

Research Article

Career Exploration and College Students' Career Adaptability: The Mediating Role of Future Work Self-Salience and Moderating Role of Perceived Teacher Support

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Based on the theory of career construction, a moderated mediation model is built in this paper to probe into the relationship between career exploration and career adaptability, discussing the mediating role of future work self-salience and the moderating role of perceived teacher support. With the research sample of 1101 unemployed college students, SPSS and AMOS, a structural equation modeling software is employed for modeling so as to perform the linear regression analysis of three-stage data. The research findings are about four aspects; to start with, students' career exploration is positively related to career adaptability; besides, future work self-salience plays a partial role in mediating between college students' career exploration and career adaptability; next, perceived teacher support positively moderates two kinds of positive relationship: one is between career exploration and future work self-salience of college students and the other between their future work self-salience and career adaptability. Lastly, the indirect effect of the future work self-salience between career exploration and career adaptability is moderated by perceived teacher support. As opposed to a lower level of teacher support, this moderated mediating effect is significant only at a higher level of perceived teacher support. This research clarifies the link between career exploration and career adaptability through future work self-salience and practical enlightenment about how to enhance career adaptability via perceived teacher support.

1. Introduction

The college stage serves as an important period for the development and transformation of career roles and a critical transition period from school learning to social work [1]. Under the circumstance of the complex, diverse, and dynamically shifting employment environment, students' personal career development models are high-profile, requiring higher employability for college students [2]. College students' career adaptability is the core ability for individuals to achieve sustaining career success and an important ability to help individuals successfully obtain employment, complete career transitions, and smoothly develop their careers-

exerts significantly impact their career development [3]. Career adaptability plays a decisive role in the construction of a student's career or career decision-making and also provides the guarantee of individual lifelong employment [4, 5].

Career adaptability, a kind of resource for individuals to cope with career changes and career development and a psychological resource to tackle such problems as current or prospective career tasks, career transitions, and career frustrations, is the core concept of self-career management in the career construction theory. In 2005, Savickas and Porfeli [6] proposed a complete construction model of the theory of mind about career adaptability, which includes

four dimensions [7, 8]: career curiosity (referring to the individual's curious attitude), career confidence (referring to the individual's confidence in their own career problem-solving ability, self-efficacy belief), career concern (referring to individuals' ability to pay attention to their future career/k), and career control (referring to individuals' belief self-determining and responsible for constructing their own career). Career adaptability functions in the healthy development of individuals, effective prevention of problematic behaviors, precise prediction of satisfaction levels, and great improvement of happiness. Career adaptability plays an important role not only in predicting individual employment and career outcomes but in such aspects as individual employment status [9], reemployment status [10], employment quality [11], career success [12], promotion opportunities, and job satisfaction [13]. It can be seen that enhancing the career adaptability of college students is conducive to their career success and career development. When the transition from school to work is one of the most critical steps in graduates' careers, career adaptability can determine vocational outcomes and future career success [14]. Therefore, exploring the factors that affect college students' career adaptability and how to improve the function mechanism of improving college students' career adaptability has important theoretical and practical significance.

According to the career construction theory [15], career adaptability, as a key indicator to measure the individual's career development and career maturity, is affected by the individual's level of proactive occupation exploration and goes hand in hand with the individual environment (such as learning environment, family environment, and cultural environment, etc.). Career exploration running through every stage of the career development of college students is a dynamic, continuous and balanced development process, which is dominant in the personal development process [16], while college students' proactive career exploration is a boon to improving the individual's career adaptability. A teacher-supported learning environment benefits students' access to resources and support so that they can probe into their personal careers and improve their personal career adaptability of their own accord. The interaction between the individual and the environment affects career adaptability together. Most college students who are about to graduate will take the initiative to explore careers, such as actively submitting resumes, paying attention to recruitment information and participating in job fairs, etc., thereby finding suitable jobs. During the working season, school teachers will also provide students with job-hunting information and guide. The teacher's behavior of help and support and students' voluntary career exploration interact with each other to influence the development of students' career adaptability. Career exploration enables students to establish their own goals and clarify their future work self. Future work self-salience is a positive psychological trait for college students to improve their psychological strengths such as career adaptability [17]. Future work self-salience refers to the degree to which an individual is clear and easy to imagine the future work self [18]. Previous studies indicated that

future work self-salience captures an individual's "career adaptability," which refers to the volition to change himself/herself to adapt to career transition [9]. In Taiwan, the previous study also finds that future work self-salience positively influences career adaptability and proactive career behaviors [17]. Future work self-salience is of great significance to personal career management [19]. Previous studies have found that college students' proactive personality contributes to the shaping of career adaptability [20], while emotional intelligence positively influences career adaptability [21]. At present, most of the studies are based on the personality traits and active attitude of college students' career adaptability, but they do not take college students' active career exploration behavior as the starting point to study the influence of active behavior on career adaptability. In terms of the job-hunting atmosphere, existing studies mainly take social support as the contextual condition. In countries such as the United States [22], South Korea [23], and Switzerland [24], it is found that social support is more conducive to career adaptability. However, college students did not formally participate in work, enter society, and study on campus most of the time. Therefore, this study uses teacher support as the contextual condition for the influence of career exploration on career adaptability, which is more in line with the identity of the research object being college students.

In conclusion, taking college students as the research object on the premise of career construction theory explores the influence mechanism and boundary conditions of college students' career exploration on their career adaptability. The main contributions of this study are as follows: It reveals the mediating role of future work self-salience between career exploration and career adaptability, clarifies the boundary effect of teacher support between career exploration and future work self-salience, and between future work self-salience and career adaptability, thus giving certain theoretical support and practical evidence for the career management and career development of college students and also offering corresponding support for teachers in assisting college students' employment guidance, improving and optimizing college students' career adaptability.

The research structure includes theoretical literature reasoning, hypothesis development, research method design, research data testing, data analysis, results, and finally, the research draws the conclusions, proposes theoretical and practical implications, and researches limitations and future research.

2. Related Works and Hypotheses Development

2.1. The Positive Relationship between Career Exploration and Career Adaptability. Career exploration, the most critical stage in career development, has a significant predictive influence on individual career development. Sufficient career exploration will have a direct bearing on the career maturity and career adaptability of individuals in employment, effectively improving students' career adaptability [25–27]. The early stage of career exploration is an individual's exploration behavior on oneself and the external environment.

In order to develop and measure career exploration behavior, Stumpf et al. [28] developed a new measurement scale, which mainly involved three components they believe, such as exploring belief, exploring Process, and exploring reaction—among them; the exploration process was divided into personal self-exploration and environmental exploration [29, 30]. According to the career exploration defined by Stumpf et al., it is found that the active behaviors of individuals at work are affected by career exploration. For example, individuals are more clear about their future career development goals, career curiosity, and career attention [31, 32]. At the same time, individuals are more likely to satisfy their self-efficacy at work and experience a higher level of job satisfaction and career achievement by employees' career exploration behaviors [33]. The individual proactive career exploration has a positive effect on career adaptability, and the more exploratory behaviors the individual shows during career development, the easier the positive social and psychological capital displays, that is, career adaptability [34]. Having mentioned all of the above analysis, Hypothesis 1 is proposed.

Hypothesis 1. Students' career exploration will be positively related to career adaptability.

2.2. The Mediating Role of Future Work Self-Salience. Future work self-salience refers to the extent to which an individual is clear and susceptible to imagining in his own future work state [35]. Individuals have a clearer understanding of themselves and define the identification process between themselves and their future jobs after they have gone through career exploration. Career exploration is conducive to the establishment of future work development goals and setting clear the direction of future work development. The career development stage theory emphasizes the important role of career exploration in career development. Super and Knasel [36] believe that career exploration is in favor of clarifying future career development goals [37] and the future work status you wish. Studies have found that the antecedent variables of future work self-emotion include career exploration, voluntary personality, and self-esteem. It can be concluded that the students' active career exploration behavior can clarify the students' future work self-salience [38, 39].

Meanwhile, a more explicit future self can provide individuals with more motivational resources, stimulate more future-oriented behaviors, and have a clearer personal career, showing more career maturity and adaptability. In line with the theory of career adaptability, when individuals have a clear image of their future work self, the more they adapt to the current environment, the clearer their current and future goals are, and the more proactive professional behavior they show, the better their own career adaptability they improve [40]. So it is noteworthy that future work self-salience has a remarkable influence on personal career development. Studies have found that future work self-salience has the capability to predict voluntary professional behavior [30]. Job seekers with more self-salient in future work will present

higher career adaptability and a higher level of career adaptability [9]. Based on the above analysis, Hypothesis 2 is proposed.

Hypothesis 2. Future work self-salience will mediate the relationship between career exploration and career adaptability.

2.3. The Moderating Role of Perceived Teacher Support. Career adaptability is jointly influenced by the personal active exploration and perception of the environmental atmosphere and the interaction between the individual and his living environment [7]. At present, the situational factors affecting career adaptability are mainly concentrated in social support and perception of the environmental atmosphere [41]. The target group of this research is college students who have not formally participated in the workplace. Having not formally entered the work environment, the college student's is obviously not applicable to the situation of social support, while their career adaptability is, to a great extent, influenced by the perceived environmental atmosphere [23]. Therefore, it is necessary to consider the impact of the situational factors of the environmental atmosphere on them. In terms of the perception of the environmental atmosphere, the main perception support stems from the school and family atmosphere [42]. Studies have shown that the support of parents in family atmosphere acts as a positive catalyst for promoting college students' career exploration and enhancing their career adaptability [43]. The career exploration of college students is mostly carried out in the school environment, in which the support of teachers plays a key part. A good learning atmosphere in the school has a positive facilitating function on individual adaptability and a supportive learning atmosphere positively strengthens individual adaptability [44]. The support of school teachers exerts an important influence on the confidence, attitude, and behavior of students. Perceived teacher support means that students are aware of the teacher's support for their learning, emotions, and abilities. When students encounter difficulties and setbacks in their career exploration, teachers will provide certain guidance and assistance to tackle the difficulties met by students in their job search, offering employment information and support for their abilities, which helps accelerate students' future work self-salience. Students are clear about their future work, and teachers give more emotional affirmation and ability support, from which students get more information resources and effective support to mature into their career development and improve their adaptability to optimize their careers. However, teacher support presents relatively few situational factors in the relationship between college students' career exploration and career adaptability. In view of this, to compensate for the situational factors of the teacher's support atmosphere in the school environment, Hypotheses 3 and 4 are proposed.

Hypothesis 3. The perceived teacher support will moderate the relationship between career exploration and future work self-salience, such that the relationship will be stronger at a higher level of perceived teacher support.

Hypothesis 4. The perceived teacher support will moderate the relationship between future work self-salience and career adaptability, such that the relationship will be stronger at a higher level of perceived teacher support.

Combining the mediating Hypothesis 2 and the moderating Hypotheses 3 and 4, this study proposes a mediating model with regulated function. Perceived teacher support has a positive moderating effect on the mediating role of students' future work self-salience between career exploration and career adaptability. Specifically, during career exploration, students who receive more support from teachers are more likely to obtain support and help in terms of ability, emotion, and resources, and have a clearer future work. Students who are clear about future jobs receiving more support from teachers in their careers have stronger career adaptability. To sum up, Hypothesis 5 is proposed.

Hypothesis 5. The perceived teacher support will moderate the indirect effect of career exploration on career adaptability via future work self-salience, such that the indirect effect will be stronger at a higher level of perceived teacher support.

3. Study Design and Methods

3.1. Research Model. Taking college students as the research object based on the career construction theory, this research explores the influence of career exploration on career adaptability. 4 hypotheses are proposed given the existing theories and research findings, using the future work self-salience as the mediating variable and the perceived teacher support as the moderating variable. The specific research variable relationship is shown in Figure 1.

3.2. Research Samples and Procedures. This study uses questionnaire surveys to obtain reliable and realistic first-hand research data, which mainly comes from college students in Pearl River Delta, Yangtze River Delta, Chongqing City, and Sichuan Province. All data comes from questionnaires distributed and collected in the form of three persons as a group through a unified survey process. The investigator invites the managers of each institution and college to assist in the survey, informs management coordinators of the subject and details of the investigation, and answers their questions. Then the investigator asks management coordinators to invite teachers to send out the questionnaires to students for the survey. To avoid the effect of common method biases, questionnaires are distributed at three different times with one-month intervals, lasting for 3 months (February 2021-April 2021). At time node 1 (February 2021), a survey was conducted on career exploration; at time node 2 (March 2021), a survey was conducted on future work self-salience and perceived teacher support; at time node 3 (April 2021), a survey was conducted on career adaptability. In addition, the research team adds commonly used control variables, including gender, age, educational background and place of student source under permission.

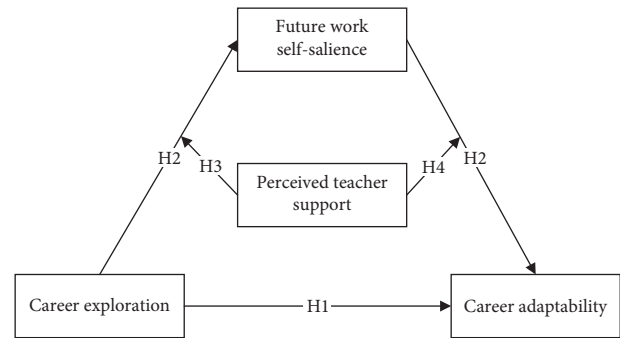


FIGURE 1: The relations among variables.

Data cleaning is performed at each data time node of release. Since the questionnaire is in the form of an electronic questionnaire, we can know the time for each questionnaire. We calculate the average questionnaire completion time for each questionnaire to be 258 seconds, 366 seconds, and 322 seconds. We exclude the questionnaires that take less than 60 seconds and more than 600 seconds to ensure the validity of the questionnaires.

In terms of the research data, at time node 1, 2200 copies were given out and 1960 student questionnaires were returned, with a return rate of 89.09%; at time node 2, 2040 copies were distributed and 1580 were returned, with a return rate of 75.49%; at time node 3, 1900 copies were handed out and 1542 were returned, with a return rate of 81.16%. In the questionnaire matching stage, we use the last 5 digits of the mobile phone of the three-node questionnaire as the main matching point and take the gender and age in the demographic variables of the three-node questionnaire as the auxiliary matching information. A total of 1243 matching data are obtained by matching the questionnaire with the mobile phone number. The last effective matching questionnaire is 1101 after checking whether gender is in line with age in the three questionnaires of the 1243 matching data and after excluding the inconsistent questionnaires.

After matching at the three time points, the investigator finally received 1101 valid matching questionnaires. 526 male students and 575 female students have engaged in the survey, accounting for 47.77% and 52.23% of the total, respectively. Among the participants, there are 765 undergraduate students, 286 graduate students together with 50 doctoral students, occupying 69.48%, 25.98%, and 4.54% apiece. The average age of the respondents is 21.51 years old.

3.3. Measurement of Variables. In order to ensure the reliability and validity of the questionnaire, this study draws on established scales. The questionnaires were accurately translated into Chinese through standard translation and back-translation procedures [45] and double-checking with the distribution team prior to the investigation and research. The entire research applies a five-point Likert scale (1—strongly disagree; 5—strongly agree).

- (1) Career exploration: students' career exploration activities are measured by The Career Exploration Scale developed by Stumpf et al. [30], which consists

of 17 questions. For example, “I know a lot about the work that I’m interested in.” and “I will try different career activities.” Conbrach’s α coefficient is 0.968.

- (2) Future work self-salience: The Future Work self-salience Scale raised by Strauss et al. is adopted [35], including 5 items. For instance, “It’s easy for me to imagine my future work” and “I’m very clear about who and what I want to be in my future work.” Conbrach’s α coefficient is 0.949.
- (3) Perceived teacher support: A questionnaire on students’ perceived teacher support behaviors developed by Ou [46] is employed for this part. It covers three dimensions: learning support, emotional support, and competence support, with a total of 19 questions. Examples: “My teacher has always been gentle to me” and “My teacher often gives me encouragement in my study and life.” Cambrach’s α coefficient is 0.956.
- (4) Career adaptability: students’ resilience to their future careers is measured by The Career Adaptability Scale, revised by Hou et al. [47]. The questionnaire has 24 questions involving four dimensions: career concern, control, curiosity, and self-confidence. Examples include: “I can think about what my future will be like” and “I will make my own decisions.” Conbrach’s α coefficient is 0.948.
- (5) Control variables: Demographic variables have been found to impact career resilience, with gender, age, and chronological age all influencing career resilience [48]. Besides, the factors about students’ family backgrounds also have a differential impact on their career adaptability. In order to verify the model more accurately, gender, age, grade, and place of student source are surveyed as control variables.

4. Results

4.1. Common Method Biastest. This questionnaire adopts the self-reported method to fill in and collect the responses. In an attempt to reduce common method biases, students finished the questionnaires at three different time periods in a self-reported manner. Therefore, it is necessary to perform common method biases on the data. Using Harman’s single-factor test [49] to perform factor analysis on all the questions, include all items from all of the constructs in the study into a factor analysis to determine whether the majority of the variance can be accounted for by one general factor. It is found that the percentage of variance explained by the first factor is 38.23%, less than 50% of the recommended value. Hence, there is no obvious homologous bias. The relationship between the variables is plausible and will not have any real influence over the overall findings.

4.2. Discriminant Validity Test. Since the information on the variables in this study is all from the subjects’ self-assessments, confirmatory factor analysis is utilized to test the discriminant validity of each variable. Factor analysis is

conducted via a structural equation model to test the variables and models. The analysis results in Table 1 reveal that the four-factor model hypothesized by the study outperforms the fit of the other factor models to the sample data ($\chi^2 = 8459.93$, $df = 1961$, $RMSEA = 0.06$, $SRMR = 0.04$, $CFI = 0.92$, $TLI = 0.92$), indicating that the questionnaire design has sound discriminant validity and that the four factors represent four different constructs.

4.3. Descriptive Statistics and Correlation Analysis. To further clarify the relationship between students’ career exploration, future work self-salience, perceived teacher support, and career adaptability, this research conducts a correlation analysis on the relationship between the variables. The results in Table 2 show the notable correlation coefficients between all variables in the hypothesized relationship, which provides support for the validation of research hypotheses as well, but further verification is needed.

4.4. Hierarchical Regression Analysis. Applying hierarchical linear regression and process method, this study is intended to analyze the relationship between students’ career exploration, future work self-salience, perceived teacher support, and career adaptability, with gender, age, grade, and place of student source as control variables. Results are shown in Table 3. From the findings of Model 1 and Model 4 in Table 3, it can be seen that the gender and place of origin in the student demographic variables have a prominent impact on future work self-salience and career adaptability. Specifically speaking, male students display more future work self-salience ($B = -0.371$, $SE = 0.048$, $p < 0.001$), ($\beta = -0.229$, $p < 0.001$) and more career adaptability ($B = -0.239$, $SE = 0.034$, $p < 0.001$), ($\beta = -0.201$, $p < 0.001$); students in the city of origin are more likely to be clear about their future work ($B = 0.223$, $SE = 0.088$, $p < 0.001$), ($B = 0.076$, $p < 0.05$) and stronger career adaptability ($B = 0.240$, $SE = 0.030$, $p < 0.001$), ($\beta = 0.116$, $p < 0.001$).

This research uses hierarchical linear regression and process methods to analyze the relationship between students’ career exploration, future work self-salience, perceived teacher support, and career adaptability. Gender, age, grade, and student origin are used as control variables.

Applying hierarchical linear regression and process, this study is intended to analyze the relationship between students’ career exploration, future work self-salience, perceived teacher support, and career adaptability, with gender, age, grade, and place of student source as control variables.

Taking the gender, age, grade, and place of student source as control variables, the analysis results of Model 5 in Table 3 demonstrate that career exploration exerts a huge positive impact on career adaptability ($B = 0.754$, $SE = 0.018$, $p < 0.001$), which proves the validity of Hypothesis 1. Meanwhile, according to the results of Model 6 in Table 3, it can be seen that future work self-salience plays a mediating effect on the relationship between career exploration and career adaptability ($B = 0.064$, $SE = 0.015$, $p < 0.001$). In an effort to make a further clarification, Bootstrap Method is used to construct tests via Process, and the results are shown

TABLE 1: Confirmatory factor analysis results.

Model	χ^2	df	$\Delta\chi^2$	RMSEA	SRMR	CFI	TLI
Four-factor model (hypothesis)	8459.93	1961	—	0.06	0.04	0.92	0.92
Three-factor model (A + B)	12340.33	1964	3880.40***	0.07	0.08	0.88	0.87
Three-factor model (A + C)	15458.65	1964	6998.72***	0.07	0.08	0.84	0.83
Three-factor model (B + C)	11662.40	1964	3202.47***	0.07	0.07	0.88	.88
Two-factor model (A + B + C)	18376.90	1966	9916.97***	0.09	0.17	0.80	0.79
One-factor model (A + B + C + D)	23061.47	1967	14601.54***	0.10	0.15	0.75	0.73

A: career exploration; B: future work self-salience; C: perceived teacher support; D: career adaptability; “+” means integration.

TABLE 2: Mean, standard deviations, and correlation coefficients of variables (N= 1101).

Variables	Mean	Standard deviation	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1 Gender	0.522	0.499	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
2 Age	21.514	1.018	0.044	—	—	—	—	—	—
3 Grade	1.351	0.565	0.021	-0.058	—	—	—	—	—
4 Place of student source	0.916	0.277	-0.164**	-0.064*	0.153**	—	—	—	—
5 Career exploration	3.648	0.601	-0.279**	-0.002	0.028	0.134**	—	—	—
6 Future work self-salience	3.641	0.807	-0.243**	-0.029	0.000	0.114**	0.460**	—	—
7 Perceived teacher support	3.790	0.656	-0.249**	-0.022	-0.038	0.117*	0.438**	0.604**	—
8 Career adaptability	4.123	0.572	-0.220**	-0.004	-0.011	0.145*	0.795**	0.437**	0.423**

Note: *** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, and * $p < 0.05$ (the same below).

TABLE 3: Hierarchical regression analysis model.

Variable	Future work self-salience				Career adaptability			
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7	Model 8
Constant	3.894** (0.516)	1.964*** (0.486)	3.721*** (0.402)	3.929*** (0.367)	1.368*** (0.237)	1.243*** (0.237)	2.423*** (0.342)	1.136*** (0.236)
Control variable								
Gender	-0.371*** (0.048)	-0.191*** (0.045)	-0.088* (0.039)	-0.239*** (0.034)	0.007 (0.022)	0.019 (0.022)	-0.093** (0.031)	0.023 (0.022)
Age	-0.012 (0.023)	-0.017 (0.021)	-0.007 (0.018)	0.006 (0.017)	-0.001 (0.010)	0.000 (0.010)	0.011 (0.015)	0.002 (0.010)
Grade	-0.012 (0.042)	-0.024 (0.038)	0.011 (0.033)	-0.025 (0.030)	-0.041* (0.019)	-0.040* (0.019)	-0.017 (0.027)	-0.037* (0.018)
Place of student source	0.223* (0.088)	0.114 (0.080)	0.045 (0.068)	0.240*** (0.030)	0.095* (0.039)	0.088* (0.039)	0.169** (0.056)	0.084* (0.038)
Independent variable								
Career exploration	—	0.568*** (0.037)	0.311*** (0.035)	—	0.754*** (0.018)	0.717*** (0.020)	—	0.715*** (0.020)
Mediator variable								
Future work self-salience	—	—	—	—	—	0.064*** (0.015)	0.178*** (0.024)	0.026* (0.017)
Moderator variable								
Perceived teacher support	—	—	0.569*** (0.032)	—	—	—	0.187*** (0.029)	0.050* (0.020)
Interaction								
Career exploration * Perceived teacher support	—	—	0.293*** (0.045)	—	—	—	—	0.143*** (0.031)
Future work self-salience * Perceived teacher support	—	—	—	—	—	—	0.095*** (0.027)	0.014* (0.022)
R^2	0.065	0.228	0.437	0.061	0.634	0.641	0.253	0.651
Adjusted R^2	0.061	0.225	0.433	0.058	0.633	0.639	0.249	0.648
ΔR^2	0.065***	0.164***	0.372***	0.061***	0.573***	0.006***	0.192* * *	0.590***

TABLE 4: Bootstrap test of mediation effect.

	Effect size	Standard error	95% confidence interval	
			Confidence lower limit	Confidence upper limit
Indirect effect	0.036	0.008	0.020	0.053
Direct effect	0.718	0.020	0.679	0.756

Note: bootstrap sample size $N=5000$.

in Table 4. Taking the participants’ gender, age, grade, and place of student source as control variables, the indirect and direct effects of future work self-salience, are both significant. The 95% confidence interval does not contain point 0, illustrating that future work self-salience plays a mediating role in the relationship between career exploration and career adaptation. Hence, Hypothesis 2 is valid as well.

With regard to verifying the moderating effect, the results of Model 3 in Table 3 display the great interaction between students’ career exploration and perceived teacher support ($B=0.293$, $SE=0.045$, $p<0.001$), which produces $\Delta R^2=0.372$ ($p<0.001$) based on control variables and the moderator variable. Therefore, perceived teacher support bears a moderating influence on the relationship between career exploration and future work self-salience. The study utilizes Aiken and West to adjust the level of the moderator variable by one standard deviation (± 1 SD) [50] above and below (plus or minus) the mean so as to give a full explanation. Results are illustrated in Figure 2, showing that under stronger perceived teacher support, students’ career exploration exerts a much more positive impact on future work self-salience. So, Hypotheses 3 and 4 hold true. Concerning the results of Model 7 in Table 3, it is obvious that with gender, age, grade, and place of student source as control variables, the interaction between their future work self-salience and perceived teacher support is also remarkable ($B=0.095$, $SE=0.027$, $p<0.001$), generating $\Delta R^2=0.192$ ($p<0.001$). Hence, perceived teacher support plays a moderating role in the relationship between future work self-salience and career adaptability. Similarly, the researcher makes use of Aiken and West to regulate the level of the moderating variable by one standard deviation (± 1 SD) [50] above and below (plus or minus) the mean so as to give a full explanation of the effect. Results in Figure 3 indicate that when students receive a higher degree of perceived teacher support, their future work self-salience tends to have more positive impacts on career adaptability, which validates Hypothesis 4.

In order to further test the moderated mediating effect, drawing on existing researches, Bootstrap Method is adopted via Process to test the moderated mediating model. Table 5 displays specific analysis results.

With a low degree of perceived teacher support, the indirect effect size is 0.001, and $[-0.005, .006]$ in the 95% confidence interval. It can be known that the perceived teacher support insignificantly moderates the mediating effect of future work self-salience in the relationship between

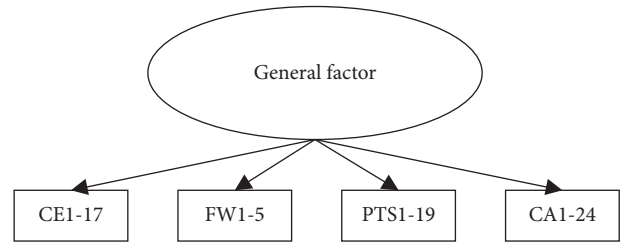


FIGURE 2: Harman’s single-factor test. CE1-17: career exploration1-career exploration17. FWS1-5: future work self-salience1-future work self-salience5. PTS1-19: perceived teacher support1-perceived teacher support19. CA1-24: career adaptability1-career adaptability24.

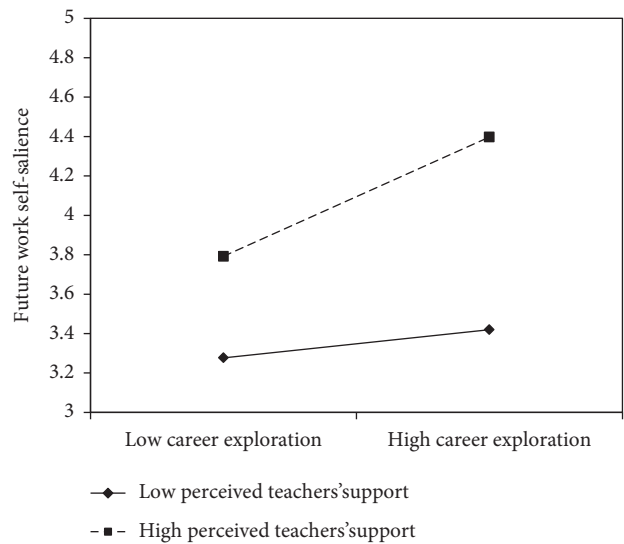


FIGURE 3: The effect of the interaction between career exploration and perceived teacher support on future work self-salience.

career exploration and career adaptability. However, with a high degree of perceived teacher support, the indirect effect size is 0.033 and $[0.014, 0.054]$ in the 95% confidence interval. It can be known that the perceived teacher support successively moderates the mediating effect of future work self-salience in the relationship between career exploration and career adaptability. In the case of higher perceived teacher support, this mediating effect is more evident. Hence, Hypothesis 5 holds true (Figure 4).

TABLE 5: Moderated mediation bootstrap test.

Independent variable	Mediator variable	Moderator variable	Indirect effect	Standard error	95% confidence interval	
					Confidence lower limit	Confidence upper limit
Career exploration	Future work self-salience	Low (-SD) perceived teacher support	0.001	0.003	-0.005	0.006
		High (+SD)	0.033	0.010	0.014	0.054

Note: bootstrap sample size $N = 5000$.

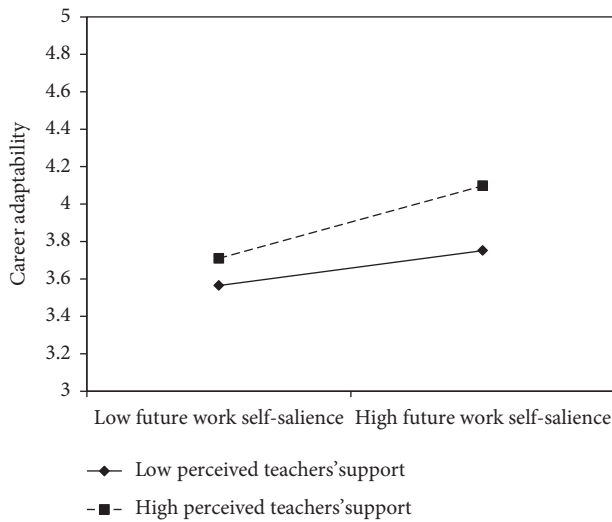


FIGURE 4: The effect of the interaction between future work self-salience and perceived teacher support on career adaptability.

5. Conclusion and Discussion

Based on the career construction theory, this study explores the influence mechanism of “career exploration-future work self-salience-career adaptability,” which is also moderated by teachers’ support. Further research found that (1) career exploration positively affects career adaptability; (2) Future work self-salience plays a part of the mediating role between career exploration and career adaptability; (3) Perceived teacher support has positive moderation on the positive relationship between career exploration and future work self-salience and that between future work self-salience and career adaptability.

5.1. Theoretical Implication.

- (1) The study employs students’ active career exploration behavior as the starting point to expand the antecedent variables of career adaptability. Taking career exploration as a positive motivational resource has enriched the research on influencing factors of career adaptability.
- (2) According to the career construction theory, the study discusses the mediating effect of future work self-salience between career exploration and adaptability, clarifies the role path and explanation mechanism, in which university students’ career exploration has abearing on their career adaptability,

providing essential empirical results support and theoretical guidance for researches on students’ career exploration and optimization of career adaptability.

- (3) The study introduces perceived teacher support as a moderator variable. On the basis of career construction theory, one’s career adaptability, high or low, depends on the interaction between the individual and the environment. As a supportive learning atmosphere, perceived teacher support can bring about a moderating effect, which supports the theory. Since the current research on situational factors of career adaptability mainly examines social support and perceived environmental atmosphere instead of perceived teacher support, this study opens up the boundary conditions under which career exploration influence career adaptability through future work self-salience and further deepens and clarifies the mechanism of action.

5.2. Practical Implication.

- (1) The research confirms that college students’ career exploration can exert positive impacts on their career adaptability. College students take the initiative to explore the environment and do career exploration on their own, which promotes their attention, self-salience, and control related to their career, thereby effectively developing their career adaptability.
- (2) The research verifies the mediating role of future work self-salience in career exploration and career adaptability. College students, with the assistance and guidance of career exploration, can shape an explicit self-salience in future work. A college student who has a clear future work self can easily cope with the uncertainty of future employment and enhance career adaptability.
- (3) The research also proves that perceived teacher support has a moderating effect on career exploration, future work self-salience, and career adaptability. When university students do not formally take a job, the situational factors of career exploration are influenced both by family and the learning atmosphere. The findings show that teacher support also makes a difference in one’s career exploration, future work self-salience, and career adaptability. That is to say, when implementing employment

guidance in the future, universities should not only focus on the family and learning climate of students but should also pay attention to the supportive behavior of teachers. This is more conducive to enhancing students' future work self-salience and career adaptability.

6. Limitation and Future Research

This research carries out an exploratory study on career adaptability, taking students in school as the object. Though having achieved some valuable conclusions, it still has the following limitations. First of all, the survey data about the multistage time node is used. However, due to the excessive number of students of the teacher, it is hard for teachers to accurately evaluate the level of support for each student, so the single source data from students' self-reported answers is employed. While the study has also validated common method bias, a multisource and multistage survey approach is a more reasonable choice when performing prospective studies. Secondly, the research is concentrated on students without considering the influence of family climate on their career adaptability, nor does it involve the effect of classroom learning climate. Future research is recommended to pay attention to whether differences in learning team and family atmosphere have different effects on career adaptability. Last but not least, the data all comes from universities of Sichuan, Chongqing, Yangtze River Delta, and Pearl River Delta regions of mainland China. When it comes to whether the relationships between the mentioned variables are general to universities in other regions, more research is needed in this field.

Data Availability

The data used to support the findings of this study are included within the article.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

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