

# Precise Guidance: An Empirical Study on the Influencing Factors of College Students' Employment Values—Taking University B as an Example

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Employment is the cornerstone of people's livelihood, and the employment values of college students directly influence their career choices and development. Taking University B as a case study, this research explores students' employment values and their influencing factors through an empirical survey. The results show that students generally maintain positive values and highly identify with collectivism, though a contradiction between ideals and reality exists in their career planning. Employment choices exhibit a rational characteristic of being "driven by intrinsic value", prioritizing career development, personal interests, and skill growth, while the focus on traditional indicators such as professional alignment and institutional reputation has decreased. Personal experience is the core factor in shaping these values, followed by the influence of peers and the social environment. Significant group differences necessitate the construction of a precision guidance system to help students establish scientific employment values.

*Keywords:* college students, outlook on life, employment values, influencing factors

Currently, college graduate employment faces numerous challenges. "Seeking stability" and "pursuing positions in the civil service or public institutions" have become the primary, or even the sole, choice for many graduates, leading to a trend of homogenization in employment expectations and career paths. Meanwhile, as a generation that grew up in the digital age, "Gen Z" college students exhibit distinct and diverse characteristics, primarily reflected in their strong self-awareness, pragmatic attitudes toward life, high reliance on information technology, and complex psychological states. These factors place new requirements on our employment-related work. At present, there is still a lack of in-depth and systematic research regarding the overall landscape of college students' employment values and their influencing mechanisms. Therefore, this study conducts an in-depth investigation at University B in the capital, aiming to comprehensively grasp employment value orientations and their influencing factors. By accurately identifying realistic needs, this research seeks to provide an empirical basis and strategic references for addressing employment challenges under the new situation.

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## Sample Description, Reliability, and Validity

### Sample Description

In this study, 813 students from University B were selected as samples through the online platform Wenjuanxing. A total of 813 questionnaires were distributed and 813 were recovered, all of which were valid, resulting in an effective rate of 100%. The questionnaire used in this survey was adopted from the doctoral dissertation “Research on College Students’ Employment Values and Their Guidance From the Perspective of ‘Three Outlooks’ Education” by Dr. Yu Hui, a 2022 graduate of Southwest Jiaotong University. The questionnaire is divided into four sub-scales: basic information, outlook on life, employment values, and influencing factors, aimed at exploring the current status and influencing factors of college students’ outlook on life and employment values.

### Reliability Analysis

The reliability analysis of the pilot scale showed that the Cronbach’s  $\alpha$  coefficient for the Outlook on Life sub-scale was  $>0.8$  (0.826). The  $\alpha$  coefficients for both the Employment Values sub-scale and the Influencing Factors sub-scale were  $>0.9$  (0.938), indicating high internal consistency and excellent reliability across the sub-scales (see Table 1).

Table 1

#### *Reliability Statistics Analysis*

Dimension	Cronbach’s $\alpha$	Number of items
Overall reliability	0.940	50
Outlook on life sub-scale	0.826	24
Employment values sub-scale	0.938	13
Influencing factors sub-scale	0.938	13

### Validity Analysis

Factor analysis was conducted on the Outlook on Life scale, the Employment Values scale, and the Influencing Factors scale. The KMO (Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin) values for the overall scale and each sub-section were all greater than 0.8, as detailed in the table below (see Table 2).

Table 2

#### *Questionnaire Validity Analysis*

Sub-scale	KMO measure of sampling adequacy	Bartlett’s test of sphericity (Approx. Chi-Square)	df	Sig.
Outlook on life sub-scale	0.925	10,493.889	276	0.000
Employment values sub-scale	0.937	7,583.025	78	0.000
Influencing factors sub-scale	0.940	7,006.682	78	0.000

## Results of Descriptive Statistical Tests

### General Status of Outlook on Life

Overall, the mean value of the positive outlook on life (2.1375) is lower than that of the negative outlook (3.0806), indicating that students’ performance in the positive life outlook category is more prominent. (Note: In this study’s scoring system, lower scores represent higher agreement.) The overall performance of college students’ positive life outlook is more significant and their views are relatively concentrated, whereas individual

differences in the negative life outlook are greater. The data distribution characteristics clearly reflect a mainstream positive trend in the students' outlook on life.

### General Status of Employment Values

Based on the mean values, the dimension of "Employment Salary and Atmosphere" (2.0716) is the lowest, "Growth and Sense of Meaning" (2.1433) is in the middle, and "Company Reputation, Professional Alignment, and Interpersonal Relations" (2.4334) is the highest. This indicates that among these three dimensions of employment values, college students' focus on salary and atmosphere is relatively more prominent, while their emphasis on company reputation, professional alignment, and interpersonal relations is relatively weaker.

### General Status of Influencing Factors

From the perspective of mean values, the factor of "Personal Environment and Objective Experience" (2.2708) is the lowest. The means for "Parents, Relatives, Friends, and Classmates" (2.4473), "Teachers and Distinguished Figures" (2.5037), and "Media" (2.6574) increase in sequence. This suggests that among these influencing factors, college students consider their personal environment and objective experiences to have the most significant impact on employment, while media is regarded as the least influential. Additionally, individual differences in the perceived influence of parents, friends, teachers, and distinguished figures are more significant (see Table 3 for details).

Table 3

#### *Influencing Factors of College Students' Employment Values*

Statistics	Media influence	Influence of parents, relatives, friends, and classmates	Influence of teachers and distinguished figures	Influence of personal environment and objective experience
N (Valid)	813	813	813	813
N (Missing)	0	0	0	0
Mean	2.6574	2.4473	2.5037	2.2708
Std. Error of Mean	0.02685	0.02789	0.02800	0.02457
Median	3.0000	2.3333	2.5000	2.1667
Mode	3.00	3.00	3.00	2.00
Std. Deviation	0.76552	0.79518	0.79831	0.70046
Variance	0.586	0.632	0.637	0.491

### Correlation Analysis of College Students' Three Outlooks, Employment Values, and Influencing Factors

The correlation analysis in this study reveals that close and complex links exist among college students' worldview, life outlook (hereinafter referred to as the "Three Outlooks"), employment values, and their primary influencing factors. The survey results show:

First, external influencing factors are significantly and positively correlated with employment values. All external influencing factors demonstrate a highly consistent positive correlation with employment values. Among them, "personal environment and objective experience" (such as family background, economic status, and internship experience) has the strongest impact and is the core driving force in shaping career expectations. The influence of "teachers and distinguished figures" follows, and its impact exceeds that of "parents, relatives, friends, and classmates", highlighting the critical value of university education and professional role models.

Although the influence of “media” as an information channel is relatively weak, its role remains significant. This indicates that the formation of employment values is the result of integrating diverse information and is profoundly shaped by individual real-life experiences.

Second, different life outlook orientations have vastly different correlation patterns with employment values. A positive life outlook shows an extremely strong positive correlation with all three categories of employment values, particularly the tightest link with “growth and sense of meaning” (with a coefficient of 0.781). This suggests that students with a positive attitude toward life view career development as an important way to realize personal value and hold comprehensive and high expectations for their work. Conversely, the correlation between a negative life outlook and employment values is weak and complex: There is no significant correlation with “growth and sense of meaning”, but a weak positive correlation exists with “employment salary and atmosphere” and “company reputation”. This may reflect a psychological compensation mechanism, students with a negative mindset might be more inclined to pursue salary stability and company reputation to obtain security and external recognition.

In summary, college students’ employment values are the result of the interaction between their “Three Outlooks” (especially their life outlook) and the external environment. A positive life outlook will promote students’ active integration of external information and personal experiences, forming clear and high-standard employment values (see Table 4).

Table 4

*Correlation Analysis of Key Variables*

Variable	Employment value: Growth and sense of meaning	Employment value: Salary and atmosphere	Employment value: Company reputation, professional alignment, and interpersonal relations
Influencing factor: Media	0.323**	0.382**	0.381**
Influencing factor: Parents, relatives, friends, and classmates	0.387**	0.469**	0.430**
Influencing factor: Teachers and distinguished figures	0.462**	0.433**	0.468**
Influencing factor: Personal environment and objective experience	0.511**	0.573**	0.486**
Life outlook: Negative type	-0.045	0.182**	0.074*
Life outlook: Positive type	0.781**	0.571**	0.581**

Notes. \*\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed); \*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

## Results of Differential Statistical Tests

### Results of *T*-Test Analysis of College Students’ Employment Values

To further understand the relationship between demographic statistical items and other sections, an independent samples *t*-test was utilized for analysis. The results of the difference tests on employment value dimensions indicate that parents’ education level, only-child status, region, grade, college, and gender are unrelated to the selection of values. However, the degree of influence from media varies across genders, and differences exist among different ethnic groups regarding employment influencing factors. The details are as follows:

**The influence of gender on various factors.** According to the results of the independent samples *t*-test, among all tested variables, only “Influencing Factor: Media” showed a statistically significant difference between males and females ( $p = 0.012 < 0.05$ ) (see Table 5). Among employment-related influencing factors,

only “Influencing Factor: Media” exhibits gender differences, with females being more susceptible to media influence.

**The influence of ethnicity on multiple factors.** According to the results of the independent samples *t*-test, only two of the tested variables exhibited statistically significant differences across ethnic groups. Regarding the influence of teachers and distinguished figures ( $p = 0.028 < 0.05$ ), students from ethnic minority backgrounds ( $M = 2.66, SD = 0.80$ ) placed significantly more emphasis on these individuals than Han students did ( $M = 2.48, SD = 0.80$ ). Furthermore, in the dimension of employment salary and atmosphere ( $p = 0.039 < 0.05$ ), minority students ( $M = 2.20, SD = 0.71$ ) showed a higher level of concern compared to Han students ( $M = 2.05, SD = 0.72$ ), which is further detailed in Table 6. All other variables showed no significant differences between the ethnic groups.

### **Results of One-Way ANOVA for College Students’ Employment Values**

**The influence of regional background on multiple factors.** Regional background exerts a significant influence on three specific variables, which include the “influence of parents, relatives, friends, and classmates”, the “employment value of growth and sense of meaning”, and the “negative life outlook” ( $p < 0.05$ ). This indicates that students from different places of origin exhibit systematic differences across these three dimensions.

Regarding the influence of parents, relatives, and classmates, students from Beijing ( $N = 457, M = 2.40 \pm 0.81$ ) showed a significantly higher degree of influence compared to students from medium-sized cities outside Beijing ( $N = 114, M = 2.58 \pm 0.61$ ), with a significance level of  $p = 0.036$ . Given that lower scores in the scoring rules represent a higher degree of agreement (or being “more consistent” with the factor), it is evident that students originally from Beijing identify more strongly with the influence of their family and social circles on their career choices. This phenomenon may be attributed to the richer social capital and more intimate family social networks generally available to Beijing-based students.

In the dimension of growth and sense of meaning within employment values, students from small cities outside Beijing recorded lower scores, suggesting that they place a higher value on the growth opportunities and the sense of meaning that a career provides. Conversely, students from townships showed a relatively lower level of emphasis in this area, which may be related to differences in resource accessibility and professional perspectives.

The most significant differences were observed in the category of a negative life outlook. Students from Beijing had slightly higher scores, indicating that their tendency toward a negative life outlook is slightly higher than that of students from rural areas. While the differences between students from small cities outside Beijing and those from rural areas were statistically significant, their actual mean values remained close. This suggests that these two groups do not differ substantially in their negative attitudes, which might be a result of psychological adaptation mechanisms within their respective urban and rural backgrounds.

Overall, the data demonstrate that regional factors provide a vital perspective for understanding the values and influencing mechanisms of students. The place of origin not only correlates with disparities in social resources but also potentially shapes the psychological tendencies and professional perceptions of students, thereby providing an empirical basis for implementing regionally categorized employment guidance (see Table 5).

Table 5  
ANOVA Results of the Influence of Region on Different Factors

Variable	Levels of variable (sample size)	Mean $\pm$ Standard Deviation	F-value	p-value
Influence of parents, relatives, friends, and classmates	Beijing (N = 457)	2.40 $\pm$ 0.81	1.674	0.036
	Medium-sized cities outside Beijing (N = 114)	2.58 $\pm$ 0.61		
Employment value: Growth and sense of meaning	Small cities outside Beijing (N = 95)	1.98 $\pm$ 0.62	1.122	0.024
	Townships outside Beijing (N = 21)	2.30 $\pm$ 0.62		
Life outlook: Negative type	Beijing (N = 457)	2.14 $\pm$ 0.64	1.718	0.007
	Rural areas outside Beijing (N = 114)	2.08 $\pm$ 0.74		
Life outlook: Negative type	Small cities outside Beijing (N = 95)	2.07 $\pm$ 0.69	1.718	0.044
	Rural areas outside Beijing (N = 114)	2.08 $\pm$ 0.74		

Notes. The “Levels of Variable” column displays the regional groupings and their sample sizes (N). Mean and standard deviation are presented in the format of Mean  $\pm$  Standard Deviation. F-values and p-values are derived from the results of the One-Way ANOVA.

**The influence of family economic status on multiple factors.** This research demonstrates that the family economic status of college students exerts a significant influence on several dimensions, including career choices, information acquisition channels, and life outlook. Through analysis of variance (ANOVA) across groups with different economic levels, the following statistically significant differences were identified ( $p < 0.05$  for all).

Regarding the importance attached to information sources, students with a “good” economic status tended to view the “media” as a more important influencing factor than those in the “moderately difficult” category, with mean values of 2.56 and 2.81 respectively. Furthermore, in relation to the influence of “parents, relatives, friends, and classmates”, the data indicate that better economic conditions correlate with a higher degree of influence. Specifically, the “very good” economic group recorded the lowest mean score (1.89), suggesting that their decision-making is more susceptible to the influence of their core social circles.

In terms of employment values, groups with family economic advantages placed greater emphasis on the intrinsic value and development prospects of their work. Students in the “good” economic category valued “growth and sense of meaning” ( $M = 1.99$ ) significantly more than those in the “moderately difficult” ( $M = 2.26$ ) and “difficult” ( $M = 2.31$ ) groups. They also showed a higher preference for “employment salary and atmosphere”. The most prominent difference appeared in the dimension of “company reputation, professional alignment, and interpersonal relations”, where students in the “difficult” economic category placed the least importance on these factors ( $M = 2.79$ ), while those in the “good” category valued them most ( $M = 2.21$ ). These findings suggest that students facing less economic pressure have more freedom to pursue “idealized” conditions such as professional matching and high-quality environments, whereas those under greater economic pressure are more likely to prioritize securing employment itself.

At the level of life outlook, students with “relatively good” economic status achieved the highest scores for “negative life outlook” ( $M = 3.14$ ), where higher scores represent a lower level of agreement with a negative outlook. This was significantly higher than the scores of students in the “not difficult” category ( $M = 3.02$ ), reflecting a relatively more positive and optimistic mindset among the former.

In summary, the influence of family economic status is multi-dimensional. Generally, students with better economic conditions exhibit several distinct characteristics, including being more easily influenced by their surrounding environment and information sources, placing more emphasis on personal development, sense of meaning, and soft conditions in their career choices, and maintaining a more positive outlook on life.

### Strategies for the Precise Guidance of College Students' Employment Values

According to individual socialization theory, employment is guided by the ultimate goal of promoting and realizing the socialization of college students, as the quality of their employment directly impacts their future life development and career success. Given that values fundamentally determine an individual's thoughts and behaviors, universities must prioritize the cultivation of a scientific and rational employment outlook during the critical transition from campus to society (Li, 2021).

The first strategy for precise guidance involves deepening experiential career education to promote the internal value of personal experiences. This requires the systematic construction of a "practice-reflection-integration" guidance loop where students accumulate direct experience through intensive internships, volunteer services, and project-based learning to enhance their observation of social reality and grassroots conditions (He & Jia, 2024). By participating in social practices that improve socialization capabilities and attending structured reflection workshops, students can extract core value preferences from their experiences and transform fragmented observations into clear career anchors.

Building on this experiential foundation, the second strategy focuses on growth and meaning narratives to bridge the gap between individual development and social needs. Career courses and counseling should emphasize "meaning construction" and utilize diverse methods to illustrate how various career paths unify self-actualization with social value. This approach directly addresses students' pursuit of growth and meaning, guiding them to translate a positive life outlook into pragmatic and mission-driven long-term career plans.

Furthermore, the third strategy necessitates the implementation of targeted, layered support to respond to the rational choices of diverse student groups. For students with economic advantages, the focus should be on stimulating intrinsic motivation and transforming resource advantages into cross-disciplinary exploration and professional resilience. Conversely, for economically disadvantaged students, universities must provide practical support, including skill training, job search subsidies, and psychological counseling, to affirm their realistic considerations while broadening their professional horizons and preventing economic constraints from prematurely limiting their potential.

Finally, the fourth strategy requires integrating a multi-dimensional influence network to construct a collaborative educational ecosystem. The cultivation of employment values must be a shared responsibility among the government, society, universities, families, and the students themselves (Dong, Hu, & Li, 2022), forming an organic whole where each stakeholder fulfills its unique educational function. Internally, this involves enhancing the career guidance capabilities of teachers so they may serve as "significant others" for students; externally, it involves engaging with parents, high-quality media, and alumni to transmit a consistent, positive professional value system that reduces the impact of conflicting information and forms a powerful synergy for value guidance.

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