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FACTORS INFLUENCING EMPLOYMENT ANXIETY AMONG ARCHITECTURE STUDENTS IN HENAN PROVINCE, CHINA

NingyiRan Liu¹, Nuttapol Deekam^{2*}

^{1,2} Department of Education and Society, Institute of Science Innovation and Culture,
Rajamangala University of Technology Krungthep, Bangkok, Thailand

Nuttapol.d@mail.rmutk.ac.th

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to explore the factors influencing employment anxiety among vocational architecture students in Henan Province, China, and provide a research basis for alleviating such anxiety. A quantitative research approach was adopted, with a questionnaire as the research instrument. Through multi-stage random sampling, 500 architecture students from Zhengzhou Vocational and Technical College were selected as the research sample. Descriptive statistics and multiple linear regression were used to analyze demographic, personal, school, and family factors related to employment anxiety. The results showed that gender, education type, and grade significantly affected anxiety (females, divorced students, and seniors were more anxious); job-seeking confidence and self-evaluation were positively correlated with anxiety, while employment preparation was not; school social influence and career guidance had positive effects on anxiety; family economic capital and parents' expectations also showed positive correlations with anxiety. Among the three factors, family factors had the strongest explanatory power for employment anxiety variance, and the three factors together explained 57.9% of the variance. The findings indicate that personal, school, and family factors all contribute to the employment anxiety of this group, with the core cause being the gap between individual expectations and reality.

INTRODUCTION

Against the backdrop of China's growing emphasis on vocational education and the escalating employment pressure for vocational college students, employment anxiety has become a prominent issue for architecture majors in vocational education institutions. The construction industry, a pillar of national infrastructure, has expanded rapidly, with vocational colleges increasing enrollment in construction-related majors at an annual growth rate of 15%. However, the industry has strict recruitment requirements for professional knowledge and practical experience (over 80% of enterprises prioritize candidates with project/internship experience), leading to a severe supply-demand contradiction. A survey showed 75% of vocational construction students experience employment anxiety, and 40% report that anxiety impairs their job-hunting performance (Belle, 2022).

Existing studies have identified individual, school, family, and social factors as influencers of employment anxiety (Zhu, 2019; Chen, 2020). Individual factors such as self-efficacy and employment preparation (Kim et al., 2022), school factors including reputation and career guidance (Chu, 2021), and family factors such as economic capital and parental expectations (Gao et al., 2020) have been shown to correlate with employment anxiety. Based on Individual Factor Theory, Family Factor Theory, School Factor Theory, and Employment Anxiety Theory, this study focuses on personal (employment preparation, self-evaluation, job-seeking confidence), school (social influence, career guidance), and family (economic capital, parental expectations) factors to explore their impact on employment anxiety of vocational architecture students in Henan. The research aims to clarify the mechanisms underlying each factor and to provide targeted strategies for alleviating employment anxiety, helping students transition smoothly into the workplace.

Research Questions

The research questions are as follows:

To what extent do personal factors—specifically employment preparation, self-evaluation of abilities, and job-seeking self-confidence—affect the employment anxiety levels of architecture students in vocational education schools?

In what way do school factors, including the social influence of schools and career guidance services, impact the employment anxiety of architecture students in vocational education schools?

To what role do family factors, such as parents' employment expectations and family capital, play in contributing to the employment anxiety of architecture students in vocational education schools?

Research Objectives

1. To Evaluate the Impact of Personal Factors: Assessing Self-Perception and Employment Preparedness on Anxiety Levels.
2. To Explore Social Influence and Career Guidance: Assessing the Effectiveness of Guidance Programs on Employment Anxiety.
- To Investigate the Role of Family Environment: Analyzing Parental Expectations and Support Systems in Employment Anxiety.

Research Hypotheses

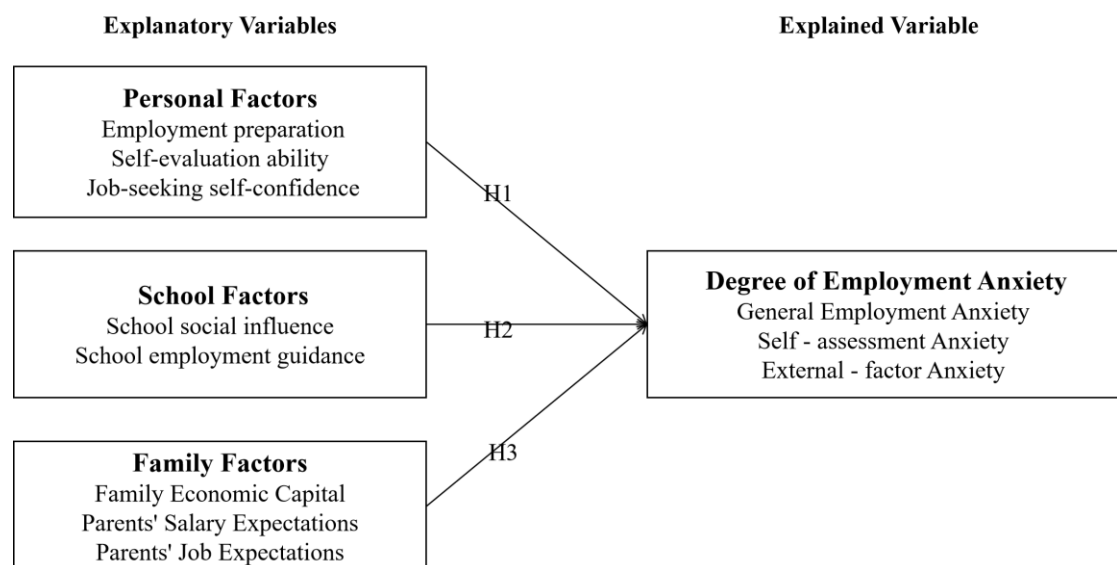
Based on the research questions above, the following research hypotheses can be proposed:

H₁: There is a correlation between personal factors and employment anxiety among vocational architecture students.

H₂: There is a correlation between school factors and employment anxiety among vocational architecture students.

H₃: There is a correlation between family factors and employment anxiety among vocational architecture students.

Research Framework



RESEARCH METHODS

This study adopted a quantitative research approach with a cross-sectional survey design to investigate the relationship between influencing factors and employment anxiety. The research subjects were architecture students from Zhengzhou Vocational and Technical College, a key vocational institution in Henan Province with over 18,000 enrolled students and a strong reputation in cultivating urban construction

talent. The college's population was 18,000 architecture students, and a sample of 500 students was selected at the 95% confidence level with a 5% margin of error. Multi-stage random sampling was used, with freshmen, sophomores, juniors, and seniors each accounting for 25% (125 students per grade), selected via a random number generator.

Table 1 Sample Size Grouping

Grade Level	Proportion	Sample Size
Freshman	4500	$\frac{18000}{4500} \times 500 = 125$
Sophomore	4500	$\frac{18000}{4500} \times 500 = 125$
Junior	4500	$\frac{18000}{4500} \times 500 = 125$
Senior	4500	$\frac{18000}{4500} \times 500 = 125$
Total	18000	500

Research variables included explanatory variables (demographic factors: gender, education type, grade, preferred job type; personal factors: employment preparation, self-evaluation ability, job-seeking confidence; school factors: social influence, career guidance; family factors: economic capital, parents' salary/job expectations) and the explained variable (employment anxiety, divided into general anxiety, self-assessment anxiety, external-factor anxiety). A self-designed questionnaire was the main research tool, consisting of 5 parts: basic information, personal factors, school factors, family factors, and employment anxiety, with Likert 5-point scales (1=strongly disagree, 5=strongly agree) for the latter four parts.

The questionnaire's content validity was tested by 3 university professors using the Item-Objective Congruence (IOC) index, with all items meeting the $IOC \geq 0.5$ criterion. Reliability was verified via a pre-survey of 30 samples, with Cronbach's α coefficient above 0.7, indicating good internal consistency. Data were collected anonymously via the Questionnaire Star platform from March to July 2025, resulting in 500 valid questionnaires. Data analysis techniques included descriptive statistics (frequency, mean, standard deviation) to describe variable characteristics and multiple linear regression to test the correlation between each factor and employment anxiety, using statistical software.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Descriptive Statistics of Research Variables

The overall mean of personal factors was 3.531 (SD=0.839), with employment preparation (3.627) > self-evaluation ability (3.557) > job-seeking confidence (3.410), all at the "agree" level. School factors had an overall mean of 3.349 (SD=1.084), with school social influence (3.354) and career guidance (3.343) near the neutral-agree threshold. Family factors had an overall mean of 3.222 (SD=0.725), with family economic capital (3.314) > parents' job expectations (3.195) > parents' salary expectations (3.158), at the neutral-agree level. Employment anxiety had a high overall mean of 3.795 (SD=0.979), with external-factor anxiety (3.822) > self-assessment anxiety (3.790) > general employment anxiety (3.775), all at the "agree" level, indicating significant anxiety among the sample.

Demographic Factor Effects

Gender, education type, and grade significantly affected employment anxiety: females, divorced students, and senior students had higher anxiety levels; preferred job type had no significant impact on anxiety.

Multiple Linear Regression Analysis

Personal factors: The model explained 41.2% of the variance in employment anxiety (adjusted $R^2 = 0.412$). Job-seeking confidence had a significant positive correlation ($\beta=0.217$, $p=0.001$), self-evaluation ability had a marginally significant positive correlation ($\beta=0.143$, $p=0.054$), and employment preparation had no significant correlation ($\beta=0.089$, $p=0.223$).

School factors: The model explained 52.0% of the variance (adjusted $R^2 = 0.520$). Both school social influence ($\beta=0.197$, $p=0.026$) and career guidance ($\beta=0.336$, $p=0.000$) had significant positive correlations with anxiety, with career guidance having a stronger effect.

Family factors: The model explained 54.1% of the variance (adjusted $R^2 = 0.541$), the highest among single-factor models. Family economic capital had the strongest significant positive correlation ($\beta=0.407$, $p=0.000$), parents' job expectations were significantly positive ($\beta=0.124$, $p=0.009$), and parents' salary expectations were marginally significant ($\beta=0.097$, $p=0.077$).

Combined factors: The model explained 57.9% of the variance (adjusted $R^2 = 0.579$). All three factors had significant positive correlations, with family factors ($\beta=0.230$, $p=0.000$) having the strongest impact, followed by school factors ($\beta=0.288$, $p=0.000$) and personal factors ($\beta=0.161$, $p=0.000$).

Table 2 Summary of Employment Anxiety Measurement Scales

Scholar (Year)	Dimensions of Employment Anxiety
Zhang Xiaoqin (2005)	Employment fear, employment unease, interview anxiety, work anxiety
Zhang Yuzhu (2005)	Concerns about employment prospects, lack of employment support, insufficient job - seeking confidence, employment competition pressure
Xiao Ying (2007)	Lack of confidence, concerns about the job - seeking process, concerns about working conditions, concerns about work tasks
Ren Huajuan (2010)	Physiological - behavioral anxiety, subjective - feeling anxiety

Discussion

The most notable finding is the positive correlation between positive factors and employment anxiety, which deviates from conventional cognition, and the core cause is the gap between individual expectations and practical reality (Bozgeyikli et al., 2024). For personal factors, students with higher job-seeking confidence and better self-evaluation ability set higher employment expectations; when facing the uncertainty of the job market, the gap between high expectations and reality triggers stronger anxiety (Srivastava, 2011). Employment preparation has no significant effect because most vocational students' preparation is formalized (e.g., certificate acquisition, superficial internships) and does not effectively improve their actual employability.

For school factors, students have high expectations for school social influence and career guidance. If the school's actual support (e.g., incomplete recruitment information, formalized mock interviews) fails to meet their job-hunting needs, the psychological gap caused by unmet expectations exacerbates anxiety (Phillips et al., 1960; Jones-Rincon, 2019). Career guidance has a stronger impact because it is the most direct school support for students' job hunting, and its ineffectiveness is more likely to cause psychological frustration.

Family factors have the strongest explanatory power, consistent with the findings of Middeldorp et al. (2006) and Rapee (2012). Students with greater family economic capital face higher expectations from themselves and their families (e.g., pursuing stable, high-paying jobs in state-owned enterprises), and the pressure to "not disappoint the family" significantly increases anxiety. Parental job and salary expectations further add psychological pressure; the higher the expectations, the more anxious students are about failing to meet them during job hunting.

In terms of demographic factors, female students face greater gender discrimination in the male-dominated construction industry, leading to higher anxiety; senior students are in the critical job-hunting stage and have more direct pressure; divorced students may lack family emotional support, making them more vulnerable to

employment anxiety. The preferred job type has no significant effect because most students prefer state-owned or private enterprises, and the homogeneity of job preferences leads to no obvious differences in anxiety levels.

CONCLUSION

This study systematically explored the factors influencing employment anxiety among vocational architecture students in Henan Province, China, through a quantitative survey of 500 students from Zhengzhou Vocational and Technical College. The key conclusions are as follows: First, demographic factors including gender, education type, and grade have significant effects on employment anxiety, with females, divorced students, and seniors being high-anxiety groups, while preferred job type has no significant impact. Second, personal factors partially affect anxiety: job-seeking confidence and self-evaluation ability are positively correlated with anxiety, and employment preparation has no significant effect, reflecting that psychological traits have a greater impact on anxiety than formal preparation behavior. Third, school factors (social influence, career guidance) are significantly positively correlated with anxiety, with career guidance having a stronger effect, due to the gap between students' high expectations and the actual effectiveness of school support. Fourth, family factors are the strongest single factor influencing anxiety, with family economic capital having the most significant positive effect, followed by parents' job and salary expectations, as good family conditions are associated with higher employment expectations and psychological pressure. Fifth, personal, school, and family factors together explain 57.9% of employment anxiety variance, with family factors having the strongest comprehensive impact, followed by school and personal factors, and all three factors show positive correlations with anxiety due to the expectation-reality gap.

Based on the conclusions, targeted practical suggestions are proposed: Vocational colleges should carry out differentiated anxiety intervention for high-risk groups, optimize the quality of career guidance, and provide precise industry-specific employment support to reduce the expectation-reality gap; parents should adjust their unreasonable employment expectations, strengthen emotional support instead of just material support, and reduce students' psychological pressure; students themselves should establish rational self-cognition and employment expectations, improve the effectiveness of employment preparation, and learn scientific psychological adjustment methods to alleviate anxiety.

This study has limitations: the sample is limited to one vocational college in Zhengzhou, with regional constraints, and the research method is single (a quantitative questionnaire), lacking in-depth exploration of students' subjective psychological experience of anxiety. Future research can expand the sample scope to multiple vocational colleges in Henan or the whole country to improve the universality of conclusions; combine qualitative research methods such as in-depth interviews and



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focus groups to deeply analyze the formation mechanism of employment anxiety; add social factors such as industry development prospects and market competition to enrich the research model; and adopt longitudinal research to track the dynamic changes of students' employment anxiety at different stages, providing more accurate support for anxiety intervention.

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