

A Study on the Employment Intentions and Influencing Factors of Sports Education Major Students

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Abstract: This study explores the employment intentions of physical education major students, the influencing factors, and proposes corresponding strategies. It addresses issues from the perspectives of the government, sports colleges, and individuals. The research utilizes methods such as literature review, questionnaire surveys, statistical analysis, and expert interviews to investigate and study the employment intentions and influencing factors of undergraduate students majoring in physical education at Ankang University. The study examines the employment intentions of physical education major students in terms of employment regions, economic value, and alignment with their majors. Factors influencing the employment intentions of school physical education major undergraduates are investigated, including employment prospects, employment standards, family influences, personal abilities, school guidance, and internship experiences. By investigating the employment intentions and influencing factors of physical education major students at Ankang University, this research provides valuable insights for the employment of Chinese sports university students.

1. Introduction

Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2019, the pace of China's economic development has gradually slowed down, leading to a reduction in the demand for labor in the job market. The shortage of employment positions for college graduates has become severe, despite the consistent high output of graduates from higher education institutions each year. This has resulted in intense competition in the job market and a deteriorating employment environment for college students. The societal demand has become a crucial prerequisite for the reform of higher physical education [1]. Balancing the market demand and higher education for students in sports colleges has become a significant challenge in the current landscape of higher physical education. In recent years, the employment pathways for university graduates have entered a normal "two-way selection track." With the rapid development of higher sports education institutions, in addition to physical education majors, various other disciplines such as sports sociology, sports training, and traditional ethnic sports have been introduced. This has led to the training of tens of thousands of sports teachers and other professionals, addressing the severe shortage of sports teaching staff and other

sports-related talents, and making a positive contribution to the development of the sports industry [2].

With the gradual increase in enrollment in sports-related disciplines at Ankang University in recent years, there has been a localized oversupply of undergraduate students in sports colleges, but an overall irrational shortage situation persists. At the same time, students from sports colleges have shown preliminary issues such as a relatively narrow range of employment intentions and weak competitiveness. However, the proportion of graduates from sports colleges being absorbed into the workforce has declined. This is primarily due to two factors. Firstly, the growing influence of sports has led to increased interest in the field, with more individuals aspiring to engage in sports-related careers amidst the development of the domestic sports market and sports industry. Secondly, there are societal factors at play, including the expansion of university enrollment, a rise in the number of graduates, reforms in public institutions reducing available job positions, and non-sports college graduates broadening their job choices. Moreover, there is a certain gap in the overall competitiveness of graduates from sports colleges compared to their counterparts from non-sports colleges. The current trend in our country's sports development indicates a need for versatile sports talent. Graduate employment is a policy-driven, wide-reaching, and widely observed issue in society. The success of graduate employment placement is crucial for the future of graduates, the expectations of parents, and societal stability. Additionally, the employment rate of graduates is an important evaluation indicator for the quality of higher education, the management level of universities, and various other aspects in the conditions of a socialist market economy. The employment situation of graduates is not only a test of the training level of higher education talent and the social reputation of universities but also crucial for a university's ability to maintain vitality in a competitive job market. It also affects the future source of students and the rational allocation of talent resources, constituting a significant matter for social stability. Therefore, exploring the employment intentions and influencing factors of undergraduate students in sports colleges, identifying existing issues, holds great theoretical significance and practical value for sports colleges in our province to cultivate sports-qualified talents needed by society and improve the employment rate of students from sports colleges.

2. Literature review

The family economic situation directly influences the career choices and employment outcomes of college students. Substantial and necessary economic support not only expands the options for students in their employment decisions but also helps alleviate the psychological burden during the job search, promoting improved employment outcomes. Simultaneously, an improvement in the family's economic condition will also have a direct impact on the employment situation of students majoring in sports [3]. The educational attainment of parents significantly affects the employment intentions of college students, encompassing their basic qualities, educational background, and educational perspectives, all of which directly influence an individual's career development path [4]. Therefore, parents themselves need to continuously learn, cultivate the right mindset, and provide rational guidance for their children's career paths, selecting employment routes that suit their children best. When analyzing their children's employment situations, parents should maintain rationality and consider the value of the profession and the interests of the practitioners, rather than simply measuring the quality of work by salary. In terms of educating their children, parents should guide them scientifically, reasonably, and correctly, instilling confidence in their children's learning and work endeavors and fostering an optimistic outlook on the future [5]. In the actual social structure, family social background and economic capability are inherent factors for college students, and they cannot be chosen directly. For the employment decisions of college graduates,

these factors do not have practical significance and can only serve as reference materials for research institutions.

Researchers have conducted surveys and found that current graduating students generally have a low level of awareness about their own majors, with only about 20% having a clear understanding of their respective fields of study. Close to 40% of students lack a systematic and comprehensive plan for their future careers, indicating that the relevant courses and guidance in school's employment counseling have not been effective. A well-developed career plan can play a crucial role in the development of college students, laying the groundwork for future endeavors and alleviating the pressure of employment. It is advised for students to avoid unrealistic and impractical planning, conduct reasonable research, recognize their own shortcomings, and adapt to the professional environment [6]. Related to this, findings from the survey regarding employment internships show that fewer than 50% of graduating students participate in internships, and even among those with internship experience, only 40% have interned in roles aligned with their majors. This suggests a significant deficiency in the school's guidance on student employment [7]. Previous research has detailed how schools can establish effective and comprehensive employment guidance services. First and foremost, there should be a focus on acknowledging the practical realities of employment, raising the school's awareness level, improving the quality of teaching staff, refining the structure of employment guidance, and integrating guidance into the entire learning cycle. Enhancing the educational and training capabilities is also crucial[8].

Wang Xiangyi, in his study on the employment intentions of contemporary college students, emphasizes the critical role of graduates' own abilities in the core competition of the job market. The graduates' proficiency in their field of study and professional skills will demonstrate advantages surpassing their peers in the future job market. It is essential to significantly enhance one's overall qualities through social practice, cultivate grassroots abilities that meet the needs of social development, and adapt adeptly to the ever-changing employment environment[9]. Previous research on the employment intentions of early childhood education graduates has indicated that graduates should possess the correct views on employment and career choices. Moreover, these skills should be acquired and mastered from the first year of college, emphasizing the importance of proactive action. Graduating students should objectively and reasonably assess their own abilities, align their employment intentions with practical societal needs, and integrate theory and practice in their learning and practical experiences. Diligent learning of professional skills to enhance overall qualities, fostering a strong sense of identity in their field, and approaching their profession with confidence are essential for providing dedicated and wholehearted service to their chosen profession [10].

In the study of the employment situation of college students in third- and fourth-tier cities, some researchers have found that a significant proportion of graduates express a desire to stay in their local areas. The primary reasons for this inclination include proximity to their alma mater, familiarity with the local environment, and the ability to find a satisfactory job. In contrast, the number of graduates wishing to return to their hometowns is relatively small. The research also reveals that graduates have relatively high salary expectations. If the offered salary does not meet their inner expectations, they would rather choose unemployment and spend time considering opportunities in government agencies or public service roles, rather than accepting lower-paying jobs[11]. With the development of the market economy and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the domestic economy since 2019, pursuing higher education as a means of securing high-quality employment has become a new norm. Previous studies on the status of vocational education in the job market indicate that across various industries, the demand for talent has increased. Graduates from ordinary vocational colleges face a lack of advantages in the job market. The number of graduates from vocational nursing programs choosing to pursue further education

has been steadily increasing. According to surveys, six out of ten individuals are willing to participate in further education programs, indicating that societal discrimination against educational qualifications has increased employment pressure, pushing more graduates into the crowded path of educational advancement [12].

The government plays a pivotal role in the entire employment landscape, and previous studies have emphasized its crucial position within the employment structure. Therefore, it is essential for the government to focus on adjusting and improving grassroots employment policies. Governments should adopt flexible and tailored approaches, continuously deepening and optimizing policies based on the specific conditions of different regions. Simultaneously, the government should ensure the material security of employees by raising the minimum wage levels and improving job welfare benefits. Establishing dedicated funds from educational fiscal expenditures is also recommended. Governments should actively promote youth organizations, providing opportunities for young talents to connect and potentially find life partners. Supporting professionals emotionally and ensuring robust support for their spiritual needs is crucial. Offering a platform for young individuals to contribute and providing a warm home background are essential elements. This involves the government collaborating with youth organizations to facilitate networking and support the holistic needs of the workforce[13].

In the choice of employment intentions, most graduates are often influenced by family and friends. Research indicates that the most direct factor influencing employment is the influence of peers. Students with the same major, in the same class, or within the same category of majors tend to exhibit high levels of similarity in their employment intentions. If there are many students in the same dormitory preparing for further studies, the remaining students are more likely to choose further studies under the influence of their peers. In the same environment, the choices of the majority of students have an inspiring effect on the choices of other students. In a dormitory, students with a negative attitude towards employment tend to exhibit more negativity in their employment intentions, directly influencing the choices of other students and weakening their own willingness to make employment choices. The positive employment attitude and actions of student leaders can activate the employment intentions of some students and have an irreplaceable positive guiding role [14].

3. Methodology

This article employs various research methods, including literature review, questionnaire survey, statistical analysis, and interviews, to investigate and study the employment intentions of students majoring in physical education and the influencing factors.

3.1 Literature Review

In accordance with the needs of the research objectives and tasks, a substantial amount of literature, articles, journals, and books related to the employment intentions and influencing factors of graduates majoring in physical education were reviewed at the library of Ankang University. The collected literature and books were promptly organized and analyzed. Additionally, the latest information on students' employment intentions was obtained through searches on platforms such as "China National Knowledge Infrastructure" (CNKI) and "Wanfang Data."

3.2 Questionnaire Survey

Tailored to the research purposes, a questionnaire titled "Research on Employment Intentions and Influencing Factors of Students Majoring in Physical Education: A Case Study of Ankang

University" was designed. The questionnaire was distributed and collected online using WeChat. This method was chosen to facilitate data collection for the study.

Validity Test of the Questionnaire: To ensure the reliability of the questionnaire data, a small-scale reliability test was conducted using the test-retest method. Twenty randomly selected participants from the initial survey were invited to fill out the same questionnaire online after a one-month interval. The correlation coefficient between the two sets of responses was calculated using SPSS, as shown in Table 1. The results indicate that the reliability of the survey questionnaire for this study is high and meets the required standards.

Table 1: Results of the questionnaire reliability test

Number of Participants in the Retest	Number of Days Between Tests	Correlation Coefficient	P-value
20	30	0.85	<0.01

The reliability test of the questionnaire was conducted using the internal consistency testing method. Through the questionnaire examination, a significant difference was observed with a p-value < 0.01, indicating high credibility and strong reliability.

3.3 Statistical Analysis

All data from the questionnaire survey were processed and statistically analyzed using Excel software. The data entry into the tables was performed by hiring professionals for design and compilation. After a thorough review by experts, the statistical results were deemed accurate and were used for the analysis and argumentation in this study.

3.4 Expert Interview Method

Throughout the distribution of the questionnaires, interviews were conducted with several leaders and professional teachers from the sports department of the university. These interviews aimed to gather information on the current employment situation and status of students majoring in physical education at Ankang University. This additional information, collected beyond the scope of the questionnaires, served as theoretical basis and material accumulation for the writing of this paper.

4. Results and discussion

This section discusses the research on the employment intentions, influencing factors, and strategies of students majoring in physical education. We explore how to enhance the employment levels of university students from the perspectives of the government, sports institutions, and individuals.

4.1 Expression of College Students' Employment Intentions

(1) Employment Regional Preferences

Regarding the choice of region, Ankang University's undergraduate students majoring in physical education predominantly focus on cities where their household registration is located and cities where their graduation institution is situated. Among the surveyed students, 36.57% prefer cities where their household registration is located, and 38.87% prefer cities where their graduation institution is situated. Additionally, 26.53% of the undergraduate students choose cities where their graduation institution is located, and this figure rises to 28.53% with a confidence interval of 95%.

(2) Employment Unit Preferences

The survey categorized the employment preferences of undergraduate students majoring in physical education at Ankang University into various types of institutions: schools, research institutions, sports clubs, government agencies, large enterprises, and entrepreneurship. The results indicate that the intention of Ankang University's undergraduate students majoring in physical education is primarily concentrated on schools, accounting for 45.05% of the total surveyed individuals. Due to the stability of jobs in schools and advantages in terms of salary, working environment, and benefits, schools remain the top choice for employment among undergraduate students in sports institutions. On the other hand, a relatively smaller number of students expressed preferences for government agencies, large enterprises, and sports research institutions. This is mainly attributed to the difficulty for sports institution students to enter large enterprises due to the mismatch of their majors. Additionally, government agencies and sports research institutions have fewer annual job openings, higher comprehensive requirements for students, and intense competition, leading to fewer students choosing these options. Students expressing a preference for entrepreneurship accounted for 15.37%, while those opting for sports clubs constituted 13.89% in terms of employment unit intentions.

(3) Economic Employment Preferences

Among the surveyed undergraduate students majoring in physical education from sports institutions at Ankang University, 2.95% chose a monthly salary of "below 2500 yuan," while 65.47% selected the range of "3501-4500 yuan." With a confidence interval of 95%, the proportion of students choosing the range of "3501-4500 yuan" was 67.67%, which is consistent with the actual income situation of sports teachers in our province. This suggests that the employment expectations of the majority of undergraduate students in sports institutions in our province are relatively rational, as they can pragmatically assess their actual abilities and social value. Students choosing a monthly salary of "above 3000 yuan" accounted for 9.48% of the total surveyed individuals. This indicates that there is still a small proportion of students with higher economic expectations. With the deepening of market economy development, every graduate hopes to secure a job after graduation that can better meet both their material and spiritual needs.

4.2 Main Factors Influencing Employment Intentions

(1) Workplace and Benefits

The most crucial considerations for students from sports institutions when choosing a job are the salary level and benefits of the workplace, the employment region, and whether it is conducive to personal development and promotion. According to the survey, the main factors influencing the employment intentions of students majoring in physical education are, in order: salary and benefits, employment region selection, whether it is conducive to personal development and promotion, interest in the job itself, job stability, working environment, and the size and reputation of the institution. The data indicates that the most significant concern for undergraduate students in sports institutions in our province when it comes to employment is the economic compensation. They consider "salary and benefits" as the most critical factor when making employment decisions, aligning with the employment standards of graduates from other disciplines. This situation is also practical and in line with common expectations.

(2) Family Influence

The survey results indicate that undergraduate students majoring in physical education at Ankang University prioritize opinions on employment as follows: "self," "parents," "partner," and "teacher." About 32.79% of students choose "self," suggesting a general trend of increased self-awareness and independence among graduates. However, when facing practical difficulties during the employment

process, graduates still tend to seek advice from their parents, with 30.6% of students choosing "parents." With a confidence interval of 95%, female students tend to value parental opinions more than male students. About 18.11% of students choose "partner." Given the common phenomenon of dating in universities and the challenge of finding employment in different locations after graduation, successful relationships are relatively rare. This poses a significant problem for graduates majoring in physical education in our province, making them consider the opinions of their "partners" during employment decisions. Additionally, 12.42% of students choose the opinions of "teachers." Since teachers are familiar with the employment situation of students each year and have a deep understanding of the employment prospects in the field, their opinions are considered more professionally oriented than those of others.

(3) Influence of Institutional Level

Among the surveyed undergraduate students majoring in physical education at Ankang University, 72.84% of the students believe that the level of the graduation institution has an impact on the employment of graduates, with a confidence interval of 95%. On the one hand, the level of the graduation institution indirectly determines the differences in the education and abilities of graduates, directly affecting their employment situations. Key provincial universities have advantages over regular universities in terms of employment. On the other hand, the geographical location of the graduation institution also affects the employment of graduates. Graduates from universities in provincial capital cities show advantages in employment, while those from non-capital cities may face relatively more challenges.

4.3 Strategies to Enhance the Employment Intentions of University Students

This section presents strategies and recommendations from three perspectives: the government, educational institutions, and the graduates themselves, addressing the issues and shortcomings identified in the employment intentions of sports education majors at Ankang University. These suggestions are provided for reference by the education authorities and university career guidance departments in our province.

4.4 Strengthening Government Macro-Control Over Graduate Employment

The government should establish comprehensive employment norms in the job market. Standardize market management systems to legally safeguard "independent employment, mutual selection," implementing principles of openness, fairness, and impartial competition. The government needs to fulfill its supervisory role, establish supervisory bodies, and effectively manage and oversee the employment market. Coordination of various talent demand information sources is essential, establishing employment service agencies and refining personnel agency systems. Utilizing market mechanisms to regulate the supply and demand relationship of graduates will optimize the allocation of graduate resources.

4.5 Enhancing Employment Guidance in Sports Universities

Revamping the current state of employment guidance work, each secondary college should provide precise guidance based on the characteristics of sports majors and market demands, ensuring effective assistance from the institutions. Implementing a one-leader responsibility system, all secondary college cadres should actively participate in employment assistance work, establishing a long-term mechanism for specialized personnel responsibility and targeted support. Elevating guidance work to a new level, hierarchically not inferior to the college entrance examination, continuously tracking and investigating the real employment situation of graduates according to

market entry requirements.

4.6 Strengthening Qualitative Education for Sports Majors

The university combines the characteristics of the sports-type undergraduates to increase extracurricular practice opportunities and transforms the traditional written exams into outdoor practical teaching courses. The school focuses on cultivating students' teaching ability, and mainly improves students' professional skills and overall qualities. The school focuses on improving students' language expression, teaching organization, self-evaluation ability, teaching level and skills. The university actively responds to teaching feedback, promptly solve various challenges in education and teaching, and promote students' learning progress.

4.7 Strict Control of Educational Internship Work

The university has adjusted and extended the internship time for graduates, increasing it from the traditional 12 weeks to 14-16 weeks. The school has restructured the internship program to systematically arrange the content and time of employment internships. The school emphasizes the balance between practical and theoretical study, incorporates practical courses into formal curricula, and uses theoretical knowledge to guide practical work. The school has changed the previous centralized internship model to two separate internships for junior and senior years.

4.8 Establishing the Correct Employment Concept, Enhancing Comprehensive Qualities

College students improve their competitiveness and knowledge structure from the perspectives of ideology, ethics, culture, and physical and mental qualities. Students maintain a positive competitive mentality and establish a correct employment philosophy. Moreover, they should also recognize that competition involves risks, prepare for setbacks, and view setbacks as opportunities to strengthen their willpower and abilities.

4.9 Changing Employment Concepts, Achieving Employment Through Multiple Channels

College students should establish independent career choice concepts, overcome dependent mentality. Based on personal conditions and social reality, students make rational career planning, adjust employment expectations, and make decisions that align with personal circumstances and market demands. Before choosing a career, college students should have a clear understanding of the job, grasp employment opportunities, and flexibly adjust career development directions. At the same time, they should abandon the concept of one-stop shopping and lifelong careers, and view career choices and career development with a developmental perspective. With the continuous improvement of the personnel agency system, conditions for the mobile employment of university students are created. University students should cultivate a progressive career mobility concept, learning to discover, seize, and utilize opportunities during transitions.

5. Research implications

This study offers insights into the employment preferences of graduates, enabling them to understand the employment landscape and directions in the sports industry under a market-oriented economy. It is advantageous for job seekers to make informed decisions, reducing the risk of choosing inappropriate employment opportunities.

By exploring the employment intentions and influencing factors of students majoring in sports

education, identifying existing issues, and proactively planning for them, schools can be better prepared. This proactive approach is conducive for educational institutions to strengthen career education, provide effective guidance on employment perspectives, and prepare students psychologically, enabling them to take a proactive stance in the competitive job market. Simultaneously, students' employment intentions represent an evolving and dynamic process. Only by understanding their fundamental aspects can educational institutions provide a theoretical basis for improving career guidance and curriculum reforms, thereby better serving the learning and professional needs of students.

6. Conclusion

This study investigates the employment intentions of graduates majoring in sports education, exploring various factors influencing these intentions. It proposes solutions from the perspectives of the government, educational institutions, and the graduates themselves. Understanding the employment intentions of university students can enhance the proactive initiative within the student community, stimulating their enthusiasm for employment. Relevant authorities can gain insights into the genuine thoughts of university students regarding employment, enabling more scientifically informed macroeconomic regulation. Educational institutions can refine the structure of employment guidance courses and choose the correct guidance directions more clearly. It is important to note that this study focused solely on the sample of graduates from the sports education program at Ankang University. Therefore, the survey results may lack generalizability. Future researchers should aim to collect more comprehensive and diverse data from multiple sources to support and expand upon the findings of this study.

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