

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN COLLEGE STUDENT LEADERSHIP AND EMPLOYMENT COMPETITIVENESS IN SHANDONG YOUTH POLITICAL COLLEGE, CHINA

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Abstract: This study aimed to explore the relationship between college student leadership and employment competitiveness. It used a questionnaire survey method, with Shandong Youth Political College students as the research group. Through convenient sampling methods, questionnaires were distributed to college students, and 384 questionnaires were collected, including 375 valid questionnaires. The research tools were the College Student Leadership Scale and the Employment Competitiveness Scale, which were compiled with reference to previous literature. The research results showed that there was a significant correlation between college student leadership and employment competitiveness, and the two showed a significant positive correlation. There were significant differences in the college student leadership with different family economic backgrounds and association experiences. There were significant differences in the employment competitiveness of college students with genders, grades, family economic backgrounds, and association experiences.

Keywords: College Student Leadership, Employment Competitiveness, Higher Education.

Introduction

In the increasingly competitive society and job market environment of the past, the employment issue of college students has become a hot topic of social concern. Not only had the employment pressure on college students increased, but the employment competition environment had also become increasingly fierce. College student leadership has been regarded as one of the critical factors in enhancing their employment competitiveness.

Weng (2011) pointed out in "The Current and Approaches of Leadership Development for College Students" that leadership referred to the abilities exhibited by individuals in organizational, social, and self-management aspects, and it played a core role in different fields and industries. In modern society, especially among college students, leadership has become a core competency in self-

management, organizational management, and social interaction. As the backbone of the future society, the leadership level of university students is directly related to the future social and economic development. Lou (2005) pointed out in "Analysis of Employment Competitiveness of College Students" that the employment competitiveness of college students referred to the ability of college students to stand out among numerous competitors in the job market, find job positions that could unleash their talents and realize their value, that is, the ability to meet the needs of the talent market and employers. Ye (2016) pointed out in "Research on Employment Competitiveness and Cultivation of College Students' leadership" that developing college students' employment competitiveness required a certain level of leadership and continuous learning and improvement. Therefore, college student leadership was crucial to improve their employment competitiveness, and it had even become an essential quality. Leadership could help college students better manage themselves and others, making it easier to adapt to the workplace environment, improve workability, and improve performance quality. Through the practice and exercise of leadership, college students could better achieve their goals and achieve more significant employment competitiveness. Meanwhile, enhancing college student leadership would also profoundly impact Chinese society and economic development.

In summary, this study delved into the correlation between college student leadership and employment competitiveness. The research results would have had significant application value for promoting the competitiveness of college students in employment and also provided helpful references and inspiration for developing leadership theory and practice.

Research Objectives

This study aimed to explore in depth the relationship between college student leadership and employment competitiveness. Based on the research questions, the research objectives of this study mainly included:

Firstly, to identify the current college student leadership and employment competitiveness.

Secondly, to identify the differences in college student leadership and employment competitiveness under different demographic backgrounds.

Thirdly, to determine the relationship between college student leadership and employment competitiveness.

Literature Review

College Student Leadership

At that time, scholars had two main views on understanding college student leadership. The first viewpoint held that college student leadership referred to a series of traits or abilities that college students already possess or need to master. Different researchers had different conclusions about

specific characteristics and skills. For example, Weng (2011) believed that the essential attributes of college student leadership included self-awareness, effective handling of interpersonal relationships, flexible adaptability, creative thinking, commitment to service, and the ability to grasp public policies. Wen (2011) analyzed the leadership quality of college students from four dimensions: social practice, learning ability, problem-solving ability, and emotional intelligence. The second viewpoint held that college student leadership referred to the process in which they utilized their and surrounding resources to achieve their and group goals ultimately. Yang's research was based on this viewpoint. In short, the first viewpoint was based on leadership behavior, while the second viewpoint studied leadership based on leadership processes. Based on the above research results, it could be concluded that the essential characteristics of college student leadership were the traits and abilities they possessed to lead and manage a particular team, achieve common team goals, and fulfill the wishes of team members. These traits and abilities included building a vision, strategic decision-making, and work practice.

Firstly, one of the characteristics of college student leadership was "building a vision". College student leaders should have clear goals and visions and be able to inspire team members to have a sense of shared goals and motivation. They communicated the team's vision through their actions and words and encouraged team members to work towards a common goal. Secondly, leadership characteristics among college students also included "strategic decision-making". College student leaders needed to be able to analyze problems, make plans, and make decisions. They developed clear strategies and action plans from a team perspective, providing guidance and support for the team's success. Finally, the leadership characteristics among college students also included "work practice". University student leaders should have had the ability to implement practical actions. They could organize and coordinate the work of team members and promote the achievement of team goals. They were able to effectively allocate resources, solve problems, and demonstrate good communication and collaboration skills within a team. In summary, the characteristics of college students' leadership were the characteristics and abilities that individual college students had to lead and manage a specific team and achieve the common goals of the team and the aspirations of team members. Through the cultivation and development of these characteristics, college students could become influential leaders and contribute to the success of the team and the organization.

Employment Competitiveness

Jin (2003) pointed out in "Theory and Methods of Evaluating Enterprise Competitiveness" that "competitiveness" or "international competitiveness" had become a trendy topic since the late 1990s. Whether it was economists, managers, entrepreneurs, government officials, or even ordinary people, almost everyone was talking about competitiveness. In a market economy, competitiveness was most intuitively reflected in the ability of enterprises to provide products or services to consumers more effectively than other enterprises and to acquire their development capabilities or comprehensive

qualities.

Lou (2005) pointed out in "Analysis of Employment Competitiveness of College Students" that employment competitiveness of college students referred to the ability of graduates to stand out among numerous competitors and find job positions in the job market that could unleash their talents and realize their value. It refers to the ability to meet the needs of the talent market and employers, which can be summarized as core competitiveness, fundamental competitiveness, and environmental competitiveness. Zhao (2006) pointed out in "On the Employment Competitiveness and Improvement of College Students" that the employment competitiveness of college students referred to the comprehensive quality of college students entering the talent market for the first time and being able to provide their all-round abilities to the market more effectively than other competitors in their career, to ensure their sustainable survival and development.

Zheng (2007) pointed out in "Exploration of the Composition of Employment Competitiveness of College Students" that employment competitiveness of college students referred to the competitive ability that college students acquired during their study period, which was more competitive than other college students in finding, maintaining, and transferring jobs. Xu & Gao (2008) pointed out in "An Analysis of the Basic Elements of College Students' Employment Competitiveness" that college students' employment competitiveness referred to a kind of ability obtained through the comprehensive cultivation of professional knowledge and practical ability during their time in school. This ability could not only help them achieve their employment ideals and meet the needs of employers but also help them realize their value in social life through competition. The five abilities of professional ability, professional ability, innovation ability, job-seeking ability, and adaptability formed the basic elements of the employment competitiveness of college students.

Research on the Relationship between College Student Leadership and Employment Competitiveness

College student leadership refers to an individual's ability to influence others and achieve common goals in an organization or team. Roland (2007) pointed out in "On the Improvement of Employment Competitiveness of College Students" that their leadership played a positive role in enhancing the employment competitiveness of college students. This section explored the positive impact of college student leadership on employment competitiveness from three aspects: the definition of college student leadership, the impact of college student leadership on employment competitiveness, and the ways to cultivate college student leadership.

Firstly, college student leadership refers to the individual's ability to influence others and achieve common goals within an organization or team. College student leadership included personal traits and behaviors of leaders, such as confidence, decision-making ability, communication ability, teamwork, etc. Leadership did not only refer to the people who held leadership positions. Everyone had

the potential of leadership, which could be played in different occasions and roles; secondly, the influence of college students' leadership on employment competitiveness was positive. (1) Leadership could enhance an individual's confidence and self-management abilities. College students faced many challenges and pressures in the process of job hunting. Good leadership skills could help them better deal with difficulties and challenges and maintain a positive attitude. (2) Leadership could enhance an individual's decision-making and problem-solving abilities. Wang & Liu (2010) proposed in "A Brief Discussion on Enhancing the Employment Competitiveness of College Students and Implementation Paths" that in the process of career development, individuals needed to face various complex situations and choices, and having good leadership could help them make wise decisions and solve problems. (3) Leadership could also enhance an individual's communication and teamwork abilities, which were essential in the workplace. Finally, there are various ways to cultivate college student leadership. (1) Universities could offer relevant leadership training courses to help students understand the concepts and principles of leadership and provide practical opportunities for students to exercise leadership in practice. (2) Students could participate in student organizations or association activities, hold leadership positions, and cultivate and develop leadership skills through practical experience. (3) Individuals could also enhance their leadership skills by reading relevant books, attending seminars, and other means.

In summary, college student leadership positively impacted employment competitiveness. Leadership could improve an individual's self-confidence, self-management, decision-making, problem-solving, communication, and teamwork ability, thereby enhancing the individual's competitiveness in the job market.

Summary of Reviews

Currently, Although the importance of leadership had been widely recognized, the specific correlation between the college students leadership and employment competitiveness, especially in the specific educational background of Shandong Youth Political College, was still insufficient. Existing research primarily focused on theoretical exploration and model construction of leadership.

In contrast, empirical research on the impact of college student leadership training on employment competitiveness was relatively scarce. This research gap limited the understanding and decision-making of educators and policymakers on how to enhance student leadership to enhance their employment competitiveness effectively. This study aimed to fill this research gap by conducting an in-depth analysis of the correlation between college student leadership and employment competitiveness in Shandong Youth Political College, exploring the inherent relationship between the two and providing the theoretical basis and practical guidance for improving the employment competitiveness of college students.

Methodology

The Likert scale was designed for a college student leadership survey questionnaire. The questionnaire was based on analyzing factors affecting college student leadership, revised by Zhang & Wu (2017). After revising and summarizing the literature, the leadership section was developed, including three dimensions: leadership quality, behavior, and development. Each dimension comprised multiple questions, and respondents were asked to evaluate each on a scale of 1-5 points. Please refer to the appendix for details. Similarly, using the Likert scale method, the employment competitiveness survey questionnaire was developed based on the analysis scale of the influencing factors of college students' employment competitiveness, revised by Yin (2023). After modifying and summarizing the literature content, it included two dimensions: Knowledge and skill, and comprehensive ability. Each dimension includes multiple questions, and respondents were required to evaluate each question. The evaluation method was 1-5 points, and the score represented the importance of the indicator in assessing this aspect, which 5 indicated "completely agree," 4 indicated "relatively agree," 3 indicated "neutral," 2 indicated "disagree," and 1 indicated "completely disagree." Please refer to the appendix for details.

The leadership scale for college students Cronbach's α was 0.801. Leadership quality 0.810. Leadership behavior 0.820. The dimension of leadership development was 0.771. The reliability of the "College student leadership Survey Questionnaire" selected by the research institute was good. The Employment Competitiveness Survey Scale Cronbach's α was 0.894; Knowledge and skill 0.787; Comprehensive ability of 0.801. The reliability of the "Employment Competitiveness Questionnaire" selected by the research institute was good.

Results

Demographics details

Table 1: Descriptive Statistical Analysis of Participants' Information

Demographics	Group	Number	Percentage
Gender	Male	213	56.80
	Female	162	43.20
Grade	Freshman	91	24.27
	Sophomore	95	25.33
	Junior	97	25.87
	Senior	92	24.53
Major	Liberal arts major	154	41.07
	Science major	147	39.20
	Art and sports major	74	19.73

This study collected 384 questionnaires, and after sorting out nine problematic questionnaires, 375 valid sample data were obtained, with an effective rate of 97.6%. Among the 375 valid samples, five demographic backgrounds, including gender, grade, major, family economic background, and

association experience, were tested. The basic information of statistical characteristics in the first part of the formal questionnaire is shown in Table 1

Analysis of the Current College Student Leadership

The current college student leadership was analyzed using M and SD, and the results are shown in Table 4.2. The descriptive statistical results of the overall and various dimensions of college student leadership are as follows:

The overall college student leadership was $M=4.21$, $SD=0.878$. The Likert Level, five-scale analysis score, indicated that the overall college student leadership was high. Therefore, it could be seen that the cognitive level of college student leadership was relatively high. The overall ranking of the means of various dimensions of college student leadership was that leadership behavior ($M=4.35$, $SD=0.869$) was the highest, followed by leadership quality ($M=4.25$, $SD=0.873$) and leadership development ($M=4.03$, $SD=0.894$). It could be seen that the scores of college students participating in three dimensions were high, indicating that most college students had a certain leadership level. There were specific differences in the SD of different dimensions, indicating differences in college student leadership dimensions. A more significant indicated a wider distribution of scores among college students participating in the survey on these dimensions.

Analysis of the Current Employment Competitiveness

The current level of employment competitiveness was analyzed using M, SD, and the results are shown in Table 4.3. The descriptive statistical results of the overall and various dimensions of employment competitiveness are as follows:

The overall employment competitiveness was $M=4.12$, and $SD=0.835$. The analysis score of the Likert Level 5 scale indicated that the overall level of employment competitiveness was above average. Therefore, the overall ranking of the average values of various dimensions of employment competitiveness was comprehensive ability ($M=4.1$, $SD=0.825$), followed by comprehensive ability ($M=4.1$, $SD=0.825$) and knowledge and skill ($M=4.05$, $SD=0.855$). It could be seen that the scores of the college students participating in the survey were concentrated at the above-average level, indicating that most college students had a certain level of understanding of employment competitiveness. There were certain differences in the SD of different dimensions, indicating differences in the performance of college students in different dimensions of employment competitiveness. The SD indicated a wider distribution of scores among college students participating in the survey on these dimensions.

Correlation Analysis

The correlation analysis between leadership and employment competitiveness of college students was analyzed by Person correlation coefficient. The results of the correlation analysis of the dimensions of leadership and employment competitiveness of university students are as follows:

The correlation between college student leadership and employment competitiveness was analyzed using the Pearson correlation coefficient. The analysis results of the correlation between college student leadership and employment competitiveness in various dimensions are as follows:

(1) The correlation analysis between leadership quality and other dimensions was leadership quality and leadership behavior ($r=0.842$, $p=0.000$). Leadership quality and leadership development ($r=0.741$, $p=0.000$). Leadership quality and college student leadership ($r=0.828$, $p=0.000$). Leadership quality and knowledge and skills ($r=0.583$, $p=0.000$). There was a significant positive correlation between leadership quality and comprehensive abilities ($r=0.656$, $p=0.000$). There was a significant positive correlation between leadership quality and employment competitiveness ($r=0.643$, $p=0.000$).

(2) The correlation analysis between leadership behavior and other dimensions was leadership behavior and leadership development ($r=0.642$, $p=0.000$). Leadership behavior and college student leadership ($r=0.853$, $p=0.000$). Leadership behavior and knowledge and skills ($r=0.627$, $p=0.000$). There was a significant positive correlation between leadership behavior and overall ability ($r=0.521$, $p=0.000$). There was a significant positive correlation between leadership behavior and employment competitiveness ($r=0.537$, $p=0.000$).

(3) The correlation analysis between leadership development and other dimensions was leadership development and college student leadership ($r=0.932$, $p=0.000$). Leadership development and knowledge and skill ($r=0.816$, $p=0.000$). There was a significant positive correlation between leadership development and comprehensive ability ($r=0.892$, $p=0.000$). There was a significant positive correlation between leadership development and employment competitiveness ($r=0.834$, $p=0.000$).

(4) The correlation analysis between college student leadership and other dimensions was: college student leadership and knowledge and skill ($r=0.827$, $p=0.000$). There was a significant positive correlation between college student leadership and comprehensive ability ($r=0.904$, $p=0.000$). There was a significant positive correlation between college student leadership and employment competitiveness ($r=0.851$, $p=0.000$).

(5) The correlation analysis between knowledge and skill and other dimensions was: Knowledge and skill ability and comprehensive ability ($r=0.843$, $p=0.000$); Knowledge and skill and employment competitiveness ($r=0.859$, $p=0.000$).

(6) The correlation analysis between comprehensive ability and other dimensions was comprehensive ability and employment competitiveness ($r=0.901$, $p=0.000$).

Discussion

This study analyzed the current college student leadership and employment competitiveness using M, SD after collecting data for statistical analysis. At the same time, differential analysis was used to understand the differences in college student leadership and employment competitiveness under

different demographic backgrounds and further explore the correlation between college student leadership and employment competitiveness. The following is a comparison and discussion with existing research.

Firstly, in terms of the overall level, the college student leadership and employment competitiveness of most students were above average. It indicated that students had a certain level of competitiveness and potential in these two key areas, which might have been influenced by various factors such as educational quality, school environment, and personal efforts. Secondly, college students had a relatively high level of understanding of college student leadership and employment competitiveness. It reflected that the school education and social environment had achieved specific results in cultivating students' consciousness and cognitive ability, which was of great significance to their future career and personal development. Further analysis revealed that students had a relatively wide distribution of scores in various dimensions of college student leadership and employment competitiveness, showing specific differences. It indicated that students had different strengths and weaknesses in different aspects and required personalized training and guidance to unleash their potential and abilities better. In addition, there were specific differences in the standard deviation values on different dimensions, which meant that students' performance in various aspects differed to varying degrees. This difference might have been influenced by various factors, such as individual differences and educational resource allocation, and further research and exploration were needed.

According to the results of the T-test, there were insignificant differences in college student leadership quality, leadership behavior, and leadership development dimensions of different genders. In terms of knowledge and skills, and comprehensive abilities, there were significant differences between males and females, indicating that college students of different genders had some differences in employment competitiveness.

According to the results of the one-way ANOVA test of variance, there were significant differences in college student leadership quality and leadership development dimensions from different majors. This discovery triggered further reflection on the differences in leadership and employment competitiveness among majors among college students. The significant difference in leadership quality meant that students from different majors might have received varying degrees of education and training in leadership development. It could be attributed to factors such as professional curriculum design, teaching methods, and the training background of teachers. The significant differences in college student leadership development dimensions also suggested that there might have been differences in career development paths and needs among students from different majors. However, although there were significant differences in leadership quality and leadership development dimensions, the differences in other dimensions were insignificant. It meant that although students from different majors might have had specific advantages in certain aspects, there was an insignificant difference in their

overall quality. According to the results of the study, there are significant differences in leadership qualities, leadership behaviors, leadership development dimensions, and job competitiveness among college students from different family backgrounds. In this study, the results show that having or not having club experience makes a significant difference in leadership qualities, leadership behaviors, leadership development, knowledge and skills, and general competence dimensions of university students.

The findings show that there is a significant positive correlation between the leadership level of college students and their competitiveness in employment. Improved leadership skills make college students more competitive. In the process of job hunting, employers usually prefer candidates with leadership potential and teamwork spirit. College students with leadership qualities are not only able to play a leading role in the team, but also better able to cope with challenges at work, showing stronger adaptability and problem-solving ability. This increased competitiveness makes it more likely that they will have access to desirable job opportunities and better career development.

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