College Students Career Decision-Making Difficulties

College students suffer from various difficulties due to their own and environmental reasons in the process of career decision-making, which may affect their individual psychological state and social functions over time. One of the main difficulties is career decision-making. Career decision-making difficulties refer to various difficulties or problems faced by individuals in the process of career decision-making, including lack of readiness (LR), lack of information (LI), and inconsistent information (II). College students have certain career decision-making difficulties due to the lack of occupational information and self-information. The career decision-making difficulties not only affect college students' employment, but also affect their solutions to the problems in career development.

1. Background

Nowadays, the employment of college students has attracted more and more public attention, especially the sustainable development of individual occupations [1][2]. As the main reserve resources of the future labor market, college students' future career development and contributions to society cannot be ignored [3]. How can college students adapt to the social development trend as soon as possible, and make definite their future career development? This requires college students to be able to wisely choose their own careers and realize their own value. However, especially in the current epidemic (COVID-19), the employment problem of college students has become particularly serious [4]. The main reasons are the individual occupational mismatch and feeble career planning, as well as the external environment caused by market talent requirements and financial crises [5][6][7].

With the promotion of the Career Development Theory [8], it is not only necessary to solve the current employment problem, but also to pay attention so as to cultivate college students' career planning and exploration abilities in advance [9]. Career decision-making is one of the important components of career development. College students will inevitably encounter various difficulties in the process of career decision-making, which hinder them from making the best decisions [10]. Faced with these difficulties, sometimes personality traits will play the same important role as emotional intelligence [11]. When college students have difficulties in making career decisions, it is necessary to analyze their own internal characteristics and drive their calling [12][13]. Some college students have difficulties in career decision-making because of a low level of core self-evaluation [14], lack of environment exploration [15], and lack of necessary occupational knowledge and skills in the key stages of determining career development goals [16]. As an individual's internal driving force, career calling shows a positive working attitude and the power to forge ahead in the career decision-making process, which can help individuals to enhance the recognition of their career development [17]. Therefore, it is of great significance for college students to have a high level of core self-evaluation and career calling when facing difficulties in career decision-making.

2. Career Decision-Making Difficulties

Gati et al. (1996) define career decision-making difficulties as various difficulties encountered by individuals in the career decision-making process, which includes preparation for career decision-making [5]. In other words, career decision-making difficulties may already exist before the career decision-making process begins. According to the "ideal career decision-maker", Gati et al. (1996) divided career decision-making difficulties into the following three categories: lack of readiness before beginning the process of decision-making, lack of information, and inconsistent information during the process of career decision-making [5]. Saka and Gati (2008) further proposed the classification model of career decision-making difficulties (emotional and personality-related aspects of career decision-making difficulties) related to emotions and personality, which paid more attention to the emotional and personality factors in the source of career decision-making difficulties [18]. The measurement of career decision-making difficulties gradually emerged in the 1960s and 1970s. Up until now, there have been many kinds of measurement tools for career decision-making difficulty, including the Career

Decision Scale (CDS) [19], Career Factor Inventory (CFI) [20], and Career Decision-Making Difficulty Questionnaire (CDDQ) [21][22]. Among them, CDDQ is the most widely used [23]. At present, researchers in many countries (such as China, South Korea, Turkey, and Croatia) have carried out localized verification on CDDQ [23][24][25][26][27]. Research has confirmed that CDDQ is a reliable and effective method for measuring an individual's performance of career decision-making difficulties.

Previous research on career decision-making difficulties mainly focused on the verification of scales [24][27], differences among cross-cultural groups [24][28], and the verification of the relationship between career decision-making difficulties and individual emotions and personality [27][28][29][30]. For example, some scholars studied the influence of personality traits on career decision-making difficulties and found that a Big Five personality, including neuroticism, is correlated to three dimensions of difficulties [31][32]. In addition, previous research paid more attention to the impact of individual positive factors on career decision-making difficulties, including career adaptability [33], resilience [34], and core self-evaluation [14].

3. Core Self-Evaluation and Career Decision-Making Difficulties

Early research on career decision-making was based on the hypothesis of "complete rationality" in economics, following the "normative model", and emphasized the importance of cognitive factors in decision-making [35]. However, more studies have shown that individuals do not always use rational steps in the decision-making process, but are affected by personality factors [36][37]. Previous studies on the influence of personality on career decision-making difficulties have found that some personality variables related to self-perception and self-evaluation (how people view themselves) affect individual career decision-making [38]. For example, individuals with high self-esteem, self-identity, and self-efficacy experience fewer career decision-making difficulties [39][40].

Furthermore, scholars begin to pay attention to the impact of a positive and integrated self-concept, named core self-evaluation, on career decision-making difficulties [14][41]. Core self-evaluation refers to the most basic evaluation of an individual's own ability and value, which includes four elements: self-esteem, control point, general self-efficacy, and neuroticism [42]. At present, the research on core self-evaluation mainly focuses on the field of industrial and organizational psychology. Among them, research has been done on the relationships between core self-evaluation and various variables such as job performance [43], job satisfaction [44], and turnover intention [45][46]. Moreover, researchers have introduced core self-evaluation as a personality trait in the field of career [47][48].

Previous studies have also confirmed the influence and function of core self-evaluation on the career decision-making process [41]. Di Fabio and Palazzeschi (2012) showed that there is a correlation between core self-evaluation and career decision-making difficulties and career indecisiveness [49]. Kouumoundurou et al. (2011) explored the influence of core self-evaluation and family factors (family type and parents' authoritative style) on career decision-making difficulties in a 15-year-old Greek youth group [14], and found that, especially in the female group, the core self-evaluation had a significant influence on career decision-making difficulties. In the research of SCCT, self-efficacy has been found to be a trait that affects career decision-making [41]. The concept of core self-evaluation includes self-efficacy, that is, self-efficacy is the basis of core self-evaluation, so we assume that core self-evaluation will play a predictive role in career decision-making difficulties [50].

To summarize, the research on the relationship between core self-evaluation and career decision-making difficulties has a positive effect on career choice and career development.

4. The Mediating Role of Career Calling

The study of calling first appeared in the field of religion. As time goes by, religious meanings gradually fade. At present, the concept of career calling has not yet formed a unified definition [51]. Ballah et al. (1985) proposed that people have three different value orientations for their jobs, namely: job orientation, career orientation, and calling orientation [52]. People who hold job orientation think that a job is not the purpose of life, but a way to obtain the necessary material resources for life activities. Career-oriented individuals not only regard work as a channel to obtain material resources, but also try to constantly improve in their organizational structure so as to obtain higher social status, power, and self-esteem. Calling-oriented people regard work as an inseparable part of life, which means they work not for economic reward or career development, but for realizing the individual value and making a social contribution through their work [53]. Following this conceptual description, Cardador et al. (2011) singled out calling separately, and defined it as an individual's view on his/her own work, that is, the work is purposeful, with intrinsic significance and value. Calling comes from external calls or inner feelings, so it is often shown as an incentive force [54]. Dik and Duffy (2009) defined calling as a transcendent summons, experienced as originating beyond the self, in order to approach a particular life role in a manner oriented toward demonstrating or deriving a sense of purpose or meaningfulness, which holds other-oriented

values and goals as primary sources of motivation [55]. Dobrow and Tosti-Kharas (2011) believe that calling is a consuming, meaningful passion that people experience toward a career domain [56]. It can be seen that calling embodies a driving force behind one's pursuit of vocational purposes and goals [57]. Previous research on calling has shown that calling is positively correlated with positive self-concept and core self-evaluation [58]. When individuals have positive self-evaluation, they are more likely to develop a calling. At the same time, an individual's calling is positively correlated with career decidedness and career choice comfort, and is negatively correlated with indecisiveness [59]. Considering the needs of this study and the localization of calling research in China, this study regards calling as a value orientation for occupation, and people with a calling regard work as having intrinsic significance and value.

According to SCCT, calling, which reflects outcome expectations, plays a key role in career selection. Individuals develop career calling through the self-evaluation of their experience in the basic social learning stage [50]. When individuals develop intrinsic work-related values, they are more likely to make career decisions [60]. According to the Value System Theory, general personality traits (such as core self-evaluation and the trait elements it contains) are antecedents of career calling [61].

Although career calling is relatively stable, it will be affected by self-reflection and self-evaluation. This viewpoint has been confirmed by the research that core self-evaluation significantly impacts the formation of career calling [57][62]. Dobrow et al. (2011) also believed that career calling is an individual's strong passion for a certain field [53]. It can be seen that career calling embodies a kind of motivating force for vocational purposes and goals. These findings indicate that career calling is beneficial to career decision-making, and core self-evaluation may have a significant impact on career calling.

In addition, the research by Shen and Hu (2015) showed that career calling plays an intermediary role between proactive personality and the certainty of career goals and job search clarity [63]. The higher an individual's proactive personality, the more likely it is to form a career calling and find a career goal [50], which further explains SCCT's view that individual personality factors influence career decision-making results by forming value orientation. At present, there is no research on the mediating role of calling in the relationship between core self-evaluation and career decision-making difficulties. According to SCCT, we hypothesize that core self-evaluation, as a personality factor, including self-efficacy, affects career decision-making difficulties by influencing the value orientation (career calling).

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