



Employment Anxiety in the Digital Age: Psychology and Behavior of College Students in Employment under the De-Domainization Theory

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Abstract. Based on Giddens' disembedding theory, this study explores the psychological mechanism of college students' employment anxiety in the digital age. In the context of rapid technological advances (e.g., artificial intelligence, gig economy) reshaping the labor market - automation is expected to displace 85 million jobs worldwide by 2025, while creating 97 million new positions [1] - we examine how the digital employment environment reconfigures anxiety traits and behavioral responses. Using the survey data of 133 vocational college students (72.93% in rural areas and 70.68% in non-only children), we found that: (1) employment cognition significantly predicted higher anxiety ($\beta=0.453$, $p<0.01$), indicating that clear self-assessment exacerbated stress; (2) Non-only child increased anxiety ($\beta= -0.208$, $p<0.05$), which may be related to family resource competition; (3) The model explains 51.5% of the variance ($R^2=0.515$), with negligible effects of gender and hometown. The findings highlight the "de-embedding" effect of the digital employment virtualized work scenario, weakening traditional professional identities and social support networks. Practical implications include improved university career guidance (e.g., cognitive adjustment training) and policy interventions (e.g., targeted subsidies for vulnerable groups) to enhance resilience to a mobile labor market.

Keywords: Employment anxiety, Disembedding theory, Employment behaviour

1 Introduction

1.1 Digital Technologies Reshape the Employment Landscape

With the rapid development of artificial intelligence, quantum computing, virtual reality, edge computing and other digital technologies, the production, consumption and employment patterns of human society are undergoing profound changes. The World Economic Forum's Future of Jobs 2020 Report predicts that 85 million traditional jobs will be replaced by automation globally by 2025, while 97 million new jobs will be created [1]. This trend is equally significant in China, where technological advances are expected to generate a net increase of 12% in employment, but are also accelerating the iteration and restructuring of career structures. Digital technolo-

gies have not only lowered barriers to entrepreneurship, but also enabled individuals to participate in global markets by removing barriers of time and space, giving rise to new forms of employment such as flexible employment and the gig economy [2].

1.2 The Rise of the Casual Economy and Employment Uncertainty

The rapid growth of the digital economy has fueled the rise of the "Gig Economy." Aliresearch (2023) predicts that by 2036, 400 million Chinese workers may become freelancers, accounting for 50% of the total labor force[3]. This shift from "company + employee" to "platform + individual" reduces career stability and increases employment uncertainty. At the same time, the career concept of the younger generation has changed significantly, and they are more inclined to pursue work autonomy rather than the traditional bureaucratic career path [4]. However, this flexibility is also accompanied by higher career anxiety, especially for college students, and how to establish a stable professional identity in a highly uncertain job market has become an urgent problem to be solved.

1.3 Psychological Challenges of Employment from a Derangement Theory Perspective

Giddens' (1991) theory of "Disembedding" points out that modern social relations have been separated from the traditional regional interaction and reconstructed in a wider scope of time and space[5]. In the field of employment, digital technologies have removed occupational activities from the physical office space, forming a virtualized, fragmented employment model. For example, new ways of working, such as telecommuting and freelancing, make individuals need to switch identities frequently in different "life scenarios" (such as WeChat, Dingding, recruitment platforms, etc.), leading to the blurring of professional identity [6]. This "disengagement" phenomenon exacerbates employment anxiety, manifested in:

1. Separation of time and space: the boundary between work and life is blurred, resulting in increased psychological pressure;
2. Reconstruction of social relations: traditional career support networks (such as colleagues and industry communities) are weakened, and individuals rely more on online social communication, but virtual interaction is difficult to provide a stable sense of belonging.
3. Professional identity mobility * : Freelancers need to switch roles between different platforms, and professional identity is difficult to be established stably.

2 Significance of the Study

The research focuses on college students to provide practical guidance for coping with digital employment anxiety:

1. Policy level: Based on the characteristics of de-localized labor relations, flexible employment security mechanisms (such as blockchain storage, digital social security) are proposed to help policy formulation.
2. Education level: Provide data support for college career planning education, optimize digital skills training and psychological adjustment courses;
3. At the individual level, adaptive strategies such as "slash youth" are revealed to help college students enhance their psychological resilience in career mobility.

3 Methodology

3.1 Research Subjects

Taking full-time students of a common vocational college in East China as the test objects, the self-designed "Employment Anxiety, Social Support and Cognition Scale for College students" was distributed to the students through the questionnaire star platform, including freshmen, sophomores and juniors. A total of 135 questionnaires were collected as Table 1 shows, and those with less than 80 seconds of answering time and obvious regular responses were deleted. There were 133 valid questionnaires, with an effective rate of 98.52%, of which 51 were male students (38.35%), 82 were female students (81.65%), 97 were rural students (72.93%), 39 were only children (29.32%) and 94 were non-only children (70.68%).

Table 1. Frequency analysis results

Name (of a thing)	Options	Frequency	Percentage (%)
grade	first-year university student	53	39.85
	second-year university student	33	24.81
	third-year university student	47	35.34
place of origin of students	villagers	97	72.93
	cities and towns	36	27.07
Only child	be	39	29.32
	clogged	94	70.68
sex	male	51	38.35
	women	82	61.65
add up the total		133	100.0

3.2 Methods of Statistical Analysis

This study used the SPSSAU data science analysis platform (<https://spssau.com>) for descriptive statistical analysis of data, analysis of variance, and correlation regression analysis.

3.3 Findings

Reliability analysis: According to the questionnaire statistics, the 36 analytical items were analyzed for reliability, and the Cronbach's reliability analysis can be found in Table 2.

Table 2. Cronbach's reliability analysis

Sample	Cronbach's alpha Coefficient
A1-A24	0.962
A25-A48	0.951

As can be seen from Table1, the reliability coefficient values are 0.962 and 0.951 respectively, and the CITC values of the above analyzed items are all greater than 0.4, which indicates that there is a good correlation between the analyzed items, and also indicates a good level of reliability. In summary, the research data reliability coefficient value is higher than 0.9, which comprehensively indicates that the data reliability is of high quality and can be used for further analysis.

Correlation analysis: Based on the above demographic analysis of variance, using pearson product difference correlation method, correlation analysis was done for gender, grade, only child, employment support, employment perception, and employment anxiety as shown in the table 3 below:

Table 3. Pearson's Correlation-Delta Format

	Employment support	Employment awareness	employment anxiety	sex	grade	place of origin	Only child
Employment support	1						
Employment awareness	0.572**	1					
employment anxiety	0.479**	0.702**	1				
sex	0.193*	0.132	0.071	1			
grade	0.138	0.080	0.091	0.102	1		
place of origin	0.014	0.072	0.147	-0.042	0.090	1	
Only child	-0.059	-0.122	-0.238**	0.205*	0.081	-0.314**	1

* p<0.05 ** p<0.01

The correlation coefficients were 0.572, 0.479 and 0.193, which were all greater than 0. This means that employment anxiety is positively correlated with employment support and employment awareness at 0.01 level, and positively correlated with gender at 0.02 level. At the same time, there is no significant correlation between employment support and grade, place of birth and whether or not the only child, and the correlation value is close to 0, indicating that there is no correlation between employment support and grade, place of birth and whether or not the only child.

The correlation value is -0.238, which is less than 0, indicating that there is a negative correlation between employment anxiety and only child. At the same time, there is no significant correlation between employment anxiety and gender, grade and place of birth, and the correlation value is close to 0, that is, there is no correlation between employment anxiety and gender, grade and place of birth.

3.4 Regression Analysis

Using stepwise regression analysis (independent variables: employment support, employment perceptions, and whether or not they are only child; dependent variable: employment anxiety), the final model retained the variables Employment perceptions and Whether or not they are only child, which explained 51.5% of the variation in employment anxiety ($R^2=0.515$) as Table 4 shows. The model passed the F-test ($F=70.708$, $p<0.05$) with the formula:

Employment Anxiety = 0.989 + 0.453 x Employment Perceptions - 0.208 x only children

Key findings: 1. Employment perceptions have a significant positive effect on employment anxiety ($\beta=0.453$, $p<0.01$). 2. Whether being an only child has a significant negative effect on employment anxiety ($\beta=-0.208$, $p<0.05$).

Model test: No multicollinearity ($VIF<5$) and autocorrelation (D-W value close to 2), model valid.

Table 4. Stepwise Regression Analysis Results - Simplified Format

	regression coefficient	95% CI	covariance diagnosis	
			VIF	tolerance level
a constant (math.)	0.989** (5.203)	0.616 ~ 1.361	-	-
Employment awareness	0.453** (11.224)	0.374 ~ 0.532	1.016	0.985
Only child	-0.208* (-2.508)	-0.371 ~ -0.046	1.016	0.985
sample size		133		
R^2		0.515		
Adjustment R^2		0.508		
F-value		$F(2,133)=70.708, p=0.000$		

Note: Dependent Variable = Employment Anxiety

D-W value = 2.039

* $p<0.05$ ** $p<0.01$ t-values in parentheses

4 Summary

1. Reliability: The employment anxiety scale has a high reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha=0.962/0.951$), which confirms the quality of the data.

2. Relevance: Employment anxiety was positively associated with employment support ($r=0.479$, $p<0.01$) and perception ($r=0.702$, $p<0.01$), suggesting that increased awareness may increase anxiety.

The negative association with only children ($r=-0.238$, $p<0.01$) indicates higher anxiety among non-only children, possibly due to competition for family resources.

Gender was only weakly associated with employment support ($r=0.193$, $p<0.05$) and had no significant effect on anxiety.

3. Regression analysis: Employment perception ($\beta=0.453$, $p<0.01$) strongly predicted higher anxiety, likely from realistic self-assessments.

Non-only child status ($\beta=-0.208$, $p<0.05$) increased anxiety, possibly due to socio-economic stress.

The model explains 51.5% of the anxiety variance ($R^2=0.515$), highlighting these factors as key influences.

4. Practical significance: Cognitive adjustment: Career counseling should help students manage expectations and reduce anxiety resulting from increased awareness.

Targeted support: Non-only children (and rural students, 72.93%) can benefit from financial aid, family workshops, and tailored mental health resources.

5 Conclusion

Employment guidance in colleges and universities should focus on students' cognitive adjustment. Through career planning courses, psychological counseling, and social support, students should be helped to establish reasonable employment expectations and alleviate the anxiety caused by the clarification of their cognition.

1. Optimize the employment guidance system in colleges and universities, and strengthen cognitive adjustment and psychological construction.

(1) Reform of career planning courses:

- Introduce dynamic career assessment tools (such as MBTI and Holland's Occupational Interest Test), combined with industry trend analysis, to help students clarify their career positioning.

- Offer "industry experience courses", inviting professionals to share real work scenarios and reduce the information gap between students and the workplace.

(2) Regularization of psychological intervention:

- Establish an "employment anxiety screening mechanism", regularly assessing students' psychological states through questionnaires, and providing one-on-one counseling for high-risk groups.

- Design Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) workshops to teach emotional management skills and alleviate the frustration of job hunting.

2. Targeted support measures for non-only children and rural students

1) Economic assistance and employment incentives:

- Establish a "Frontline Employment Scholarship" to provide tuition compensation for students who sign up for jobs in the central and western regions or in rural revitalization.

- Collaborate with enterprises to launch a "Rural Student Internship Subsidy" to cover transportation and accommodation expenses for job hunting in different locations.

(2)Family-school collaborative intervention:

- Organize "Parent Employment Policy Briefing Sessions" through live streaming to eliminate families' misunderstandings about "slow employment" and reduce inter-generational pressure.

- Develop a "Family Communication Guide" providing conversation templates (such as how to explain flexible employment choices to parents) to reduce conflictual communication.

3. Empowering with digital tools to enhance the flexibility of employment strategies

- Develop an "AI Job Search Assistant" to real-time capture job demands and recommend highly-matched positions, reducing the energy consumption caused by blind applications.

- Build a "Flexible Employment Skills Platform" offering training courses on short video operation, cross-border e-commerce, and other freelance jobs to broaden career perspectives.

6 Limitation

This study took 133 students from a vocational college in East China as samples to explore the influencing factors of employment anxiety. It was found that employment cognition ($\beta=0.453$) and being an only child ($\beta=-0.208$) significantly predicted the anxiety level ($R^2=51.5\%$). However, there are the following limitations: the sample size is small and the region is single; the validity of the self-compiled scale has not been verified; the cross-sectional design cannot determine the causal relationship; key variables such as family economic status were omitted; and the interaction of variables was not analyzed. It is suggested that in the future, the sample size should be expanded, a tracking design should be adopted, and the measurement tools should be improved to enhance the reliability of the conclusion.

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