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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Parental Support and Career Decision-Making Difficulties: A Chain Mediation Model

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ABSTRACT

Against the backdrop of career development among Chinese college students, this study explores the influence mechanism of parental support on career decision-making difficulty, with a focus on examining the chain mediating role of positive psychological capital and general self-efficacy. Method: A questionnaire survey was conducted online among 245 college students in Guangxi. The Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) was employed to test the research hypotheses. Results: (1) Parental support has a significant negative impact on career decision-making difficulty; (2) Parental support can significantly and positively predict psychological capital and general self-efficacy; (3) Both positive psychological capital and general self-efficacy can significantly and negatively predict career decision-making difficulty; (4) Positive psychological capital and general self-efficacy play a significant chain mediating role between parental support and career decision-making difficulty. Conclusion: Positive psychological capital and general self-efficacy exert a chain mediating effect in the influence of parental support on career decision-making difficulty.

Contribution/Originality: This study contributes to the existing literature by showing a step-by-step relationship between family support and psychological resources. It further extends theory by explaining how these resources interact over time and jointly shape career decision-making outcomes among college students.

1. Introduction

Employment is a necessary way for young people to integrate into society and realize their own value. It is also a core indicator for the labor market to assess the educational outcomes of schools and the comprehensive quality of the talents they cultivate. The smooth employment of young people is of great significance to economic development and social stability (Song et al., 2021). In 2025, the number of higher education graduates in China exceeded 12.22 million. This figure increased by 430,000 compared

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with 2024. It also represents the highest growth rate recorded so far. During the period from 2022 to 2025, China consistently had more than 10 million university graduates each year. The overall figure also continued to climb (Zhang, 2025).

Contemporary college students, due to their lack of necessary career preparation and planning, as well as insufficient job exploration and job skills, will encounter significant difficulties and challenges when transitioning from school learning to workplace work (Sun & Liu, 2019). On one hand, employers have raised their requirements for personnel, while on the other hand, college students tend to avoid choosing jobs that are not essential (Zhongguancun Online, 2025). This has led to an increasing number of young people engaging in "slow employment" or "delayed employment" and the problem of college students' difficulty in making career decisions has become increasingly prominent. How to enhance the ability structure of graduates, optimize the supply of talents by universities, and achieve multi-party collaboration from society to families, can truly realize the transformation from "difficult employment" to "high-quality and sufficient employment".

This study looks at why college students experience difficulties when seeking employment. It also considers how these difficulties shape their future career development. The findings are expected to help students achieve sustainable career success.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Parental Support and Difficulties in Career Decision-Making

When one is preparing to move from university to the workforce, they will not only face the shift from university life to the broader social and professional environment but also the change from student to employee. This process of change can easily leave them feeling lost and uncertain when confronted with numerous choices. Career Decision-Making Difficulties (CDMD) occur when individuals feel unsure or hesitant about choosing a career or entering the job market. This is due to their doubts about their own abilities and unclear knowledge of the external environment.

The Conservation of Resources Theory (COR) explains that individuals usually work to gain resources, keep them safe, and increase them over time, especially when these resources are important to them.The scarcity or loss of resources is a significant cause of stress responses and functional impairments (Hobfoll, 1989). Based on this theory, it can be understood that the selection difficulties experienced by college students during the job-hunting process mainly result from the insufficient knowledge and support they received from the outside before this. This career decision difficulty should also be regarded as a negative reaction situation (Gati et al., 1996).

Environmental factors are an important source influencing an individual's career development (Lent & Brown, 2013). Parental support (PS) as a key external environmental resource (Chen et al., 2022) can ensure that individuals gain diverse improvements such as emotional value, job-seeking ability, career information, and work ability, buffer the stress experience in the career decision-making context, and promote the accumulation of internal psychological resources (Hobfoll, 2001). Family environment and the level of parental upbringing are vital to shaping an individual's ability. Parents with strong capabilities and high participation levels are conducive to

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cultivating children with relatively higher abilities (Feng et al., 2024). For college students with relatively insufficient social experience, their career-related information, value concepts, and decision-making methods are largely influenced by their parents (Chasanah & Salim, 2019; Song et al., 2024). Most existing studies on the influencing factors of college students' CDMD focus on the individual factors of the decision-makers (Udayar et al., 2020; Ye et al., 2018), while the situational factors influencing CDMD, especially family factors, have not received due attention. Some scholars have found that family has a very significant impact on an individual, especially in the social background environment of China, where family factors have become the most important factor influencing an individual's career choice (Chen et al., 2022; Kim et al., 2016).

It can be inferred that higher levels of parental support can help alleviate the difficulties that college students encounter in making career decisions. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1. PS is expected to negatively predict perceived CDMD.

2.2. Parental Support, Positive Psychological Capital, and General Self-Efficacy

Positive Psychological capital (PsyCap) describes the positive mental resources that individuals develop during their growth process. It reflects how people respond to their environment and daily challenges. Individuals with high PsyCap tend to stay hopeful about the future. They also believe in their own abilities. In addition, they are more willing to face stress and difficulties with a positive attitude. According to (Luthans et al., 2004), PsyCap shows a person’s ability to maintain a healthy mental state in different situations and supports personal adjustment and development.

General Self-Efficacy (GSE) means the core psychological belief that an individual has in themselves when dealing with different situations, regardless of whether they are difficult or not. GSE is an important psychological factor that affects an individual's motivation level, goal setting, and behaviour persistence. High GSE indicates a high level of trust in oneself (Bandura, 1997).

External resources may directly influence an individual's core psychological beliefs (Hobfoll et al., 2018). PS, as an important environmental factor (Barber et al., 2005), can help individuals form a positive mental state by promoting the formation of a stable supportive environment, thereby facilitating the development of PsyCap (Wang, 2018). Effective parental autonomy support can provide an environment that promotes the comprehensive growth of students, enabling them to develop balance in cognition, emotion, and social interaction (Yao et al., 2024). Studies have shown that PS from parents can significantly enhance the creative self-efficacy of teenagers of different age groups (Liang & Yuan, 2020). Other scholars' research has also verified this significant correlation (Miller et al., 2012). Understanding and support from parents can enhance an individual's hope for the future and optimism expectations, improve their psychological resilience when facing setbacks, and strengthen their confidence in their own abilities, thereby enhancing an individual's PsyCap. Under the long-term support, parents' encouragement and affirmation help individuals form positive self-evaluations,so they feel more capable of overcoming difficulties and getting tasks done,which directly improves GSE.

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In conclusion, it can be considered that PS, as an important environmental factor, not only promotes the accumulation of an individual's PsyCap but also directly enhances their GSE.

H2. PS positively predicts PsyCap.

H3. PS positively predicts GSE.

In the context of career development, the hope and optimism contained in PsyCap can prompt individuals to strengthen their belief in their own abilities, further promoting the development of GSE. Christy & Mythili (2020) found that the satisfaction of basic psychological needs can enhance students' creative self-efficacy, and individuals with high self-esteem can have the belief to solve creative problems. Existing studies have shown that the richer the positive psychological resources are,the more career decision-making self-efficacy is linked to career outcomes. Students with stronger confidence in career decisions tend to achieve better results (Duan & Xu, 2017). High levels of PsyCap help individuals establish stable and lasting ability beliefs. According to Luthans (2004)and Avey (2011), higher levels of PsyCap help individuals better understand their own abilities. This makes it easier for them to complete tasks successfully.

In conclusion, it can be inferred that PsyCap has a significant promoting effect on general self-efficacy. Based on this, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H4. PsyCap positively predicts GSE.

2.3. Positive Psychological Capital, General Self-Efficacy and Career Decision Difficulties

PsyCap, as a crucial psychological resource, encompasses four measurement directions: self-efficacy, optimism, psychological resilience, and hope (Larson & Luthans, 2006; Liu, 2019). It is a factor that can enhance an individual's ability to respond positively to career decision-making situations. Studies have found that PsyCap can effectively reduce the CDMD that individuals experience (Duan & Xu, 2017; Zhan & Li, 2019). When facing stress or CDMD, individuals with higher psychological capital often keep calm. They can also recognize dependable information sources. These strengths help them manage different challenges during this period.(Zhou et al., 2024). Therefore, when enhancing an individual's PsyCap, it makes it easier for them to reduce confusion when making career choices.

Studies on self-efficacy often draw on Bandura (1997) Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) as a main theoretical guide. Many scholars have found that self-efficacy influences career choice indecision. It is also considered an important psychological factor (Choi et al., 2012; Udayar et al., 2020). Taylor and Betz (1983) proposed that the decision-making efficacy and professional identity one possesses during career selection can explain the differences in CDMD among individuals. When making career decisions, people with stronger self-efficacy often trust their abilities more. They are more willing to actively collect information, can more rationally compare different career options, and are more inclined to take practical actions to reduce decision uncertainty. In contrast, individuals with low self-efficacy are more likely to avoid decision-making tasks, showing hesitation and procrastination.

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In conclusion, individuals with high levels of PsyCap and GSE tend to explore careers more confidently and positively, thereby reducing CDMD. Therefore, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H5. PsyCap negatively predicts CDMD.

H6. GSE negatively predicts CDMD.

2.4. Mediating Effect Hypothesis

During the career decision-making process, PS can provide individuals with a rich emotional environment and practical material assistance, enabling students to have a clearer direction when facing employment choices for the first time and reducing their anxiety (Hobfoll, 2001). Some scholars also believe that PS can indirectly enhance decision-making effectiveness by strengthening PsyCap (Bandura, 1997; Luthans et al., 2006). This is likely because through the care and encouragement from parents, individuals can become more optimistic and positive and can also learn more about careers from parents (Luthans et al., 2006). These accumulations all help individuals enhance their PsyCap, and we know that the higher the PsyCap, the more confident individuals are in handling various problems, which thereby reduces feelings of difficulty.

In addition, PS can directly enhance an individual's GSE, which is the overall confidence in one's own abilities (Bandura, 1997). When individuals have more confidence in their own abilities, they will be more decisive and less hesitant when making career choices. Studies have shown that individual characteristics often exert influence through self-efficacy, and the intensity of self-efficacy is a key factor determining whether decisions can be made during the career selection process (Betz & Klein, 1996; Betz & Voyten, 1997; Lent et al., 1994; Taylor & Popma, 1990).

Therefore, it can be speculated that PsyCap and GSE can form a chain effect: PS first enhances PsyCap, PsyCap then strengthens GSE, and ultimately jointly reduces CDMD(Bandura, 1997; Hobfoll, 2001; Luthans et al., 2006).

Therefore, the following hypotheses are formulated:

H7. PsyCap mediates the relationship between PS and CDMD.

H8. GSE mediates the relationship between PS and CDMD.

H9. PsyCap and GSE sequentially mediate the relationship between PS and CDMD.

Drawing on the theoretical rationale and proposed hypotheses, Figure 1 depicts the conceptual framework that informs this study.

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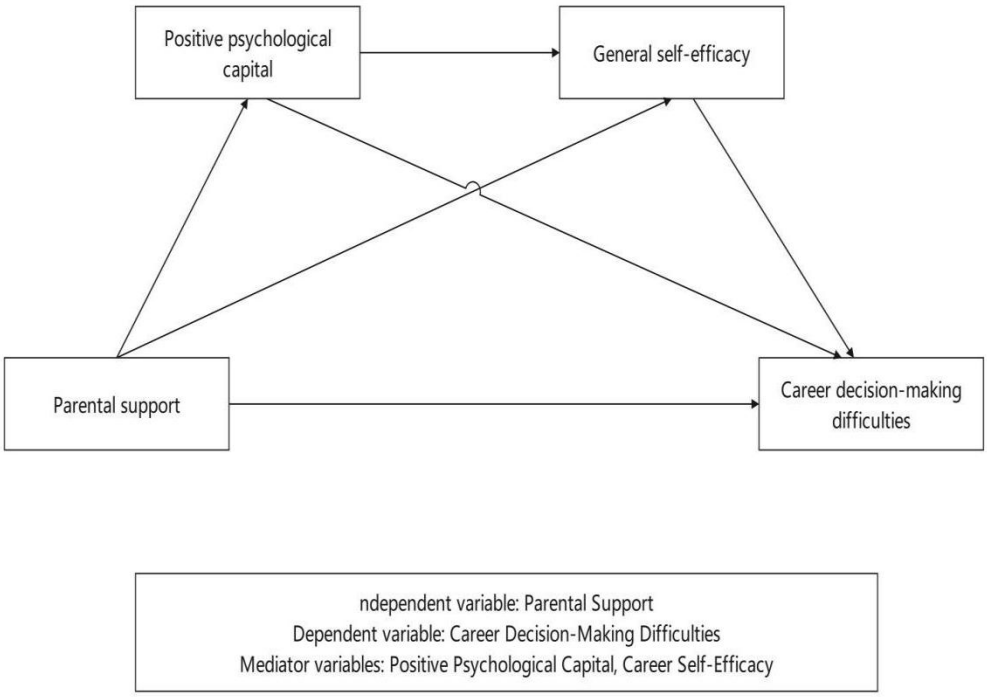
Figure 1: Conceptual framework



3. Methods

3.1. Sampling Technique

This study focused on college students in Guangxi, China, and utilized the convenience sampling method to collect data (Etikan, 2016).

The method is characterized by simplicity and cost-effectiveness. Specifically, participants were recruited through the online questionnaire platform Wenjuanxing. Participants were included in the study if they met the following criteria.

i. Full-time undergraduate students studying in Guangxi universities.
ii. Voluntary participation in this study.
iii. Able to understand and complete the questionnaire content.

3.2. Sample Size

Based on the recommendation of Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), the minimum sample size was determined to be 138, using G*Power with an effect size f^2 of 0.15, significance level α of 0.05, and test power of 0.95(Hair et al., 2019). In this study, a total of 250 questionnaires were distributed, and after eliminating the invalid responses, a total of 245 valid questionnaires were used (N = 245).

3.3. Research Tools

The core variables were measured using four well-established scales. Parental Support (PS) was assessed with the PS Scale (PSS) developed by Zou (1999), which consists of 17 items (Yang et al., 2021). Psychological capital (PsyCap) was captured through the PsyCap Questionnaire (PPQ), revised by Zhang et al.(2010) based on Luthans et al. (2004) psychological capital framework, and includes 26 items. General self-efficacy

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(GSE) was determined using the GSE Scale (GSES) developed by Schwarzer and Jerusalem (1995),consisting of 10 items. Career decision-making difficulties (CDMD) were examined via the CDMD Questionnaire (CDDQ) compiled by Gati (1996), with the Chinese version revised by Du and Long (2006), including 16 items.

All these scales used a 5-point Likert scale (1 = "strongly disagree", 5 = "strongly agree"), with higher scores indicating a higher degree of the individual's corresponding level. These scales have good reliability and cross-cultural applicability among Chinese college students (Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 1995; Wang et al., 2001; Yang et al., 2021).

3.4. Research Approach

This study uses a quantitative research design and builds a chain mediation model to examine the relationships among variables. In the model, parental support is the independent variable, positive psychological capital and general self-efficacy are the mediating variables, and career decision-making difficulties are the dependent variable. All variables are measured using standardized scales. Statistical methods are then used to test both direct and indirect effects. This approach helps turn abstract psychological concepts into measurable data. It also makes the relationships between variables clearer and easier to understand, while improving the reliability and interpretation of the results.

3.5. Research Location

The sample of this study comes from college students in Guangxi, China. This group is at an important stage of exploring and making career decisions, which fits well with the purpose of this research. Universities in Guangxi are diverse in type, which helps the study collect a more varied sample. This improves how well the results can represent the wider population. In addition, it is also practical and convenient to collect data in this region, which makes the questionnaire survey easier to carry out.

3.6. Analysis Method

This study uses Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) to analyze the data. It is used to test the chain mediation effect of parental support on career decision-making difficulties through positive psychological capital and general self-efficacy. PLS-SEM is suitable for models with multiple latent variables and complex relationships, especially mediation models. It also works well with smaller sample sizes and does not require the data to follow a strict normal distribution. In addition, it can evaluate path coefficients and the explanatory power of the model, which fits well with the needs of this study.

4. Results

This section describes the demographic characteristics of respondents who took part in the survey voluntarily. It provides information regarding gender, age, and academic year. The demographic variables are presented as follows Table 1.

Analysis of the demographic variables of the respondents indicates that there were 126 male participants (51.43%) and 119 female participants (48.57%) in this survey. Regarding age distribution, 67 respondents (27.35%) were 18–20 years old, 80

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respondents (32.65%) were 21–22 years old, 17 respondents (6.94%) were 23–25 years old, and 81 respondents (33.06%) were over 25 years old. In terms of academic year, 60 participants (24.49%) were in Year 1, 39 participants (15.92%) were in Year 2, 66 participants (26.94%) were in Year 3, 28 participants (11.43%) were in Year 4, and 52 participants (21.22%) were in Year 5.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage(%)
Gender	Male	126	51.43
	Female	119	48.57
Age	18-20	67	27.35
	21-22	80	32.65
	23-25	17	6.94
	> 25	81	33.06
Grade	Year 1	60	24.49
	Year 2	39	15.92
	Year 3	66	26.94
	Year 4	28	11.43
	Year 5	52	21.22
Total		245	100.0

Note. N=245.

4.1. Reliability Analysis

In assessing the reliability and validity of the constructs in the model, Cronbach's Alpha, Composite Reliability (ρ_a), Composite Reliability (ρ_c), and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) were used. In this study, the values of Cronbach's Alpha, ρ_a, and ρ_c for all scales were above 0.7, indicating good reliability of the questionnaire items. Additionally, all AVE values exceeded 0.5, demonstrating satisfactory internal consistency of the measures (Table 2).

Table 2: Reliability and Validity Indicators of Constructs

	Cronbach's α	Composite reliability (rho_a)	Composite reliability (rho_c)	AVE
GSE	0.919	0.924	0.932	0.579
PS	0.943	0.944	0.949	0.523
PsyCap	0.969	0.970	0.971	0.565
CDD	0.944	0.947	0.950	0.543

Note. AVE=Average variance extracted.

4.2. Correlation Analysis

Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationships among the study variables. The results showed that:

PS was significantly positively correlated with PsyCap ($r = 0.276$, $p < 0.01$) and GSE($r = 0.328$, $p < 0.01$).PsyCap was significantly positively correlated with GSE ($r = 0.262$, $p < 0.01$).CDMD were significantly negatively correlated with PS ($r = -0.472$, $p < 0.01$), PsyCap ($r = -0.391$, $p < 0.01$), and GSE ($r = -0.317$, $p < 0.01$).

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Table 3 presents the Pearson correlations among all variables in this study. The variables showed moderate correlations in the expected directions. Higher PS was linked to greater PsyCap and GSE. Meanwhile, CDMD tended to be lower when PS, PsyCap, and GSE were higher.PsyCap and GSE were positively correlated. This indicates that a person's psychological resources and confidence in their abilities strengthen one another.These correlation results provide a foundation for further exploration of causal relationships and underlying mechanisms among the variables.

Table 3: Pearson Correlations Among Study Variables

Variable	PS	PsyCap	GSE	CDD
PS	1			
PsyCap	0.276**	1		
GSE	0.328**	0.262**	1	
CDD	-0.472**	-0.391**	-0.317**	1

Note. * p<0.05. ** p<0.01.

4.3. Model and Hypothesis Testing

All hypothesized paths had T-statistics greater than 1.96 ($p < 0.05$), indicating that the path coefficients were statistically significant. Specifically:

i. GSE showed a significant negative effect. This indicates that higher GSE is linked to lower CDMD.($\beta = -0.134$, $p = 0.027$).
ii. PS significantly predicted both GSE ($\beta = 0.278$, $p < 0.001$) and PsyCap ($\beta = 0.285$, $p < 0.001$). In addition, PS had a significant negative effect on CDMD ($\beta = -0.366$, $p < 0.001$).
iii. PsyCap positively influenced GSE ($\beta = 0.188$, $p = 0.011$). It also negatively affected CDMD ($\beta = -0.257$, $p < 0.001$).

As shown in Table 4, the variable relationships in the model are consistent with theoretical predictions. Moreover, all path effects reached significance.

Table 4: Path Coefficients and Hypothesis Testing

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	STDEV	T statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P values
GSE→ CDD	-0.134	-0.135	0.061	2.212	0.027
PS→ GSE	0.278	0.284	0.077	3.630	0.000
PS→PsyCap	0.285	0.295	0.073	3.891	0.000
PS→ CDD	-0.366	-0.366	0.071	5.156	0.000
PsyCap→GSE	0.188	0.192	0.074	2.551	0.011
PsyCap→CDD	-0.257	-0.258	0.068	3.756	0.000

Note. STDEV=Standard deviation.

4.4. Mediation Analysis

In the analysis of indirect effects:

i. The indirect effect of PS → PsyCap → CDMD was -0.073, with a 95% confidence interval of [-0.139, -0.026]. Since the confidence interval does not include 0, PsyCap significantly mediates the relationship between PS and CDMD. Therefore, H7 is supported.
ii. The indirect effect of PS → GSE → CDMD was -0.037, with a 95% confidence

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interval of [-0.088, -0.004]. As the confidence interval does not contain 0, GSE significantly mediates the relationship between PS and CDMD. Thus, H8 is supported.

iii. The chain-mediated indirect effect of PS → PsyCap → GSE → CDMD was -0.007, with a 95% confidence interval of [-0.022, -0.001]. Since the confidence interval excludes 0, H9 is supported. This indicates a chain mediation effect, whereby PS sequentially enhances positive PsyCap and GSE, which in turn reduces CDMD (Table 5).

Table 5: Mediation Analysis Results

	O	M	STDEV	T statistics	P values	2.5%	97.5%
PS→ PsyCap→ CDD	-0.073	-0.077	0.029	2.540	0.011	-0.139	-0.026
PS→ GSE → CDD	-0.037	-0.039	0.021	1.750	0.080	-0.088	-0.004
PS → PsyCap→GSE → CDD	-0.007	-0.008	0.005	1.403	0.161	-0.022	-0.001

Note. O=Original sample. M=Sample mean.STDEV=Standard deviation .

5. Discussion

This study is based on COR theory (Hobfoll, 1989) and examines how PS affects CDMD. The study also brings in two mediators, PsyCap and GSE. These two factors form a chain mediation path. The main goal was to explore whether this relationship exists and how it works.

The results show that PS is significantly and negatively related to CDMD. PS is an important external resource that individuals can feel and experience. It not only gives emotional support but also offers practical help and material support (Yang et al., 2021; Zou, 1999). With steady support from parents, students can gain a clearer understanding of what they need for career development.

In our daily practice, we notice that many graduates appear to be hesitant when searching for a job. This is not only because of a lack of skills, but it is more probable that the reason for this is that people, when confronted with difficult choices, feel uncertain about the options available to them due to their lack of experience. As the uncertainty is reduced, so is the anxiety. As the doubts are reduced and the amount of relevant information is increased, people can feel more confident in their decision-making. Consequently, the CDMD can be reduced (Du & Long, 2006; Gati et al., 1996).

Through research, we have found that PS is a significant negative correlate of CDMD. PS, as a major external resource that individuals can perceive, includes a number of key dimensions, such as a knowledge resource, social skills, work guidance, and financial support. With the constant support of parents, not only can it provide individuals with emotional support internally, but also material and behavioral support (Yang et al., 2021; Zou, 1999). Once individuals have gained clearer information and guidance, this feeling of clarity can reduce confusion and emotional anxiety, and thus help them plan out their future courses more effectively.

A positive family environment can make people feel accepted and protected. The more stable the family relationship and the better the communication, the more people feel secure in their hearts. When they feel supported by their parents all the time, they are

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more likely to develop positive expectations for the future and feel that they are able to deal with problems(Luthans et al., 2006; Schwarzer& Jerusalem, 1995).

PsyCap emphasizes a future-oriented psychological state. It includes hope, optimism, and the strength to persist in the face of difficulties (Luthans et al., 2006). When the level of PsyCap is high, individuals are usually more proactive and willing to try new possibilities. A rich inner self enables them to be less likely to retreat in the face of stressful situations. Instead, they show a more proactive attitude in seeking solutions to problems(Avey et al., 2011).

Another important variable for individual internal development, GSE, focuses more on an individual's assessment of their overall capabilities (Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 1995). It addresses a more specific question - "Can I do it?" During the growth process, the encouragement, trust, and empowerment from parents gradually internalize into a stable self-assessment. When parents express "You can do it", this information is repeatedly reinforced and eventually transforms into the individual's affirmation and trust in their own abilities. On the contrary, excessive negation or control may weaken the individual's belief in their own capabilities, causing them to lose confidence even more.

From the perspective of COR, these two psychological forces do not exist independently. PsyCap is like an overall reserve of psychological energy, while GSE is like the stable belief that emerges after the long-term accumulation of this energy, which is a confirmation of one's own ability to act. When an individual has sufficient energy reserves and believes that they possess the ability to solve problems, it is more conducive for them to understand difficulties from an optimistic and positive perspective and to believe that problems can be overcome. In this way, the information chaos and real-life pressures they encounter during the job search process will no longer be so anxiety-provoking.

On the basis of this logical sequence and in light of the empirical findings, the study confirmed the chain-mediated hypothesis: PS → PsyCap → GSE → CDMD. Parental support (PS) begins with the provision of emotional and value-based support to individuals, which helps them build PsyCap. Then, with increased PsyCap, their GSE gets further strengthened. Finally, this continuous process from "hope" to "ability belief" helps individuals feel more confident about career decision-making, thus overcoming career decision-making difficulties (CDMD) (Lent & Brown, 2013).

This finding indicates that different psychological resources do not only add up to each other but also show a dynamic relationship of progression and construction. PS is an important external beginning point in the whole process of resource construction. As a crucial family resource, PS not only brings emotional comfort and value confirmation to college students but also builds a safe exploration ground for them through information guidance, behavior demonstration, and expectation guidance. PsyCap is the relatively stable and broad psychological basis of an individual, while GSE further specifically develops this into action beliefs and confidence expressions when confronting tasks and challenges. The former is more about positive psychological advantages, while the latter turns these advantages into specific judgments and behavioral expectations of "I can do it." The two complement each other and progress step by step, jointly building the psychological basis for individuals in the context of career decision-making.

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Thus, PS not only has a direct effect of diminishing CDMD, but it also has the potential to increase PsyCap by activating and building it up, which in turn can strengthen GSE and finally overcome the hesitation and uncertainty of individuals in making career decisions. This logic explains how external resources work by the gradual building of internal psychological resources, and it not only broadens the explanatory path of COR in the area of career development, but it also provides a more systematic empirical foundation for understanding how family factors are incorporated into the individual's psychological structure and affect the process of career decision-making.

From the view of Chinese culture, this mechanism is especially obvious. As Chinese culture values family responsibilities and intergenerational obligations, it places more emphasis on the role of parents in career choices. If parents provide support through respect and understanding, students are more likely to achieve a balance between family responsibilities and personal interests, thus alleviating internal conflicts. Chinese families in general value long-term investment in their offspring and stress hard work and persistent effort. Parents can help children develop an attitude of not giving up in the face of difficulties through encouragement, expectations, and role models in daily education. This developmental environment is beneficial for the cultivation of resilience and responsibility, and provides fertile soil for the development of psychological capital. When people learn to persist and self-regulate in the family support environment, their understanding of challenges will be transformed. They are more likely to perceive difficulties as a process of growth instead of a demonstration of lack of ability. Besides the emotional part, the social resources, interpersonal information, and economic assistance from parents can also improve students' psychological security. On the contrary, if the support is one-sided in control or one-way arrangement, it may worsen the confusion in career decision-making. Furthermore, Chinese culture values the importance of "achievements rewarding the family". People often work not only for self-actualization but also for family expectations. This two-fold motivation can reinforce the sense of purpose and action intention.

However, this study still has some limitations. This study used a cross-sectional research design, which can only reflect the relationship between variables and has a relatively weak ability to describe the causal relationship of each variable. Future studies can use a longitudinal tracking approach to further observe the dynamic changes of psychological resources in the process of individual development so as to improve the explanatory power of this study. In the aspect of data, the data of this study mainly came from self-report questionnaires.This method may be affected by social expectations or subjective judgments, which may lead to a certain degree of measurement bias. Subsequent research can combine multiple sources of data, such as combining interview methods, and include teacher evaluations or behavioral observation data to enhance the reliability of the research results. The sample collected in this study was all from the undergraduate students in Guangxi, China. Therefore, the applicability of the research conclusions in other career development stages still needs to be tested. Future research can expand the scope of the research subjects and include people of different age groups or career stages. At the same time, personality traits and social cultural background factors can also be included in the analysis framework to construct a more complete model of the influence of career decision-making.

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6. Conclusion

Based on the COR, this study constructed and tested a chain mediating model of PS on the influence of CDMD on college students. The main conclusions are as follows.

PS can significantly reduce CDMD, indicating that PS is an important external resource source in the career development process of college students. PsyCap serves as a partial mediator between PS and CDMD. This indicates that part of PS's effect on CDMD operates through PsyCap, suggesting that family support helps individuals accumulate PsyCap, thereby promoting the development of career adaptability. GSE also plays a mediating role between PS and CDMD, this indicates that an individual's beliefs in their abilities play a key role. They form an important cognitive foundation for career decision-making behavior.

Further research found that PsyCap and GSE form a significant chain mediating path between PS and CDMD. PS promotes the accumulation of psychological resources and strengthens ability beliefs, ultimately reducing the level of CDMD. This result reveals the internal mechanism of the transformation of family resources into psychological resources, enriching the application of COR in the field of career development.

Overall, this study reveals the multi-path mechanism of the formation of college students' CDMD from the perspective of resource integration, providing theoretical basis and empirical support for college career guidance and family education practices.

Ethics Approval and Consent to Participate

This study has been approved by the UiTM Research Ethics Committee (Ethics Approval No.: REC/09/2025 (PG/MR/524)). All research procedures involving human participants were conducted in strict accordance with the guidelines of the ethics committee. Before data collection, all participants were informed of the purpose and content of the study, and informed consent was obtained. The study followed the ethical principles of the Declaration of Helsinki, ensuring voluntary participation, anonymity, and confidentiality of data, while fully protecting participants' rights and interests.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of Interest.

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