

# The Realistic Dilemma, Reason Analysis and Countermeasure Suggestion of College Students' Employment Quality

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**Abstract**—In recent years, the problem of “difficult employment” of college students has become increasingly prominent, and the employment quality of college students deserves attention. This paper focuses on the current employment quality of college students, combs the concept of employment quality, the current situation of employment quality of college students and the factors affecting employment quality of college students, and focuses on the realistic dilemma and main reasons for employment quality of college students based on existing literature. This paper believes that the current practical difficulties of college students' employment quality mainly include delayed employment, excessive salary expectations, and a high turnover rate. The main reasons include the increasing enrollment rate of college students leading to great competitive pressure in the job market of college students, the devaluation of academic qualifications, and many students passively or actively choosing to delay employment. At the same time, the rapid social and economic development makes college students have higher salary expectations, and they are not well suited to entering jobs. When facing pressure such as overtime work and competition, a high turnover rate occurs. Under this circumstance, this paper believes that college students should establish a realistic professional perspective, actively consider their issues, seek to enhance their abilities and working skills, and learn how to handle the strain of their jobs well. While universities should enhance training initiatives, give additional career guidance to pupils, and provide pupils with greater employment options, governments, and enterprises should build a friendly, welcoming environment for college students.

**Keywords**—college students, employment quality, realistic dilemma, reason analysis

## I. INTRODUCTION

Employment is the foundation of society, and it is the source of life since most people in the world need a job for survival. According to the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, there were over ten million students who graduated from higher education in 2021 [1], meaning that at least over ten million people are competing for jobs every year. The employment of college graduates not only bears on the welfare of millions of families but also relates to the utilization efficiency of national human resources and the stability of a great country. Since the eighteenth CPC National Congress in China, Chinese governments have paid high attention to university graduates' vocational problems. What's more, they have introduced a series of policies on stabilizing college graduates' employment. Currently, the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security of the People's Republic of China has announced that for enterprises recruiting 2023 general college graduates who have not been employed within two years after leaving school, or registered unemployed youths aged 16–24, signing labor contracts and

paying unemployment, work-related injury, and employee pension insurance premiums for more than one month, the one-time job expansion subsidy will be issued at a standard of no more than 1,500 yuan per person recruited [2]. In this case, the policy facilitates the employment of graduates of higher education and maintains the stability of China's employment situation. The introductions to new policies have inevitably improved college graduates' vocational condition. However, university graduates still face a lot of problems, such as long employment circles, high vocational competitiveness, delayed employment, etc. Therefore, promoting high-quality economic and social development and safeguarding people's livelihood make it indispensable to be concerned about Chinese college graduates' problems with the quality of employment.

According to Green and Mostafa [3], “job quality”, a synonym for “quality of work and employment”, is an essential component of an individual, describing how an individual benefits from the job. It contains four key elements: earnings, prospects for the job (the possibility of keeping one's job in the future, the prospect of progression, and the beneficial contract status), intrinsic job quality (skills, working environments, and working intensity), and the working time quality. Based on existing research, this paper will focus on analyzing the realistic dilemma of college students' employment quality, analyze the reasons in depth in combination with the actual situation, and put forward countermeasures and suggestions to improve college students' employment quality on this basis.

## II. PREVIOUS RESEARCH ON JOB EQUALITY OF COLLEGE STUDENTS

University graduates' employment has been a crucial topic for recent research. The existing literature around college student employment mainly included employability, social capital, human capital, job quality, and entrepreneurship, with job quality acting as one of the important branches of research on college students' employment issues. Centering on the research goal of this paper, this paper combs the concept of employment quality, the current situation of the job quality of college students in China, and the factors affecting the job quality of college students.

### A. Definition of Job Quality

On the issue of job quality, scholars first discussed the concept of employment quality.

Holman defined job quality as the amount to which a job contained work and employment-related aspects that promoted favorable outcomes for the employee, namely psychological well-being, physical well-being, and positive

attitudes such as job satisfaction [4].

In addition to foreign experts, Chinese experts also shared their perspectives on the definition of the quality of employment. Liu [5] reckoned that job quality was a comprehensive category reflecting the degree of the specific conditions of the laborer's combination with the means of production and obtaining remuneration or income in the whole employment process. According to Qin [6], the quality of employment for college students referred to the degree to which the quality of jobs available to college students and the inherent characteristics of jobs met the requirements of college students and was a comprehensive concept that measured the employment status of college students in the entire employment process.

Through combing through the existing studies, it is found that although scholars have different definitions of employment quality, the basic connotation is the same: employment quality refers to employment status, employment consistency with workers' talents, and employment satisfaction.

### *B. The Contemporary Status of University Students' Job Quality*

Several studies have been conducted to evaluate the current status of the quality of employment of university students.

According to Zhao [7], the pay level of enterprises had increased greatly every year under the circumstance that the overall level and average level of workers' wages in China continued to rise sharply and the pay level of the industry had increased greatly. However, the starting pay of college students in their first employment had remained stagnant. What was more, as the enrollment scale of colleges and universities continued to expand, the supply of university students tended to become saturated. In the face of the slow growth of jobs in society, the employment space for university students had been compressed to a smaller and smaller size, and it had become increasingly difficult for them to match their specialties in their initial employment. In addition, university students seemed to have little motivation and initiative to start their businesses [7].

Sun [8] showed in his research that college students in contemporary society lack in motivation to find employment and have a low employment rate. The reason for the phenomenon of "slow employment", which was not in line with the current national conditions, might be that students had firm employment goals and strong confidence in the suitability of employment, or that they did not have a comprehensive understanding of the career and had weak planning and execution ability [8].

Wang *et al.* [9] indicated that the overall employment situation of the graduate graduates from the classes of 2014-2018 is fine, and the employment rate had been maintained at a high level, realizing a high degree of employment satisfaction. Although the employment rate of graduates had slightly declined due to the impact of the economic downturn, it had been maintained above 98%.

### *C. Possible Influencing Factors of Job Quality*

It is necessary to be aware of the elements contributing to high job satisfaction to better understand job quality in a way to analyze the possible challenges university students are

facing in the labor market nowadays.

With the depth of research, some scholars have expanded from qualitative to quantitative studies, while others have indexed the measurement of employment quality.

Holman [4] listed out the factors indicating high job quality: work organization (job resources, job challenge demands, and job hindrance demands), wages system (high pay and pay enhancements), working security and tractability (working time flexibility and permanent contracts), employer's development on skills (training and skill use), and involvement.

Another expert, Clark, compared two data sets of measures of job quality. One was from the Work Orientations module of the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP). This module showed that the most significant job value was job security, followed by job interest, independence, and so on. The other data set came from the British House Panel Survey (BHPS). The data demonstrated that job security and payment stood the high scores [10]. In both surveys, people considered job security as an essential characteristic of the quality of employment.

Overall, there were several studies set based on the current status of college students' job quality. There were also some professors studying the factors contributing to the various consequences of college students' job quality.

#### *1) Personal characteristics*

##### *(1) Self-directedness*

Kim and Kim [11] contended that self-directedness had a positive effect on undergraduates' employment. They defined self-directedness as a process in which learners, with or without the assistance of others, took the initiative in diagnosing their learning needs, building learning goals, locating people and material resources for learning, choosing and utilizing suitable approaches to learning, and evaluating learning outcomes. Students with self-directedness made their own decisions in their work lives and were responsible for their skills and talents. In their research, Kim and Kim [11] found out that undergraduates' independence and task-solving capacities positively impacted their achievement orientation and intrinsic motivation, while the achievement orientation and intrinsic motivation led them to their goal-setting for job-seeking and their job information searching, which were forms of employment readiness, raising the possibility of them to enter the workforce [11]. Therefore, self-directedness positively affects students' employment readiness and might give rise to their employment rate.

##### *(2) Academic Performance*

According to Guo and Tang [12], college students' academic performance was relevant to job quality on its effects on the starting salaries. Guo and Tang used some models to show that controlling for other variables, a 1% increase in academic integration was associated with an 18.7% increase in average starting salary, indicating that academic integration had a significant positive effect on the starting salary of university students. What was more, among the possible variables, subject categories and length of school were also found to be contributors to different starting salaries. As shown in the models, two-year students had a higher average starting salary than three-year students. Students who studied social sciences, sciences, and

engineering also had higher average starting salaries than those who majored in the humanities [12]. In addition, Pham *et al.* [13] concluded from their research that college students' wages were closely connected to the extent to which students' jobs were relevant to their majors. It was likely that the more relevant a student's job was to their major, the higher their salary would be. Therefore, different academic performances cause different payments.

### (3) Personal Preferences

In a study of motivation and preferences of college students, Ko and Jun [14] indicated that job preferences were also influencing factors of job quality. They compared China, Korea, and Singapore and found that different motivations and inclinations contributed to different working conditions. Chinese students, having a desire for leadership, friendly associates, and acquiring new skills, were less likely to participate in public service jobs than South Korean students who pursued stable futures and were keen on benefiting society. In addition, Asian females, being motivated to avoid gender discrimination, were more inclined to choose public sector jobs than Asian males [14]. In the cases above, students' personal preferences made differences in choices of working environment, which represented a great factor in job quality.

### 2) Families

Some researchers studied the impact of families on one's job quality. Liu [15] mentioned that parents' education levels might affect one's exposure to high-level knowledge and advanced skills, which were key factors of satisfied employment. Timmons *et al.* [16] pointed out that families were serving as a role-modeling function. By discussing working and employment experiences with kids, parents and other adults in the family were exposing the children to the methods of earning money and the state of dependence and personal satisfaction. What was more, Timmons *et al.* [16] insisted that years of role modeling resulted in deeply embedded and engrained work expectations. Therefore, families serve as role models and affect college students' perception of employment and working capabilities from an early age.

### 3) Schools

In the research, Timmons *et al.* [16] studied the role of schools as a factor in job quality as well. First, they contended that school-based personnel provided university students with the first exposure to job experience. When planning for employment in the workforce, undergraduates were likely to communicate with their teachers on job-seeking and employment since teachers were the closest workers they could meet at schools. In this case, college students were more inclined to acquire useful advice provided by the teachers and prepared for their employment, which might affect the job quality [16]. In addition, early working experiences also affected people's confidence in their capacity to contribute to the community and made some of them cautious to look for future employment [16]. What was more, Pham *et al.* [13] found out that schooling had a positive impact on college students' job quality. They focused on occupational students in California, analyzing data from the California Community College Career Technical Education Employment Outcomes Survey.

Students receiving certain schooling were exposed to higher income, better employment status (part-time or full-time), and longer working span (temporary or permanent) [13]. Therefore, job quality is significantly affected by school policies as well as early exposure to working experience. Zhang [17] found in her studies that colleges and universities have a positive impact on improving the employment quality of college students. Based on the 2021 Annual Report on the Employment Quality of Graduates from 39 colleges and universities in Tianjin, China, she confirmed that the implementation of "employment + ideological and political" education, the promotion of advanced typical stories of grass-roots employment, the good work of grass-roots employment services, and the recognition and reward of grass-roots employment can improve the enthusiasm and quality of grass-roots employment of college students.

### 4) Community (Government)

According to Findlay *et al.* [18], organizational features could shape evaluations of job quality. It was said that social democratic institutional regimes in Northern European countries owned the highest dimension of superb jobs, Southern European countries had a large number of insecure jobs, while transitional institutional regimes in Eastern European countries owned a huge ratio of stressing work [18]. The differences in employment policies among the countries contributed to the intense differences in job quality. Wang [19] pointed out that in terms of improving the employment quality of college students, the government should actively specify employment policies, give full play to the role of the government as the main body of high-quality employment management for college students, and work with families and students to improve the employment quality of college students. In addition, some scholars have conducted research on the employment of minority college students. Lu [20] believes that as a social phenomenon, the employment of minority college students should be managed by the government as its main body and responsibility. As a type of public service, only the government, as the subject qualification, can maximize the use and creation of possible resources to promote the employment of minority college students. The government here includes relevant departments at the national level, such as the central agencies such as the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Finance, and the National Affairs Commission, as well as local agencies such as the local agencies such as the Bureau of Human Resources and Social Security, the Bureau of Education, the Bureau of Finance, and the talent service agency.

From combing through the literature, it appears that college students' job quality is a crucial topic among all the research topics. To improve the job quality of university students nowadays, it is essential to figure out what the specific challenge of university students' employment is and the possible factors that result in the difficulties, leading to the analysis of several previous research. In the search for the contributors to a high job quality, personal characteristics, families, schools, and community stand out to be the main factors of a high-quality job. The following discussion will focus on the four key factors and the solutions to them.

### III. THE DILEMMA AND THE POTENTIAL RESOLUTIONS

#### A. Real Dilemma and the Possible Contributors

##### 1) *Employment difficulties of fresh graduates lead to delayed employment*

Delaying employment has become a choice for many fresh graduates. One form of deferred employment is active deferred employment. Many college students take the initiative to apply to postpone their graduation, mainly for the following reasons: first, because it is difficult to find a job, they have to fight for more internships as students, so that they can have more time to “brush up on their resumes” to be more competitive in the job market; second, due to the failure of postgraduate entrance examination, an increasing number of students want to retain the status of fresh graduates by postponing to prepare for entrance into the system; third, since time and physical conditions are not allowed, some students hope to stay one more year for their buffer period and apply for further study. As can be seen from the above, the current college students are facing more severe employment pressure, which results in delaying graduation and delaying employment.

According to Wang and Wang’s Chinese 4-year College Graduates’ Employment Annual Report, in 2022, there was an increasing number of college students, which raised university students’ employment pressure significantly. Data in the report exhibits that in the past five years, the proportion of fresh undergraduate graduates studying for graduate school has increased year by year, reaching 17.9% in 2022, an increase of 3.2% compared with 14.7% in 2018. Avoiding the current employment pressure and delaying entry into the labor market, an increasing number of graduates are determined to choose graduate schools. The proportion of the class of 2022 who are temporarily enrolled in graduate school due to employment difficulties (22%) has increased by 5% compared with 2018 (17%). The phenomenon of “avoidant entrance examination” needs proper attention [9].

The other form of deferred employment is the devaluation of academic qualifications, which results from the increasing enrollment rate of universities. According to the Ministry of Education of the People’s Republic of China, the number of college graduates in 2014 was 7.27 million in 2014, while there may be 11.58 million graduates in 2023. From the perspective of the job market, a large number of college students graduate from colleges and universities and enter society, which provides a large number of alternative labor forces for society. However, the demand for college students has not increased correspondingly. Even, the employment literacy of some university students cannot match the actual needs of society. The continuous increase in the number of graduates has resulted in a perennial oversupply in the job market, which affects the equilibrium between supply and demand of high-quality jobs in the job market and aggravates the contradiction between supply and demand in the market.

##### 2) *High salary expectations lead to low job satisfaction*

The main reason why many fresh graduates show low job satisfaction is that the overall actual salary of university students was much lower than the amount of income they expected. Mao [21] found out that only 20.3% of the college students surveyed matched their expected salary with their

actual salary. The data collected indicated that most college students blindly and ideally estimated their expected salary and that they were unable to make reasonable judgments on their own human capital and market salary level.

First of all, the most important reason for college students’ excessive salary expectations is some bad social media reports. In October 2023, some media released the recruitment salary of fresh college students in 2023, saying that “the average person is more than 10,000 yuan”. As soon as the news came out, it triggered discussion from all walks of life. Some people think that the data is credible, and the salaries of new college graduates are indeed high. However, some people think such reports are not newsworthy and even misleading to society, especially inexperienced college students. This paper holds that, on the one hand, the recruitment salary is only a publicity method adopted by enterprises to attract college students to submit resumes in the recruitment process. The salary signed with college students is much lower than that in the recruitment announcement; On the other hand, some unofficial reports are suspected of attracting traffic by exaggerating data, and such reports may have problems such as unreasonable sampling and loose data analysis. Therefore, this paper believes that it is urgent to strengthen the research on the actual contract salary of college students and publicize and correct the excessive salary expectations of college students.

There are three additional aspects of the reason. First, college students are incapable of detecting their conditions. Some students have difficulties estimating their overall performances, efforts, and capabilities. Working in conditions with high rivalry, college students may be inclined to pursue popular vocations and exorbitant wages [21]. Second, college students are experiencing a change in their daily lives, increasing students’ idealistic salaries. The living costs might be exposing college students to a more suffering burden, with rising prices, more expensive houses, and high child-rearing costs. In addition, with the development of social multimedia video platforms, the spread of social information is constantly increasing. Among them, the spread of some false information might have a misleading effect on college students, leading to the misjudgment of their social value, resulting in estimation bias, which affects their satisfaction with salary. Third, parents’ levels of literacy may have a significant impact on college students’ monthly salary expectations. With the popularization of education, an increasing number of parents are educated. According to Chen [22], the higher degree parents are being educated, the more possibility that students have a high expectation of working salary. In this case, parents are also a factor in causing college students to have an unrealistic prediction of wages.

##### 3) *The rising rate of enterprise cancellation leads to the increasing employment risk of college graduates*

College students were suffering from a high turnover rate. The main reason is that many companies break their contracts soon after hiring college students, which increases the risk of college students being fired. According to Li [23], nearly half of the college students had once quit their jobs within three years of graduation. Given the current phenomenon that many enterprises lay off newly graduated college students, different views have been expressed at all levels of society.

Some people believe that layoffs are legitimate and normal to adjust their structure and improve efficiency. This paper believes that for newly graduated college students, being laid off will not only lose the identity of fresh graduates but also be passively involved in the severe job market competition due to lack of work experience. Therefore, as the main economic body, enterprises should actively assume social responsibilities. When facing the pressure of enterprise operation or adjustment and optimization, they should consider the interests of fresh graduates as much as possible, give priority to protecting the employment opportunities of college students, and reduce layoffs. In the case of layoffs, subsidies and benefits for new graduates must be fully guaranteed.

Besides, the potential reason for the high turnover rate might be that college students suffer from the huge working pressure. In Li's research [23], 28.38% of college students reckoned that their high frequency of working overtime and the intolerable working pressure led them to leave the labor market. Students' working pressure may come from several aspects. Luo [24] pointed out that the lack of family concern might lower college students' moods and could enable students to give up when facing adaptation and working challenges. What was more, college students might be under huge stress struggling through the severe occupational competition in the workforce during periods of stagnant or atrocious economic situations.

## *B. Countermeasures and Suggestions*

### *1) College students*

College students should set up a correct view of their career, actively reflect on their problems, and put effort into improving their working skills and capacities. Instead of blindly establishing a goal that they can never achieve, college students should always reflect on the skills that they lack and the possible ways to improve themselves. For example, in the case of many students pursuing an exorbitant amount of salary that they are unable to achieve, students should instead consider their potential in the job, whether they can complete their tasks efficiently and balance their work, study, and lives wisely or not, and have a rational expectation of wages based on their potentials. Afterward, college students should regularly reflect on their lacking skills and plan to make some improvements. If students are not familiar with the use of a computer but have to make graphs, charts, and reports to finish their tasks, they should practice working on the computer in their spare time and try to complete their tasks more efficiently. In this case, they are more likely to have a promotion due to their improvements, leading to better job quality.

In addition, college students should learn to handle their working pressure wisely. First, they could try to make some entertainment after work. For example, they could try new sports and do some exercises, or they could go to the theatre and go to concerts to release their stress. Second, it is also relaxing to raise their efficiency during working. With high efficiency, college students would be less likely to worry about working overtime and might be able to enjoy their spare time after work. Third, they could share their worries and anxiety with people around them. Talking with friends and families about what they experience during work, college

students' stress might be somehow released due to others' comprehension and concerns about their pain. With stress mostly released, college students are more inclined to experience better satisfaction with work, which enhances their job quality.

### *2) Colleges and universities*

Colleges and universities should optimize training programs to train elites in the new era to meet the new needs of society. As the competition in the labor market is becoming increasingly fierce, workers' talents and skills are becoming more and more important as criteria for companies' entrance. Young workers who are lacking in experience and talent are less likely to stand out among the large number of job applicants. In this case, it would be crucial for universities to build job-training programs for students to improve their talents and capacities. Universities should find out the skills that most students lack and endeavor to improve them. For example, if most students in a college are introverted and are afraid of talking in public, the college should set up a speaking lesson for all students as a requirement. Forcing all the students to attend the class, the college enables the introverted students to be more confident and sociable, which makes them more competitive in the labor market.

What is more, universities should provide students with more employment counseling. When students have trouble with their jobs and are confused about the job and working goals, the counselors in school ensure the convenience of students addressing their questions and reducing their puzzlements. By offering students support and help when they meet difficulties at work, colleges lessen students' stress and raise their job satisfaction, resulting in a rise in job quality.

Last but not least, colleges could offer students with more job opportunities in school. Many jobs are required in a university. For example, students can work as librarians in the school library during their free time, or they are able to introduce the university to visitors in the school as guides. Providing students with more job opportunities in school, universities bring convenience to students who are unable to find jobs outside the school, which may increase college students' employment rate.

### *3) Governments*

The "visible" role of the government should be strengthened to help solve the problem of college students' employment quality. There is an ongoing debate about whether the government should "get involved" in employment or not. Some argue that employment is entirely a market issue and should be resolved by both companies and workers. However, this paper believes that the employment of college students is related to social stability and economic development. Under the social structure of China, the government must introduce some measures to improve the employment quality of college students. First, improve the employment policy of college students, encourage enterprises to absorb college students, give enterprises tax incentives, and so on. In this case, college students who are struggling with their applications can enter the workforce with a higher possibility and jobs are more available for students who hesitate in whether to further their studies or

not.

Second, the government should provide college students with a greater amount of job subsidies. With these subsidies, students may be more inclined to find jobs, leading to a rise in the employment figure. The government could probably cope with college students' employment issues by offering college student subsidies and motivating college student entrepreneurship. Third, the government should establish a congenial and peaceful employment atmosphere, and guide the whole society to create an amicable good environment for college students to have a better working experience.

#### 4) Enterprises

Enterprises are a crucial part of the society as well. Enterprises should certainly take responsibility for encouraging college students to join the workforce and raise college students' incentives for jobs. They could achieve this goal in two ways. First, enterprises should take the initiative to bear social responsibility, absorb college students' employment, and have long-term employment contracts with college students without breaking them readily. Second, they should provide college students with a better working environment and atmosphere and play the role of "stabilizer" in the employment of college students. Third, enterprises should actively promote co-construction with colleges and universities, participate in curriculum setting, strengthen project cooperation and achievement transformation, and provide internship and retention opportunities in a targeted manner. The co-construction of university and enterprise could not only help college students to get in touch with practical work skills and learn effective work skills, but also help college students to get familiar with the demand of the labor market in advance, better improve their rational cognition of work and salary, and thus improve their ability to apply for jobs.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

The employment quality of college students has been an increasing concern for all sectors of society. Based on sorting out the reality of college students' employment, this paper studies the quality of college students' employment. First of all, this paper reads the relevant literature writes a literature review, and sorts out college students' employment quality, current situation, and factors that may affect the employment of college students. Secondly, this paper analyzes the dilemma and analysis of the current employment quality of college students in China and further provides suggestions on how to improve the employment quality of college students from the perspectives of college students, universities, governments, and enterprises.

Through the research, this paper draws the following conclusions: there are practical difficulties in the employment quality of college students, mainly reflected in the employment difficulties of fresh college students leading to delayed employment, high salary expectations resulting in low job satisfaction, and the rising rate of enterprise layoffs causing a high risk of college students being laid off. Indeed, students nowadays suffer from deferred employment, based on their wills, or being compelled to struggle due to the mass majority of job applicants. What is more, for certain reasons mentioned above, some college students hold unrealistic

expectations of their incomes while others may quit their jobs owing to the huge workload. However, every part of the society can help with the situation. College students can help themselves through frequent reflections on their own and wise methods that release their stress. Universities could offer a larger number of training programs, chances for counseling, and job opportunities on campus. In the end, governments and enterprises could offer college students a more congenial working environment and motivate students by giving them more opportunities or subsidies. All in all, everyone in society is responsible for the whole college students' employment issues and should help establish a better working environment for college students

#### CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author has claimed that no conflict of interest exists.

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