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An Analytical Study on Emerging Employment Trends and Guidance Strategies for Contemporary University Graduates

Chen Yu^{1*} and Yin Jie²

¹Deputy Director of the Student Career Development and Employment Service Center at Southwest University, Chongqing, China. E-mail: 543176922@qq.com.

²Market Expansion Department, Student Career Development and Employment Service Center, Southwest University, Chongqing, China. E-mail: 1169473227@qq.com.

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Abstract

With the rapid development of the social economy, new forms of employment have emerged as a crucial force in stabilizing employment. Through a nationwide survey, this study analyzes the characteristics of college student groups with varying occupational preferences and attitudes. It is found that factors such as family background, living conditions, employment perceptions, and psychological states significantly influence their career choices. College students who are inclined to opt for emerging professions often come from economically well-off families and exhibit an open and accepting attitude towards these new career paths. However, college students still encounter challenges in the employment process, including inadequate job stability and low occupational recognition. Moreover, there exists a disconnect between the current cultivation models in higher education institutions and market demands. The study emphasizes the need to strengthen the cultivation of interdisciplinary capabilities and a composite knowledge structure, while simultaneously enhancing college students' digital literacy and soft skills. Based on these findings, this research proposes strategic recommendations, such as fostering new employment perceptions, cultivating new professional qualities, and empowering multiple stakeholders to dismantle "development barriers." These measures aim to guide college students in actively adapting to the development trends of new forms of employment and facilitate the realization of high-quality employment goals.

Keywords: *Employment optimization, University graduates, Emerging employment patterns*

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1. Introduction

Against the backdrop of rapid socioeconomic advancement, the accelerated development and widespread application of emerging information technologies, including artificial intelligence, big data, and cloud computing, have catalyzed transformative changes in corporate labor demand and workforce employment patterns (Hao and Fang, 2022). These technological innovations have dissolved the spatial and temporal constraints characteristic of traditional employment models, leading to a fundamental reconfiguration and evolution of labor paradigms.

In this context, new employment forms have emerged as a stabilizing anchor for employment security. They serve to: (1) broaden occupational domains, (2) enhance employment quality, and (3) stabilize career opportunities for key

* Corresponding author: Chen Yu, Deputy Director of the Student Career Development and Employment Service Center at Southwest University, Chongqing, China. E-mail: 543176922@qq.com.

demographic groups (Bi, 2022). Such modalities now represent a critical component of employment prioritization strategies in the digital era.

The growing prevalence of new employment forms among younger generations has emerged as a distinctive trend closely tied to the rapid development of the digital economy. Typically encompassing individuals aged 18–30, this workforce engages in flexible, diversified, and autonomous employment via internet-based platforms. Their labor participation primarily involves undertaking task-oriented work through online platforms—such as ride-hailing drivers, freelance writers, online education tutors, and short-video content creators—where compensation is derived from skill-based services.

With the sustained expansion of the digital economy and shifting youth employment paradigms, the proportion of young people opting for these new employment forms has risen steadily. In 2021, China's National Development and Reform Commission and 12 other ministries jointly issued the Guidelines on Supporting the Healthy Development of New Business Models to Stimulate Consumer Markets and Expand Employment, formally incorporating “new employment forms” into national employment policies. This institutional recognition underscores their significance as a vital component of the labor market. Further reinforcing this trend, in 2025, the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security, Ministry of Education, and Ministry of Finance released the Notice on Promoting Employment for College Graduates and Youth in 2025, emphasizing the need to expand opportunities, enhance competencies, optimize services, and strengthen safeguards to help youth adapt to evolving labor market conditions.

Against this backdrop of digital transformation, critical challenges arise for policymakers and academic institutions: how to guide youth in rationally evaluating new employment forms, improve their professional competitiveness, and foster long-term career stability. Addressing these questions is imperative for refining university career guidance frameworks and formulating evidence-based social policies.

2. Literature Review

2.1. The Connotation and Characteristics of New Employment Forms

At the Fifth Plenary Session of the 18th CPC Central Committee in 2015, the concept of “new employment forms” (新就业形态) was first introduced, emphasizing the need to “strengthen support for flexible employment and new employment forms to promote self-directed employment among workers” (Xinhua News Agency, 2015). Subsequent policy documents further developed and refined this concept. New employment forms represent a flexible, digitally driven mode of employment distinct from traditional arrangements (Zhu, 2018). Enabled by internet-based technologies, they exhibit unique characteristics in labor relations, work patterns, and organizational structures, differing from both formal stable employment and conventional flexible work models (Xu *et al.*, 2022; Hao and Fang, 2022).

Regarding labor relations, new employment forms are characterized by flexibility, the casualization of labor, multi-employer participation, and novel labor methods (Fang, 2020). Employment relationships often become “elastic, virtualized, and multi-layered,” allowing workers to operate independently^a or even hold multiple jobs^a through virtual accounts without traditional organizational ties (Wang, 2019). In terms of work patterns, these forms break traditional constraints on workplace, tasks, and schedules, replacing fixed hours and physical locations with self-determined work times and digital platforms (Mulcahy, 2017). Organizationally, hierarchical corporate structures give way to platform-based models featuring decentralized small units, large-scale support platforms, diversified ecosystems, and bottom-up entrepreneurial dynamism (BCG and AliResearch, 2016).

2.2. The Impact of New Forms of Employment

Employment, as the cornerstone of people's livelihoods, holds a pivotal position in economic and social development (Li, 2017). The Opinions on Further Steadying Employment Work (General Office of the State Council, 2019) and the Opinions on Supporting Multi-Channel Flexible Employment (General Office of the State Council, 2020) issued by the State Council underscore the necessity of “supporting the development of new forms of employment.” These documents emphasize the significance of harnessing the positive impacts of new employment forms, integrating employment development objectives seamlessly with various facets of economic and social advancement (Wang and Feng, 2018), addressing the challenges of total employment pressure and structural contradictions, enhancing people's well-being, and fostering a new development paradigm (Guo and Li, 2021). Furthermore, these new forms are viewed as pivotal tools for resolving major societal contradictions and propelling supply-side structural reforms (Li, 2017).

Characterized by “the casualization of labor” and “novel labor methods,” new forms of employment are increasingly pivotal in absorbing the workforce. The “multi-employer” model, such as “shared employment,” is also gradually

gaining traction in China (Fang, 2020). These new forms are witnessing rapid growth in major industrialized nations, emerging as a vital source of job creation in their labor markets (Zhang, 2018). Propelled and innovated by the “Internet+,” they exhibit robust development momentum (Zhu, 2018).

For young individuals, new forms of employment present novel opportunities for growth and development. On the one hand, these forms are readily comprehensible and acceptable to college graduates (Yang, 2022). The richness of work content and opportunities they offer provides greater flexibility and autonomy in the labor process (Yang, 2020). By leveraging personal capital, young people can fully capitalize on their strengths and advantages, expanding the horizons of their growth and development (Zhang, 2020) and maximizing their self-actualization. On the other hand, new forms of employment can mitigate the gender dilemmas inherent in traditional employment markets and enhance the employability of female college graduates (Guan, 2022). In the employment landscape of new forms, they can effectively compensate for female graduates’ deficiencies in social networks, surmount traditional relational barriers, and explore more career development avenues (Song, 2021).

However, new forms of employment have led to increased heterogeneity in the labor force and heightened fragmentation of work tasks, disrupting traditional employment models in terms of workplaces, working hours, supervision and management, and employment relationships (Zhang, 2018). This has given rise to a series of practical issues. Firstly, labor relations are ambiguous, labor rights and interests are unprotected, the labor regulatory system is inadequate, the efficacy of vocational skills training policies is limited, social security for practitioners is insufficient, and occupational injuries are not adequately safeguarded (Bi, 2022). Secondly, there are new risks to employment stability, new challenges to safeguarding workers’ legitimate rights and interests, new impacts on the enhancement of workers’ vocational skills, and new issues in the demand for public employment and entrepreneurship services (Xu *et al.*, 2022). Thirdly, employment quality is subpar, public policies lag behind, industrial capabilities are inadequate, and information risks are severe (Zhang and Liu, 2019).

In response to these challenges, the government is enhancing institutional construction to furnish a more conducive environment for employment and entrepreneurship, thereby addressing the impacts and challenges posed by new forms of employment. This involves strengthening top-level design, improving social security and other systems, expanding coverage, innovating coordination mechanisms, and smoothing channels for expressing grievances (Bi, 2022); broadening flexible employment channels, strengthening vocational skills training, optimizing the environment for independent entrepreneurship, and increasing publicity and promotion efforts (Xu *et al.*, 2022); and advocating for the development of a multi-center collaborative governance system of “government services, market leadership, and social advocacy” (Zhang and Liu, 2019).

Meanwhile, it is crucial to acknowledge that when young people confront the occupational transformations brought about by new forms of employment, they must navigate both the common challenges faced by ordinary workers and the unique transitional pressures specific to the youth cohort, rendering their choice of new forms of employment fraught with various limitations. At the ideological level, college students’ awareness of employment and entrepreneurship is still evolving, and their understanding of these concepts is a gradual process, which may constrain their choice of new forms of employment during the “employment transition” phase (Zhang and Wang, 2023). Young people often possess unclear career orientations, excessively pursue “prestigious” jobs, and harbor unrealistic employment expectations that are disconnected from the market, causing them to miss potential employment opportunities (Wu and Xu, 2024). At the gender level, due to the limitations of new forms of employment, female college graduates who favor these forms may encounter issues such as employment instability and insufficient security (Guan, 2022).

In terms of talent cultivation, universities lack guidance and fail to adjust their curriculum settings and professional structures in a timely manner based on market changes and talent feedback (Liu and Ma, 2024), resulting in inadequate skill preparation among college students (Liu and Yang, 2023). This makes it difficult for them to adapt to the changes in work content and methods brought about by technological advancements, lacking higher-order cognitive abilities, non-cognitive abilities, skill combinations, and lifelong learning abilities (Liu and Ren, 2021), thereby diminishing their competitiveness. In terms of personal development, under new forms of employment, young people find it challenging to maintain the relatively standardized employment relationships between workers and employers in the traditional economy, leading to a lack of reference points for career growth in the traditional economic context and engendering a sense of anxiety about their career development (Huang *et al.*, 2022). Moreover, influenced by utilitarianism and the instrumental rationality of technology, there is a tendency to view students as mere “containers” for technical skills, neglecting character cultivation and ideological guidance, which leads to insufficient development potential in the long run (Liang, 2022).

2.3. Characteristics of the Emerging Youth Cohort

The emerging youth demographic represents a new social force that has grown alongside China's rapidly evolving industrial structure and the expansion of the digital and gig economies. Typically composed of young individuals with specialized knowledge, innovative mindsets, liberal values, and a strong emphasis on self-expression (Li *et al.*, 2021), this group serves as the primary driver of new employment forms and has become an indispensable force in China's current and future economic development.

Characterized by dynamism and creativity, this demographic exhibits three distinct traits in their engagement with new employment forms: (1) proactive attitudes coupled with significant internal diversity (Feng, 2023); (2) interest-driven work preferences, frequent side occupations, and high cross-industry or cross-regional mobility (Li *et al.*, 2021); and (3) pronounced demands for welfare protections, labor rights, and skill development (Zhu, 2022). Effectively guiding and nurturing this group is pivotal—it bridges economic restructuring and youth empowerment, making it essential to reconcile “talent cultivation” with “societal needs.”

Here, “new employment forms” signify not only diversified job opportunities tailored to youth characteristics and contemporary demands but also a qualitative leap: elevating job quality and satisfaction to transition youth from merely “finding work” to “securing meaningful and fulfilling employment.”

3. Data Sources and Research Framework

3.1. Research Methodology

To comprehensively understand and assess the perceptions of Chinese university students regarding new employment forms, a nationwide survey was conducted from September 2023 to September 2024 across 31 provinces, municipalities, and autonomous regions, excluding Qinghai, Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan. The study employed a mixed-methods approach, integrating online questionnaires with focus group discussions and interviews. A total of 644 questionnaires were collected, with 645 deemed valid, yielding an effective response rate of 99.80%. The research framework was structured around four key dimensions: family background, livelihood conditions, employment preferences, and psychological factors. The study examined university students' basic demographic and educational profiles, including academic experiences, degree levels, and fields of study, to establish a general characterization of the surveyed population. Furthermore, respondents were categorized into two groups based on their employment preferences—those inclined toward traditional employment forms and those favoring new employment models. By analyzing their family situations and living conditions from multiple perspectives, the study aimed to identify the key factors influencing their employment choices. The findings provide a foundation for formulating practical policy recommendations to better guide university students toward achieving high-quality employment outcomes.

3.2. Sample Characteristics

Among the valid questionnaires, 38.66% of respondents were male and 61.33% were female, reflecting a gender ratio of approximately 5:8. In terms of ethnic composition, 90.84% of the surveyed university students identified as Han, while 9.16% belonged to ethnic minority groups. Regarding household registration, 55.75% of respondents were from rural areas, whereas 44.25% were from urban areas.

The surveyed students were distributed across different types of higher education institutions: 46.27% were enrolled in “211 Project” universities, 35.09% attended regular undergraduate institutions, 15.53% studied at vocational colleges, and 3.11% were from “985 Project” universities. In terms of educational attainment, 15.83% of respondents were pursuing associate degrees, 61.49% were undergraduate students, 21.89% were master's students, and 0.77% were doctoral candidates. The academic disciplines of the respondents covered a broad spectrum, including science (28.88%), humanities and social sciences (20.19%), engineering (19.57%), economics and management (17.24%), agriculture (7.14%), arts (4.35%), medicine (1.4%), and sports sciences (1.24%).

4. Analysis of the Characteristics of University Student Groups with Different Career Orientation Attitudes

4.1. Family Background: University Students Favoring Traditional Employment Forms Tend to Have Fewer Working Family Members and Exhibit Lower-Middle Economic Status

4.1.1. Family Structure

Among students inclined toward traditional employment forms, 47.25% come from families with four to five members, while 41.16% belong to families with two to three members. The proportions for families with six to seven members, eight or more members, and single-person households are 9.23%, 1.85%, and 0.53%, respectively.

Regarding the number of working family members, 57% of students favoring traditional employment come from households with two working individuals, while 26% have three or more working members. In contrast, 17% of these students belong to families with only one or no working members (Figure 1). As for the occupations of their family members, 25.96% are employed in government or institutional positions, while 16.74% are agricultural workers, 16.44% are freelancers, and 15.51% are workers or commercial service personnel (Figure 2).

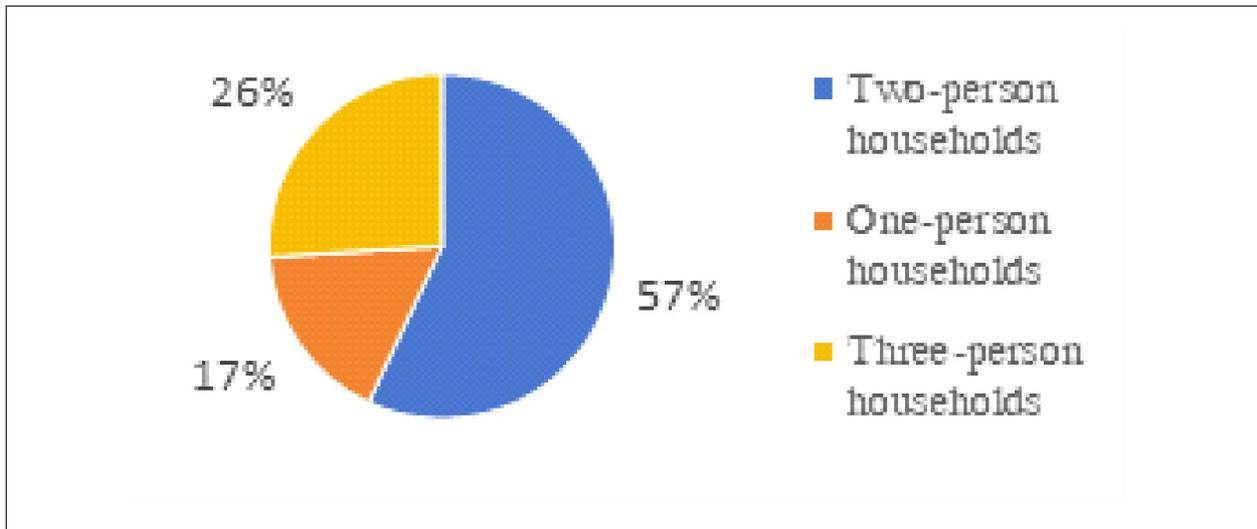


Figure 1: Family Size Distribution

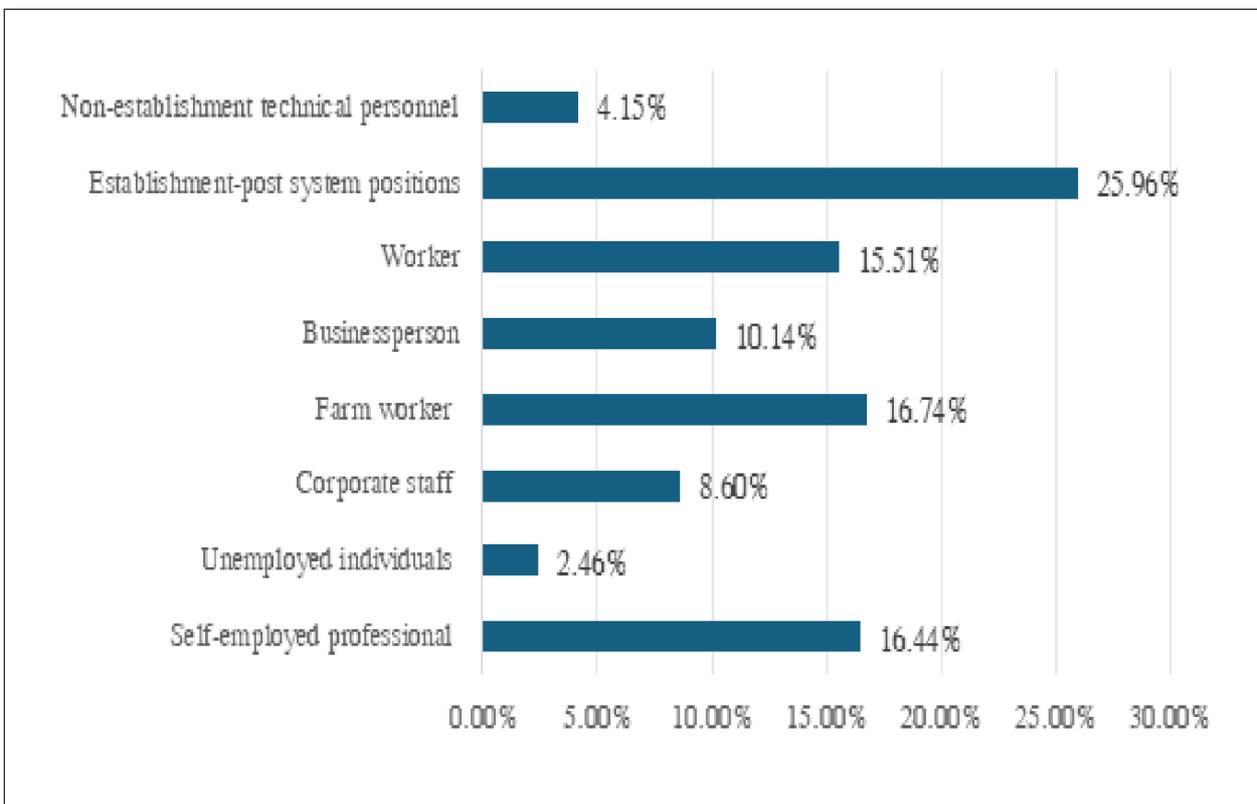


Figure 2: Occupational Distribution of Family Members

4.1.2. Family Living Conditions

According to the National Bureau of Statistics, “2022 National Economic and Social Development Statistical Bulletin”, all surveyed households were categorized by per capita income into five groups: low-income group (per capita disposable income of 8,601 yuan), lower-middle-income group (per capita disposable income of 19,303 yuan), middle-income group (per capita disposable income of 30,598 yuan), upper-middle-income group (per capita disposable income of 47,397 yuan), and high-income group (per capita disposable income of 90,116 yuan). For students inclined toward traditional employment forms, the majority of their families fall within the “lower-middle” income range. Specifically, the proportions of families with per capita annual incomes in the following ranges are: 23% with income below 10,000 yuan, 30% with income between 10,000 and 30,000 yuan, 12% with income between 30,000 and 40,000 yuan, 20% with income between 40,000 and 90,000 yuan, and 15% with income above 90,000 yuan (Figure 3).

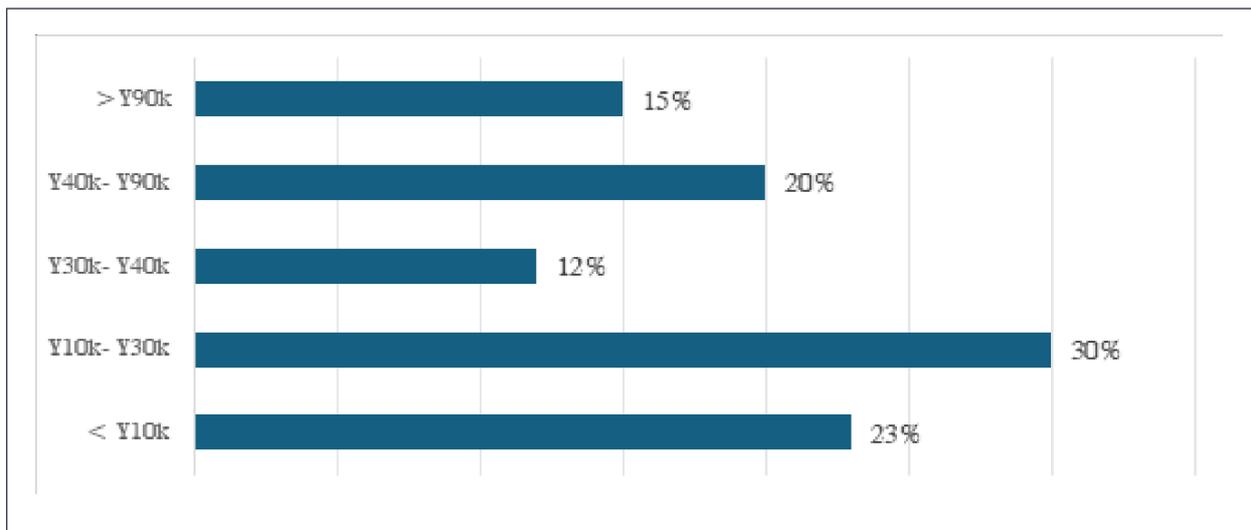


Figure 3: Family Income Distribution

4.2. Living Conditions: For Students Inclined Towards New Employment Forms, Their Families Serve as a Strong Support for Maintaining “Quality of Life”

4.2.1. Personal Living Foundations

Among students who prefer new employment forms, 58% primarily rely on “family support” as their main source of income, 23% rely on “personal savings”, and 18% depend on “temporary wages”. The survey revealed that, when cross-examining “economic sources” with “the duration of the most recent job”, 52% of those students who had worked for 2 to 5 years in their last job still relied on “family support” (Figure 4).

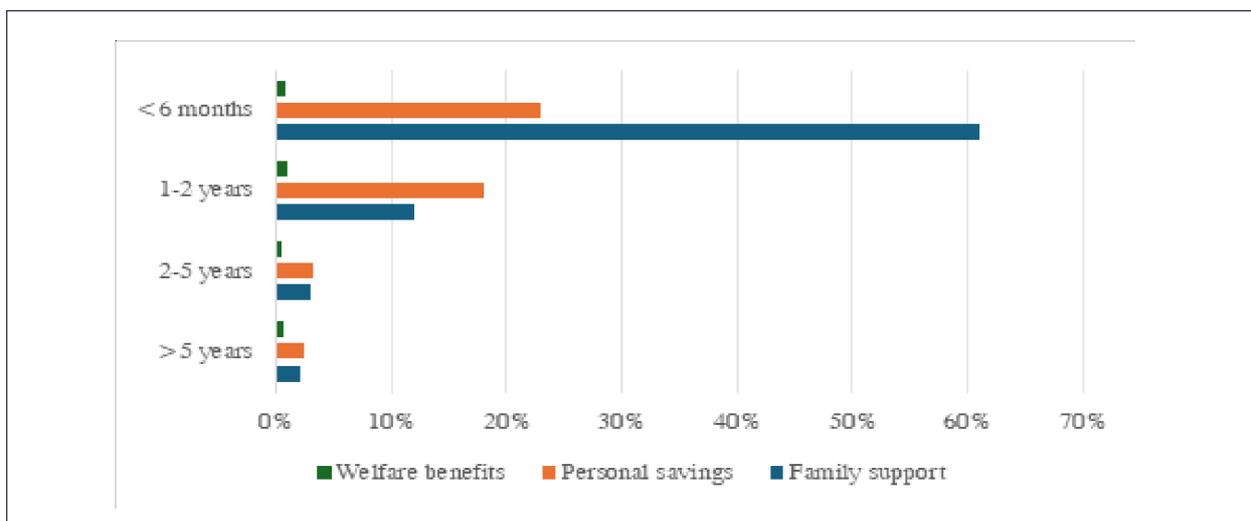


Figure 4: Cross-Examination of “Duration of Last Job” and “Source of Income”

4.2.2. Personal Quality of Life

Among students inclined toward new employment forms, 81% report that their family’s monthly living expenses are below 10,000 yuan. 13% of their families have monthly living expenses ranging from 10,000 to 15,000 yuan, 4% spend between 15,000 and 20,000 yuan, and only 2% have monthly living expenses exceeding 20,000 yuan. The survey revealed that, when cross-examining with “family per capita annual income”, 24.5% of students from families with monthly living expenses below 10,000 yuan have a per capita annual income below 10,000 yuan, while 33.3% have an income between 10,000 and 30,000 yuan. Among students whose families have monthly expenses exceeding 20,000 yuan, 53% come from families with an annual per capita income above 90,000 yuan (Figure 5).

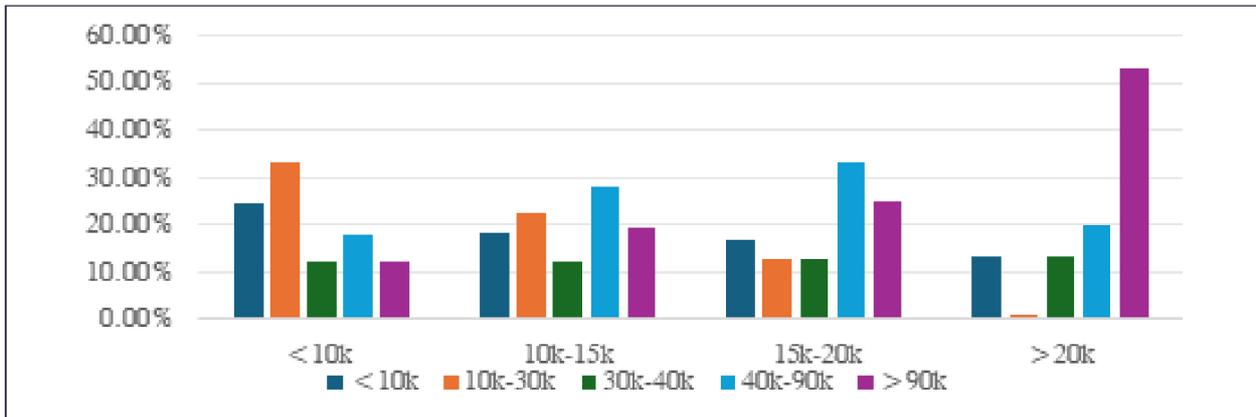


Figure 5: Family Income Distribution Under Different Living Expense Conditions

4.2.3. Personal Leisure Activities

Among students favoring new employment forms, 68% report that their primary leisure activity is “staying at home and surfing the internet”, ranking first. The second and third most popular activities are “shopping and spending” (44%) and “social gatherings” (41%). Other leisure activities include “fitness and exercise” (30%), “traveling” (29%), “watching performances and events” (16%), “handicrafts” (10%), and “painting and photography” (8%) (Figure 6).

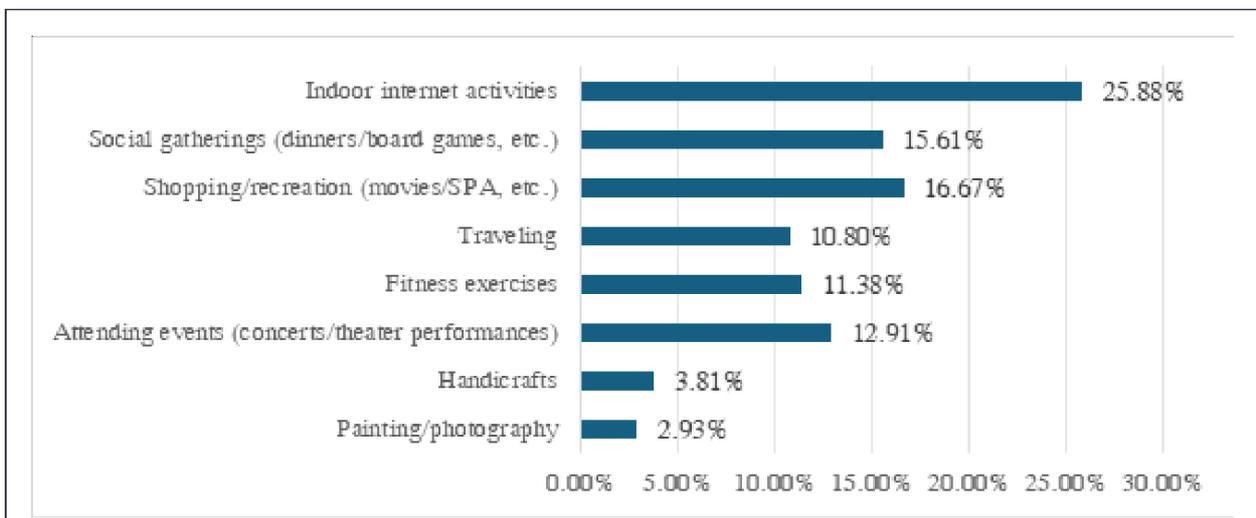


Figure 6: Leisure Activities of University Students Inclined Toward New Employment Forms

4.3. Employment Concepts: University Students’ Employment Demand is “Fundamental”, and Their Employment Expectations are “Pragmatic”, with the “First Job” Achievement Rate Below 65%

4.3.1. Employment Status

Among students inclined toward traditional employment forms, 62.1% have “not achieved their first job”. Of these, 33.3% graduated within the last six months, 57.26% graduated between one and two years ago, and 6.86% graduated between two and five years ago. Among those who have “achieved their first job”, 78.7% had a job duration of “less

than six months”, 17.8% worked for “one to two years”, and only 3.5% had a job lasting “two years or more” (Figure 7). The survey further shows that among students inclined toward traditional employment forms, 74.6% have been unemployed for “less than six months”, 22% have been unemployed for “one to two years”, 3.0% have been unemployed for “two to five years”, and 1.4% have been unemployed for “more than five years”.

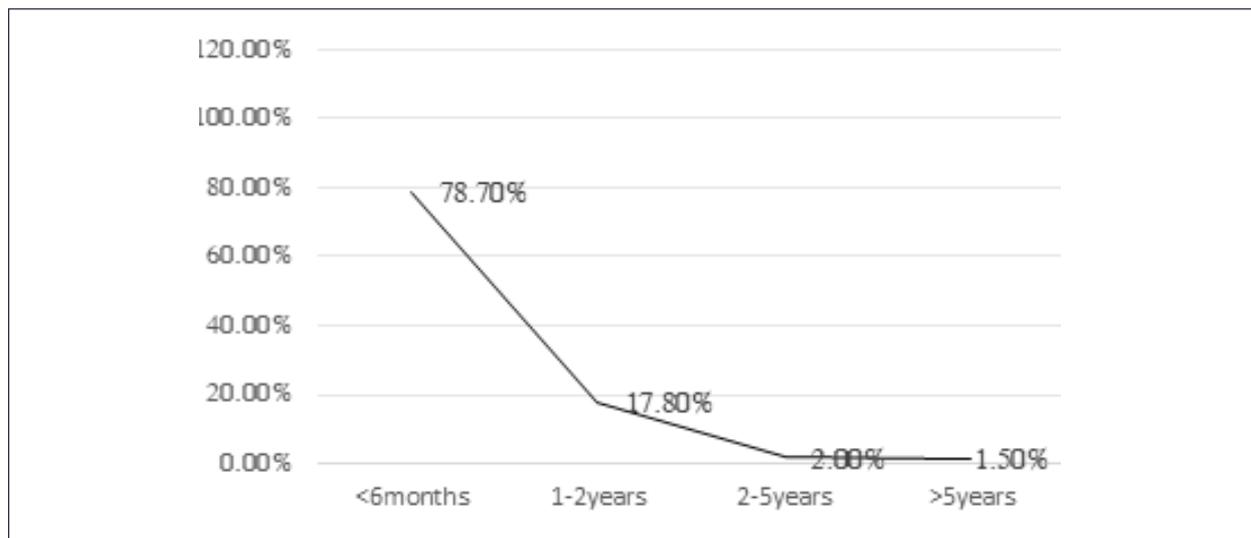


Figure 7: Duration of Last Job

4.3.2. Employment Expectations

Only 12.5% of students inclined toward new employment forms have a “very clear” career plan for the future, while 22.54% have a “relatively clear” plan. 31.93%, 14.51%, and 16.62% of students chose “average”, “not very clear”, and “unclear”, respectively, making up 63.06% of the total. The survey revealed that, even among those inclined toward new employment forms, they often view this choice as a temporary “transitional” option. In the future, 46.9% of students still hope to work in “government agencies/research institutions or other public institutions”, while 26.4% wish to join “state-owned enterprises”. Only 9.2% and 6.9% of students hope to work in “private enterprises/individual businesses” and “joint ventures/foreign trade/sole proprietorships”, respectively. Additionally, 10.4% of students have “no expectations” for their future career choices.

The survey also indicated that, among students inclined toward new employment forms, 44.7% expect a salary of “5,000–8,000 yuan,” while 22.7% and 23.3% expect a salary of “8,000–11,000 yuan” and “above 11,000 yuan”, respectively. Another 7% expect a salary of “below 5,000 yuan” (Figure 8).

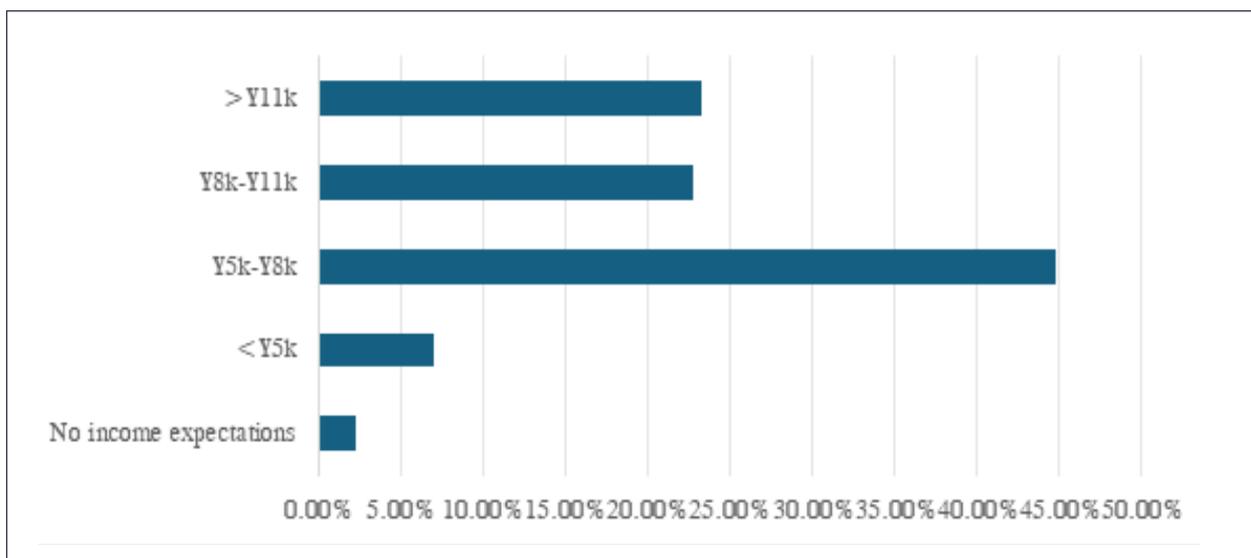


Figure 8: Expected Salary of Students Inclined Toward New Employment Forms

4.3.3. Employment Preparation

Among students inclined toward new employment forms, 10.8% “need a job” for “survival”, 22.13% for “enjoying material life”, 17.07% for “fully developing their personal interests”, 17.02% for “gaining social recognition of their value”, 14.83% for “accumulating social experience and improving their personality”, and 18.14% for “contributing to social development” (see Figure 9).

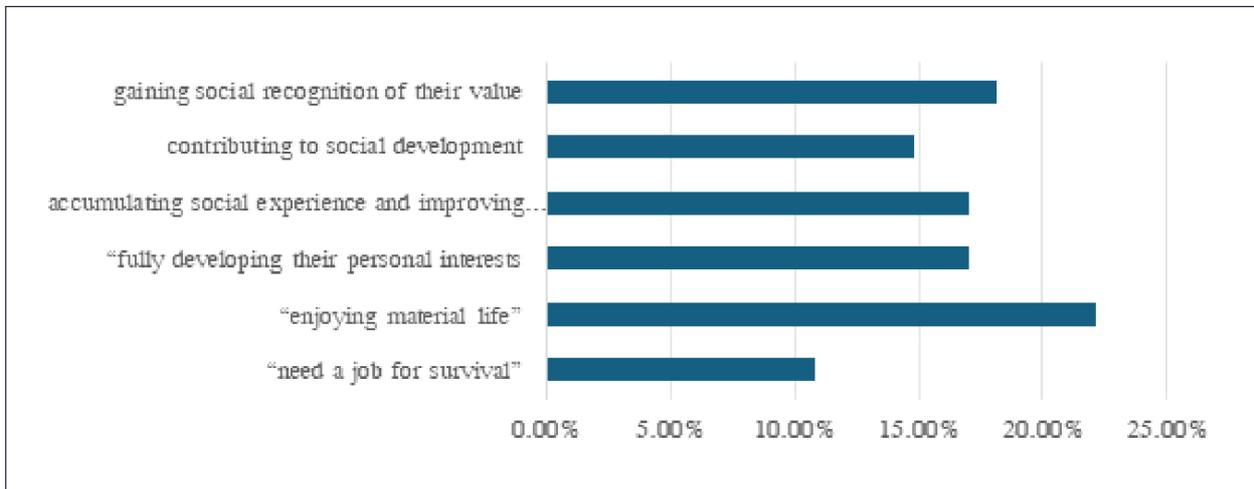


Figure 9: Work Purposes of Students Inclined Toward New Employment Forms

The survey also revealed that, among students inclined toward new employment forms, 25.20% are “preparing for civil service exams”, 19.40% are “preparing for relevant skill certifications”, 14.96% are “engaged in temporary or short-term jobs”, 14.78% are “preparing for graduate school entrance exams”, 10.79% are doing “short-term internships”, 3.26% are “engaged in volunteer service”, 3.17% are “applying for study abroad”, and 8.43% have “no preparations” at all (see Figure 10).

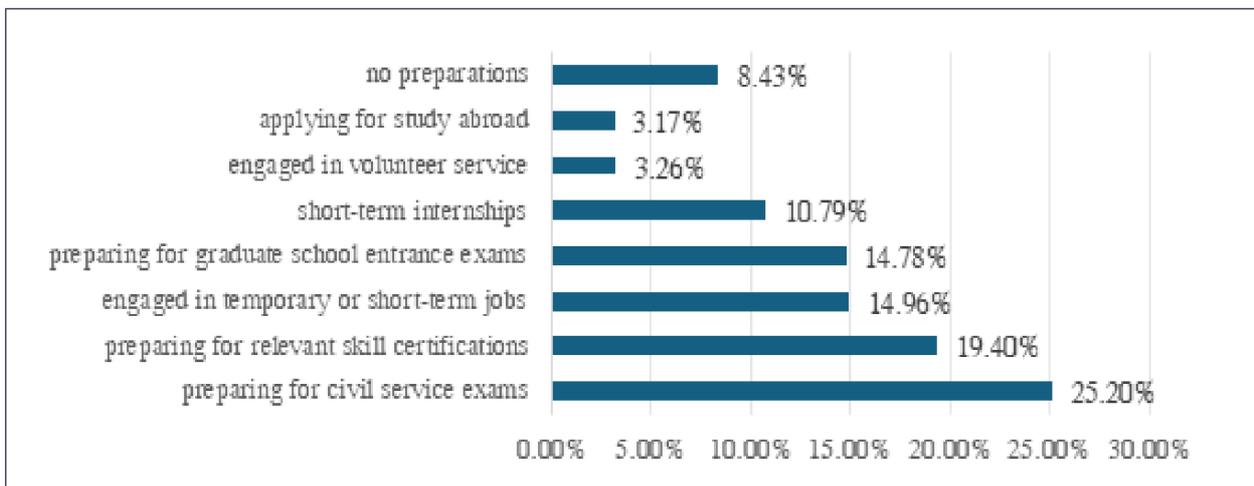


Figure 10: Employment Preparation of Students Inclined Toward New Employment Forms

4.4. Psychological Status: Students Inclined Toward New Employment Forms Show Higher Employment Support, Trust, Psychological Resilience, Participation, and Correct Career Attitudes

4.4.1. Employment Support Perception

Among students inclined toward new employment forms, 80.9% believe that “personal ability” significantly impacts the “successful finding of a job”, 75.5% believe that “personal qualities” have an important impact, 75.8% think that “school level” matters, 72.6% consider “national policies” significant, 67.7% believe that “family resources” are important, 61.5% feel that “family support” is crucial, and 59.3% think that “school assistance” plays a key role (see Figure 11).

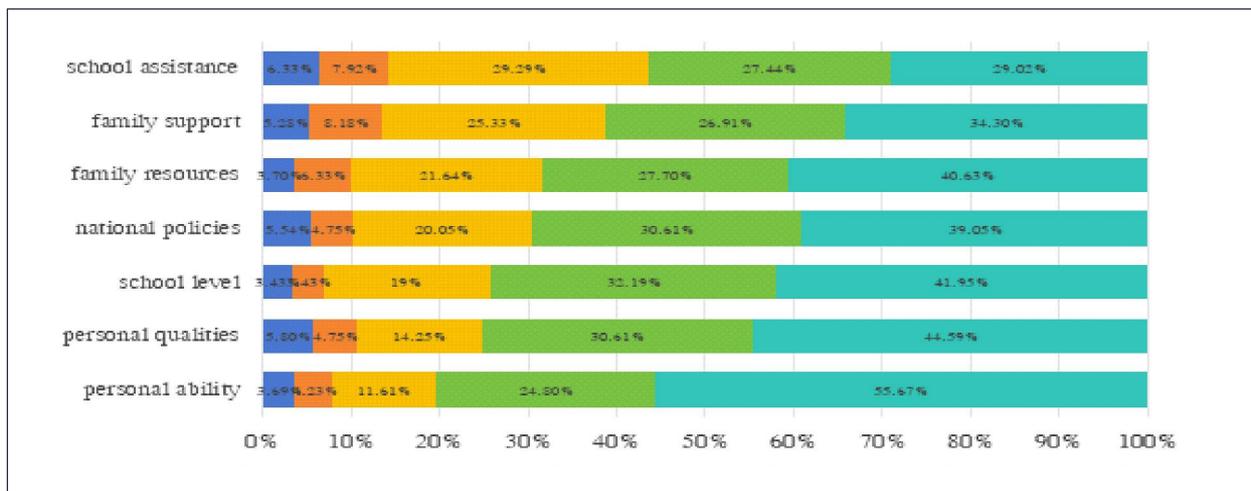


Figure 11: Factors Influencing the Successful Employment of Students Preferring New Employment Forms

4.4.2. Employment Trust

82.1% of students preferring new employment forms believe that “they have the ability to find a good job”. 81.7% believe that “ability is more important than connections”. 74.1% believe that “most job postings are truthful and reliable”. 64.7% believe that “the current employment situation is generally improving”. 63.8% believe that “employers’ promises can be fulfilled”. 60.9% believe that “national employment policies can provide a safety net” (Figure 12).

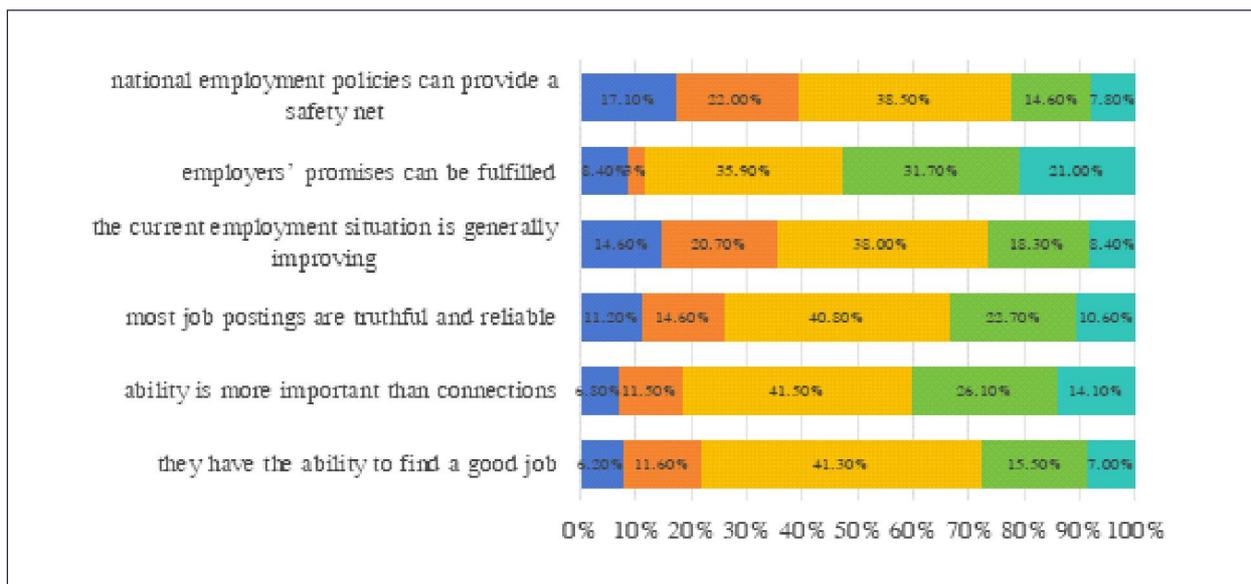
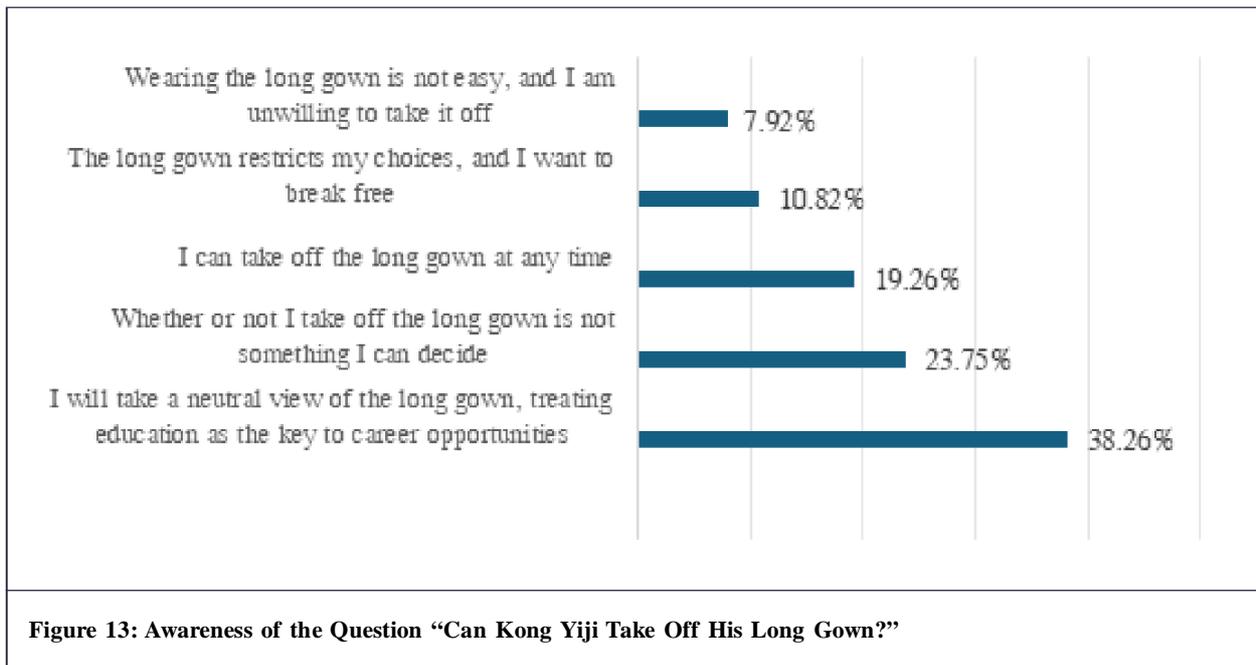


Figure 12: Employment Trust among Young College Students

4.4.3. Employment and Career Preferences

Among students inclined toward traditional employment types, 38% believe that “soldiers” have the greatest social value, ranking first; 34% believe that “engineers, accountants, researchers, and other professional technicians” hold the greatest social value, ranking second; and 21% believe that “civil servants and institutional staff” have the greatest social value, ranking third. The following ranks are “businesspeople, entrepreneurs, and other commercial personnel” (5%), “service staff, cleaners, salespeople, and other service industry workers” (1.2%), and “actors, singers, influencers, and other entertainment workers” (0.8%). The survey also shows that, regarding the question of whether “Kong Yiji can take off his long gown”, 38.26% of students inclined toward new employment types expressed a neutral stance, stating, “I will take a neutral view of the long gown, treating education as the key to career opportunities”. 23.75% stated, “Whether or not I take off the long gown is not something I can decide”, 19.26% stated, “I can take off the long gown

at any time”, 10.82% stated, “The long gown restricts my choices, and I want to break free”, and only 7.92% expressed, “Wearing the long gown is not easy, and I am unwilling to take it off” (see Figure 13).



5. Research Findings and discussion: Key Determinants of Employment Preference Formation Among Young College Students in New Employment Forms

5.1. Factors Influencing the Employment Preferences and Attitudes of Young College Students

5.1.1. Career Stability: Insufficient Career Stability and High Survival Pressure

Career stability and future income expectations are significant factors influencing young college students’ attitudes toward new employment types. The survey reveals a clear pyramid-like distribution in career attitude preferences. At the top of the pyramid, students are more inclined to choose new employment types as their future career path. These students typically have stable financial support from their families, which helps mitigate the uncertainties and risks associated with choosing such career paths. At the base of the pyramid, students face significant survival pressures and lack family support, driving them to prioritize “stability” when making career decisions. Jobs in emerging employment types often come with higher uncertainties and risks. Therefore, students at the base of the pyramid tend to adopt a cautious attitude toward such careers, due to their preference for stability. Additionally, many emerging careers involve substantial work pressure. Some emerging jobs have low entry barriers but high competition, and with incomplete legal frameworks, income security is insufficient, leading to significant income disparities within these industries. For example, occupations like couriers and ride-hailing drivers, although offering relatively flexible working hours, often experience long working hours, exceeding 10 hours per day on average, which severely affects work-life balance. This intense work environment further heightens young students’ concerns about job stability in new employment types, influencing their attitude toward such career choices. Given that college students have limited risk tolerance and struggle to adapt quickly to the high innovation and adaptability demands of these jobs, coupled with market risks and career uncertainties, they often feel uneasy and hesitant when considering these professions. In contrast, traditional professions, with their relatively stable work environments and clear career progression paths, are more likely to earn students’ trust and preference. Furthermore, the social recognition of a profession also impacts young students’ choices. Some emerging professions fail to allow practitioners to accumulate sustained industry experience, resulting in lower social recognition and further diminishing students’ trust in these professions.

5.1.2. Family Capital: Significant Impact and Divergence in Employment Choices

From birth, individuals are deeply rooted in the value system cultivated by their family environment, gradually forming their career views through interactions with family members. Family environment plays a crucial role in shaping young college students’ career preferences. Parents’ recognition of emerging industries, career achievements, and investment in education resources significantly influence their children’s career exploration.

Students inclined toward new employment types often come from families that encourage innovation and diversified development, where parents possess a forward-thinking vision and are willing to support their children's personal choices. Strong family financial conditions provide students with abundant career exploration resources, such as opportunities for internships, entrepreneurship, and professional training, which help deepen their understanding of emerging careers and accumulate necessary skills and experience. Additionally, family economic support enables students to demonstrate greater autonomy and decision-making power when facing emerging career choices, allowing them to make career decisions that align with personal interests, career vision, and market trends. In contrast, students from economically disadvantaged families are often encouraged to prioritize "stability" in their career choices. These parents, who may have faced limitations in their own development due to economic constraints and generally desire upward social mobility, place their hopes in their children, hoping they can establish themselves in cities and achieve social mobility. The concept of family capital proposed by Coleman, including material capital, human capital, and social capital, suggests that for students with limited family capital, choosing a more stable and long-lasting "traditional employment type" becomes their key, if not the only, pathway for upward mobility. Specific family cultures serve as a reference for individuals' career cognition and identity positioning. As a result, students inclined toward traditional employment types may have been influenced by ideas such as "seeking upward mobility" from an early age, thus establishing the direction for their career exploration. They strive for higher education to secure stable employment, and this inter-generational consensus shapes their career choices. Consequently, the gap between students' career ideals and actual choices becomes increasingly apparent under the influence of family factors.

5.1.3. University Training Models: Disconnect from Market Demand, Adaptability Needs Improvement

With the rapid development of China's social economy, the new employment forms in China have achieved a relatively leading position in terms of practitioner scale, platform variety, environmental transformation, and service coverage, providing youth with more development opportunities. Different from traditional employment forms, the development of the digital economy has facilitated the connection of various production factors, enabling youth to fully utilize their skills. Even niche skills can find long-tail niche markets in this diversified employment environment, where new employment forms can provide them with a development path full of potential.

However, under the circumstance that the talent cultivation system in higher education lags behind the actual development needs of society, only a minority of youth choose new employment forms. Specifically, in terms of employment guidance courses, the curriculum design in some universities lacks pertinence and contemporaneity, without conducting surveys on the current situation of new employment forms. Consequently, there are blind spots in guiding employment perspectives, leading most college students to have cognitive biases toward new employment forms, labeling them with incorrect tags such as "transitional," "temporary," and "short-term."

On the other hand, there is a lag in the establishment and adjustment of academic programs. New employment forms place new demands on youth's interdisciplinary knowledge reserves, innovative thinking, practical abilities, and application of cutting-edge technologies. However, as the program design and competency cultivation schemes in some universities still focus on imparting knowledge and skills for traditional industries, the knowledge and competency structures of youth fail to match the emerging employment forms, reducing their willingness to choose these options.

Meanwhile, in the practical training component, there is still insufficient communication and collaboration between universities and the new employment forms sector, creating an "information gap." This "information gap" makes youth less informed about the career development prospects, job security, specific job content, and requirements in the new employment forms sector. Therefore, when making career plans or decisions, they tend to prefer more familiar traditional employment forms, developing a "hesitant" attitude toward new employment forms.

6. Conclusion

6.1. Cultivating New Employment Perspectives to Overcome "Cognitive Biases" and Boost Youth's Confidence in Career Choices

The essence of addressing employment issues lies in youth development, where mindset precedes action. Employment perspectives fundamentally shape career trajectories. With rapid transformations in socioeconomic structures, new employment forms have become the "ballast" for employment stability. As the future backbone of the labor market, college students urgently need to adopt new employment perspectives to break conventional thinking patterns and embrace more diversified and open career pathways.

First, guide college students to develop diversified employment orientations and overcome traditional employment mindsets. By establishing and improving career guidance courses related to new employment forms, we can strengthen employment education and help students deeply understand “what new employment forms are.” This approach aims to dismantle the conventional mindset of seeking “golden rice bowls” or “iron rice bowls,” encouraging them to evaluate opportunities from more diverse and open perspectives. It emphasizes that future success depends not on job nature alone but on personal skills and adaptability to market changes, fostering a more proactive attitude toward career development.

Second, update college students’ understanding of industry trends to actively embrace new employment forms and seek change. Universities should leverage career guidance courses to harness students’ intellectual agility, creativity, and broad-mindedness, guiding them to recognize emerging industries and understand the underlying technological innovations, market demands, and policy directions. Personalized guidance based on students’ professional competencies and interests can broaden their career horizons, enhance their identification with new employment forms, and boost their confidence in pursuing such paths,³ ultimately reducing reliance on traditional employment models.

Third, inspire college students’ sense of responsibility and mission by helping them correctly comprehend the positive significance of new employment forms. These forms break the spatiotemporal constraints of traditional employment, promoting optimized resource allocation and economic growth. Universities should strengthen the ideological and political dimension of career guidance, framing new employment forms within national strategies like the “Employment-First Policy” and the “Digital China” initiative. By constructing a tripartite career guidance system encompassing “macro narratives, micro-level empowerment, and micro-level practices,” we can help students recognize the profound connection between flexible employment and national development strategies, elevating their values and sense of purpose in employment.

6.2. Developing New Professional Competencies to Overcome “Skill Dilemmas” and Forge a New Employment Landscape

While new employment forms present fresh opportunities for youth career choices, they also impose new competency requirements. Universities should align with contemporary demands, leverage regional economic advantages and institutional resources, emphasize curriculum innovation, and focus on cultivating comprehensive competencies to enhance youth employability and pioneer new employment paradigms.

First, prioritize interdisciplinary competencies and composite knowledge structures. New employment forms involve cross-domain integration, necessitating multidisciplinary knowledge and skills. To improve adaptability, universities should optimize curricula, promote disciplinary convergence, encourage cross-disciplinary course selection and project participation, and foster complex problem-solving abilities to give youth a competitive edge in future careers.

Second, strengthen digital literacy and technological application skills. Digital transformation has made digital competencies essential for new employment forms. Theoretically, universities should offer electives like information technology and data analysis, integrating systematic, cutting-edge digital skills into disciplinary learning. Practically, they should combine theory with practice through industry-academia collaboration and flexible internships to enhance youth’s comprehensive skills and market adaptability, enabling them to transcend traditional disciplinary constraints and meet economic restructuring needs.

Third, enhance “soft skills” cultivation. New employment forms break spatiotemporal constraints of traditional work, featuring flexible, collaborative project-based tasks requiring multi-domain expertise. Universities should expand competency development through team projects, social practice, and international exchanges to equip youth with soft skills for professional uncertainties.

6.3. Multi-stakeholder Empowerment to Break “Development Barriers” and Activate New Employment Dynamics

First, vigorously support platform enterprises and improve employment policies. As core carriers of new employment forms, platform companies crucially promote youth participation. Governments should provide tax incentives and funding to encourage platform growth and transformation, creating professional opportunities. Flexible, inclusive policies should strengthen social security and fair compensation to safeguard labor rights.

Second, establish digital employment service platforms to eliminate “information silos.” Leveraging big data and AI, governments, universities, and enterprises should build a unified national job database for intelligent matching based on youth profiles. A credible certification system should validate flexible work experience, addressing social insurance and professional recognition issues.

Third, foster an employment service ecosystem with full-cycle support. Government-led public welfare alliances should offer continuous assistance, meeting diverse needs across “job search-employment-development” stages. Mentor networks with industry experts can provide career guidance, mental health support, and rights protection, creating a collaborative employment promotion framework where governments ensure basics, markets add vitality, and society fills gaps.

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