



The Mediating Effect of Social Support Between Family Socioeconomic Status and Career Maturity

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Abstract: This study utilizes a sample of 1231 college students in Beijing and employs the Family Socioeconomic Status Questionnaire, Social Support Scale, and Career Maturity Scale to investigate the mediating effect of social support on the relationship between family socioeconomic status and career maturity. The survey results found that the career maturity of male college students (3.311 ± 0.444) was significantly higher than that of females' (3.267 ± 0.427) ($P < 0.01$), and the career maturity of urban students (3.291 ± 0.422) was higher than that of rural students' (3.274 ± 0.446) ($P < 0.01$). As students' grades increase, their level of career maturity increases as well. The correlation analysis showed that family socioeconomic status, social support and career maturity were positively correlated with each other ($r = 0.114, 0.127, 0.270, P < 0.01$). Mediating effect test showed that social support played a partial mediating role between family socioeconomic status and career maturity, with a mediating effect value of 0.041. This mediating effect accounts for 31.4% of the total effect.. The study found that in the social support dimension, school support had a significantly higher impact on college students' career maturity compared to family support. The mediating effect values for school support and family support were 0.035 and 0.043, respectively. However, the support from friends and classmates did not show a significant mediating effect. These findings indicate that social support partially mediates the relationship between family socioeconomic status and college students' career maturity, with school support playing the most significant mediating role.

Keywords: Family Socioeconomic Status, Career Maturity, Social Support

1. Introduction

China's higher education transforms from elite education to mass education, more students have been given the opportunity to enjoy better education, but along with it comes the problem of difficult employment for college students. Recently, the Ministry of Education announced 10.76 million college graduates in 2022, an increase of 1.67 million year-on-year [1]. To deal with this situation, many scholars have conducted relevant studies, among which career maturity has received much attention. Career maturity was first proposed in 1955 by an American occupational psychologist, Super. Career maturity refers to an individual's readiness to make age-appropriate career decisions and successfully cope with career development tasks based on certain information [2]. Higher the level of career maturity, the easier it is for individuals to make appropriate career choices and, accordingly, the more conducive to career success [3].

Domestic and international studies have shown that parents' occupational status, type and family socioeconomic situation are closely related to college students' career maturity [4-6] and that family socioeconomic status has a significant impact on college students' perceived social support [7, 8]. The higher the level of social support perceived by college students, the higher their personal planning level, more specific, and proactive [9]. Scholars have found that family socioeconomic status influences college students' career maturity and social support, and social support influences college students' career maturity, focusing more on the relationship between the two, but rarely involving the simultaneous inclusion of family socioeconomic status, social support and career maturity in the model to explore the mechanism of their occurrence. In view of this, this paper will investigate this issue to enrich the theoretical study of college students' career maturity, which is an important reference value for colleges and universities to improve college students' career guidance work.

2. Design

(1) Study Object

The objects of this study are college students in three universities in Beijing in 2022. A three-stage sample sampling method was adopted. A total of 1246 questionnaires were issued and 1231 were valid, with a valid questionnaire rate of 98.8%. Among them, 624 were boys, accounting for 50.7% of the total number, and 607 were girls, accounting for 49.3% of the total number.

(2) Research Methodology

1) Measurement of family socioeconomic status

Bradley & Crowyn [10] proposed that family socioeconomic status generally includes economic ability (household income), parents' occupational status and education level, and this paper selected that family socioeconomic status includes parents' education level, parents' occupational level and total annual household income. The educational level of parents is divided into eight levels, where "1" represents no schooling and "8" represents graduate students; referring to Shen Hong's study, the parents' occupational level is divided into four levels: "1" represents industrial workers, agricultural laborers and the jobless/unemployed/semi-unemployed; "2" represents general employees of enterprises and institutions and commercial service workers; "3" represents professional and technical personnel; "4" represents state and social managers, managers and private business owners [11]. Referring to Zheng Jie's study, the total annual household income options were coded from 1 to 5, with higher scores indicating higher total annual household income [12]. The calculation method of family socioeconomic status refers to the practice of Yang Xiumu and other scholars. The values obtained by parents' education level, occupation level and family economic situation will be added together as the index value of family socioeconomic status [13], and the distribution range is 5 -29 points. Using factor analysis method, the Bartlett's spherical test with $P=0.000$ and $KMO=0.712$, which can explain 70.448% of the variance, and the single standard factor loads are all greater than 0.7. The Cronbach's α value for the family socioeconomic status scale was 0.726, $AVE=0.601$, and the combined reliability $CR=0.864$.

2) Social support scale

Referring to the studies of Xiao Shui Yuan [14], Ye Yuemei [15] and Tang Haibo [16], three dimensions of family, friends and classmates and school support were selected and the Likert five-point scale was used for measurement. The higher the score, the higher the degree of social support. The results of factor analysis showed that $KMO=0.894$, $P=0.000$ for Bartlett's spherical test, which can explain 76.439% of the variation, and the signal standard factor loadings were all greater than 0.7, three common factors are family, classmates and friends support, and school support., $AVE=0.634$, and combined reliability $CR=0.869$. The Cronbach α coefficient of career maturity is 0.923.

3) Career Maturity Scale

Referring to the study of Zhang Zhiyong [17], four dimensions of career goals, career confidence, career autonomy and career reference were selected and measured

using the five-point Likert scale method, and higher scores indicated higher career maturity. The results of factor analysis showed that $KMO=0.720$, $P=0.000$ for Bartlett's spherical test explained 65.918% of the variance, the individual standard factor loadings were all greater than 0.7, $AVE=0.634$, and the combined reliability $CR=0.869$. the Cronbach alpha coefficient for career maturity was 0.797.

(3) Statistical analysis

The data were organized and analyzed using SPSS 24.0 and Mplus 6.0, and tested using correlation analysis, linear stepwise regression analysis, and mediation models.

(4) Common method deviation test

All data measured in this study were obtained from college students' self-reports, which may be subject to common method bias, using the Harman one-way test. All topics of the three variables were put together for exploratory factor analysis, and there were five factors with eigenvalues greater than one, the first of which had an explanatory amount of 32.65%, which was less than the critical value of 40%, indicating that there was no common method bias problem.

3. Results

(I) Comparison of the mean values of career maturity among different groups of college students

Using occupational maturity as the dependent variable and gender, place of origin and grade as the dependent variables, ANOVAs were conducted to examine whether there were differences in occupational maturity among different groups of college students (see Table 1). There was a difference in the career maturity of college students by gender ($F=8.000$, $p<0.01$), and all male students had higher career maturity scores than female students. Due to the constraints of external resources, students in rural areas have lower career maturity compared to students in towns ($F=11.822$, $p<0.01$), and from the survey sample, the proportion of fathers with higher education is 39.6% and 4.9% in towns and rural areas, respectively; the proportion of mothers with higher education is 34.6% and 3.1% in towns and rural areas, respectively; the effect of grade on career maturity had a significant effect ($F=9.342$, $p<0.1$). The results of the study also largely verified hypothesis 1.

Table 1. Descriptive analysis of career maturity.

Variables	M \pm SD	F	p
Gender			
Boys	3.311 \pm 0.444	8.000	0.005
Girls	3.267 \pm 0.427		
Grade			
freshman	3.266 \pm 0.440	9.342	0.042
sophomore	3.283 \pm 0.432		
junior	3.290 \pm 0.424		
senior	3.301 \pm 0.441		
Place of origin			
Rural	3.274 \pm 0.446	11.822	0.002
Cities and towns	3.291 \pm 0.422		

Note: * $p<0.05$, ** $p<0.01$, *** $p<0.001$, same as below.

(2) Social support in family socioeconomic status and college students' career maturity

Table 2 shows the means, standard deviations, and correlation coefficients of the main variables, and the results show that family socioeconomic status, occupational maturity, and social support are significantly correlated, and family

socioeconomic status is significantly correlated with family support and school support in the social support dimension, but not with friend and peer support. Social support and the dimensions were significantly correlated with occupational maturity.

Table 2. Means, standard deviations and correlation coefficients of the variables.

Variables	M±SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
1 Family socioeconomic status	13.901±5.376	1.000					
2 Social support	3.333±0.782	0.114**	1				
3 Family Support	3.107±0.987	0.084**	0.831**	1			
4 Friends and classmates support	3.338±0.870	0.101	0.907**	0.691**	1		
5 School Support	3.554±0.866	0.111**	0.849**	0.490**	0.669**	1	
6 Career maturity	3.285±0.435	0.127***	0.270**	0.197**	0.240**	0.264**	1

(3) The mediating effect of social support between family socioeconomic status and occupational maturity

The mediating effect of social support was tested using stratified regression according to the mediating effect test procedure proposed by Zhonglin Wen and Lei Zhang et al. [18]. The results of model 1 indicated that the effect of family socioeconomic status on career maturity was significant ($\beta = 0.130$, $p < 0.001$), hypothesis H1 was supported, and the first step was verified. In the second step, the effect of family socioeconomic status on social support was tested, and the results of model 2 showed that the positive effect of social support on occupational maturity was significant ($\beta = 0.159$, $p < 0.001$), hypothesis H2 was supported and the second step was verified. In the third step, the mediating role of social

support between family socioeconomic status and occupational maturity was tested. The results showed that after the introduction of social support variables, the data of model 6 indicated that the regression coefficient of family socioeconomic status on occupational maturity decreased, the effect was still significant ($\beta = 0.121$, $p < 0.001$), the effect of social support on occupational maturity was significant ($\beta = 0.257$, $p < 0.001$), and the coefficients of models 7-9 were all significant, which indicated that social support in family socioeconomic status between family socioeconomic status plays a partially mediating role. The ratio of the mediating effect to the total effect is $(0.159 \times 0.257)/0.130 = 0.314$, which means that the mediating effect accounts for 31.4% of the total effect.

Table 3. Results of regression analysis.

Variables	Occupational	Social	Family	Friends	School	Career Maturity			
	Maturity Model 1	Support Model 2	Support Model 3	Support Model 4	Support Model 5	Model6	Model7	Model8	Model9
Grade	0.005**	0.031**	0.012	0.041**	0.039**	0.011*	0.007	0.011*	0.009*
Gender	0.018**	0.045**	0.068**	0.022*	0.180**	0.029**	0.004**	0.023**	0.036**
Family socioeconomic status	0.130***	0.159***	0.146***	0.160	0.159***	0.121***	0.121***	0.120***	0.118***
Social Support						0.257***			
Family Support							0.240***		
friends and classmates								0.224***	
Support									0.269***
School Support									
R ²	0.035	0.037	0.044	0.029	0.032	0.079	0.064	0.054	0.083
Adjusted R ²	0.033	0.036	0.043	0.028	0.031	0.078	0.063	0.052	0.079
F	3.714***	33.289***	37.240***	24.144***	26.677***	69.146***	55.416***	44.068***	29.394***

The overall mediating effect value was tested using the Bootstrap method using 1000 replicate samples with a put-back sampling method and the effect was considered significant if its 95% confidence interval did not include zero [19]. The results showed that social support had a 95% confidence interval of (0.025, 0.047), excluding zero, and a mediating effect value of 0.041, indicating a significant mediating effect of social support between family socioeconomic status and occupational maturity.

(4) Analysis of the mediating effect of social support

It was found that of the three dimensions of social support, family support, friend and peer support, and school support,

friend and peer support was not significantly related to family socioeconomic status, and thus, friend and peer support did not mediate the condition. Then, the situation of family support and school support mediating effect, whether there is a difference, this paper will use mplus6.0 software to do further analysis. The results are shown in Table 4. it can be seen that the mediating effect of both family support and school support between family socioeconomic status and career maturity is significant, with the mediating effect values of 0.035 and 0.043 for family support and school support, respectively ($p < 0.01$), and the mediating effect value of school support is significantly higher than that of family support.

Table 4. Results of intermediary effect analysis.

Variables	Estimated value	Standard deviation	p
Family socioeconomic status → family support → career maturity	0.035	0.029	<0.01
Family socioeconomic status → school support → career maturity	0.043	0.024	<0.01

4. Conclusion

(1) Gender, grade and place of origin differences in college students' career maturity

It is found that the career maturity of female students is lower than that of male students, and the career maturity of students from rural areas is lower than that of urban students. In terms of grade level, the career maturity of college students is weakest in the first year and strengthens as the grade level rises. This indicates that higher education institutions can compensate for the differences in students' family background and upbringing to a certain extent in the process of education resources and talent cultivation, and to a certain extent promote the improvement of rural students' vocational ability and social equity of education.

(2) Family socioeconomic status and social support have positive predictive effects on college students' career maturity

The empirical study from the survey also found that family socioeconomic status has a significant positive impact on college students' career maturity. Families with high family socioeconomic status not only provide superior regulation in terms of students' food, clothing, housing and transportation, but also, importantly, are able to provide more social resources to their children, which is difficult for low-income families to reach. Differences in students' occupational maturity due to their families' socioeconomic status can lead to differences in students' occupational maturity, and this inequality may seem difficult to eliminate on the surface. It was found through the survey that social support and all dimensions play a positive predictive role for college students' career maturity.

(3) Social support partially mediates the relationship between family socioeconomic status and occupational maturity

Social support, as a mediating variable, can reduce inequality due to an innate irreversible factor such as family socioeconomic status. Social support is obtained not only from the family, but more importantly from colleges and universities, and more resources and support are obtained through schools and teachers. From the survey results, family support and school support mediated significantly, but school support mediated significantly higher effect than family support. School support, as an important mediating variable, can intervene in the inequality of career maturity caused by family socioeconomic status, and students with low family socioeconomic status can improve their career maturity by getting more school support.

5. Recommendations

Social causation theory suggests that families embody the socioeconomic resources that students have and play an important role in their development. Social cognitive theory suggests that environmental, behavioral, and intrapersonal

factors are interconnected and determine each other [20]. The external environment (e.g., family socioeconomic status) can influence human behavior (e.g., career maturity) through internal human factors (social support).

This study provides insights for universities to carry out career guidance for college students. Universities should carry out targeted support and assistance in specific student work. At present, the state has introduced a series of student financial aid policies for poor students, and colleges and universities, as the executors of implementing government policies, should precisely carry out financial aid; when colleges and universities set up work-study positions, they should give priority to poor students and female college students, so that they can exercise their abilities while gaining economic income, and they can also set up job-seeking subsidies and buy professional clothes for poor students; on the other hand, colleges and universities should focus on ability financial aid. For poor students, colleges and universities can set up overseas exchange programs for excellent poor students, employment training camps, employment skills training, interpersonal communication courses and inter-school exchanges.

The limitations of this study are that, first, the data of the main variables are all from college students' self-reports, and future studies can be collected by various methods to avoid methodological bias caused by self-reports. Second, this paper uses social support as a mediating variable, but does not exclude other variables from mediating the relationship between family socioeconomic status and career maturity, and the mediating role of other variables will be further considered in future studies.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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Biography

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