

Analysis on The Current Situation and Influencing Factors of Career Adaptability of Applied Undergraduates

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Abstract

Research objectives: Investigate the current status of college students' career adaptability and its influencing factors, help college students establish a positive attitude, enable them to calmly cope with career development, increase their attention to career, and improve college students' cognitive level of themselves and the environment in order to control Career development. **Research tools:** This study used the Variable Career Orientation Scale and the Career Adaptability Scale for investigation. **Data analysis:** SPSS 27.0 statistical software for statistical analysis of the data. The measurement data used "mean \pm standard deviation", and the component comparison used the independent sample T test and ANOVA single factor. Analysis of variance, explored using Pearson correlation analysis. **Research results:** The study found that the overall situation of college students' career adaptability is good, and college students of different grades have significant differences in career adaptability; variable career orientation is positively correlated with career adaptability.

Keywords: College Students; Changeable Career Orientation; Career Adaptability

Introduction

Driven by the wave of globalization and the knowledge economy, the speed of technological updates and industrial upgrades is accelerating, and career development is becoming more dynamic and unpredictable. The traditional career model needs to be gradually replaced by a changeable career model, which means that individuals should constantly adapt and respond to career changes. Contemporary college students should persist in continuous learning and progress, with the core of enhancing the flexibility and adaptability of career development, focusing on the establishment of interpersonal relationships and the improvement of social skills, and focusing on cultivating innovative thinking and problem-solving skills. At the same time, maintaining an open mind, constantly exploring and adapting to the path of career development can achieve career success and achievement.

After 20 years of vigorous development, the gross enrollment rate of higher education in China has climbed from 15% in 2002 to 60.2% in 2023. This important milestone means that China's higher education has entered the stage of universalization. The national level is paying more and more attention to meeting the diversified needs of the higher education system and cultivating applied talents. With employment as the orientation, focusing on cultivating undergraduate students and focusing on improving innovation and practical ability, such an educational positioning and development trend can better meet the society's demand for applied talents.

Contemporary college students face some challenges and criticisms in real life. For example: In China, a phenomenon called “Elder-gnawing” has attracted increasing attention. This phenomenon mainly manifests itself in the fact that some college students continue to rely on their parents for financial support after completing their studies, thus lacking the ability to live independently. This phenomenon has aroused widespread concern and criticism at the social level (Deng et al., 2008: 59). In addition, in Taiwan, some people jokingly call contemporary college students the “strawberry tribe”, which means that they grow up in a relatively favorable environment and look good in appearance, but lack the ability to cope with stress and difficulties. This term is over-protective and incompetent for college students. A satire of resilience (Jiang, 2003). The emergence of these criticisms and titles fully demonstrates concerns about the current status of career development of contemporary college students. In a social background full of variables and challenges, college students must have corresponding abilities in order to cope with various difficulties more efficiently and achieve personal growth and development (Jia, 2005: 68). Therefore, enhancing the career adaptability of college students has gradually become a top priority in the current education work of colleges and universities. Colleges and universities need to actively reform the education system and create more courses that focus on practice and comprehensive ability training to guide students to develop independent learning and problem-solving skills. The insights described by Super and Knasel (1981: 194) once again emphasized the core concept of “adaptability” importance.

An individual's adaptability determines their ability to cope with challenges and changes in their career development. By being adaptable, individuals with the ability to flexibly adjust their behaviors and ways of thinking can better adapt to changing environments and achieve career development goals. Adaptability is called adaptability resource in career construction theory. This concept was proposed by psychologist Savickas (2005). Adaptability is a key human capital that helps individuals effectively cope with changes and challenges and achieve self-regulation. According to Savickas and Porfeli (2012:661), career adaptability mainly includes four core elements: career confidence, career curiosity, career focus, and career control. These elements jointly build the foundation for individuals to achieve lasting success in their careers, and play a vital role in successful employment, effectively coping with career changes, and smoothly advancing their careers. After in-depth discussions in many academic studies, career adaptability has been widely confirmed to have a significant positive impact on employment and career outcomes. For example, career adaptability predicts individual employment status (Guan et al., 2014:136) and reemployment ability (Koen et al., 2010: 126), the quality of career development (Guan et al., 2013: 561), overall career success (Ebberwein et al., 2004: 292), the level of job satisfaction, and the possibility of career advancement (Tolentino et al., 2013: 410) and perceptions of work stress (Johnston et al., 2013: 295) and other aspects have shown significant predictive effects. When considering the depth of an individual's focus on the future and the effort they put into preparing for it, we focus on career focus. At the same time, the career control level is used to evaluate the self-discipline displayed by individuals in the career decision-making process. In addition, the career curiosity aspect focuses on the individual's degree of exploration of the environment and willingness to seek career opportunities. As for the level of career confidence, it focuses on assessing an individual's confidence in their ability to solve problems and cope with challenges. The cultivation of career adaptability is crucial for individuals to cope with challenges and

overcome obstacles in their careers. Difficulties such as unemployment, career transition, work pressure, etc. can be effectively dealt with, and then more steadily move toward personal career goals and the peak of career development. . In college, life has reached a crucial turning point. It plays an indispensable and key role in the role development and transformation of individual careers. During this stage, students transition from the school environment to the work environment and face many challenges and opportunities. The career adaptability of college students plays an important role that cannot be ignored in the development of their entire career.

Research Objectives

1. Population and sample group

According to the latest data of Henan's education statistics in 2023, as of November 2023, the total number of ordinary colleges and universities in Henan Province has reached 168, of which 57 are undergraduate universities. In the field of ordinary undergraduate and junior college education, the number of students in Henan Province has exceeded 3 million, ranking first in the country. Therefore, according to the actual situation of the researchers, random stratified sampling is carried out to ensure the efficiency of the research, ensuring that the sample is similar to the population in certain important characteristics, thereby increasing the representativeness and reliability of the sample. Therefore, the study adopted a random stratified sampling method to conduct a sampling survey of four applied undergraduate colleges in Henan Province, China .

Research Methodology

A. Fluctuating Career Orientation Scale: This study uses the Fluctuating Career Orientation Scale of Briscoe et al., (2006: 4) to assess the degree of orientation of individuals in fluctuating careers. The scale includes two sub-dimensions, namely, self-directed (SD) and value-driven (VD). Self-directed is the core indicator for evaluating an individual's ability to independently manage his or her career. It covers 8 items and reflects the individual's comprehensive quality in career planning, decision-making and career management. Value-driven measures the degree to which an individual adheres to values in career decision-making. It consists of 6 questions and reflects how an individual makes career decisions and takes actions based on values and beliefs. This study uses the Likert five-level scale for scoring. The Cronbach's α coefficient of the questionnaire reached 0.899, showing good reliability.

B. Career Adaptability Scale: This study selected the most popular career adaptability assessment tool, the CAAS (Career Adapt-Abilities Scale) (Hou et al., 2012: 686). CAAS covers four levels, namely the 4C model: Career Concern, Career Control, Career Curious, and Career Confidence. When considering the depth of an individual's concern for the future and the efforts made to prepare for it, we focus on career concern. At the same time, the career control level is used to assess the self-discipline shown by an individual in the career decision-making process. In addition, the career curiosity level focuses on the individual's degree of exploration of the environment and the willingness to seek career opportunities. As for the career confidence level, it focuses on assessing the individual's confidence in his or her ability to solve problems and cope with challenges. This study uses the Likert five-level scale for scoring. The Cronbach's α coefficient of the questionnaire reached 0.890, showing good reliability.

2. Collection of information

To ensure the smooth progress of the assessment, this study uses the class as the basic unit and makes full use of class meeting time for testing. Each test will involve 30-50 people. Before the test, the counselor or class teacher will explain the basic situation of the questionnaire. After confirming that the subjects understand the content of the questionnaire, the counselor or class teacher will release the questionnaire QR code through WeChat and other tools, and the subjects will start to answer. The counselor will supervise and check the students' filling in the questionnaire during the students' answering period, and they can leave only after they have finished answering. The questionnaire filled in by the subjects includes (i) demographic data; (ii) Variable Career Orientation Scale; and (iii) Career Adaptability Scale. It takes about 10 minutes to answer.

3. Research Methods

SPSS 27.0 statistical software was used for statistical analysis of the data. The measurement data were expressed as "mean \pm standard deviation". The independent sample T test and ANOVE one-way analysis of variance were used for component comparison, and Pearson correlation analysis was used for exploration.

4. Reliability Analysis

This study conducted a reliability analysis on the 12-question variable career orientation scale and the 24-question career adaptability scale. The results showed that the Cronbach 's alpha internal consistency coefficient of the variable career orientation scale was 0.944; the Cronbach 's alpha internal consistency coefficient of the career adaptability scale was 0.984, indicating that the questionnaire had good reliability. Therefore, the social support scale and career adaptability questionnaire used in this study are reliable.

Research Results

1. Basic situation of college students' career adaptability

The survey results of this study show that the average career adaptability of college students is 92.029, and the average values of each dimension are between 22.712-23.231; the standard deviation of career adaptability is 17.280, and the standards of each dimension are between 4.462-4.879.

Table 1Basic information on college students' career adaptability (n=281)

Project	Number of Entries	Average Value	Standard Deviation
Career Adaptability	24	92.029	17.380
Career Focus	6	23.217	4.879
Career Control	6	22.712	4.459
Career Curiosity	6	23.231	4.620
Career Confidence	6	22.868	4.462

The results show that in the average scores of career adaptability, career curiosity > career concern > career confidence > career control, indicating that college students are more concerned about their future career curiosity.

2. Basic situation of college students' changeable career orientation

The survey results of this study show that the average value of college students' changeable career orientation is 46.445, and the average values of each dimension are 23.541 and 22.904; the standard deviation of changeable career orientation is 8.859, and the standards of each dimension are 4.593 and 4.767.

Table 2 Basic information of changeable career orientation (n= 281)

Project	Number of Entries	Average Value	Standard Deviation
Variable Career Orientation	12	46.445	8.859
Self-direction	6	23.541	4.593
Values Driven	6	22.904	4.767

The results show that in the average scores of each dimension of changeable career, self-orientation > value-driven, indicating that college students currently attach more importance to self-orientation.

3. Single factor analysis on the impact of college students' career adaptability

Table 3 Analysis of gender differences in career adaptability

	Mean (Standard Deviation)		df	t-value	P	Effect Size (d)
	Male (N = 98)	Female (N = 183)				
Career Adaptability	91.63 (20.08)	92.24 (15.80)	279	.279	.781	.287

After independent sample T test analysis, the results show that there is no significant difference in career adaptability between students of different genders, $t(279)=0.279$, $p=0.781$, $d=0.287$. There is no significant difference between boys' career adaptability ($M=91.63$, $SD=20.08$) and girls' career adaptability ($M=92.24$, $SD=15.80$).

Table 4 Analysis of differences in career adaptation in areas of origin

	mean (standard deviation)		df	t-value	P	Effect Size (d)
	Towns (N=176)	Rural area (N=105)				
Career Adaptability	91.85 (17.31)	92.31 (17.58)	279	.213	.832	.026

After independent sample T test analysis, the results show that there is no significant difference in career adaptability among students from different places of origin, $t(279)=0.212$, $p=0.832$, $d=0.026$. There is no significant difference between the career adaptability of students from urban areas ($M=91.85$, $SD=17.31$) and the degree of career adaptability of students from rural areas ($M=92.31$, $SD=17.58$).

Table 5 Analysis of differences in career adaptability by grade

Analyze factors	<i>SS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>P</i>	η_p^2
Grade	1508.86	3	502.95	1.68	.01	.150
Error	83072.92	277	299.90			
Sum	84581.77	280				

According to ANOVE single factor analysis, there is a significant difference between the career adaptability of college students and their grades. The career adaptability of senior students ($M=97.07$, $SD=16.29$) is generally higher than that of freshmen ($M=91.02$, $SD=17.24$), sophomores ($M=89.61$, $SD=18.01$) and juniors ($M=92.10$, $SD=17.33$). At the same time, compared with sophomores, the career development ability scores of freshmen students also showed that higher level. This phenomenon may occur, on the one hand, due to the gradual improvement of students' career development abilities as they advance through grade, age, and accumulation of learning and growth experience; on the other hand, it may also be related to the differences in the different grades of colleges and universities. It is related to the way of career education implemented.

4. Analysis of the correlation between college students' career adaptability and social support

According to the results of Pearson correlation analysis, Table 6 shows that the various dimensions and total scores of college students' variable career orientation are significantly positively correlated with the total score of career adaptability. It shows that the clearer the self-direction of college students, the more correct the value drive of college students, and the higher the career adaptability of students.

Table 6 Correlation analysis between career adaptability and variable career orientation

	Self-Directed	Values Driven	Variable Career Orientation Total Score	Total Career Adaptability Score
Self-directed	1			
values driven	.792***	1		
Variable Career Orientation Total Score	.944***	.949***	1	
Total career adaptability score	.414***	.392***	.425***	1

Discussion

1. Analysis of the current situation of college students' career adaptability

This study shows that the average score of college students' career adaptability is 92.029 points, indicating that the overall career adaptability of college students is at an above-average level, but there is still much room for improvement. The average score of each dimension is greater than 3 points and is relatively balanced, indicating that college students have good adaptability to their future careers.

According to the difference between college students' career adaptability and grade, through in-depth interviews with college students, we further learned that colleges and universities mainly focus on the freshman stage in the setting of career education courses, and carry out career planning courses as the main form. Especially during the epidemic, limited by objective conditions, career education is mainly carried out online, including online course learning and the use of career education platforms. However, at the school level, sophomores and juniors have not received a stable and systematic implementation form in career education. For seniors, as they are about to face key stages such as further studies, career education activities are relatively more, such as internship opportunities, special lectures, experience sharing sessions, etc. Therefore, in terms of career education, colleges and universities still have deficiencies in top-level design, and have failed to provide stable and systematic career development guidance and support for students of all grades. This result is consistent with previous literature results (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012:661). Therefore, colleges and universities need to further strengthen their attention and investment in career education and improve top-level design to better promote the improvement of students' career development capabilities.

2. The impact of changeable career orientation on college students' career adaptability

The changeable career orientation emphasizes that individuals need to be adaptable and flexible when facing a constantly changing career environment. Therefore, individuals with a changeable career orientation usually actively develop and improve their career adaptability to cope with various career changes and challenges. At the same time, career adaptability refers to the coping ability that individuals show when facing changes and challenges in their careers, covering many aspects such as adjusting psychological state, adapting to changes, solving problems, and coping with stress. This enhanced adaptability enables individuals to cope with various challenges and changes in the workplace more easily, and then achieve their personal career development goals more effectively. Correspondingly, individuals with a changeable career orientation tend to actively shape and improve their career adaptability, so as to more effectively cope with uncertainty and challenges in their career development. Research has found that when individuals have a higher tendency to change their careers, they are more likely to have extensive contact with different people and things. Individuals not only interact with the environment through job changes, but also establish connections with the surrounding environment in various ways. This result is consistent with previous literature results Supeli and Creed (2015:66). Therefore, individuals are more likely to get more opportunities to improve their adaptability and gradually improve their resilience in these interactions.

Recommendations

1. Establish a positive attitude and calmly deal with career development

In the process of college students' career development, unpredictability and uncertainty are inevitable. These incidental events and uncontrollable situations often trouble career decision makers, making their planning face many challenges. Although every college student will try to make a preliminary career plan when they first enter college, the large variables of career trajectory cannot be ignored, and the existence of these uncertainties is inevitable. In view of this, in career counseling work, we particularly emphasize cultivating students to face and accept these uncertainties in their careers with a positive and optimistic attitude. This positive attitude not only helps them better adapt to various changes in their careers, but also improves their career adaptability.

Therefore, we should not only strengthen students' awareness of career planning, but also guide them to establish the awareness of constantly adjusting their plans in the face of changes. In this way, we can help students better cope with challenges in their careers and maximize their personal values.

2. Stimulate career curiosity and increase career attention

Career curiosity and career attention are the key elements of career adaptability. In order to effectively improve college students' career attention, it is particularly important to enhance their career curiosity. Cultivating students' strong interest in their majors is the cornerstone of stimulating them to carry out professional exploration activities. To this end, professional career planning instructors can be arranged to systematically guide students to pay close attention to career development information at all stages based on the individual interests and hobbies of students, combined with the inherent laws of professional development, the specific development characteristics of each grade, and actual cases closely related to their interests, so as to gradually enhance their career exploration awareness. Unknown and novel things often have a strong attraction, which can effectively stimulate and enhance individuals' desire for exploration and attention. In view of this, as educators, teachers should shoulder the important mission of guidance and enlightenment, and constantly guide college students to have a deep understanding of the new dynamics and new developments in their professional fields. To this end, we should adopt a teaching strategy that combines theory and practice, aiming to help college students broaden their knowledge horizons and deepen their understanding of their professional fields.

Specifically, teachers can integrate the latest academic achievements and research progress into teaching by constantly updating and optimizing classroom teaching content, so that students can be exposed to cutting-edge knowledge in a timely manner. At the same time, lectures by famous employment experts are invited to give students in-depth and easy-to-understand explanations, guiding students to understand professional knowledge from multiple angles and levels. In addition, a variety of practical courses are designed to encourage students to apply what they have learned to the solution of practical problems and cultivate their practical ability and innovative spirit. In the process of professional exploration and innovative practice of college students, teachers should give full encouragement and support, respect students' personality and differences, and protect their curiosity and enthusiasm for careers.

Through active guidance and help, students' initiative and creativity are stimulated, and they are promoted to achieve more outstanding achievements in their professional fields.

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