

# Research on the Pathways to Enhance Vocational Decision-Making Ability of College Students in Local Universities from the Perspective of Resilience

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## Abstract

With the continuous increase in the number of college graduates in China, university students are facing challenges such as low employment rates and poor employment quality. This not only places excessive employment pressure on students but also leads to widespread mental health issues such as anxiety and confusion. Phenomena like "delayed employment" and "slow employment" are becoming increasingly prevalent, particularly among students from local universities. To deeply analyze the impact pathways and mediating effects among employment pressure, psychological resilience, and career decision-making of students in local universities, this study distributed 160 questionnaires at a local institution. The results revealed that employment pressure significantly negatively predicts career decision-making ability; employment pressure significantly negatively predicts psychological resilience; psychological resilience significantly positively influences career decision-making; and psychological resilience plays a partial mediating role between employment pressure and career decision-making. Based on these findings, this study proposes corresponding recommendations to provide theoretical foundations and practical guidance for the employment of students in local universities.

**Keywords:** psychological resilience, employment in local universities, career decision-making ability, college student career planning

## 1. Introduction

With the continuous increase in the number of college graduates, the mismatch between talent supply and labor market demand has led to increasingly severe employment challenges for university students. According to data from the Ministry of Education (2024) [1], the number of college graduates in China reached 11.79 million in 2024. However, data from Zhaopin.com (2024) [2] indicates that the employment rate for college graduates was only 55.5%, meaning nearly half of the graduates face the dilemma of "unemployment upon graduation." Behind the low employment rate lies the hidden crisis of poor employment quality. Employment quality is reflected not only in whether graduates find a job but also in their job adaptation and career expectations, which directly affects their employment satisfaction. A survey of 311 undergraduate graduates majoring in Public Administration by Zeng Lijing, Guo Han, Zheng Yongping, and Yang Guoyong (2023) [3] found that only 32.8% reported being "very satisfied/satisfied" with their jobs. Low employment satisfaction is not an isolated phenomenon but is widespread among college students. A survey of 526 college graduates who had been working for over six months by Yu Chen (2022) [4] revealed that 32.5% were dissatisfied with their current jobs, and 7.4% were very dissatisfied, indicating that overall employment satisfaction among graduates is not ideal. Notably, amid the dual challenges of low employment rates and poor employment quality, students from local universities face even more pronounced employment pressure. A survey on the employment-related psychological difficulties among fresh graduates from local universities found that over 50% reported experiencing anxiety, confusion, fear of difficulty, and low self-esteem. He Liang, Zhou Min, and Ma Jianjing (2020) [5] surveyed 8,274 graduates from Changsha University of Science & Technology's class of 2020: 42.10% felt the employment situation was not optimistic, 28.57% felt considerable employment pressure and were confused about their future, and 3.48% were unsure if

they could secure employment successfully. A survey of 450 students at Weinan Normal University by Wang Dajiang and Guo Dan (2018) [6] showed that 80% felt pressure regarding their employment prospects. An analysis of reasons for rejection by employers revealed that "insufficient qualifications/certificates" was the top reason (40%), followed by "lack of capability" (30%). A survey of 336 graduates from the School of Art and Design, Guangzhou Panyu Polytechnic, by Liu Fang, Duan Na, and Lin Chaoyang (2023) [7] indicated that 51.46% felt considerable pressure. Pan Ming and Lu Yijia (2006) [8] also pointed out significant differences in employment pressure among graduates based on institutional hierarchy, scale, and type. Graduates from mid-tier local undergraduate universities experienced higher employment pressure than those from key universities and higher vocational colleges. The difficulties in securing employment and low satisfaction essentially reflect insufficient career decision-making ability among college students. Wu Fang (2008) [9] indicated a significant positive correlation between employability and employment quality, meaning students with stronger career decision-making ability tend to achieve higher employment quality. Therefore, the career decision-making ability of college students directly affects their employment quality. Previous research confirms that the lack of career decision-making ability among college students is a direct result of the high-pressure employment environment. A Zhaopin.com (2024) [2] survey found that 36.2% of graduates cited "feeling too confused to know what kind of job to choose" as the primary reason for unsuccessful job hunting, far exceeding reasons like "lack of skills" or "low educational background." This exposes graduates' difficulties in career choice, indicating a current deficiency in career decision-making ability. Li Xiyang (2006) [10] found that students who had not received career guidance experienced greater decision-making difficulties than those who had, meaning students lacking career education feel more helpless and confused when facing career decisions. Zheng Yuehui (2019) [11] noted that over 70% of students felt helpless, confused, and lacked career planning education during career decision-making. Since 2012, China's macroeconomy has entered a phase of slowing growth and quality improvement. The annual GDP growth rate fell below 8% for the first time in 2012 and gradually decreased to 5.0% in 2024 (National Bureau of Statistics, 2025) [12][13]. This economic slowdown has pressured job creation in the labor market. Cai Fang (2022) [14], comparing the gap between official new employment data and net employment increase, pointed out that urban employment actually decreased by 1.64 million jobs in 2019 alone. This undoubtedly intensifies the competitive pressure on new graduates, who face not only fewer job opportunities but also the challenge of meeting higher entry thresholds posed by emerging industries. Research by Li Jiagen (2019) [15] suggested a negative correlation between college students' employment pressure and their career decision-making ability, meaning that in high-pressure environments, students find it harder to make rational career decisions, ultimately forming a vicious cycle of "high employment pressure - weak career decision-making ability." High employment pressure not only reduces career decision-making ability but also exposes students' vulnerability when facing complex career choices. This phenomenon is more severe among local university students, manifesting as increased trends of "delayed employment" and "slow employment." A survey of 1,804 graduates from the classes of 2022 and 2023 at Hunan City University by Li Gui, Huang Zhi, and Li You (2023) [16] showed that 26.49% of the 2022 graduates chose "delayed employment"; 27% were preparing to start their own businesses or had not found work. Among the 2023 graduates, 34% were not in a hurry to sign employment contracts; about 12.57% had not found suitable positions and were forced into "delayed employment." Mao Lingyuan (2021) [17] stated that the employment rate for local universities in recent years was about 80%, with relatively poor employment quality. A survey of 292 graduates from the class of 2021 at local universities by Ai Guojin, Yan Qin, and Hu Dan (2023) [18] found that 12% belonged to the "slow employment" group. This phenomenon reflects the 普遍 difficulties local university students face in career planning and decision-making (Yang Qiqi, Shen Yan, Shen Xiangying, 2020) [19]. According to Zheng Yuehui (2019) [11], over half of the local university students in Inner Mongolia were unclear about their post-graduation career direction; 72.75% could not develop clear, suitable career plans due to lack of university-provided employment guidance and were unable to analyze the external employment environment and their own direction accurately. Chen Xinyu (2023) [20] noted that, on average, one in ten undergraduate students from local universities in Guilin City failed to secure employment. Among 622 valid questionnaires, only 10 respondents reported never experiencing career decision-making difficulties. The survey of 8,274 graduates from Changsha University of Science & Technology's class of 2020 by He Liang, Zhou Min, and Ma Jianjing (2020) [5] also showed that 44.70% of students could not effectively make preparations and plans related to employment and career choice. Based on the above research, local university students are facing the dual challenges of low employment rates and poor employment quality, leading them to endure employment pressure far exceeding that of other groups. Under such high pressure, students generally lack adequate career decision-making ability, forming a vicious cycle of "high employment pressure - low career decision-making ability." The key to breaking this cycle lies in enhancing students' intrinsic positive capacity to cope effectively and make reasonable decisions in high-pressure environments. Psychological resilience is precisely the process through which individuals achieve

psychological balance through self-adjustment when facing adversity. In recent years, it has often been validated as a positive mediating factor in studies examining individuals facing various stressful situations. For instance, in academic stress, resilience has been proven to have a direct positive impact on students' academic pressure (Bai Yan, 2024) [21]; regarding burnout, resilience can indirectly moderate the impact of mental health on burnout, helping individuals cope positively with various stressful events (Yang Rui, Li Jianmin, Wang Yulong, Li Hongmei, Xue Chengjing, 2023) [22]. Based on research from various scholars, the application of psychological resilience in the context of employment pressure has corresponding theoretical support. Particularly when college students face negative threats, resilience can provide immediate ameliorative effects. Lin Xinxin, Zhou Kailiang, Chen Xianjian, Li Haizhe, Chen Xiaochun, Xu Hui (2021) [23] and Luo Tingting, Lu Junxiao (2022) [24] also mentioned related viewpoints, suggesting that resilience can help college students effectively cope with employment pressure, become more self-disciplined and adaptable to stress, and make decisions beneficial to themselves. Therefore, leveraging psychological resilience to mitigate the negative impact of employment pressure on career decision-making might yield similarly positive effects among local university students. However, research specifically targeting this group is relatively scarce, and the relationships between employment pressure, psychological resilience, and career decision-making ability require further verification. Thus, it is necessary to deeply explore the impact of employment pressure on psychological resilience, employment pressure on career decision-making ability, and psychological resilience on career decision-making ability among local university students. Analyzing the mediating role of resilience in the relationship between employment pressure and career decision-making can help break the vicious cycle of high employment pressure and low career decision-making ability faced by these students, providing theoretical basis and practical guidance for their employment counseling.

## 2. Theoretical Background

### 2.1 Employment Pressure

Stress is a cognitive appraisal process arising from the dynamic interaction between an individual and their environment, not solely determined by external events themselves. It exists in various aspects of an individual's life and manifests differently across situations. Employment pressure is the stress experienced by individuals within the employment context and constitutes a significant branch of stress. Scholars have defined employment pressure differently. Zhou Dongbin, Luo Jiawen, Lin Weiying (2005) [25], focusing on the recipients of employment pressure, defined it as the physiological and psychological reactions occurring when college students face an employment situation where external threats exceed their coping abilities. Liu Chunlei (2010) [26], from a psychological perspective, viewed employment pressure as the stress arising when facing career choices, a phenomenon of psychological tension resulting from the interaction of many internal/external variables and personal factors within the employment context. Qiu Huiyan, Dai Binrong (2014) [27] emphasized perception and psychological experience, considering employment pressure as a psychological feeling generated by an individual's perception of internal and external stimuli related to employment factors. Although scholars differ in their specific definitions, there is general consensus that employment pressure is a complex and dynamic process involving psychological and physiological reactions resulting from the combined effect of external and internal factors. Employment pressure among college students has become a widespread social phenomenon. Surveys by scholars such as Liu Jie (2004) [28] and Sun Yiwen (2023) [29] have found that employment pressure is a long-term challenge for this group. With increasingly fierce employment competition, the continuous rise in university graduates, and uncertainties in career development, college students face difficulties in career choice after graduation, forcing them to endure significant psychological and physiological pressure from the employment environment. This phenomenon does not occur 偶然 but results from the interaction of multiple factors. From a social environment perspective, employment pressure is influenced by economic conditions and the supply and demand in the job market. From the perspective of family expectations, some pressure stems from family expectations regarding career choices. From an individual perspective, employment pressure is influenced by internal psychological factors such as self-awareness, motivation, and psychological resilience. Sustained employment pressure negatively impacts the psychological resilience of college students. Research by Gao Yuanshan, Yang Yanfei, Yu Xiaoyu et al. (2024) [30] and Qi Qiqi (2023) [31] shows that employment pressure can negatively predict psychological resilience. When employment pressure is high, an individual's psychological resilience decreases, leading to lower resilience in coping with adversity, and feelings of anxiety, depression, and even despair, making it difficult to maintain a positive mindset and the ability to face challenges. According to research by Wu Shiyun, Zhang Jing, Liu Yong (2015) [32], 恶性 employment competition pressure can also induce other negative psychological states such as inferiority and avoidance. These negative states not only increase an individual's sensitivity to employment pressure but may also create a vicious cycle, further affecting

mental health. Simultaneously, employment pressure affects the rationality of career decision-making among college students. Research by Wang Xiang, Li Haitao (2024) [33] found a negative correlation between employment pressure and career decision-making. Excessive anxiety and tension during career decision-making can interfere with rational thinking, leading to ambiguous and impulsive decisions. Han Huiping (2023) [34] argued that excessive employment pressure strengthens conformity in job seeking and leads to unclear self-perception, causing students to 倾向 prioritize material and utilitarian factors during career decision-making, making it difficult to make rational choices.

## 2.2 Psychological Resilience

Psychological resilience, also referred to as resiliency or mental elasticity, lacks a unified definition but has three classic perspectives: process-oriented, outcome-oriented, and trait-oriented definitions. The process-oriented definition views resilience as a dynamic process of continuous interaction between the individual and the environment, involving ongoing self-adjustment (Kathleen, 2004) [35]. The trait-oriented definition considers resilience an inherent psychological quality or ability (Connor & Davidson, 2003) [36]. The outcome-oriented definition sees it as a behavioral result, reflecting good adaptive ability gained after overcoming difficulties (Masten, 2001) [37]. Compared to outcome and trait definitions, the process-oriented definition is more integrative, and Chinese scholars tend to view psychological resilience as dynamic. Yu Xiaonan, Zhang Jianxin (2005) [38] defined psychological resilience as effective coping and adaptation when facing loss, difficulties, or adversity. Liao Wenna, Luo Xianghan, Kong Fanxu (2023) [39] viewed it as the ability to recover from negative experiences and flexibly adapt to the external environment. Tian Xiao (2024) [40] considered it the outcome where an individual maintains a positive mindset to face difficulties, strives continuously, overcomes obstacles, and achieves healthy psychological development and good adaptation. In essence, these perspectives emphasize that psychological resilience enables individuals to achieve psychological balance through self-adjustment and adaptation when facing challenges. Psychological resilience is not only an individual's psychological capacity to cope with difficulties but also influences the rationality of career decision-making. Numerous studies indicate a significant positive correlation between psychological resilience and career decision-making. Higher levels of resilience are associated with stronger adaptive abilities when facing adversity, leading to more scientific and rational career decisions. Zhang Jiamei's (2020) [41] survey results indicated that psychological resilience can effectively mitigate the negative impact of emotions on career decision-making. Students with high resilience can quickly adjust their emotions when encountering adversity, proactively cope with difficulties, make decisions aligned with their needs, and avoid emotional decision-making. Pan Ling, Chen Lixia, Zhong Tiantian (2021) [42] emphasized that the adjustment and reflection inherent in resilience during difficulties can make career decision-making more scientific. Specifically, higher resilience correlates with better problem-solving abilities; through continuous reflection and adjustment, students optimize their career decisions, thereby reducing decision-making difficulties. Yang Liheng, Mu Quanshang, Gu Zhen (2014) [43] pointed out that psychological resilience not only promotes proactive actions during the decision-making process but also facilitates long-term career development. Students with higher resilience typically exhibit greater motivation and courage to face challenges, prompting them to actively participate in career planning activities, seek out occupational information (e.g., qualifications, salary, working conditions), engage in vocational training and social practice, and develop clear career plans, thereby making more scientific decisions and laying the foundation for achieving long-term career goals. Beyond directly enhancing decision-making rationality, psychological resilience can act as a key mediating factor, validated in many stress models. Studies by Wang Zhao (2023) [44] and Zhou Zheng, Ning Ning (2020) [45] both indicate that occupational stress influences behavioral outcomes through psychological resilience, which plays an important role in the stress pathway. Similarly, the mediating role of resilience has been repeatedly verified in studies on academic stress (Bai Yan, 2024) [21] and occupational burnout (Yang Rui, Li Jianmin, Wang Yulong, Li Hongmei, Xue Chengjing, 2023) [22]. Therefore, psychological resilience can be seen as an important positive psychological mediator (Gao Yuanshan, Yang Yanfei, Yu Xiaoyu, 2024) [30], helping individuals mobilize inner resources when facing external pressure, fostering more positive appraisal, reducing the impact of negative emotions during decision-making, enhancing self-confidence, and promoting adaptation to adversity, thereby improving the 科学性 of career decisions and increasing the likelihood of successful and satisfactory employment outcomes (Huang Guangsheng, Ren Xinwei, 2025) [46]. This study, based on the process-oriented definition, views psychological resilience not as a fixed trait but as something that can be enhanced through learning and cultivation. When facing pressure and setbacks, resilience can effectively alleviate negative emotions, enhance an individual's adaptive capacity and recovery, thus enabling better coping with life's challenges and difficulties (Chen Qixiu, Peng Wenbo, 2022) [47]. This regulatory factor can mitigate employment pressure through its universality and positivity, reducing the impact of employment pressure on individual career decision-making, offering a new perspective on the career decision-making dilemma of local university students.

### 2.3 Career Decision-Making

The theoretical foundation of career decision-making can be traced back to Frank Parsons' (1909) [48] "Choosing a Vocation," which proposed that career choice is a rational matching process where individuals achieve a precise fit between personal traits and job requirements through "scientific methods," emphasizing the consideration of both internal and external factors. Jepsen (1974) [49] enriched this view and first proposed "career decision-making," regarding it as a complex cognitive process where individuals analyze and integrate information about themselves and occupations, consider alternative career prospects, choose a suitable option, and publicly commit. He recognized career decision-making as not only a rational matching process but also an information processing and analysis activity. Building on this, Huang Bin (2011) [50] and Wang Yilin (2023) [51] viewed career decision-making as the process of searching for occupational information, weighing pros and cons, and making a career choice to achieve maximum value based on personal needs and external environmental factors, after establishing a clear career direction. Career decision-making exerts varying degrees of influence on self-actualization, job satisfaction, career development, psychological mood, and occupational burnout. On the positive side, Guo Zongyi (2022) [52] pointed out that college students with self-actualization tendencies engage in reflection on career planning during the decision-making process, enhance their employability, and consequently obtain work that realizes self-value. This view highlights the importance of career decision-making for individual career planning and its role in laying the foundation for self-actualization. Yang Hui's (2020) [53] research found that improving the career decision-making ability of young people significantly enhances their job satisfaction and further boosts proactivity in career development, indicating the impact of decision-making ability on job satisfaction. Xia Yanjun (2021) [54] noted that correct career decisions not only promote personal career development but also contribute to social harmony and stability, showing the societal impact of career decisions. However, weak career decision-making ability can also lead to negative consequences. Zhang Ning's (2022) [55] research found that students with weak decision-making ability often exhibit procrastination, preventing them from executing planned goals on time, leading to guilt, self-blame, and other negative emotions. Individuals with insufficient decision-making ability might also make involuntary career choices or gather incomplete occupational information, leading to career decision regret. Yue Xingyu, Wang Lingfeng, Yang Yuqing (2023) [56] found a significant positive correlation between career decision regret and occupational burnout among kindergarten teachers, meaning regret can exacerbate burnout. Therefore, insufficient career decision-making ability not only affects individuals' negative psychological emotions but also adversely impacts their career development.

## 3. Research Methodology

### 3.1 Research Model

This study establishes a tri-factor model involving employment pressure, psychological resilience, and career decision-making ability, as illustrated in Figure 1. Firstly, based on the research by Lu Lijun & Chen Yulan (2017) [57], employment pressure can influence psychological resilience. Secondly, studies by Liu Hongxia & Ye Juan (2023) [58] conclude that employment pressure also affects career decision-making ability. Finally, an investigation by Gao Jun & Sui Guorong (2018) [59] found that psychological resilience positively promotes career decision-making ability.

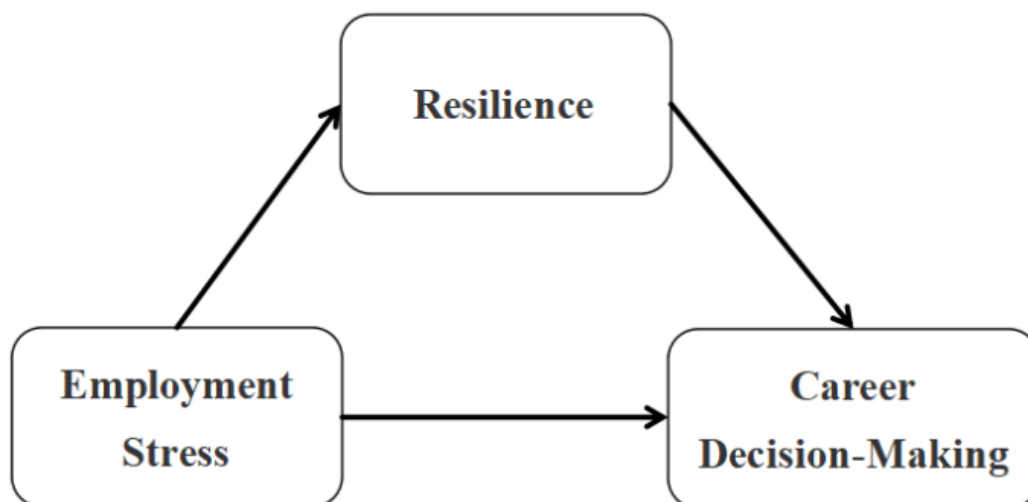


Figure 1. Research Model

### 3.2 Research Instruments

All measurement tools in this study utilized a 5-point Likert scale, with response options ranging from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree." The factor structure and reliability coefficients are presented in Table 1. The measurement of employment pressure employed the scale developed by Juhee (2013) [60], comprising 11 items. All items used reverse scoring, including statements such as: "I am confident about finding employment through competition," "I am actively working to improve my academic performance in preparation for job seeking," and "I am actively exploring career directions after graduation and feel hopeful." The scale demonstrated a Cronbach's  $\alpha$  of 0.946. Psychological resilience was measured using the instrument from Park's (2016) study [61], which consists of 20 items. A higher score indicates a higher level of psychological resilience. The overall Cronbach's  $\alpha$  coefficient was 0.957. The instrument consists of three distinct factors:

1. Positive Orientation Towards the Future (6 items, Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.927$ ), including items such as: "I believe good things will happen in the future," "I feel the future is bright," and "I am hopeful about my future."
2. Individual Emotion Regulation Ability (7 items, Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.903$ ), including items such as: "I can manage my emotions effectively," "I can remain calm in difficult situations," and "I do not get easily annoyed."
3. Diversity of Interests (7 items, Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.902$ ), including items such as: "I enjoy challenging myself with various experiences," "I like novel or unique things," and "I am interested in and concerned about a wide range of topics." **Career decision-making** was assessed using the scale developed by Googhwa (2023) [62], which consists of 10 items. Sample items include: "I feel confident and certain about my future career choices," "I have multiple fields of interest and am actively considering which one to choose," and "I have clarified my direction and feel satisfied with my choice." The scale demonstrated high internal consistency, with a Cronbach's  $\alpha$  coefficient of 0.942.

Table 1. Factor Composition and Reliability of Research Instruments

factor	item	number of items	Cronbach $\alpha$
employment pressure	1*,2*,3*,4*,5*,6*,7*,8*,9*,10*,11*	10	0.946
psychological resilience	positive orientation toward the future	3,6,10,14,15, 17	0.927
	individual emotional regulation ability	2,5,7,9,11,13,19	0.903
	diversity of interests	1,4,8,12,16,18,20	0.902
career decision-making ability	1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11	10	0.942

\*Reverse-scored items

### 3.3 Data Collection

This study investigates the mechanism through which employment pressure and psychological resilience influence career decision-making ability. The survey targeted undergraduate students from local universities. Given the advantages of online questionnaires—lower collection costs, convenience, and speed—this study utilized an online questionnaire distributed and collected via the Questionnaire Star platform to students at a university in Quzhou City, Zhejiang Province. The data collection period lasted for two months, from March 19 to May 17, 2025. A total of 160 valid questionnaires were finally collected and used for analysis in this study. The analytical procedure was as follows: First, the reliability of the data was assessed using SPSS 26.0. Second, correlation analyses were conducted among employment pressure, psychological resilience, and career decision-making ability. Third, regression analyses were performed to examine the relationships between employment pressure, psychological resilience, and career decision-making ability. Furthermore, a mediation analysis was conducted to test the mediating effect of psychological resilience between employment pressure and career decision-making ability. Finally, corresponding strategies were proposed based on the research findings.

### 3.4 Research Subjects

Regarding the demographic characteristics of the participants, 66 (41.2%) were male and 94 (58.8%) were female. In terms of academic year, 74 (46.3%) were lower-year students and 86 (53.7%) were upper-year students. Regarding major type, 93 (58.1%) were from Humanities and Social Sciences, and 67 (41.9%) were from Natural Sciences. Concerning family location, 28 (17.5%) were from provincial capital cities, 44 (27.5%) were from

prefecture-level city urban areas, and 88 (55.0%) were from counties or towns. Details are shown in Table 2: Distribution of Research Subjects.

Table 2. Distribution of Research Subjects

component		number of people	ratio
gender	male	66	41.3
	female	94	58.8
grade	lower grades (Freshman and Sophomore years)	74	45.0
	upper grades (Junior and Senior years)	88	55.0
major type	humanities and social sciences	93	58.1
	natural sciences	67	41.9
family location	provincial capital city	28	17.5
	prefecture-level city proper	44	27.5
	county seats and other towns	88	55.0
total		160	100%

## 4. Results

### 4.1 Correlation Analysis

Among the main variables—employment pressure, psychological resilience, and career decision-making ability—the following correlations were observed. Employment pressure showed a significant negative correlation with psychological resilience ( $r = -0.683$ ), positive orientation towards the future ( $r = -0.672$ ), individual emotion regulation ability ( $r = -0.610$ ), and diversity of interests ( $r = -0.581$ ). Furthermore, employment pressure was negatively correlated with career decision-making ability ( $r = -0.419$ ). In contrast, psychological resilience demonstrated a significant positive correlation with career decision-making ability ( $r = 0.433$ ). Its sub-dimensions also showed positive correlations: positive orientation towards the future ( $r = 0.413$ ), individual emotion regulation ability ( $r = 0.420$ ), and diversity of interests ( $r = 0.351$ ) were all positively correlated with career decision-making ability. Detailed data are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Correlation Analysis Among Variables

component	1	2	3	4	5	6
1employment pressure	1					
2psychological resilience	-0.683**	1				
3positive orientation toward the future	-0.672**	0.914**	1			
4individual emotional regulation ability	-0.610**	0.914**	0.747**	1		
5diversity of interests	-0.581**	0.910**	0.733**	0.770**	1	
6career decision-making ability	-0.419**	0.433**	0.413**	0.420**	0.351**	1

\* $p \leq 0.05$ , \*\* $p \leq 0.01$

### 4.2 Direct Effects

To examine the impact of employment pressure on career decision-making, a multiple regression analysis was employed. As shown in Table 4, employment pressure was set as the independent variable, and career decision-making as the dependent variable. The overall regression model was significant,  $F=33.631$  ( $p < 0.05$ ), with  $\beta = -0.419$  and  $t = -5.799$  ( $p < 0.05$ ), indicating a significant negative (-) effect on career decision-making. The explanatory power of this regression model was approximately 17.5%, suggesting that employment pressure can negatively influence career decision-making. Secondly, regarding the impact of employment pressure on psychological resilience, the overall regression was significant,  $F=137.953$  ( $p < 0.05$ ), with  $\beta = -0.683$  and  $t = -11.745$  ( $p < 0.05$ ), showing a significant negative (-) effect. The explanatory power of the regression model was approximately 46.6%, indicating that employment pressure can reduce psychological resilience. Finally,

concerning the impact of psychological resilience on career decision-making, the overall regression was significant,  $F=36.407$  ( $p<0.05$ ), with  $\beta=0.433$  and  $t=6.034$  ( $p<0.05$ ), demonstrating a significant positive (+) effect. The explanatory power of the regression model was approximately 18.7%, suggesting that psychological resilience can enhance career decision-making. For the sub-dimensions, positive orientation towards the future, individual emotion regulation ability, and diversity of interests were set as independent variables, with career decision-making remaining the dependent variable. In the impact of positive orientation towards the future on career decision-making, the overall regression was significant,  $F=32.400$  ( $p<0.05$ ), with  $\beta=0.413$  and  $t=5.692$  ( $p<0.05$ ), indicating a significant positive influencing factor. The explanatory power of the regression model was approximately 17.0%. For the impact of individual emotion regulation ability on career decision-making, the overall regression was significant,  $F=33.779$  ( $p<0.05$ ), with  $\beta=0.420$  and  $t=5.812$  ( $p<0.05$ ), showing a significant positive influencing factor. The explanatory power of the regression model was approximately 17.6%. Regarding the impact of diversity of interests on career decision-making, the overall regression was significant,  $F=22.211$  ( $p<0.05$ ), with  $\beta=0.351$  and  $t=4.713$  ( $p<0.05$ ), indicating a significant positive (+) influencing factor. The explanatory power of the regression model was approximately 12.3%. This demonstrates that all three dimensions of psychological resilience can positively influence career decision-making.

Table 4 Regression Analysis of Employment Pressure on Psychological Resilience

dependent variable	independent variable	B	$\beta$	t	p	R2	F	VIF
career decision-making	employment pressure	-0.472	-0.419	-5.799	0.000	0.175	33.631	1
psychological resilience	employment pressure	-0.644	-0.683	-11.745	0.000	0.466	137.953	1
	psychological resilience	0.517	0.433	6.034	0.000	0.187	36.407	1
career decision-making	positive orientation toward the future	0.412	0.413	5.692	0.000	0.170	32.400	1
	individual emotional regulation ability	0.485	0.420	5.812	0.000	0.176	33.778	1
	diversity of interests	0.396	0.351	4.713	0.000	0.123	22.211	1

4.3 Indirect Effects

To examine whether psychological resilience plays a mediating role between employment pressure and career decision-making, this study employed a stepwise regression analysis. As shown in Table 5, in Step 2, only the effect of employment pressure on career decision-making was considered. The  $\beta$  value was -0.419, and the model's explanatory power was 17.5%. This indicates that employment pressure can predict college students' career decision-making to a certain extent. Subsequently, in Step 3, both employment pressure and psychological resilience were included as predictor variables to examine their combined effect on career decision-making. At this stage, the  $\beta$  value for employment pressure changed to -0.231, showing a decrease compared to Step 2, while the  $\beta$  value for psychological resilience was significant. This change indicates that after introducing psychological resilience into the model, the direct influence of employment pressure on career decision-making weakened, yet both variables maintained a significant predictive effect on career decision-making. Therefore, it can be concluded that psychological resilience plays a partial mediating role between employment pressure and career decision-making.

Table 5. Analysis of Mediating Effects

stage	dependent variable	independent variable	B	S.E	$\beta$	R <sup>2</sup>	F	p	VIF
1	career decision-making	employment pressure	-0.472	0.081	-0.419	0.175	33.631	0.000	1
2	psychological resilience	employment pressure	-0.644	0.055	-0.683	0.466	137.953	0.000	1
3	career decision-making	employment pressure	-0.260	0.109	-0.231	0.216	21.606	0.000	1.873
		psychological resilience	0.328	0.115	0.275				1.873

Further calculation reveals that the indirect effect size of psychological resilience is  $\beta = -0.188$  ( $\beta_a = -0.683$ ,  $\beta_b = 0.275$ ). As shown in Table 6, combining the direct effect ( $\beta = -0.231$ ) and the indirect effect ( $\beta = -0.188$ ) yields a total effect size of -0.419. Finally, based on the proportion of effects calculation, the mediating path through

psychological resilience accounts for 44.83% of the total influence of employment pressure on career decision-making.

Table 6. Mediating Effect Sizes and Proportions

effect	effect size	proportion
total effect	-0.419	100%
direct effect	-0.231	55.17%
mediating effect	-0.188	44.83%

## 5. Conclusion

This study examined the relationship between employment pressure and career decision-making ability, as well as the mediating role of psychological resilience. The results show that employment pressure significantly and negatively predicts both career decision-making ability and psychological resilience, while psychological resilience significantly and positively influences career decision-making.

Employment pressure significantly and negatively predicts career decision-making ability, consistent with the findings of Ma Xuhong & Gao Xinghui (2025) [63] and Liu Hongxia & Ye Juan (2023) [58]. Specifically, the higher the level of employment pressure perceived by university students, the lower their level of career decision-making ability. This may be because undergraduates are currently in a context of high graduate unemployment and low job availability, generally lacking sufficient social experience and internships, while at the same time being eager to become independent from their parents and desperately seeking a job that can sustain them. Consequently, they focus more on immediate survival needs than on long-term career development or personal interests, leading to short-sighted career decisions. This phenomenon is even more pronounced among students from local (non-elite) universities, who often face intense competition with graduates from key universities and endure additional social pressure regarding their institution's ranking, academic background, and perceived personal competence. These comparative pressures further intensify their employment stress and erode self-confidence, blurring their self-perception of ability. Thoughts such as "good job opportunities have nothing to do with me" emerge, prompting them to withdraw from competition voluntarily, weakening the initiative in career decision-making and further lowering their career decision-making ability.

Employment pressure also significantly and negatively predicts psychological resilience. As employment pressure rises, individual psychological resilience tends to decline, a result consistent with previous research (Qi Qiqin, 2023) [31]. In a high employment-pressure environment, new graduates frequently encounter job-search setbacks; negative emotional experiences accumulate beyond the normal psychological tolerance range, fostering thoughts such as "effort is useless." Prolonged negativity gradually consumes self-efficacy, and numerous studies have found a significant positive correlation between self-efficacy and psychological resilience (Wang Guanzhong & Wu Guanghong, 2025) [64]; Yuan Jingle, 2019) [65]. Therefore, when facing employment pressure, university students' psychological resilience declines along with their self-efficacy.

Meanwhile, the results indicate that psychological resilience significantly and positively affects career decision-making ability. Its sub-factors—individual emotional regulation, future positive orientation, and interest diversity—all exert significant positive effects, with emotional regulation exerting the relatively strongest influence. Individuals with higher psychological resilience can make career decisions more rationally and effectively under employment pressure. They possess stronger emotional-regulation skills, a more positive future orientation, and broader interests, which reduce the impact of employment pressure and lead to more effective decisions. Because job hunting is inherently uncertain and rejection-prone, it easily triggers anxiety, frustration, and self-doubt. When failure occurs, emotional-regulation ability helps individuals recover from negative emotions more quickly, maintaining initiative and motivation to seek new opportunities. Successfully coping with failure through emotional regulation also strengthens confidence in one's own career decision-making ability. By contrast, future positive orientation mainly provides hope, and interest diversity expands the range of career choices; both are helpful but less direct and immediate than emotional regulation.

In the mediation test, the effect of employment pressure on career decision-making was reduced after psychological resilience was introduced ( $\beta = -0.419 \rightarrow \beta = -0.231$ ), indicating partial mediation. This shows that enhancing psychological resilience can still buffer the impact of employment pressure, reducing avoidance and impulsiveness in career decision-making. However, as an internal psychological resource, psychological resilience

is itself eroded by increasing employment pressure. Therefore, reducing employment pressure remains an important prerequisite for psychological resilience to function stably.

Based on the above findings, this study proposes recommendations from three perspectives: students, teaching faculty, and university support.

At the student level, undergraduates should take the initiative to participate in short-term internships, volunteer services, project practices, and other activities to accumulate varied experiential capital. Through direct exposure to future occupations they can identify vocational interests and strengths, form a clear and positive future orientation, enhance confidence in their future careers, raise their psychological resilience, and promote sound career decisions. Concurrently, students should actively learn and apply tools such as SWOT analysis to conduct comprehensive and objective self-assessments, clarifying their strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats within the current employment context. By aligning abilities and interests with opportunities, they can determine career directions, proactively confront challenges, compensate for weaknesses through skill acquisition or further study, and adopt a positive mindset toward employment pressure, thereby reducing impulsive decisions driven by anxiety, low self-confidence, or confusion.

At the teaching level, instructors should build high-quality career-guidance courses. Course design should integrate typical employment problems relevant to different majors, using case analysis, scenario simulation, reflective learning, and other diversified pedagogies. Teachers should also teach practical methods and techniques to cultivate psychological resilience, allowing students to experience employment pressure in class, guiding them to reflect on, summarize, and practice coping strategies, maintain an optimistic attitude, improve emotional-regulation skills, and ultimately enhance psychological resilience and make reasonable career decisions.

At the university-support level, institutions can invite outstanding alumni who have followed diverse career paths to give talks or panel discussions, sharing employment experiences and career challenges to provide students with a fuller spectrum of vocational possibilities. Alumni who have overcome employment adversity are especially valuable, offering relatable role models and boosting students' confidence in facing future career dilemmas. In addition, universities should respond to national calls by strengthening industry–education integration and university–enterprise cooperation, establishing training bases that supply more practicum opportunities, enabling students to accumulate real-work experience, enhance psychological resilience, and refine career decision-making.

By constructing a three-factor model of employment pressure, psychological resilience, and career decision-making, this study verifies the influence pathways among them, quantifies the mediating mechanism of psychological resilience, highlights its value in the career decision-making process of local-university students, and provides three directions—emotional regulation, future positive orientation, and interest diversity—for cultivating psychological resilience, thereby enriching the theoretical basis of career-development research for local-university students. However, the study has limitations such as a single-region sample: all respondents came from one university, which may limit generalizability across regions and institutional tiers. Future research should expand sample size and include local universities of different regions and levels to enhance external validity. The study also relies solely on questionnaires; future work could combine surveys with interviews to explore in greater depth how employment pressure and psychological resilience affect career decision-making.

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