

Childhood Socioeconomic Status and College Students' Career Adaptability

—The Mediating Role of Generalized Self-Efficacy

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Abstract: This study aims to explore the relationship between childhood socioeconomic status and college students' career adaptability, with a particular focus on the mediating role of generalized self-efficacy. Drawing on a comprehensive survey of 4676 Chinese college students, this research examines the deep and complex impact of childhood socioeconomic background on the psychological growth and career development of college students. The findings provide valuable insights into how socioeconomic status influences career adaptability and offer practical guidance on nurturing resilience and adaptability during university life.

Keywords: Childhood Socioeconomic Status; College Students; Career Adaptability; Generalized Self-efficacy

In today's rapidly changing society, college students face numerous challenges in their career development. Career adaptability, which refers to an individual's ability to adjust and respond to the changing demands of the job market, is crucial for their success. Meanwhile, childhood socioeconomic status has been recognized as an important factor that can shape an individual's development. However, the relationship between childhood socioeconomic status and college students' career adaptability remains underexplored. This study aims to fill this gap by investigating the mediating role of generalized self-efficacy in this relationship.

I. Literature Review

Childhood Socioeconomic Status and Individual Development

Childhood socioeconomic status is a complex construct that encompasses various aspects such as family income, parental education level, and

social class. Previous studies have shown that childhood socioeconomic status has a significant impact on an individual's cognitive, emotional, and social development. For example, children from lower socioeconomic backgrounds are more likely to experience poverty, stress, and limited access to educational resources, which can affect their academic achievement and psychological well-being.

Career Adaptability. Career adaptability is defined as the ability to cope with career-related changes and transitions. It includes four dimensions: concern, control, curiosity, and confidence. Previous research has found that career adaptability is positively related to career success and well-being. College students with high career adaptability are more likely to make informed career decisions, adapt to the job market, and achieve career satisfaction.

Generalized Self-Efficacy. Generalized self-

efficacy refers to an individual's belief in their ability to successfully perform a variety of tasks. It has been shown to be an important predictor of various outcomes, including academic achievement, job performance, and mental health. Previous studies have also suggested that generalized self-efficacy may play a mediating role in the relationship between childhood socioeconomic status and individual development.

II. Methodology

Participants: The study recruited 4676 Chinese college students from different universities and majors. The participants were aged between 18 and 25 years old.

Measures: Childhood socioeconomic status was measured using a composite index that included family income, parental education level, and social class. Career adaptability was measured using the Career Adapt-Abilities Scale. Generalized self-efficacy was measured using the Generalized Self-Efficacy Scale.

Procedure: The survey was conducted online. Participants were asked to complete a series of questionnaires that measured their childhood socioeconomic status, career adaptability, and generalized self-efficacy. The data were analyzed using structural equation modeling.

III. Results

Descriptive Statistics. The descriptive statistics showed that the participants had a wide range of childhood socioeconomic backgrounds. The mean score of career adaptability was moderate, and the mean score of generalized self-efficacy was relatively high.

Correlation Analysis. The correlation analysis revealed that childhood socioeconomic status was

positively correlated with career adaptability and generalized self-efficacy. Career adaptability was also positively correlated with generalized self-efficacy.

Structural Equation Modeling. The structural equation modeling results showed that childhood socioeconomic status had a significant positive effect on career adaptability. Generalized self-efficacy partially mediated the relationship between childhood socioeconomic status and career adaptability.

IV. Discussion

The Impact of Childhood Socioeconomic Status on Career Adaptability. The results of this study suggest that childhood socioeconomic status has a significant impact on college students' career adaptability. Students from higher socioeconomic backgrounds are more likely to have access to better educational resources, social networks, and career opportunities, which can enhance their career adaptability. On the other hand, students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds may face more challenges and obstacles in their career development, which can reduce their career adaptability.

The Mediating Role of Generalized Self-Efficacy. The mediating role of generalized self-efficacy in the relationship between childhood socioeconomic status and career adaptability suggests that self-efficacy beliefs play an important role in shaping an individual's career development. Students with higher self-efficacy beliefs are more likely to believe in their ability to overcome challenges and achieve their career goals, which can enhance their career adaptability. On the other hand, students with lower self-efficacy beliefs may be more likely to give up in the face of difficulties, which can reduce their career adaptability.

Implications for Practice. The findings of this study have important implications for practice.

First, educators and policymakers should pay more attention to the impact of childhood socioeconomic status on college students' career development. They can provide targeted support and resources to students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds to help them improve their career adaptability. Second, interventions that aim to enhance generalized self-efficacy can be developed and implemented to help college students improve their career adaptability. For example, career counseling programs can be designed to help students develop positive self-efficacy beliefs and coping strategies.

V. Conclusion

This study has investigated the relationship between childhood socioeconomic status and college students' career adaptability, with a particular focus on the mediating role of generalized self-efficacy. The results show that childhood socioeconomic status has a significant impact on career adaptability, and generalized self-efficacy partially mediates this relationship. These findings provide valuable insights into how socioeconomic status influences career adaptability and offer practical guidance on nurturing resilience and adaptability during university life. Future research can further explore the mechanisms underlying this relationship and develop more effective interventions to help college students from different socioeconomic backgrounds achieve career success.

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