

The influence of authoritarian parenting style on children's career choice strategies

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Abstract: Choosing a career is a necessary step that every young person about to enter society and the workplace must go through. It is also a crucial stage for college students during their transition from student to social person, thus attracting more attention and emphasis from society and the research community. The formation of college students' career values does not occur in a very short period of time. Stable values are bound to be influenced stably for a certain period of time. Since most college students live with their parents before entering the workforce, parents have a profound and continuous influence on their career cognition and initial career choice. This influence is often manifested in subtle ways, such as family expectations, career role models, and evaluations of career social status, and thus becomes an important source for college students' career-type cognition. From the perspective of family education, family upbringing methods are very important, as they shape the values, worldviews, and outlooks on the lives of children. Therefore, studying how parents' upbringing methods affect college students' career values and career orientations is of great significance.

1. Introduction

Previous studies on the career choice tendencies of college students have been inseparable from the research on the parenting styles of their parents. Parenting styles have been pointed out as the bond between parents and their children as well as the medium for intergenerational communication, and they are the ways for children to perceive their family's economic status educational expectations and cultural level. Previous studies mostly focused on high school students and teenagers as the main research subjects, lacking studies on the college student group who are about to enter society and make autonomous career choices. Therefore, this study sets the research group as the college student group who are about to enter society and make autonomous career choices to supplement the diversity of samples. Although previous studies have explored the influence of parenting styles on students' academic performance, self-efficacy, and happiness [1], etc., there is a significant deficiency in the research on how parenting styles affect college students' career choices, and there are few studies that directly investigate the relationship between parenting styles and career-related beliefs and behaviors [2]. Moreover, previous studies have some limitations. Firstly, most studies on parenting styles and the confidence of teenagers in career decisions focus on general parenting styles

(such as parental support), and few studies examine the specific parenting styles of parents and the confidence of teenagers in career decisions [3]. There are few studies on how specific parenting styles affect college students' career choices. As the research states, previous studies have focused more on the research on the relationship between perception of parenting styles, motivation orientation, academic performance, and happiness of college students [4], and so far, they mainly focus on the direct connections among various concepts [5]. This study will focus on one parenting style and investigate the specific beliefs and behaviors of college students under this parenting style. Previous studies have confirmed that although parents have accepted more advanced parenting ideas with the development of society, due to the influence of Chinese traditional culture, the majority of family parenting styles are still dominated by authoritarianism [5]. Considering that the parents of the research subjects in this study are mostly from the "70s", they still encounter more traditional parenting ideas from childhood, even if they are impacted by new ideas, their ideological transformation may not be so thorough [6]. The majority of parents still have an "authoritarian" ideological foundation. Therefore, this study focuses on the influence of authoritarian parenting styles, and mainly analyzes the value orientation and decision-making behavior characteristics of college students in the career choice process under this parenting style.

2. Method

This study conducted semi-structured interviews with senior students from a provincial key undergraduate school and students preparing for career choices in institutions related to postgraduate entrance examinations and civil service recruitment. The aim of the study was to explore the career values formed by students under the intervention of authoritarian parents and their autonomy in career choices. Eight students who were preparing to graduate and make career choices were interviewed in depth. A total of eight students who were about to graduate or were in the career selection stage were interviewed. Among them, three students indicated that their parents adopted supportive intervention and belonged to authoritative parenting styles; one student indicated that their parents did not participate in their career choices; the remaining four students were subject to obvious authoritarian intervention from their parents. This study attempted to supplement the behaviors and value orientations of students under authoritarian parenting styles when making specific career choices. Therefore, it was more valuable to focus on the four students among the eight interviewees who were strongly intervened by their parents. Among the four interviewees, the first two were senior students in their final year of undergraduate studies who were about to graduate, one was a student preparing for civil service recruitment in an institution, and one was an alumnus who graduated in the senior year and was currently engaged in business. The interviews mainly focused on two topics: how authoritarian parents intervened in career choices and how these students made autonomous career choices under parental intervention. The interview results demonstrated the ways and degrees of intervention by authoritarian parents and their impact on students' autonomy in career choices, as well as the role of authoritarian parenting styles in the transmission of intergenerational values.

3. Result

The research findings reveal that the parents of these four interviewees all imparted their professional values to them. When making career choices, they all prioritized "stability" as the primary consideration factor, without following the students' own wishes. This also affected the students' autonomy in making career choices and brought certain resistance during the process of them making career choices independently.

3.1. Dependent on Parents' Career Decision-making

During college years, students are in an important transitional stage from family to society. During this period, they gradually face the challenge of making independent life decisions and developing an autonomous consciousness. During this time, students may feel dependent on their parents' strong intervention and lack a clear judgment of whether the intervention is right or wrong, thereby reducing their own subjectivity. As Interviewer A said:

“Since the end of the college entrance examination and the filling of college applications, I have been intervened by my parents. I had no opportunity to choose my major independently. Their criteria for choosing a major were oriented towards employment, and they favored certain majors for me based on the requirements of civil service recruitment and government positions. At first, I tried to express my preferences to them, but it seemed that my preferences did not match their understanding of career choices. Under the daily quarrels like this, I gradually internalized the value judgments of my parents. During each discussion about my future employment situation after graduation, they would plan for me based on civil service recruitment and government positions. This seemed to be a clear and correct path. Under the clear planning and strict intervention of my parents, I believed that civil service recruitment and government positions were the correct path, and I also thought that my parents' decisions and experience were more mature and correct than mine, so whenever I wanted to learn new skills or had entrepreneurial ideas, I would ask them. I think that my parents' judgment in career choices is higher than mine. Although I have my own ideas, most of the time I adopt my parents' decisions as the final decision-making power. After reaching adulthood, I realized that independence requires facing many challenges. Sometimes I become more dependent on my parents' decisions...”

Interviewer A internalized the career values of his parents under their strong intervention and had multiple conflicts with his parents regarding career choices, which led to his doubts and lack of confidence in his own decision-making ability, so that when faced with choices, he would more often take his parents' suggestions, reducing his own subjectivity. As previous experiments have confirmed, authoritarian parents often impose strict rules and expectations on their children, limiting their opportunities for independence. This kind of upbringing method may lead young people to have a sense of dependence, uncertainty, and inadequacy. They may think that they lack the ability to make independent career decisions [2].

3.2. Complete Rebellion against Parental Career Intervention

During the university years, students' autonomy is significantly stimulated. The authoritarian parenting style responds less to the parents' increasing demands and more to the rules and compliance. The communication between parents and children often shows a one-sided characteristic [2], which not only leads to students' dependence but also easily causes rebellion against the family and tension in intergenerational relationships. As Interviewer B said during the interview:

“My major in college was chosen by my parents, but during my college years, I didn't like my major. I blamed my parents for this anxiety and it was also the beginning when I stopped following their decisions. After graduation, during the job search season, I chose a private enterprise instead of a career like teaching or civil service. I worked very diligently in the enterprise and had good earnings. Every time I returned home for the holidays, I would show my achievements to my parents, but every time it ended in discord due to the mismatch of career values. I couldn't receive their recognition easily. At first, I was still striving for their recognition. Later, I began to dislike their so-called stability work ideology, and as a result, our relationship became increasingly tense, leading to almost no contact with my family after work...”

Interviewer B began to enhance his autonomy when he first realized that his parents' decisions didn't suit him. This was manifested as strong opposition to parental intervention. Interviewer B also said during the interview that when he had conflicts of values with his parents, he felt very pain. This shows that the parental authoritarian parenting style in career choice has significantly hindered students' independence. As pointed out in existing studies, when parents adopt controlling behaviours (i.e., parental career intervention) or fail to provide sufficient support for their children, teenagers may suffer from damaged autonomy and thus experience weakened intrinsic motivation, leading to difficulties in coping with and overcoming challenges in career development [7]

3.3. Negative and Avoidant Type of Parents' Occupational Intervention

Autocratic parents' hindrance to students' career choices is not only reflected in students' complete rebellion against their parents' intervention but also in their negative and evasive attitudes when facing the choice to embark on the next stage of life. As Interviewer C said:

“Since I entered university, my parents have always compared and judged the employment situations of relatives' children around them. When hearing about someone engaging in individual business, their words often contain disapproval, but they often praise my elder sister who is a primary school teacher. Every time they learn about the career choices of relatives' children around them, they always instil the concept of "respectable" in me. But to be honest, "respectable" is not the primary factor for my career choice. I prefer to engage in the field I love, but I lack the courage to go against my parents. Therefore, I hope that the day when I make the decision will be as slow as possible. Maybe by that time, they won't have such strong persistence on my job as much as they do now. To delay this choice, I even want to delay graduation by failing the exams or fail the postgraduate entrance examination to delay the decision...”

Interviewer C demonstrated her wavering and fearful mentality towards career choices during the interview. Clearly, when Interviewer C's parents made occupational intervention towards her, due to their overly strong attitude, she developed negative emotions towards her own choice. Children's cognitive development and enthusiasm for exploration in the face of realistic choices will be limited by the strict intervention of parents and even avoidance.

3.4. Compromising Type of Parental Career Intervention Strategies

When studying the career choice values of college students, it is necessary to take into account their social attributes and the cultural background they are in. In a more collectivist cultural environment (such as China), teenagers should consider the opinions of important others and family responsibilities when making career decisions [8][9]. Furthermore, in line with the traditional cultural concept of filial piety, teenagers are taught to recognize and respect their parents' authority and control rather than being autonomous [10]. As Interviewer D said:

“I cannot betray my parents' interference in my career. Before I got employed, all my financial resources came from my parents. I cannot completely betray their ideas. I also realize that completely betraying my parents' interference will lead to tension in my relationship with them, which will make me feel anxious and uneasy. But at the same time, I do not reject their interference. I don't mind following my parents' arrangements in the early stage of my career. I will carry out my own desired career after achieving complete independence.... ”

In the deep and traditional Confucian social and cultural soil of China, college students are deeply influenced by the concept of filial piety. This concept takes root in their hearts and makes it difficult for them to completely disobey their parents' wishes. However, some college students do not blindly follow blindly. They have the ability to think independently and pursue their own self-worth. Therefore, many college students will seek a subtle balance between their parents' expectations and

their own wishes. Some college students will adopt strategic compromises under the intervention of authoritarian parents. This ensures their own subjectivity, alleviates the tension with their parents and also achieves psychological harmony for themselves.

4. Discussion

Although this study reveals the significant influence of authoritarian parenting style on children's career choice tendencies, it does not mean that we should completely deny the rationality of this parenting style. The influence needs to be understood in combination with specific family backgrounds and the context of the times. This study acknowledges that the authoritarian parenting style is in line with some families and specific historical backgrounds. University is a crucial period for students to transition from adolescence to adulthood, from campus to society, and from family to individual independence. The career choice of college students also affects the overall social landscape. During the career choice period, college students are influenced by various factors, among which the influence of parents' family background is the most significant. The parenting style of parents not only conveys the career values and concepts of the previous generation but also interferes with the career value choices of their children. Therefore, parents with an authoritarian parenting style should increase their participation and support in their children's employment choices and reduce the negative impact of high demands and low responses in authoritarian parenting style on their children. At the same time, parents with an authoritarian parenting style should increase their listening to their children's own will, ease the tension of intergenerational relations, reduce obstacles to their children's career choices, and enhance their children's self-efficacy in career decision-making.

On the other hand, measures to ease intergenerational relations and provide employment guidance and support for college students are crucial for alleviating social-employment anxiety. Research shows that parents with an authoritative parenting style can increase their children's self-efficacy and personal decision-making ability in career choices. Therefore, educators should strengthen universal education, encourage authoritative parenting styles, and provide corresponding dissemination of parenting styles and career values for children. Social education institutions can set up corresponding career advisors to ease the shock of students moving from school to society and formulate different family healing plans and psychological counseling to meet the needs of families with different backgrounds. At the same time, society should give college students more tolerance and humanistic care in career choices.

5. Conclusion

This study investigated the influence of authoritarian parenting style on the career choice tendencies of college students and derived more strategies that are more conducive to the autonomy of college students. By confining the interviewees to a group of college students who have graduated from undergraduate programs, this study provided a perspective supplement to the previous research group that was roughly divided into high school students and teenagers, thereby increasing the diversity of the research. By elaborating on the different coping strategies adopted by students to deal with different parenting styles under the intervention of authoritarian career guidance, this study demonstrated the internal differences and autonomy of Chinese students, as well as the different coping measures and adaptability of students in the same cultural backgrounds. This study also supplemented a more detailed perspective for previous research that limited the influence of authoritarian parenting style on college student's career choices. The limitation of this study lies in the small sample size. Therefore, this study hopes that future research will pay more attention to the selection of samples based on region, parents' age, parents' employment values and concepts of intergenerational transmission, as well as differences in cultural backgrounds in

different regions, to expand the sample capacity and increase diversity in this field of research. At the same time, it also calls on the academic community to pay more attention to the subjectivity of college students in career decision-making and to optimize and supplement the existing employment policies. It also calls on authoritarian parenting style parents to reduce their authoritarian degree and transform into an authoritative parenting style.

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