

10.18686/eer.v2i4.4474

Study on the Relationship Between Parental Autonomy Support, Academic Self-Efficacy, and Career Adaptability of High School Students

Yijuan Deng

Tianli Education International Holdings Co., Ltd, Chengdu, 610000, China

Abstract: This study investigates the relationship between parental autonomy support, academic self-efficacy, and career adaptability of high school students in the context of the new college entrance examination system. Using the Career Adaptability Scale, the Parental Autonomy Support Questionnaire, and the Academic Self-Efficacy Scale, this research tested 440 first-year high school students from four schools in Sichuan Province. The results reveal that (1) parental autonomy support significantly positively predicts career adaptability, indicating that more autonomy support from parents correlates with higher levels of career adaptability in students; (2) parental autonomy support not only directly predicts career adaptability but also affects it through the mediation of academic self-efficacy in students, which plays a partial mediating role.

Keywords: Parental Autonomy Support; High School Students; Career Adaptability; Academic Self-Efficacy

1. Introduction

In 2022, Sichuan Province implemented a reform of the college entrance examination system, granting students more autonomy in choosing their subjects. While this new system allows students to decide their future university majors at the time of subject selection, it has presented challenges, especially as most high school students have weak autonomous capabilities and lack a strong sense of career planning (Wang Beibei, Pei Suyi, et al. 2019; Du Fangfang, Jin Zhe, 2016). The issue of adaptation following subject selection has thus attracted attention.

Mark Savickas (1997) believes that career adaptability refers to an individual's capacity to cope with necessary role changes and preparedness for unforeseen career problems. Among the factors influencing career adaptability, family factors are particularly significant. Studies have shown that parental support is closely linked to adolescents' career development (Keller & Whiston 2008; Kenny, Blustein, Chaves, Grossman, & Gallagher 2003). Parental autonomy support refers to parents' empathy, respect for their children's thoughts and feelings, and support for their children's independent expression and decisions (Barber 1996; Grolnick et al. 1997; Ryan, Deci, Grolnick, & La Guardia 2006). In an environment of autonomy support, children can develop internal resources, perform better academically (Grolnick 2009), and gain confidence to face future career development challenges (Hou Zhijin, 2004). Kenny, Blustein, and Chaves (2003) found that parental support positively predicts adolescents' career adaptability. Therefore, this study hypothesizes that parental autonomy support can significantly predict the level of career adaptability in high school students (H1).

How does parental autonomy support affect high school students' career adaptability? Academic self-efficacy is a worthy mediator to consider. According to Bandura's (1977) self-efficacy theory, individuals with high self-efficacy levels are proactive in overcoming difficulties (Gist M E 1987; Tierney P & Farmer M 2011). Academic self-efficacy refers to students' judgment of their academic capabilities, or their confidence in completing certain tasks (Cen Cui, 2005). Individuals with stronger academic self-efficacy may have better adaptability in their career development. Studies have shown that academic self-efficacy has a significant partial mediating effect between significant others' support and career adaptability (Ren Yunxia, 2018). Therefore, this study proposes a hypothesis: academic self-efficacy mediates the relationship between parental autonomy support and high school students' career adaptability (H2).

In summary, this research will explore the relationship between parental autonomy support and career adaptability, and examine the mediating role of academic self-efficacy.

2. Research Methods

2.1 Participants

The study employed a convenience sampling method, selecting four high schools in Sichuan Province for the survey. A total of 440

questionnaires were distributed, and all 440 were recovered, achieving a 100% recovery rate. After excluding 22 respondents who provided incomplete responses, 418 questionnaires remained effective, with a final effective response rate of 95%.

2.2 Instruments

Parental Autonomy Support Scale: Revised by Wang, Pomerantz, and Chen (2007), this scale was used in its Chinese version provided by Dr. Fang Xiaoyi. It consists of 12 items rated on a Likert 5-point scale (1=strongly disagree, 5=strongly agree). Higher scores on the scale indicate higher levels of parental autonomy support. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for this scale in the study was 0.887.

Career Adaptability Scale: Revised by Hou (2012) et al., this scale includes four dimensions: career concern, career control, career curiosity, and career confidence, with 6 items for each dimension, totaling 24 items. It uses a Likert 5-point scale (1=strongly disagree, 5=strongly agree). Higher scores indicate stronger career adaptability. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for this scale in the study was 0.928.

Academic Self-Efficacy Scale: Adapted by Liang Yusong (2000) from Pintrich and DeGroot's (1990) scale, this version includes 22 items rated on a Likert 5-point scale (1=do not know, 5=strongly agree). Higher scores indicate higher academic self-efficacy. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for this scale in the study was 0.765.

2.3 Testing for Common Method Bias

To address potential common method bias, this study followed the recommendation of Zhou Hao and Long Lirong (2004) by employing Harman's single-factor test. The test results showed that the first factor accounted for 21.201% of the variance, which is below the critical threshold of 40%. Thus, the common method bias in this study was not significant.

3. Results and Analysis

3.1 Correlation Analysis

To study the relationships among parental autonomy support, academic self-efficacy, and career adaptability, correlation analyses were conducted between these variables and their dimensions. The results indicated significant positive correlations among the four dimensions of career adaptability ($p < 0.01$), between parental autonomy support and academic self-efficacy ($p < 0.01$), and between parental autonomy support, academic self-efficacy, and all dimensions of career adaptability ($p < 0.01$). See Table 1 for details.

Table 1: Correlation Matrix between Parental Autonomy Support and Dimensions of Career Adaptability in High School Students

	M±SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Parental Autonomy Support	3.47±0.81						
2. Career Concern	3.86±0.68	0.375*					
3. Career Control	3.89±0.67	0.465*	0.602**				
4. Career Curiosity	3.67±0.71	0.299*	0.511**	0.617**			
5. Career Confidence	3.66±0.68	0.343**	0.489**	0.593**	0.635*		
6. Career Adaptability	3.77±0.56	0.447*	0.783**	0.853**	0.824**	0.833*	
7. Academic Self-Efficacy	3.35±0.47	0.217**	0.447**	0.407**	0.475*	0.616*	0.599*

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

3.2 Mediating Effect of Academic Self-Efficacy

Following the recommendations of Baron and Kenny (1986), this study employed a stepwise method to assess and evaluate the mediating effect. The analysis involved three steps using sequential regression, where career adaptability was the dependent variable, parental autonomy support was the independent variable, and academic self-efficacy was the mediator. The results showed: First, parental autonomy support significantly impacted career adaptability ($t = 7.12$, $p = 0.000$), explaining 20% of the variance; Second, the effect of parental autonomy support on academic self-efficacy was significant ($t = 2.97$, $p = 0.004$); Third, when academic self-efficacy was added to the independent variable, the impact of parental autonomy support on career adaptability remained significant ($t = 6.48$, $p = 0.000$), but the regression coefficient decreased from 0.46 to 0.37, and the effect of academic self-efficacy on career adaptability was also significant ($t = 9.25$, $p = 0.000$). Therefore, academic self-efficacy plays a partial mediating role in the relationship between parental autonomy support and career adaptability. The explanatory power of the direct model was 20%, and the mediation model increased the explanatory rate to 47%, confirming that the mediation model better explains the impact of parental autonomy support on career adaptability.

4. Discussion

The correlation analysis demonstrated that higher levels of parental autonomy support are associated with stronger career adaptability in high school students, confirming Hypothesis 1. This finding aligns with the conclusions of Tang Qin et al. (2013), which indicated that paren-

tal autonomy support significantly positively predicts the career development of high school students. When parents provide more autonomy support, it enables their children to actively explore and adjust to their environment.

The mediation analysis indicated that academic self-efficacy plays a partial mediating role between parental autonomy support and career adaptability in high school students, confirming Hypothesis 2. Parental autonomy support serves as an external factor enhancing career adaptability, while academic self-efficacy acts as an internal factor. When parents support their children's autonomy, it not only enhances their sense of control over their career development but also fosters their problem-solving abilities and confidence. Individuals with high academic self-efficacy are more confident in their professional abilities, which enhances their adaptability to changes in their career environment, thereby improving their overall career adaptability.

This study contributes significantly to the enrichment of career adaptability theory for high school students and offers important educational insights for parents and schools. Parents should support their children's independence in decision-making during the educational process. Schools should guide and strengthen students' career education. Students should not overlook the development of their professional skills, which will increase their academic self-efficacy and ultimately enhance their career adaptability. However, the study has certain limitations, such as the cross-sectional design, which does not reveal the causal relationships between variables, the questionnaire method, which cannot guarantee the quality of responses, and the limited scope of the sample selection.

5. Conclusion

Parental autonomy support significantly predicts the career adaptability of high school students; the more support parents provide, the higher the level of career adaptability in their children. Academic self-efficacy plays a partial mediating role between parental autonomy support and career adaptability. Thus, parental autonomy support not only directly influences career adaptability but also affects it through the impact on students' academic self-efficacy.

References

- [1] Du Fangfang, Jin Zhe. Current status and strategies of high school students' subject choice intentions under the background of the new college entrance examination reform [J]. *Educational Theory and Practice*, 2016, 36(8): 15-18.
- [2] Liang Yusong. A study on university students' achievement goals, attribution styles, and academic self-efficacy [D]. Central China Normal University, 2000.
- [3] Ren Yunxia. The significant others' support, discipline-specific self-efficacy, and career adaptability of university students [J]. *Journal of Nanchang University of Aeronautics (Social Science Edition)*, 2018, 20(2): 45-49.
- [4] Wang Beibei, Pei Suyi, Tang Fei, Zheng Jinlin. A survey on the career maturity and planning needs of high school students under the new college entrance examination system — Based on an empirical study at Haimen Middle School [J]. *Chinese and Foreign Entrepreneurs*, 2019, 8: 187-189.
- [5] Zhang Xinlei. The impact of achievement goals on middle school students' English reading performance [D]. Nanjing Normal University, 2018.
- [6] Yang Hua. A study on the correlation between high school students' biology academic emotions, self-efficacy, and academic performance [D]. Shanghai Normal University, 2020.
- [7] Shi Leishan, Gao Fengqiang, Wang Peng, Chen Yingmin. The influence of achievement goal orientation on academic burnout: The mediating role of academic self-efficacy [J]. *Psychological Science*, 2012, 11.
- [8] Pan Duo. A study on the intervention of career chaos group therapy on high school students' career adaptability and career uncertainty [D]. Central China Normal University, 2019.
- [9] Yang Yanting. A study on the influence of shared leadership on employees' proactive innovative behavior [D]. Hunan University, 2019.