

# *A Sociological Study on the Career Orientation of Undergraduates: Retrospect and Prospect*

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**Abstract:** Recently, the career orientation of undergraduates has become a hot topic in the fields of Education, Sociology, Economics and Psychology. However, the breadth and depth of the related topic should be explored further. On account of this situation, the author collects related papers from 1994 to 2022, and analyzes the career orientation of undergraduates from the perspective of research sources, concepts, angles, subjects and methods. Meanwhile, this paper puts forward enlightens and future research direction. That is to say, the research subjects should be expanded to the students in underdeveloped areas, especially, the minority students. The influence of social factors should be probed deeply, especially, family capital. The research method should be improved fully to study on the situation of the career orientation of undergraduates and its potential factors, especially, the support of empirical data.

## 1. Introduction

China is a multi-ethnic country, and education is the national priority. From the perspective of society, education has a great influence on the development and safety of a country. From the personal perspective, education is the major tool of social mobility. Being the objective of education, employment shows the equality of education. There were more than 9,090,000 graduates in China in 2021, which increased 350,000 comparing with the number last year. The situation of employment became dangerous because of numerous reasons including the covid-2019. Dozens of graduates cannot find their ideal jobs and enter into certain social structure as personal and social expectation. The quality of graduates' employment decides both the rational allocation of talents resources and the enthusiasm of teaching and learning. In China, there is a traditional concept which is he who excels in learning can be an official. Therefore, a huge number of graduates will choose a set field, which means the imbalance of professional structure, which leads to a situation of unemployment and sever job vacancy of certain fields. Exploring of orientation of undergraduates helps the prediction of future occupational structure, stability and prosperity of a country and the happiness of a whole family. Thus, to have a comprehensive insight of the career orientation of undergraduates, this paper analyzes and summarizes related papers from CNKI and SCOPUS.

There is no acknowledged concept of the career orientation. Tang Yanping claimed that career orientation was the tendency of occupational choices which showed the difference on interest of choosing a job.<sup>[1]</sup> Zhang Sufang thought that the career orientation is evaluation of a certain job

considering usefulness, importance and benefits, which was made by a university student.<sup>[2]</sup> Zhang Lanyue held that career orientation showed the value of occupation that was actuated by the employment demand, which was a conscious choice of a job.<sup>[3]</sup> After 1999, the process on popularization and universalization of higher education became rapidly, which led a continuous situation related to increasing enrollment. That is the reason why there exists more and more researches on employment of university students. The research perspectives came from different fields including pedagogy, economics, sociology, psychology, politics and philosophy, which studied on the same topic of career orientation of undergraduates and made a great contribution on the development of various undertakings.

## 2. Research Status

### 2.1 Domestic Research Status

The foundation of this paper is from all papers related to career orientation of undergraduates. This paper searches the key words from the database and conducts co-word network analysis to explore the academic connotation of the career orientation of undergraduates deeply. This paper searches results at CNKI with the concept of the career orientation of undergraduates. Considering that those papers from core journals are rare, this paper enlarges the searching range that contains all related papers from 1994 to 2022. By this way, this paper comes to the object of 112 papers including academic dissertations. Here comes the study law of Domestic Researches. Firstly, Sun Rui and Yang Youjing claimed that the formation of career orientation of undergraduates was influenced by following factors which are the pressure of employment, the level of self-esteem and confidence and self-efficacy. Meanwhile, they put forward strategies from the perspectives of students themselves, families, schools and the whole society, which accounts for 15.9%.<sup>[4][5]</sup> Secondly, Huang Yihao and Suo Hong studied research status of the particular group that is the generations after 90s, medical students, P.E. students, normal university students, agriculture university students, poor university students and navigation university students. They put forward the proposals of employment based on the different students with various backgrounds, which accounts for 59%.<sup>[6][7]</sup> Thirdly, Mei Haiqing focused on universities of the certain cities and explored the research status and potential problems of these cities including Henan, Beijing, Chongqing, Shanghai, Hebei and Jilin. The scholars and professionals proposed career suggestions on the basis of economic level, working environment, open policies and market mechanism, which accounts for 8.8%.<sup>[8]</sup> Fourthly, Tian Jiayi, Wang Yue and Liu Jie concentrated on specific stages of history, let's say, financial crisis, 1990s and the social transitional period. They studied the characteristics and bottlenecks on career orientation of undergraduates at these stages and how these characteristics and bottlenecks shaped their occupational choices, which accounts for 13%.<sup>[9][10]</sup> Fifthly, those feminist scholars like An Chunyan centered on the gender differences on career orientation of undergraduates, especially the misunderstanding and blind spots of female students on career choices. They also offered career preparative guidance for female undergraduates, which accounts for 3.3%.<sup>[11]</sup>

### 2.2 The disadvantages of domestic researches

This paper found several disadvantages while I studied on related papers.: from the research perspectives, domestic scholars mainly concentrated on Pedagogy, Economics and Psychology instead of sociology that contained about 3 papers. Secondly, from the research subjects, scholars paid much attention to the students from developed areas rather than those underdeveloped areas; especially they rarely considered the social factors. That means the scientific suggestions from

developed areas cannot benefit those who are from underdeveloped areas. Thirdly, from the viewpoint of research methods, the number of non-empirical research that is about experience conclusion is larger than empirical study. Those empirical researches were based on questionnaire of university students, which show that scholars emphasized the status of career choices. However, they under-evaluated the reasons and social factors which led to the situation. The method of data analysis was just about offering simple percentages and sequences, which was lack of theory preparation and hypothesis. The research of factors on career orientation mainly focused on the viewpoint of logic inference without the support of empirical data and method. It was evident that the final of job choosing was shaped by numerous factors intensively. The existed researches were developed from different angles, which are lack of systematic logic. Thus, there was little effective guidance on undergraduates' employment among underdeveloped areas.

### 2.3 Overseas Research Status

Comparing the domestic and overseas researches on career orientation, the author found that overseas researches were started in 1972 which was earlier than domestic researches and became the hot topic, meanwhile obtained more achievements. Overseas scholars developed 4 divisions to study on the topic. Firstly, they concentrated on the factors of age and gender, and probed into the influences on age and gender of career orientation of undergraduates. DAVID E. NEICE, Olcay Yilmaz came the conclusion that the major factors was age.<sup>[12][13]</sup> Leslie Martin Raine maintained that the mother-daughter relationship (psychological separation and reliance) had a deep influence on girls' career choices, which accounts for 15.4%.<sup>[14]</sup> Secondly, Aharon Tzine and Svetlana Kotova studied the difference on job choices from the viewpoint of psychology involving self-efficacy, work burnout and personality difference, which accounts for 23%.<sup>[15][16]</sup> Thirdly, Michele H, Hector Rivera and Michael E. Gemer were aimed at the specific group, for example, internationals students and undergraduates who majored in engineering technology, education and science. They found that majors and learning experience shaped students' occupational choices and ideology, which accounts for 38.6%.<sup>[17][18][19]</sup> Fourthly, Saturnino T. Pabalinas, Smart, John C and Bambang Suryadi studied how family economic capital, school condition and chances on employment shaped the personal career choices from the perspective of sociology, accounts for 23%.<sup>[20][21]</sup>

### 2.4 The disadvantages of oversea researches

Having studied the overseas researches, the author found the following shortcomings. Firstly, from the perspective of research objects, there were a small number of studies on minority ethnic groups. Secondly, from the research perspective, foreign scholars paid much attention to social factors of career orientation, especially, family economic capital while ignored the influence of family cultural capital and social capital on career orientation. Thirdly, from the perspective of teaching methods, most foreign scholars used questionnaires, which means scholar centered on studying the research status instead of probing into students themselves deeply to know the potential factors on different career orientations which was affected by family backgrounds.

## 3. Prospect

Having studied those domestic and overseas researches, the author found that papers related to career orientation of undergraduates were from the perspective of Psychology, Pedagogy and Economics, but scholars didn't explore the potential social factors of this topic deeply and scientifically. Meanwhile, the researches on students who were from underdeveloped areas are rare.

Thus, the author gives the following future suggestions on researches of career orientation from the viewpoint of research subjective, methods and angles. Firstly, students who are from underdeveloped areas should be paid much attention to, especially, university students' ideology of career orientation. China is a country with different ethnic groups, and the difference on the level of development is obvious. Therefore, those existed researches of typical developed cities cannot stand for those who are from underdeveloped areas. Students who are from underdeveloped areas should be emphasized and paid attention to so that the balance of social career structure and talents installation should be promoted, which will help the students to build the scientific career orientation and self-cognition. Secondly, based on the research of domestic scholars, this paper improves the research method by combining the way of explanation and description. The descriptive methods will be used to know the status of career orientation of undergraduates from different areas systematically, which helps to predict the future social changes and trendy of different areas in China. The explanative methods will be used to explore the social factors career orientation of undergraduates, especially, the family capital at the background of social stratification. The theoretical and practical methods should be used conclusively. The theoretical methods should be used to explain the regularity of relations on the family capital and status on career orientation of undergraduates, and the changing trend on future social occupational structure in China. The practical method will be used to solve the social problem, which, means to promote a rational action program for individuals and departments. The qualitative and quantitative methods should be adopted simultaneously. The questionnaire method and literature research method what are qualitative research should be used to acquaint the status on career orientation of undergraduates. The characteristic and performance of research subjective will be studied further to explain why the he status on career orientation of undergraduates happens by using the quantitative methods. Thirdly, the research perspective will be expanded to study the influence of family capital on career orientation of undergraduates, educational results and related social problems at the background of social stratification. Meanwhile, the strategies will be explored to seek the educational equality and social upward mobility, which helps to build a vibrant and progressive society.

#### 4. Conclusion

Education decides the development of the whole country, cities and individuals. Employment shows the equality of education, which is also the key evidence of upward social mobility. Therefore, studying on career orientation of undergraduates is theoretically and practically meaningful. Only exploring the status and influencing factors of career orientation, we can predict the future tendency of social occupational structure and find the defects and problem of social institution to tackle the problem of imbalance on occupational structure. Only studying how family capital affects personal career orientation on the background of social stratification, we can probe into how family capital shapes social mobility. That is the equality of educational results. Hence, the building of the national lifelong career planning system will be promoted in China. Meanwhile, the innovation on major setup and talent cultivation will be stimulated and set up majors based on geographical features from the objectives of market mechanism, national macro development and self-fulfillment to promote optimal disposition of talent resources of different areas. Only by deeply analyzing the failure of social mobility personnel and occupational structural dislocation, and exposing the dilemma of college students in different fields, can we help them build a scientific career orientation, career awareness and self-cognition. At the same time, personal competition will be formatted, which benefits self-fulfillment, family happiness, employment vitality and innovation-driven development of the whole country.

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