

A Study on Social Support for Career Adaptation of Local College Students in Southwest China

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Abstract

As the deteriorating socio-economic environment exacerbates the lack of educational resources for general universities in southwest China, the problem of the competition for employment of their graduates becomes particularly acute. To solve the above problems, based on the theoretical framework of social support, this study selected social support, social adaptation, psychological capital, self-care management ability and other scales to survey students in six universities in Southwest China. The survey results show that: (1) Social support has a significant positive impact on social adjustment. (2) Psychological capital and self-care management ability play a significant chain mediating role in the impact of social support on social adaptation. (3) Due to the lack of objective educational resources, universities should actively establish links with social enterprises so that students can continuously build professional confidence through practice. This will fill the resource gap and enable students to better adapt to society.

Keywords: social support, social adaptation, psychological capital, self-career management, southwest China, Chinese universities

1. Introduction

The socio-economic climate has been teeming with unpredictability from 2020 onwards, fueled by conflict, health crises, and shifts in political dynamics. This volatile environment has pervasive impacts on employment opportunities across all industries, but the effects are particularly pronounced for newly-minted college graduates. As elucidated in Liu's (2022) social research report, the unemployment statistics for China's youth population, aged between 16-24 years, has consistently breached the critical threshold of 15% since 2020. As of 2022, this percentage has shown no signs of plateauing, but rather displays a persistent upward trajectory year after year. A considerable proportion of students from domestic academic institutions grapple with securing employment in their preferred fields upon their departure from school. It is essential to clarify that this challenge has roots beyond the year 2020. Research findings present a compelling picture; a study indicated that as much as 32.26% of university alumni struggle with effective societal integration post-graduation (Wang & Song, 2011). Research has indicated that a primary challenge faced by university students transitioning into the workforce is the lack of practical employment skills gained through their academic coursework. This gap in skills often necessitates further training and education within their chosen industries once they have begun their professional careers (Xiao & Wu, 2008).

In response to this challenge, various technical and vocational schools have devised specific strategies aimed at satisfying this particular educational requirement. To illustrate, the New Oriental Culinary School, in the course of student training, has designed a bespoke curriculum and educational internship program in alignment with the future professional aspirations of students. Concurrently, to ensure the students' job placement quality in a competitive landscape, the institution has also established a dedicated career guidance unit. This unit aims to assist graduating students in addressing their employment issues and improving job satisfaction, thereby allowing students to fully leverage their educational experience (Luo, 2020). Nevertheless, such circumstances are not entirely applicable to common universities and colleges. Feng's (2009) research highlights that Chinese educational institutions were predominantly engaged in a phase of expansive and inclusive development. During this stage, academic institutions expanded their subject variety, but this consequently led to a diluted focus on education. Amidst the myriad of external resources, these institutions struggled to efficiently manage discipline-specific resources, fostering a reactive approach to administration. Furthermore, due to limited career resources, students were compelled to prioritize

securing employment over finding a profession that aligns with their field of study (Zhang & Yan, 2021). Nevertheless, such circumstances are not entirely applicable to common universities and colleges.

Existing research suggests that an individual's access to resources depends on his or her social network of relationships, and that the network of social support includes the state of the individual's relationships with others (Xiao, 1994). And this state involves both psychological and behavioral logic, such as trust and support (Guo, 2018). In their study of factors influencing employability, Li et al. (2020) concluded that increasing the level of psychological capital of college students can effectively improve their responsibility, altruistic behavior and self-control, which are crucial for career development. Moreover, higher psychological capital not only increases their commitment to learning (Tang & Ge, 2014), but also inhibits academic burnout to some extent (Song & Duan, 2014). Overall, the specific enhancement of psychological capital for students is that it enables them to be more assertive and decisive when faced with opportunities (Shen, 2013).

On the contrary, the impact of psychological capital on social adaptation illustrates the pragmatic significance of career planning. Research conducted by Wu et al. (2008) reveals a notable discrepancy between the skills and knowledge acquired by university graduates and the actual requirements of employers. This disparity serves as a key factor explaining why university graduates struggle to meet the demands of the job market. In 2009, Zeng and Quan (2009) underscored the significance of core employability skills for college students. They asserted that these skills are vital in the face of an increasingly globalized and knowledge-driven economy, and contribute to a more successful transition to the professional environment. Consequently, effective career management during university education may serve as a crucial mechanism for students' smoother social integration. Additionally, it could act as a valuable measure of a university's success in accomplishing its educational objectives.

In addition, if the time period of the study is extended to after the students' employment, more studies examine students as a group in the society, such as Zeng et al. (2017) found that the residential environment has a greater impact on individuals, and the poor residential environment has a significant impact on the normal work, life and social behavior of young intellectual groups, and the study concluded that the relevant problems should be managed through self-psychological regulation and relevant policy construction, so as to improve their social adaptation ability. The study by Chen et al. (2015), on the other hand, postulates a fundamental truth that a specific economic foundation is essential for individuals to adjust to a different societal setting. This adaptation process, however, involves significant strain due to discrepancies in the objective social milieu and life pace. Nonetheless, the research also suggests that individuals inevitably become an integral part of the local community as their period of residence extends, thanks to the sustained support from their social environment and relevant policies. Consequently, individuals necessitate persistent and efficacious assistance, during their educational journey and even after, they enter the workforce.

Nevertheless, there exists a significant gap in the study of sustained social support for university students and those who have completed their academic pursuits, particularly the deficiency of backing for post-career college attendees from institutional progress. This deficit inhibits students from fully leveraging the organized relationship network of the institution, and also restricts the school's access to broader social resources through the student's social connections. As such, it becomes imperative to enhance the scholarship relating to the persistence of student support to facilitate a smoother transition of college students into their professional and societal milieu. This research strives to meet the following investigative objectives informed by the theoretical framework of social support and social adaptation:

- (a) To explore the direct impact of social support on social adaptation for college students
- (b) To examine the chain intermediating role of psychological capital and self-career management capability of college students in the influence of social support on social adaptation

The study conducts a questionnaire survey on college students in southwest China and verifies the role of social support, psychological capital and self-career management in the social adaptation process of college students by analyzing the results of the questionnaire data.

2. Literature Review

2.1 *The Mechanism of the Role of Social Support on Social Adaptation of General University Students*

In an environment characterized by intense employment-related stress, the urgency of job attainment among college students is escalating. This surge in demand presents a fresh challenge for educational institutions, which are now tasked with bolstering their support mechanisms. Within the framework of social support, this encompasses a broad array of supportive actions offered by individuals within social networks (such as family and friends) when

encountering specific circumstances (Caplan, 1974). Such support can take various forms, including emotional, informational, respectful, and tangible assistance (Cutrona & Suhr, 1992; Gottlieb & Bergen, 2010; Li et al., 2018; Liu et al., 2020). Within the majority of scholarly investigations, the concept of social support is typically bifurcated into two distinct classifications: objective support and subjective support, as articulated by Xiao in 1994. Objective support can be construed as the method of providing assistance, while subjective support, by contrast, might be perceived as the emotional responses and appraisals of the aforementioned objective support.

Within the context of a competitive marketplace, effective social acclimatization signifies that university students possess the fundamental competencies demanded by businesses (Zeng & Quan, 2009). Notwithstanding the possible direct impact of social support on university students, one must consider this support as an enduring, unified behavior that accompanies individuals throughout their lives. Consequently, a simple discourse on environmental impacts fails to fully capture the beneficial role of social support for university students. It is imperative to consider that influences originating from the family and educational institution are of equal significance for these students. Future research is slated to explore these two dimensions in depth.

Relevant studies from family influences mention that parents, as key players in the kinship network, play a key role in the values of individuals. For example, in education, studies show that parents' education shows a positive correlation with whether their children pursue higher education (Ashtiani & Feliciano, 2018). Students' academic performance can greatly benefit from time spent with well-educated parents, as these interactions provide ample opportunity to acquire valuable information and resources (Abada & Tenkorang, 2009). This enriches the students' learning journey substantially. Concurrently, the instrumental role parents play extends beyond resource provision; they also shape their children's values, contributing significantly to their development. This aspect, arguably, holds more weight. Research indicates that even when parents lack higher educational qualifications, their emphasis on the importance of education, coupled with their thoughtful support and exemplar behavior, can still steer their children towards notable academic achievement (Nelson, 2019; Theodore et al., 2017). Hence, the influence exerted by parents on the conduct of their offspring in university is paramount, with their proactive involvement in the instructional journey potentially enhancing students' adaptability to societal norms.

Moreover, given that students are within a university milieu, the impact from this educational environment is of equal significance. Research findings reveal the crucial part peer influence plays in the student's academic progress and social adaptation in university (Brouwer et al., 2016; Johnson, 2013). This influence involves collaborative learning to enhance comprehension of coursework (Cole & Espinoza, 2008), the exchange of pertinent information and resources (Palmer et al., 2011), and the elucidation of complex topics as well as discussions around unexplored ideas and theories. Ultimately, these interactive elements contribute to improved academic performance (Pérez II & Taylor, 2016). Moreover, on the psychological front, assistance from fellow students can prove instrumental in mitigating test-related apprehensions, consequently enabling individuals to aspire for loftier academic outcomes and thereby accomplish superior results. Corresponding research indicates a favorable influence on student performance when their peer group within the social network comprises high achievers, attributed to the pronounced tendency for peer imitation (Poldin et al., 2016). Furthermore, the significance of teachers in promoting student involvement and facilitating scholastic success is notable (Brouwer et al., 2016). Within the learning space, the role of educators in establishing an environment that fosters equality and positivity is paramount (Thomas, 2014). Such an atmosphere serves as an avenue for students to effectively enhance their perception of social backing (Dukhan, 2022). Beyond the formal confines of the classroom, pedagogical efficacy can be significantly enhanced via instructional feedback on assignments administered outside of lecture periods (Pearce & Down, 2011; Williams, 2017). This form of educational exchange between teacher and student, on a contextual plane, is largely dependent on the interpersonal web crafted within the educational institution's parameters. A robust campus interpersonal network can serve as a vital catalyst, facilitating the accomplishment of students' educational objectives effectively (Museus, 2011). Consequently, to encapsulate, the investigation put forth the following hypothesis:

H1: Social Support Significantly and Positively Affects Social Adaptation of College Students

2.2 Mechanism of the Role of Psychological Capital and Self-Career Management on Social Adaptation of College Students

Research in the field of social support often defines it as a combination of social resources and emotional aid (Befu, 1980). Particularly, emotional assistance is intimately connected to an individual's growth-oriented mindset, providing a valuable tool in managing life's uncertainties and setbacks. Within the sphere of educational administration studies, psychological capital stands as a crucial psychometric element. Its constituents self-assuredness, positivity, aspiration, and resilience offer insights into the multifaceted psychological

transformations experienced by individuals throughout their learning journey (Luthans et al., 2004). This can be somewhat likened to the emotional assistance inherent in social support, while also partially symbolizing the psychological attributes of individuals and their prospective career flexibility. Relevant research indicates that psychological capital has the potential to affect individuals' psychological states or actions from numerous angles. For instance, psychological capital can significantly mitigate the impacts of academic stress on university students' mental anxiety (Meng & Yang, 2012), subjective sense of contentment (Gao, 2017), and sustain a favorable attitude towards their studies. The influence of this phenomenon is apparent in the observed behaviors of information exchange among students. Several research works have indicated that tactics for augmenting the psychological capital of college students can productively amplify their tendencies for knowledge sharing. This in turn can bolster their involvement in academic activities (Tang & Ge, 2014). Additionally, it has been found to mitigate, to a certain extent, the academic burnout that stems from stress (Song & Duan, 2014). Psychological capital empowers individuals to establish more ambitious objectives and persistently strive towards them (Zhou & Mao, 2021). In relation to higher education students' career prospects, existing research confirms that psychological capital significantly bolsters their employability (Li & Cao, 2011). This results in a heightened ability among college students to make accurate judgements and attributions, along with increased independence, decisiveness, preparedness, and purposefulness during their job hunt (Shen, 2013). Moreover, upon entering the workforce, they exhibit enhanced innovative capabilities (An & Zhang, 2020).

Consequently, it can be inferred that psychological capital holds a pivotal position in the interplay between social support and societal engagement for university students. Nevertheless, the necessity for social resource assistance is undeniable for individuals during their societal integration process. This aid, in comparison to psychological capital, relies heavily on an individual's capacity to obtain and deploy these resources. Despite this, there appears to be a deficiency in the current educational system in terms of providing the essential education and support. The observed disparity between educational output and labor market requirements often results in a significant number of graduates being inadequately equipped with essential skills upon entering employment (Friedman et al., 2023; Xiao & Wu, 2008). Consequently, this makes them less attractive candidates in the competitive job market. Furthermore, research indicates that students who have established professional engagements with businesses during their academic pursuits tend to display superior proficiency in job-related capabilities (Gao et al., 2009). It thus follows that the provision of potent vocational training and assistance is indispensable to adequately prepare college students for the workforce.

In the fiercely competitive contemporary employment landscape, the paradigm of boundaryless careers is increasingly gaining acceptance. This model is typified by the decentralization of organizational hierarchies and the evolution from linear upward trajectories to varied growth paths that transcend organizational limits, as highlighted by Arthur (1994). Furthermore, the boundaryless career model underscores individual initiative (Porter et al., 2016), adaptability in career progression (Chan et al., 2015), psychological wellness (Briscoe et al., 2012), and a strong capacity for managing ambiguity (Baruch, 2014). These characteristics distinguish it from the conventional model of career progression, which was more confined within organizational borders. Enhancing these factors can indeed contribute to increased career adaptability. Concurrently, it is imperative to note the constraints that are inherent in the framework of a borderless career. Certain academicians, including Inkson et al. (2012), have raised arguments against the universality of the borderless career model, contending that it may not be an appropriate approach for all career paths. Research studies indicate that the emergence of global careers has led to a noticeable decrease in both employee allegiance and corporate dedication towards workers (Chan & Dar, 2014). Such trends are unfavorable for maintaining crucial talent as high employee turnover hampers the creation of a cohesive, human-centered corporate culture. Consequently, this situation can potentially undermine the organizational drive to support employee career advancement (Wang et al., 2017). Examining this matter from the viewpoint of the person involved, those opting for a career without geographical limits are confronted with increased uncertainty, fluctuation, and vagueness from the labor market, compared to the customary career structures. This necessitates that individuals exert more mental and psychological efforts to sustain their competitive edge. Consequently, such individuals may experience a diminished sense of equilibrium between their professional and personal lives (Rodrigues et al., 2015).

In the prevailing milieu of globalized careers, solely enhancing professional capabilities is insufficient for individuals to better acclimate to society. It is essential for students to acquire and develop supplemental skills and supportive resources that supplement their fundamental skills. According to Long, L.R. et al. (2002), individuals require not just the rudimentary basis for career progression, but also five categorizations of self-career management capabilities: career exploration, goal-setting in the career realm, commitment to lifelong learning, aptitude for self-presentation, and a focus on nurturing relationships. The research further posited that to deal effectively with organizational

volatility and alterations, employees ought to incessantly augment their competitiveness. This process is intrinsically linked to exploring career pathways, setting career objectives and strategies, being committed to perpetual learning, and fostering interpersonal relations. Incorporating the previously mentioned viewpoints on career management along with the psychological requirements for career advancement, the researchers have formulated the ensuing propositions:

H2: Psychological Capital and Self-career Play a Chain Intermediating Role in the Influence of Social Support on Social Adaptation of College Students

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Framework

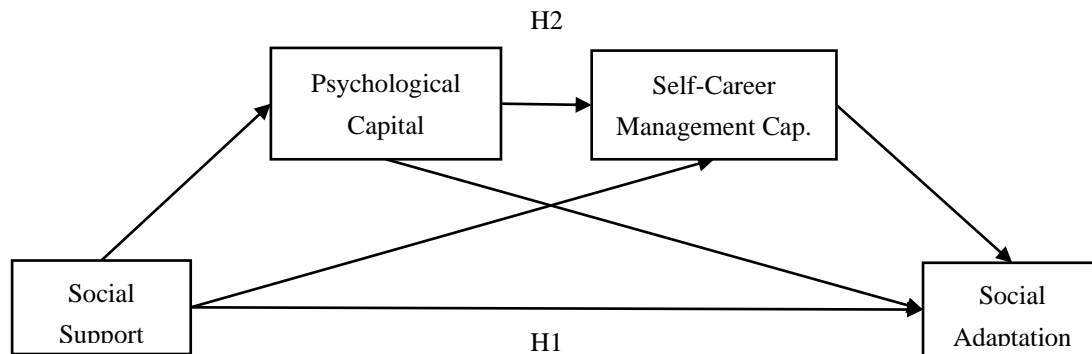


Figure 1. Research framework

In order to understand the relationship between the role of social support, the study utilized social support as the foundation framework to verify the direct impact of social support on social adaptation, as well as to verify the intermediating role of psychological capital and self-career management in it. Finally, the data results would be adopted to compare with previous studies to explore the social support framework for adapting to college students.

3.2 Research Participants

The investigation targets two academic institutions within each of three provinces in the southwestern region of China, cumulating to a sample size of students from six universities. To make the research representative, the selected universities are all local ordinary universities. This was done using a convenience sampling method via the dissemination of questionnaires. The goal is to circulate approximately 700 surveys, incorporating demographic variables like gender, place of domicile, and household earnings. This approach intended to foster a holistic and unbiased analysis of the social support structure.

3.3 Research Instruments

3.3.1 Social Support Scale

The research employed the Social Support Scale, a tool devised by Xiao (1994), originating from the realm of clinical psychology. The purpose of the scale's creation, as stated in its description, was to provide a comprehensive and referential measurement tool primarily utilized in social support-related literature. It has gained recognition as a considerably mature instrument for data measurement within this field. This scale is comprised of 10 items, exploring three facets: subjective support, objective support, and the employment of such support.

This unique measurement system employs a non-standardized variant of the Richter scale, with distinctive scoring parameters for each question. For questions 1 through 4, as well as 8 through 10, a single answer is selected, each assigned a specific score ranging from 1 to 4. This scale is designed to reflect the degree of conformity, with 1 representing very non-conforming, and 4 being very conforming. Question 5, which comprises four components labeled A to D, employs a different approach. Each item is evaluated on a scale of 1 to 4, denoting the range from "no support" to "full support". The overall score for the question is the aggregate of the scores assigned to these four components. Questions 6 and 7 are scored on a binary basis, where the lack of any sources receives a zero, while an equal number of points are given to the number of sources indicated. The scoring guidelines are classified into three dimensions: questions "2, 6, 7" assess objective support, questions "1, 3, 4, 5" evaluate subjective support, and

questions "8, 9, 10" measure support utilization. In this framework, a higher cumulative score denotes superior performance, as the scale's original α coefficient is 0.73.

3.3.2 Social Adaptation Scale

The Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire (SACQ), developed by Baker and Siryk (1999), has been widely validated and supported by the academic community and is a well-established scale. The scale emphasizes the interaction between the individual and the environment, which is in line with the social support scale, so the selection of this scale will help support the study's focus on "interactive relationship resources". The study chose a simplified version of the SACQ social adaptation subscale by Liu (2015) with 11 questions and a 5-point scale with scores ranging from very non-conforming to very conforming, with a α coefficient of 0.876.

3.3.3 Psychological Capital Scale

The research employed the PCQ-24 Physical Capital Questionnaire, a robust tool originated by Luthans et al. (2007) that enjoys broad validation and support within academic circles. Its functionality is underscored by its four key facets: self-confidence, hope, optimism, and resilience, collectively representing a broad spectrum of individuals' positive psychological attributes. This instrument is particularly useful in gauging the positive mental state of students as they engage in learning activities. Comprising of 24 items, the original format of this questionnaire uses a 7-point Likert scale, extending from extreme non-conformance to high conformance, with an alpha reliability coefficient of 0.894.

3.3.4 Career Management Scale

The research employed the "Self-Career Management Competency Scale" conceived by Long et al (2002), which was designed with a focus on individual personal growth and is particularly intended for use with corporate personnel. This scale encompasses five distinct areas: exploring careers, establishing career objectives, pursuing continuous education, presenting oneself, and concentrating on relationships. The scale is formulated with 18 items and is originally based on a 5-point Richter scale, boasting a reliability coefficient of 0.812.

4. Results

4.1 Descriptive Analysis

Table 1. Descriptive statistics

BG Variables	Category	Count	Percentage
Gender	Male	332	50.8
	Female	322	49.2
	1 st -tier City	65	9.9
	2 nd -tier City	35	5.4
Residential Area	3 rd -tier City or below	140	21.4
	County	152	23.2
	Township	262	40.1
	Below 5200	318	48.6
Domestic Income (Monthly)	5200-8300	188	28.7
	8300-12500	93	14.2
	12500-24000	40	6.1
	24000 above	15	2.3
Specialized Subjects	Liberal Arts	198	30.3
	Science	456	69.7

In line with the suggested procedures for determining sample sizes in surveys (Sudman, 1976; Wu & Tu, 2012), we arranged to distribute 700 questionnaires, set at tenfold the quantity of queries, i.e., 68. We received 660 completed questionnaires, out of which 654 were deemed valid (referred to Table 1). The gender distribution was almost evenly split, with 332 male participants making up 50.8% of the total and 322 female participants comprising 49.2% of the total. As per birth year demographics, the primary group surveyed was the post-00's generation, numbering 648

individuals, representing 99.1% of the total sample. This balanced distribution of male and female samples ensures a representative outcome for gender-focused analysis.

Gao et al. (2020) conducted a study focused on the unequal dissemination of educational resources in China, underlining the stark variations arising from divergent regional economic statuses. The research segregated the participants based on their place of origin, classifying them into first-tier cities, second-tier cities, third-tier cities or lower, counties, and towns. The urban districts and counties within China were employed as the basis for these classifications. The group distribution was as follows: 65 individuals from first-tier cities, making up 9.9% of the sample; 35 from second-tier cities (5.4%); 140 from third-tier cities or lower (21.4%); 152 from counties (23.2%), and finally, 262 participants from towns, accounting for the largest group at 40.1%. The allocation of the respondents corresponds with the demographic this study intends to serve - namely, those educated in less developed regions. Given the predominantly urbanized nature of China's populace, a large majority have assimilated into city life. However, due to the imbalanced allocation of educational resources across the country, local universities and colleges predominantly cater to students from more distant and less-developed areas. This circumstance imposes an increased responsibility on such educational institutions to preserve educational quality and secure high employment rates post-graduation.

On the issue of family disposable resources, some studies have shown that family disposable resources have a significant impact on students' achievement (Ye & Wu, 2012), while in social support theory, support from family relationships is the main factor that constitutes individual social support, so the study referred to the distribution of disposable income of Chinese residents in China by China Industry Information Network 2018 (China Industry Information, 2018) data classification, the monthly household disposable income was divided into five levels: below 5200 yuan, 5200-8300 yuan, 8300-12500 yuan, 12500-24000 yuan, and above 24000 yuan. In terms of data distribution, the average monthly household income is below RMB 5200 for 318 households, accounting for 48.6% of the total sample, followed by RMB 5200-8300 for 188 households, accounting for 28.7% of the sample weight. Both have exceeded 70% of the total sample, which is in line with the distribution of economic development level of the region where the survey sample is located. At the same time this can also show that the support related to education from most families in the sample, is very limited. This may affect the available development resources and development prospects of college students' future development.

In conclusion, the diversity in students' social adaptation capabilities throughout their educational journey may hinge on discrepancies between their high school specializations and their chosen college majors. The study methodically explored these students' preferences and competencies in high school subjects, categorizing them into two primary domains - liberal arts and science. Of the sample, 198 students, or 30.3%, demonstrated a strong aptitude in the liberal arts, while a considerable 456 students, representing 69.7%, excelled in the sciences. This data distribution indicates a larger inclination towards science subjects within the surveyed sample, a phenomenon that might be associated with the college majors chosen by these students.

4.2 Correlation Analysis

Table 2. Overall dimensional correlation analysis

	M	SD	1	2	3	4
Social Support	2.258	0.404	1			
Psych. Capt.	4.976	1.054	0.454***	1		
Self-Manage Capability	3.476	0.780	0.452***	0.675***	1	
Social Adpt.	3.595	0.646	0.456***	0.701***	0.594***	1

Note: *** $p < 0.001$

The data displayed in Tables 2 indicate that a range of variables, including social support, psychological capital, the capacity for self-directed career management, and social adaptation, all possess statistically significant, albeit low to moderate, positive correlations ($p < 0.001$, with correlation coefficient 'r' values falling within the 0 to 0.8 range). It is important to note two exceptions: hope and resilience, both of which exhibit significant strong correlations ($p < 0.001$, with an 'r' value exceeding 0.8). The variables of subjective and objective support, the capacity to leverage social support, self-confidence, optimism, hope, resilience, career exploration, career goals, the commitment to continuous learning, self-presentation, a relationship orientation, and social adaptation also demonstrated the same pattern of low to moderate correlations ($p < 0.001$, $0 < r < 0.8$). Furthermore, confidence, optimism, hope, resilience,

career exploration, career goals, the pursuit of ongoing education, self-presentation, a focus on relationships, and social adaptation all showed similar low to moderate positive correlations ($p < 0.001$, $0 < r < 0.8$). From a comprehensive perspective, the consistent low to moderate positive correlation data implies a lack of cointegration amongst the investigated variables.

4.3 Analysis of the Relationship among Variables

In this section, the researchers delve into the correlation among social support, psychological capital, proficiency in self-career management, and social adaptation, specifically in the context of college students. We utilize the PROCESS research tool for this investigation, though further verification through factor analysis may be necessary.

Table 3. Variable regression analysis

Variables	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3		
	Psych. Capt.			Self-Career Manag. Cap.			Social Adapt.		
	B	SE	t	B	SE	t	B	SE	t
Contl. Var.									
Gender	-0.296	0.073	-4.034***	0.02	0.045	0.456	-0.054	0.035	-1.513
Residence	0.01	0.028	0.338	-0.052	0.017	-3.067**	0.004	0.014	0.296
Var.									
SC.Supt.	1.227	0.091	13.498***	0.337	0.062	5.456***	0.236	0.05	4.725***
Psych. Capt.				0.439	0.024	18.629***	0.308	0.023	13.340***
Self-Career Manag. Cap.							0.155	0.031	4.994***
R2	0.226			0.489			0.534		
F	63.134***			155.55***			148.672***		

Note: * $p < 0.05$ ** $p < 0.01$ *** $p < 0.001$

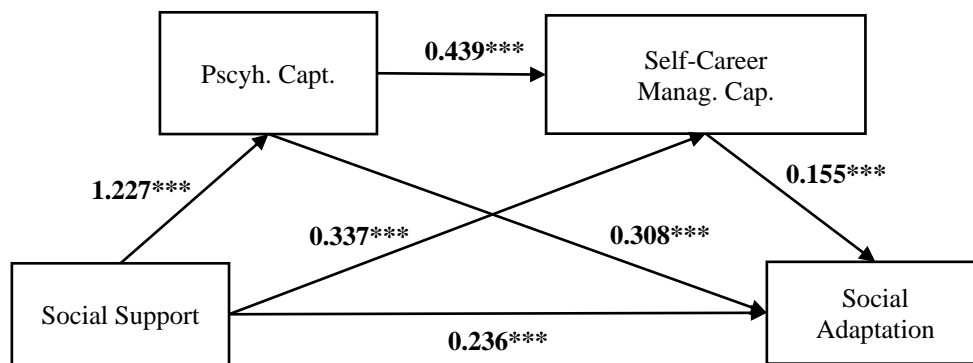


Figure 2. Intermediary effect impact pathway diagram

Note:*** $p < 0.001$

Table 4 delineates a considerable affirmative correlation between social support and social adaptation ($B=0.236$, $p < 0.001$), illustrating that an enhancement in social support corresponds with an increase in social adaptation, thereby validating our first research hypothesis (H1). Moreover, social support profoundly and favorably affects both psychological capital ($B=1.227$, $p < 0.001$) and self-career management capability ($B=0.337$, $p < 0.001$). Furthermore, the data reveals that both psychological capital ($B=0.308$, $p < 0.001$) and self-career management capability ($B=0.155$, $p < 0.001$) have a significant and positive bearing on social adaptation. Notably, psychological capital also exhibits a strong positive impact on self-career management capability ($B=0.439$, $p < 0.001$). This implies that psychological capital and self-career management capability function as partial mediators in the relationship between social support and social adaptation. Therefore, the findings lend support to our second research hypothesis (H2), confirming the mediating role of psychological capital and self-career management capability within this relationship.

4.4 Bootstrap Intermediating Effects Test

The subsequent analysis employs Bootstrap to execute additional substantiation of the trajectory linking various variables. This involves an iterative process comprising 5000 samples and incorporates a confidence level of 95% for the selection (Table 4).

As indicated in Table 4, the overall intermediary role of psychological capital and self-career management competency is quantified as 0.514. Notably, the confidence interval, ranging from 0.413 to 0.617, excludes the value 0. This substantiates that both psychological capital and self-career management competency significantly mediate the relationship between social support and social adaptation. This intermediating effect is composed of three distinct components. The first indirect effect demonstrates that social support impacts social adaptation via the channel of psychological capital. This pathway effect value is 0.378, and the confidence interval (0.286, 0.476) does not include 0, indicating the significant role of psychological capital as a mediator in the influence of social support on social adaptation. The second indirect effect illustrates how social support influences social adaptation through the prism of self-career management capability. The value for this pathway effect is 0.052, with the confidence interval being 0.025 to 0.087, again excluding 0. This indicates that self-career management abilities serve as a critical intermediating factor in the impact of social support on social adaptation. The third indirect effect suggests that social support influences social adaptation via the intermediaries of psychological capital and self-career management capability, as evidenced by a path effect value of 0.084. The confidence interval, ranging from 0.044 to 0.127, excludes zero, thus confirming the intermediating role of psychological capital and self-career management capability in the relationship between social support and social adaptation. Furthermore, inference from the effect ratio of the first indirect pathway (Ind1) suggests that the degree of psychological resilience plays a significant part in educational strategies aimed at fostering students' social adaptation. While this psychological resilience is partially rooted in material resources, emphasis on nurturing students' emotional growth, particularly in scenarios where material educational resources are limited, may offset some of the impacts associated with the absence of these resources. This focus could thus empower students to leverage their enhanced psychological resilience to navigate the challenges of their social environment more effectively.

Table 4. Analysis of Bootstrap Test for Intermediating Effect

	Effect Value	SD	Boot Upper	Boot Lower	Total Effect	Indt. Eff. SHR
Total Effect	0.751	0.056	0.641	0.860		
Total Indirect Effect ind1+ind2+ind3	0.514	0.052	0.413	0.617	68.44%	
Ind1 Social Support→Psych.Capt.→Social Adapt.	0.378	0.048	0.286	0.476	50.33%	73.54%
Ind2 Social Support→Self-Career Manag. Cap.→Social Adapt.	0.052	0.016	0.025	0.087	6.92%	10.12%
Ind3 Social Support→Psych Capt.→Self-Career Manag. Cap.→Social Adapt.	0.084	0.021	0.044	0.127	11.19%	16.34%

5. Conclusion and Discussion

5.1 Direct Impact of Social Support on College Students' Social Adaptation

In the context of tertiary college students in Southwest China, it has been observed that social support plays a substantial and beneficial role in enhancing their social adaptation abilities. Utilizing Xiao's (1994) social support scale in this investigation, social support was categorized into three key dimensions: objective support, subjective support, and the application of such support. The import of these elements is that they contribute to the establishment of a network of social support through both objective and subjective means. When individuals are successful in establishing dynamic interactions within this network, they can depend on it for valuable resources to ease their adaptation to the social environment. This pathway of influence aligns with the findings of prior studies (Gašević et al., 2013). Past research suggests that an individual's social adaptation is a collective outcome of a variety of

resources (Jia, 2001), and the diversity within a network of relationships can influence the degree of social adaptation from assorted viewpoints. This occurs due to the substantial variability in the resources that different network members can offer.

Within the familial context, the primary forms of social support consist of emotional and material aid shared among family members. The societal resources at parents' disposal allow children to rapidly assimilate their parents' life experiences, enabling them to swiftly comprehend and acquire various capabilities associated with learning and life (Abada & Tenkorang, 2009). Nevertheless, even when parents lack such societal resources, for instance, educational qualifications, their roles as models remain crucial. Parents may foster their children's growth through leading by example and providing emotional backing (Turner & Juntune, 2018). This support can substantially bolster an individual's mental well-being, including aspects such as self-assurance and resilience, thus empowering them to approach learning in an enhanced state and effectively deal with stress and uncertainties in life and learning (Ceglie & Settlege, 2016; Johnson, 2013). Within the academic milieu, peers and teachers serve as the principal sources of social support. Given the varied nature of peer influence, the construction of a robust school relationship network can notably aid the fostering of peer learning support and resource allocation behaviors (Palmer et al., 2011), thereby nurturing a positive learning and teaching atmosphere. In such environments, teachers can bolster students' perception of social support by cultivating an inclusive and affirming classroom setting (Thomas, 2014), thus boosting students' confidence in their academic pursuits.

In the structural blueprint of educational institutions, educators, being the initial point of interaction with pupils, assume a responsibility in formulating objectives for them. As aspirational targets become increasingly distinct, scholars naturally cultivate an interest in achieving these goals, thus necessitating the educational institution's function in rendering these objectives more accessible. Scrutinizing the prevalent educational paradigm, it is observable that several institutions have integrated career orientation as part of their educational objectives. However, the inability of numerous students to fulfill job requisites post-graduation exposes a rift that the educational institution, as an entity, should strive to close. By employing the framework of social support networks, we understand that social support doesn't solely encompass the exchange of experiential insights and sentiments, but also entails the conveyance of needs-related information and human resources between educational institutions and companies. The effective establishment of rapport between schools and firms forms a network, bypassing trust impediments. It ensures students remain attentive to market demands and skills cultivation, thereby optimizing human resource utilization and enabling students to implement their acquired knowledge while enhancing their societal adaptation.

5.2 The Intermediating Role of College Students' Psychological Capital and Self-Career Management Capabilities in the Influence of Social Support on Social Adaptation

According to the results of the study², social support can significantly and positively affect college students' social adjustment, while psychological capital and self-career management capability can partially mediate the effect of social support on college students' social adaptation. Among them, the results of the study on the intermediating effect of psychological capital showed that psychological capital, as the psychological foundation of individuals, could significantly enhance the social adaptation of college students, and the findings were consistent with the study of Zhang et al. (2022). The study's discussion of self-career management competencies is based on the borderless career framework, which can effectively enhance individuals' social adaptation levels by improving self-career management competencies, and therefore its intermediating effect is similar to that of (Huang et al., 2012) and supports the findings of the original scale (Long et al., 2002). Finally, there is an overall chain intermediating effect, and the findings support and complement Briscoe et al.'s (2012) findings based on the ability of psychological factors to influence borderless career competencies.

The synthesized findings underscore the significance of psychological capital and self-career management abilities in shaping college students' development. Drawing parallels from Cheng Wei's research (2017), psychological capital and self-career management abilities align with the psychological foundation and vocational capability foundation in the educational journey respectively. In this context, the higher the psychological capital among students, the better their collaborative behavior during learning and their academic engagement level (Tang & Ge, 2014). This also enhances their productivity at work and facilitates more knowledge acquisition (Zhou & Mao, 2021). Therefore, fostering psychological capital intentionally within southwest China university students' curriculum can lead to a constructive learning environment, optimize the use of educational resources, and consequently minimize the university's per-student educational investment. On the other hand, strong self-career management abilities enable universities to effectively tap into and utilize surrounding relational support resources, thereby accruing more support

resources (Gašević et al., 2013). Scholarly networks play a vital role in helping students develop both career competencies and the psychological underpinnings required for their professional paths. However, aligning their training to the prevalent borderless career paradigm could lead to significant mental fatigue, thereby undermining the cultivation of their social adaptability skills. This lends some credence to the critiques surrounding the shortcomings of borderless careers (Rodrigues et al., 2015). Drawing from various research findings, it's evident that to enhance the value of existing support systems in southwest China university students' career progression, there's a need to prioritize the development of psychological resilience among them. Furthermore, a robust psychological base could significantly boost their ability to manage their careers autonomously. Satisfying these prerequisites can effectively augment an individual's career adaptability, subsequently enhancing the social adaptability of college students.

In light of current pedagogical assets, educational institutions have the capacity to boost southwest China university students' employability adaptability by fostering their psychological fortitude in personal career management abilities, particularly when they cannot fulfill the bulk of students' job market requirements. However, akin to the aspirations of the Institute to build an educational support network, universities, through the proactive creation of alliances with societal corporations, can significantly assist students in achieving societal integration. Concurrently, the southwest China university can accrue prestige and societal resources through the positive testimonials of their students, facilitated by a reciprocal network of relationships, thereby promoting the institution's overall advancement.

5.3 Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

Considering the constraints of available resources and the restrictions of capacity, this dissertation possesses a certain degree of imperfections and areas of regret. These areas necessitate further attention and more comprehensive study in the future, as specified below:

To begin, the scope of the research object is a key limitation. This study, constrained by its ambit, examined only three provinces in Southwest China. Yet, the research revealed a widespread scarcity of educational resources in China's central and western regions. Concurrently, the research verified that social support significantly bolsters collegiate populations, underscoring the importance of probing into this aspect within various socio-environmental contexts. Looking ahead, the study advocates for broadening the exploration of social support among college students in diverse societal environments. Such expansion could validate the efficacy of the social support framework on a larger scale. It would thereby increase awareness among educational institutions about the significance of social support for both the institutions and students, facilitating students' more effective societal and professional integration.

Secondly, we must acknowledge the constraints present in the data used for this study. Utilizing cross-sectional data, we were capable of examining and corroborating the statistical relationships among variables through the application of statistical techniques. However, the format did not permit us to deduce causative associations between these variables as could be achieved with longitudinal data. The research revealed that social support originates from a variety of domains, such as educational institutions and family units. Given that individuals are continually evolving during their academic tenure, the influence of social support on their social adjustment could vary at each developmental phase. As a result, we anticipate initiating further specialized research in the future, with more rigorous conditions and extended timeframes. This would enable us to evaluate the reactions to social support and the explicit extent of its influence on college students at varying stages. In doing so, we aim to devise more comprehensive support initiatives to assist students in better adapting to the social and professional landscape.

Thirdly, the research variables presented certain limitations. Owing to the researcher's intrinsic capacity constraints, the study incorporated merely three research indices: social support, psychological capital, and self-career management capability. A review of pertinent literature revealed that the factors influencing the social adjustment of college students are multifaceted, encompassing aspects such as familial educational background, residential environment, and differing socioeconomic conditions across various social epochs. These diverse background variables can exert an influence on the social adjustment process of students. As a result, future research could benefit from the inclusion of additional background variables within the survey methodology. Such an approach will facilitate a more nuanced understanding of the impacts that arise when implementing social support policies within diverse environmental contexts. This, in turn, will enable more accurate execution of support initiatives and optimize the utilization of supportive resources.

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