

Research on the Impact of Psychological Capital on the Employment Quality of College Students

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Abstract: *The employment of college students, as a key social issue and persistent challenge in contemporary society, is closely related to the solution path and the quality of higher education. Psychological capital, as an important concept in positive psychology, is of great significance in improving the employment quality of college students. Starting from the current employment situation of college students, this article analyzes and summarizes the factors that influence the quality of employment through psychological capital, and ultimately proposes suggestions and strategies to improve the quality of employment by enhancing the psychological capital of college students.*

Keywords: Psychological capital, College students, Employment quality, Strategies.

1. Introduction

With the continuous increase in the number of college graduates, the challenges facing the job market are becoming increasingly severe, and traditional career choices and employment concepts are undergoing profound changes. Therefore, strengthening the quality of talent cultivation and promoting improvements in the graduate employment rate have become the core issues of strategic planning in universities and have attracted widespread research interest in the academic community, becoming hot topics of discussion. In this context, it is particularly crucial and valuable to delve into the mechanism by which psychological capital enhances the employment quality of college students.

Driven by the wave of positive psychology theory, the outstanding American psychologist Luthans and his team innovatively introduced the concept of “psychological capital” in 2007, defining it as a psychological resource or internal advantage and defining it as “a positive psychological state exhibited by an individual in the process of growth and development, which includes four core components: self-efficacy, optimism, resilience, and hope”. Previous studies have shown that subcomponents of psychological capital, such as hope, optimism, and self-efficacy, have a significant effect on the behavior patterns of college students in making career choices. However, the concept of psychological capital is not a simple combination of existing concepts but rather emphasizes the interaction of these four components, which in turn constitute positive tendencies in individual psychological processes and personalities. Therefore, both in theory and in the context of recent research results, psychological capital, as a positive psychological orientation, should be closely related to the career efficacy of college students [4].

2. Current Employment Situation of College Students

College students are an enormous employment force, an important talent resource for the country, and a pillar of socialism with Chinese characteristics. In recent years, to cultivate high-quality talent to meet the needs and development of society, China’s higher education has expanded its enrollment scale, and the number of graduates

has gradually increased, resulting in a “difficult” employment situation for contemporary college students in China. According to data, in 2024, the number of college graduates in China will reach 11.79 million, while the unemployment rate will reach 45%. This means that nearly half of fresh college graduates cannot find jobs. The increasing number of graduates annually has led to an increasingly severe employment situation for college students, causing employment pressure and affecting their physical and mental health as well as the balanced development of the job market.

At present, there is a significant increase in the number of college graduates, structural unemployment caused by the imbalanced distribution of employment cities, and a disconnect between school education and market demand. Since the beginning of the 21st century, China’s higher education has gradually shifted toward mass education, with a significant increase in fresh graduates and increasing competition for employment. With the acceleration of industrialization and urbanization in China, the occupation of some low-end positions by the new urban labor force (an average of 3 million new laborers per year), surplus rural labor force (approximately 150 million), laid-off and unemployed people, high school graduates, migrant workers, etc., has hindered the downward shift of the “center of gravity” of college graduates. The increasing number of college graduates is facing a fiercely competitive labor market. The original position now has multiple people competing, causing difficulties in the employment of graduates and greatly exacerbating the tense situation of China’s labor market. At present, although China’s economic growth rate can be maintained at approximately 5%, the growth of employment demand is extremely slow in the near future and cannot meet the enormous employment supply mentioned above. The situation of oversupply in China’s labor market will continue for a long period of time. Owing to the global economic slowdown and other factors, China’s labor market has recently experienced corresponding tightening. Some companies are not optimistic about the future and have chosen relatively conservative personnel policies, reducing the number of new employees recruited.

In recent years, the job market has shown a phenomenon of both “difficulty in recruiting workers” for enterprises and “difficulty in finding employment” for workers. First, the imbalance between labor supply and demand continues, and

the large total employment volume has caused structural contradictions between supply and demand. Second, the intensification of structural contradictions in employment has made it difficult to alleviate the imbalance in industry and regional development. For example, industries that have developed earlier and have greater advantages may experience a surplus of talent, whereas emerging industries may face a shortage of talent. Moreover, there is an imbalance in development between regions, with coastal areas and important cities being more attractive to talent than inland areas are, resulting in talent loss in inland cities.

The implementation of the policy of expanding enrollment in universities has led to a significant increase in the number of unemployed people each year, and the pressure of employment continues to grow. Compared with the higher education penetration rate of 30% to 60% in developed countries, although the proportion of higher education students in China is relatively low, the employment pressure is still heavy. With respect to the employment market situation of college students in China, the current supply-demand contradiction is still prominent, mainly manifested as the difficulty for graduates and employers in meeting their needs, the disconnect between school education and market demand, and the difficulty in matching the abilities and employment needs of college students. Schools focus on knowledge education but neglect the cultivation of practical skills, resulting in difficulties in recruiting for enterprises, while college students cannot find jobs.

3. The Impact of Psychological Capital on Employment Quality

Psychological capital enables college students to maintain optimism and adapt effectively to challenges and pressures by cultivating positive emotional attitudes and adaptability. The development of psychological capital also promotes good interpersonal relationships and social skills, enabling college students to establish extensive social networks and obtain employment opportunities and providing important support and advantages for improving their employability. The cultivation of psychological capital emphasizes a positive emotional attitude and self-management ability, enabling individuals to maintain optimism and adaptability and enhancing their confidence in career decision-making. The development of psychological capital encourages individuals to set clear goals and take action, which helps individuals form positive evaluations of their own abilities and improves their self-efficacy in career decision-making. Psychological capital provides support and advantages for individuals to increase their self-efficacy in career decision-making. When college students have a greater sense of career decision-making self-efficacy, they have more confidence and ability to face employment challenges and take proactive action to seek employment opportunities. Career decision-making self-efficacy enhances college students' confidence and self-awareness, making them more courageous in facing difficulties and competition in the employment process. Career decision-making self-efficacy can also enhance the problem-solving ability of college students, increasing their adaptability and innovativeness and improving their employment competitiveness. When college students realize that they have high levels of psychological

capital, their self-efficacy in career decision-making is also enhanced, and they become more courageous in facing difficulties and competition, thus improving their employability.

3.1 Increasing the Sense of Employment Hope

Hope is an individual's positive psychological state toward coping with and completing future activities. To enhance the sense of employment hope, it is necessary to provide policy guarantees and stabilize the fundamentals of employment.

3.2 Cultivating an Optimistic Spirit

Optimism is a positive attitude, actively accepting reality and embracing oneself. The school mobilizes social resources to provide practical and effective targeted employment guidance and services. First, it clarifies the necessary knowledge and skills, encourages students to practice skills diligently, accumulates self-development energy from within, enhances job-seeking confidence, and lays a solid foundation for future employment. The second is to make good use of career planning courses, strengthen knowledge related to mental health in the curriculum, provide targeted employment guidance and psychological counseling activities, teach graduates psychological adjustment methods, encourage students to actively adjust their employment mentality, and effectively self-regulate when facing setbacks in job seeking, choosing appropriate ways to relax, adjust, and vent. In addition to self-help, peer education can be used to help graduates recognize their own position, understand fierce and brutal competition in employment, avoid blindly following trends and ineffective competition, pay more attention to future career development prospects, and seize the "dividends" of grassroots employment. You can seek help from school-level psychological counseling centers or specialized hospitals to relieve psychological stress. At the same time, we should give full play to the educational function of families and attach importance to the impact of families on children's employment. Families should provide support and guidance, communicate with graduates about their current employment situation, understand their children's employment needs, actively search for employment information through interpersonal relationships, and provide material support and spiritual encouragement during the job search process.

3.3 Increased Resilience Against Setbacks

Resilience is the ability of an individual to withstand pressure and overcome adversity when faced with difficulties or failures. Improving resilience can be approached from the following aspects. On the one hand, schools should attach importance to students' mental health education, focusing on cultivating psychological resilience, that is, effective coping and adaptation in the face of loss, difficulties or adversity. In the daily ideological and political education of students, their ability to resist setbacks, good human-computer interaction skills, adaptability to society, and self-awareness are cultivated. Moreover, by improving the rules of the "second classroom", students are encouraged to participate in practical and innovative activities. During the process of participating in practical activities, students are taught to face pressure and challenges, actively regulate their emotions, overcome blind

confidence and negative coping, and exercise their resilience and ability to handle unexpected events. In addition, it is necessary to pay special attention to college graduates from economically disadvantaged families receiving the minimum living allowance, establish employment assistance work ledgers and precise assistance mechanisms, achieve a “lifelong strategy”, and provide employment guidance services. On the other hand, to play a positive role in family emotions, we must not give children expectations that are too high. We should fully respect and believe in their choices. We should help children analyze their own conditions and then use their rich life experience and job-seeking experience to help them make career choices. When necessary, we should give children more reasonable advice. In situations such as job search failure, more care, understanding, and rational incentives should be given to encourage an objective view of failure, guide children to attribute their mistakes correctly, summarize and reflect on their shortcomings, and accumulate experience for the next successful job search. They reposition themselves and actively mobilize all the resources to help students effectively cope with the employment crisis.

3.4 Increased self-efficacy

Self-efficacy refers to an individual’s belief in his or her ability to achieve goals, and enhancing self-efficacy can effectively alleviate the pressure of job seeking and employment. One is to stimulate students’ intrinsic motivation and enhance their confidence. Individuals have an inherent need for self-growth and a driving force for self-development. To this end, universities should help students develop practical and feasible career plans for college students, guide them to quickly understand their professional direction, recognize their employment situation, match suitable positions on the basis of their own advantages and preferences, and set achievable goals. They should also actively improve and adjust their plans according to practical situations. Actively obtain teacher qualification certificates, Mandarin, CET-4 and CET-6 and other related certificates during university studies; possess basic skills; and strive to become a “versatile” talent. The second is to cultivate a rational employment concept and give full play to students’ subjective initiative. Guided by employment, one should scientifically and rationally analyze one’s strengths and weaknesses, examine personal orientation and career needs, avoid blind obedience, and actively realize one’s own social value. Objectively view social needs and choose careers and job positions on the basis of personal circumstances and conditions. Third, strengthen external perception and enhance competitiveness. By actively participating in school club activities, volunteering, and teaching during spare time, students can cultivate comprehensive qualities, exercise skills, and enhance their competitiveness and confidence. Moreover, they should take initiative, familiarize themselves with relevant employment and entrepreneurship policies, make full use of multiple resources from society, families, and schools, collect employment information through multiple channels, reduce information asymmetry in job selection, and increase the possibility of successful employment.

4. Summary

Employment is a long-term, arduous, urgent, and meticulous

task. College graduates are an important foundation for building a strong manufacturing country, and their quality directly determines the overall level of the manufacturing industry. The employment pressure on college students is closely related to their physical and mental health and directly affects the development of basic education, family happiness, university development, and social stability in China. The strategy for coping with the employment quality of college students with positive psychological capital is to cultivate students’ positive psychological capital, effectively increase their employability, exert their subjective initiative, and achieve the goal of alleviating employment pressure. In this context, policy support can be provided to stabilize the employment situation, promote the reform of majors in universities and cultivate practical talent, give full play to the role of family education and provide support and guidance, and actively respond to the employment pressure of graduates by adjusting their personal employment mentality, stimulating internal motivation, and other aspects.

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