

The Influence of Social Support on College Students' Work Volition: The Mediating Effect Based on Self-Efficacy

ZHANG Xinyong^{[a], *}; LI Haoran^[a]; OUYANG Jin^[a]

^[a]Department of Applied Psychology, Guangdong University of Foreign Studies, Guangzhou, China.

*Corresponding author.

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*Corresponding author.

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Abstract

Taking the General Self-efficacy Scale, Perceived Social Support Scale and Work Volition Scale for College Students as the measuring tools, 338 college students were enrolled in the current study to assess the predictors of Work Volition among this population. The results indicated that (a) self-efficacy had a significantly direct impact on work volition, and (b) self-efficacy served as a mediating role between social support and self-efficacy. To promote work volition among college students during their career-seeking activities, it was suggested that increasing their social support so as to develop students' self-efficacy was of utmost importance. Specific recommendations, limitations and future directions were also discussed in this research.

Key words: Work volition; Social support; Self-efficacy; College students

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INTRODUCTION

In the recent decades, with the graduated population of college increasing gradually as well as the general society

transforming dramatically, the paths of career choice has developed expansively. Employment of college students has been getting more and more critical, which has been attracted attention from all sectors of our society. Some authoritative career-choice theories implied that individuals have the right or ability to select their own career path. However, the samples of such research were consisted of population with upper social class and better economic condition, which account for the greater abilities of career seeking. (Blustein, Kenna, Gill, & DeVoy, 2008; Duffy & Dik, 2009). According to the latest relevant studies, it turned out that this hypothesis didn't apply to the general population. Most of us might experience all sides of barriers when they seek for jobs (Blustein, 2006; Blustein, McWhirter & Perry, 2005; Duffy et al., 2009; Blustein, 2006). Study proposed by Blustein (2016) suggested that, due to economic constraints and parents' intentions, some undergraduates would compromise during employment, which could be harmful to both students and enterprises.

Scholars tried to conduct some theories to explain this problem. Psychology of working framework (PWF; Blustein, 2006), for example, indicated that not all individuals would be able to get access to occupations matching their ideal career vision (Duffy et al., 2009). On the contrary, many people met difficulties during this process, which limited their willingness to achieve higher levels of demand. Therefore, Blustein (2006) came up with a concept, work volition, to better understand those who faced with a series of barriers during career paths. According to psychology of working theory (PWT), work volition is the central construct in this theory explaining whether people can get decent work (Duffy, Blustein, Diemer, & Autin, 2016), which represents the ability of individuals' perception to break through limitations for career choice (Duffy, Diemer, & Jadidian, 2012). Work volition serving as a new concept, its predictors have been sparsely investigated, especially under the Chinese cultural context. The current research provided a

broader perspective to improve the theoretical study. On the other hand, mastering the predictors of work volition could support scientific proposal of career counseling for undergraduates.

Fierce market competition and turbulent internal changes in the workplace might explain why career development of people in the modern society became more uncertain and unpredictable (Eby, Butts & Lockwood, 2003; Chudzikowski, 2012). Career Construction Theory (CCT) conducted by Savickas in 2005, believed that career development was a process of dynamic construction between individuals' internal subjective world and external objective environment. During this process, people would weigh their past experiences, present feelings and future expectations comprehensively to adjust the dynamic relation between internal pursuits and external context, and finally take career decision-making (Savickas, 1997, 2005; Savickas & Profeli, 2012). As a variable for individuals to judge whether they have the ability to complete a certain behavior, self-efficacy is often used to measure an individual's competence to accomplish a task, and it is an important indicator to measure an individual's internal subjective world. Betz & Hackett (1981) indicated that self-efficacy was more effective than ability in predicting career choice behavior. Besides, social support might be a good variable to estimate how external context influence our career activities. According to a previous study (Kim & Lee, 2016), the results showed that people who thought they received more social support would report higher level of work volition, which enhance their participation in the career activities.

To sum up, undergraduates would be selected and questionnaire method would be adopted in the current study to draw up (a) the relation among work volition, social support and self-efficacy and (b) the predictors of work volition among college students in China. Based on PWT and CCT, hypotheses were listed as follow:

H1: Self-efficacy could predict work volition significantly.

H2: Social support could predict work volition significantly.

H3: Self-efficacy served as a mediator between social support and work volition.

1. METHOD

1.1 Participants

349 questionnaires were collected via online Wechat application (a popular social media in China), 338 of which were valid, and the sampling efficiency is 96.8%. Among them, 120 were male (35.5%) and 218 were female (64.5%). The amount of urban students and rural students were 231 (68.34%) and 107 (31.66%) respectively. 49 freshmen (14.5%), 77 sophomores (22.78%), 71 juniors (21.01%) and 141 seniors (41.72%) took part in the research. Of

the participants, most of them majored in science and technology (161, 47.63%), the amount of students majored in liberal arts, economic and management and others were 54 (15.98%), 91 (26.92%) and 32 (9.47%) respectively.

1.2 Measures

1.2.1 General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSES)

In the current study, General Self-Efficacy Scale was adopted in Chinese Version (Wang, Hu & Liu, 2001). 10 items were included, and higher scores indicated higher level of self-efficacy. This scale had good reliability, whose α coefficient was 0.85 ($r=0.83$, $p<0.001$). The α coefficient of the scale on our study was 0.92.

1.2.2 Perceived Social Support Scale (PSSS)

Perceived Social Support Scale (Chinese Version) compiled by Jiang (2001) was used on our research. 12 items were separated into 3 parts: support from the family, support from friends and support from significant others. This scale had good reliability and validity, whose α coefficient was 0.78. The α coefficient of the scale on our study is 0.93.

1.2.3 Work Volition Scale for College Students

Work Volition Scale for College Students was developed by Chinese scholar Shi (2014). The scale was separated into 4 parts: ability volition, environment volition, self-develop volition and self-economy volition. This scale had good reliability and validity, whose α coefficient was 0.79. The α coefficient of the scale on our study is 0.88

1.3 Statistical Analysis

The SPSS18.0 were used to conduct the data analysis and process.

2. RESULTS

2.1 Correlation Analysis among Work Volition, Self-Efficacy and Social Support.

Correlation Analysis was first operated, the data resulted on Table 1 showed that work volition and there is significantly positive correlation between work volition and self-efficacy ($r=0.48$, $p<.01$), and between work volition and perceived social support ($r=0.28$, $p<.01$), which suggested college students who owned higher level of self-efficacy may felt higher social support, so as to promote work volition.

Table 1
Correlation analysis among work volition, self-efficacy and social support

	1	2	3
Work Volition	-		
Self-Efficacy	0.48**	-	
Perceived Social Support	0.28**	0.42**	-
M	53.01	25.31	62.64
SD	10.39	5.81	11.18

Note. ** $P<0.01$

2.2 Structural Model of Work Volition, Self-Efficacy and Social Support

In the recent research, sample size, dimension analysis and confirmatory factor analysis were confirmed and released before establishing our model. According to the result, the sample size was up to the standard of structural equation model, and the scales chosen in our study were qualified. To sum up, the AMOS of the structural equation model was accepted, the structural of the scales were rational, but our model should be modified later on.

Based on the previous studies and the result of correlation analysis listed above, assumption that self-efficacy served as the mediating role between social support and work volition was brought out. After using confirmatory factor analysis, the result indicated that some

projects were proposed, and the theoretical model was constructed to further explore the relationship between the three variables on our study.

Study hypotheses were tested in our research, the alternative model was the full mediation model that also fit the data well: $\chi^2/df=2.35$, $p<.05$; CFI=.96, TLI=.95; RMSEA=.06. The final mediation model with the standardized weights were shown on Figure 1. The significantly direct effect between social support and self-efficacy ($\beta=.41$, $p<.01$) was proved, and the direct effect of self-efficacy and work volition ($\beta=.59$, $p<.05$) was also significant. However, such significantly direct effect didn't appear on the relation between social support and work volition ($\beta=.19$, $p>.05$). Thus, it can be concluded that self-efficacy acted as the full mediator between social support and work volition in the current study.

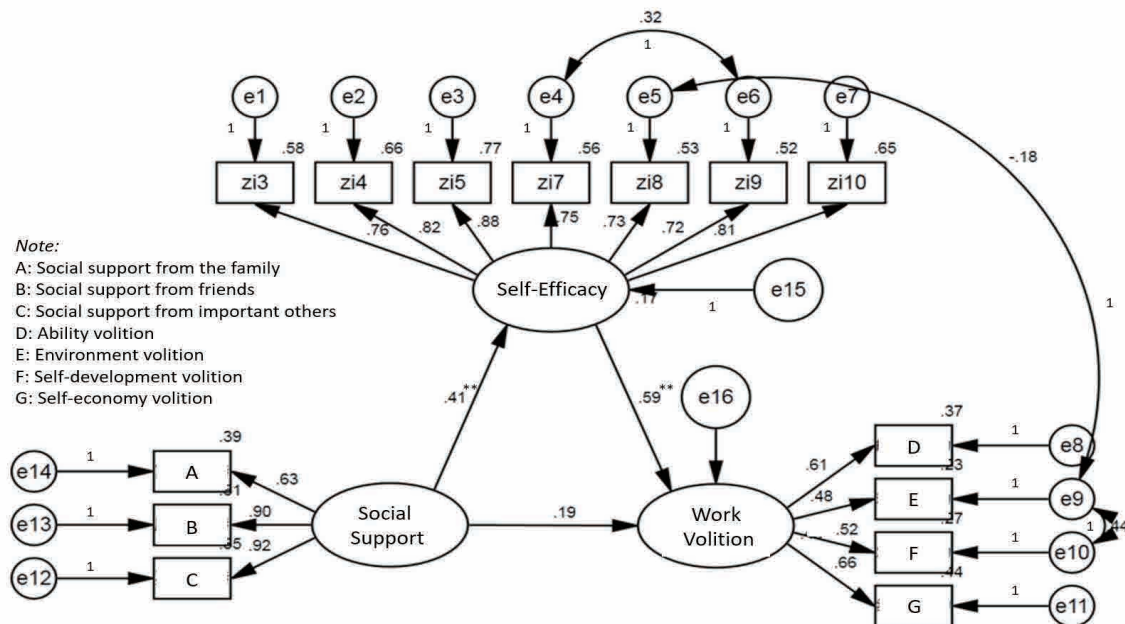


Figure 1
Final structural model with social support predicting work volition via self-efficacy

3. DISCUSSION

What could be found from the correlation analysis was that, significantly positive correlations existed among three variables in pairs. Based on the previous studies and the result of correlation analysis listed above, assumption that self-efficacy served as the mediating role between social support and work volition was brought out. It was suggested that self-efficacy in the mediation of social support and work volition, which proposed that social support might influence work volition via the impact of self-efficacy.

3.1 Correlation Analysis among Work Volition, Self-Efficacy and Social Support.

3.1.1 Correlation Between Work Volition and Social Support

Research result showed that work volition positively correlated with social support. Previous study has proved

that social support can negatively predict employment pressure. That is to say, individuals who received adequate social support may at low level of pressure when they sought for jobs (Qiu & Dai, 2014). If employment pressure decreased, people might improve confidence of overcoming difficulties during job-seeking activities. Scholar have announced that if enough social support was provided to undergraduate who was on the employment process, they might be confident to fight against barriers and reach to success (Duffy et al., 2016).

3.1.2 Correlation Between Work Volition and Self-Efficacy

According to CCT developed by Savickas, individuals can transfer internal resources to adjust balance of internal subjective world and external objective environment, and the effect of self-efficacy should be highlighted. Li

(2018) discovered that employment performance can be positively predicted by self-efficacy. Employment performance reflected whether undergraduates could get their jobs eventually and whether the whole job-seeking process was plain sailing (Zhang, Ni & Yan, 2013). And that people who had higher self-efficacy may perform better and rise courage to defeat obstacles during employment also reported in Li's research. Our study result revealed that there was positive correlation between work volition and self-efficacy, which was similar to these relevant studies.

3.1.3 Correlation between Social Support and Self-Efficacy

The positive correlation between social support and self-efficacy has been proved in the current research, and limited studies has validated the relation between these two variables (Liang, 2008; Che, et al, 2017). College students may increase self-efficacy during employment by means of accepting sufficient social support, which further improved confidence and achievements. What can be explained by CCT was that, undergraduates may be in a balanced condition during job-seeking process when they matched adequate social support to self-efficacy.

3.2 Self-Efficacy in the Mediation of Social Support and Work Volition.

It was proposed that self-efficacy was in the mediation of social support and work volition in our study. In other words, social support first influenced self-efficacy then changed work volition. Che et al. (2017) applied a research on undergraduates studying on Western Guangdong Province, and the results showed that self-efficacy served as a mediating role between social support and employment pressure. When social support was sufficient, undergraduates may developed higher self-efficacy and finally felt less pressure. Our research result was quite similar to that of this project. There is limited study examining this model, by launching the current study, more definite relation could be carried out.

CONCLUSION

The recent research has proved the correlation among work volition, self-efficacy and social support in pairs, self-efficacy was in the mediation of social support and work volition. Based on the results, specific suggestions of increasing college students' social support and self-efficacy were put forward to further promote work volition, which may guide undergraduates theoretically.

First, it is necessary to provide adequate social support. What can be inferred from CCT was that, individuals should balance the relation between intern and extern resources, and social support is one of the most important extern resources for us. Thus, social support should be offered via multiple paths and categories, such as domestic

support, peer support and school support with material and affective sources. In addition, sufficient preparations should be under consideration to increase students' self-efficacy. Such preparations includes complete employment policies adopted by government; fine employment environment provided by the general society; scientific career education and consulting established by academic institutes; domestic support offered by family members; and abundant career experiences accumulated by students themselves. All these instructions mentioned above should be applied throughout the whole process to guarantee the security of undergraduates' job-seeking activities.

There were some limitations on this study. Personalities, family impacts and other relevant factors were not included to assess the predictors of work volition. Cross-section data was used but it could not fully reflect the utility of all variables. In the further study, it is suggested that enlarging sample size and adopting longitudinal study can cover the shortages and explore what other variables influence work volition. Meanwhile, the localization of work volition in China and apply the research to career consulting practice seems very necessary and important. Future study should focus on minorities, like unemployed population, female, peasant-workers, ethnic minorities and students who facing with employment.

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