

Employment Anxiety among College Students During COVID-19: A Systematic Review

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Abstract

After the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the global economy has been severely affected, and college students in various countries are facing greater challenges in employment. The purpose of this study is to integrate existing research on employment anxiety among college students during COVID-19 by reviewing what researchers have already investigated. This systematic review searched two databases in English (Web of Science and Scopus) and two databases in Chinese (VIP database of Chinese technical journals, China National Knowledge Infrastructure). The search time is from the time of database creation to January 1, 2023. Of the 1064 retrieved records, a total of 19 studies were included. During the pandemic period, more than most college students had employment anxiety, and the anxiety level was moderately high. In areas that were more severely affected by the pandemic, the proportion of college students with employment anxiety was greater. Obviously, the employment anxiety of graduates is greater than that of non-graduates. Compared with males, females are more likely to have employment anxiety. The employment anxiety of college students from medical and normal backgrounds is more prominent. Through the analysis of factors affecting employment anxiety, it is found that universities and families should provide employment support and psychological assistance for college students, such as career planning, enhancing psychological resilience, self-efficacy, professional sense of mission, reducing perfectionism, etc. Social support is an important factor that can help relieve college students' employment anxiety.

Keywords: COVID-19, Employment Anxiety, Educational Psychology, College Students

Introduction

Since the outbreak of Coronavirus Disease, COVID-19 has spread rapidly to more than 200 countries and territories. As of January 18, 2023, more than 660 million cases of COVID-19 have been diagnosed and more than 6.72 million deaths have been recorded (Google News, COVID-19 map). During severe public health emergencies, the economy and the workplace bear the brunt of the impact. This includes rising unemployment, with 25 million new unemployed people worldwide in 2020 because of COVID-19 (International Labor Organization, 2020) and significant challenges to the labor market (Crayne, 2020; Xie, 2020;

Jiskrova et al., 2021; Liu, 2022). Vaccination has contributed to slowing down the development of the pandemic (Watson, 2022; Dye, 2022; Fan et al., 2022), and many countries have no longer imposed traffic restrictions or travel restrictions on the pandemic of coronaviruses. However, the mitigation effect of this measure on the economic and employment shocks brought about by COVID-19 was not obvious (Morgan et al., 2021; Wang & Li, 2021; Fasanya et al., 2022).

Precarious employment and unemployment brought about by global economic constraints cause employment anxiety among job seekers (McIntyre et al., 2021). And as the employment of college graduates begins to cause concern Ksinan (2022), more and more bad feelings begin to emerge. In the United States, students nearing graduation during the pandemic similarly showed increases in anxiety, loneliness, and depression (Lee et al., 2021).

The closed-door policy brought about by COVID-19 prevented college students from gaining work experience through internships Sahu (2020) and part-time jobs (Zhai & Du, 2020), and some industries, such as the airline industry, curtailed hiring during this period (Miani 2021), with disruptions in career prospects significantly affecting their financial stability and future employment opportunities. Indeed, college students expect to get good jobs after higher education, but the COVID-19 pandemic has effectively further blurred the prospects for college graduates to find satisfying jobs (Wendy et al., 2021). Thus, job search insecurity triggers the emergence of employment anxiety among college students.

College students' employment anxiety, specifically, it is the emotional experience of restlessness that occurs when college students face the problem of employment search and are upset about the possible failure to achieve their original employment goals (Jie, 2009; Yaşar& Turğüt, 2020; Fang& Liu, 2022). Employment anxiety can interfere with normal study and life to some extent, for example, college students are unable to concentrate in the classroom because of the fear of not being able to find a job, triggering poor academic performance (Nazempour et al., 2022), and in severe cases, it can put people in an agitated mood, inhibit brain functioning, and even cause depression or even suicidal thoughts in graduates (Zhang, 2022; Chowdhury et al., 2022; Zheng et al., 2022).

However, the current research on employment anxiety experienced by university students during this period is preliminary or sporadic, with some studies focusing on only one aspect of the causes of employment anxiety, such as the change in hiring practices in companies as a result of the pandemic, to which maladaptation is a possible cause of university students' employment anxiety Zhao (2021), while others have suggested that financial pressures can lead to employment anxiety, such as in the United States, where some students need to find jobs to pay off student loans (Froidevaux, 2020).

In contrast, prior to the pandemic, research on employment anxiety or employment mental health among college students focused on the increased competition due to the surge in the number of college students (Lin, 2010; Yamada, 2018) and the replacement or upgrading of certain industries due to rapid technological advances (Teng et al., 2019; Murtagh & Devlin, 2018). COVID-19 has undoubtedly exacerbated the impact of these conditions on college students' employment anxiety, necessitating a comprehensive review and synthesis of research on college students' employment anxiety during the pandemic.

Moreover, the impact of global events on employment and the economy does not disappear in a short period of time, as Shen (2020) also mentioned in his study, Alfani dissected the occurrence of the Great Plague in Italy in the 17th century, and that sudden environmental changes can inhibit economic development in the long term. And the statement of the

International Labor Organization (2021) said that the impact of the pandemic on employment is more serious than expected. So the impact of COVID-19 is long-term, and a literature review can be effective in providing systematic insights into this evolving field.

Thus, this study is the a comprehensive attempt to synthesize existing researches about employment anxiety among college students, particularly during the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic. The study focuses on what researchers have been investigating relating to employment anxiety, thus aiding in decision making and future research on employment anxiety among college students.

Methods

Literature Search

Two Chinese and two English databases were searched, including CNKI, Vipshop, scopus, and Web of Science, and the search period was from the date of establishment to January 1, 2023. We used the following search terms: "novel coronavirus pneumonia", "COVID-19", "college employment", "employment anxiety", and "employment anxiety". ", "employment anxiety", "anxiety about finding a job among college students", and "anxiety about career choice among college students". The search was conducted using a combination of subject terms and natural terms to supplement the reference files of the included documents.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

The inclusion criteria for eligible studies were: (a) the article presented an empirical (quantitative or qualitative) study rather than a review or theoretical argument; (b) the study population was a university population during the pandemic; (c) employment anxiety was assessed using standardized instruments or evidence-based self-administered scales; (d) the study was included during the COVID-19 pandemic (since December 19, 2019). Exclusion criteria: (a) the study was on anxiety disorders rather than employment anxiety, and (b) the article was not published in English or Chinese.

Data Extraction

Using a pre-designed electronic form (reference form for the assignment), we extracted the following information from the included studies: first author, sample size and characteristics of the study sample, study methodology and design, assessment instruments, and main findings.

Resulting Literature

The initial search yielded 1064 articles. After eliminating 120 duplicates, 273 papers were filtered based on title and abstract. Finally, 143 papers that were deemed eligible and their full text were reviewed. During this process, 19 papers met the eligibility criteria. Figure 1 shows the search process based on the PRISMA flowchart.

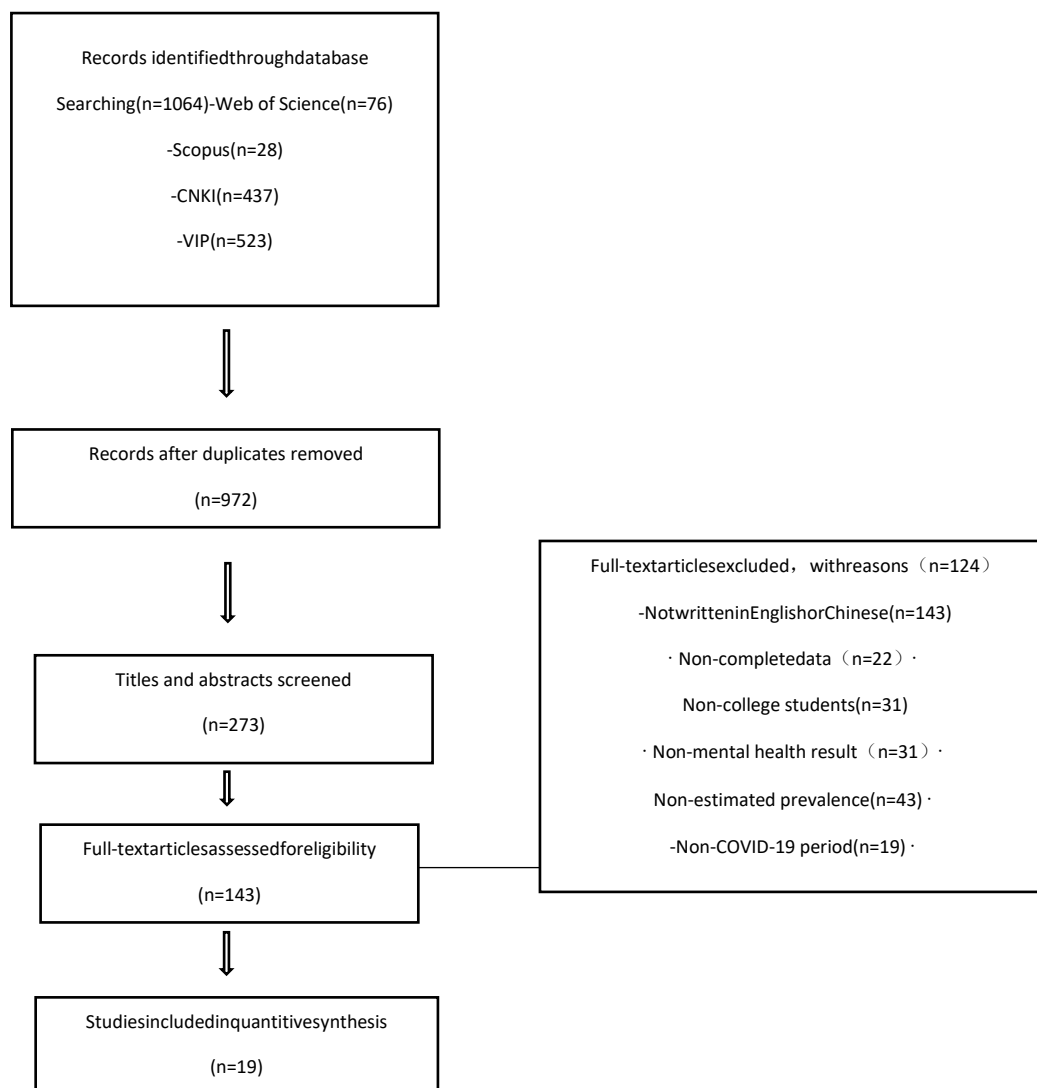


Figure 1 Flowchart of the literature search and study selection process.

Results

Samples and Recruitment

Table 1 shows the details of the 19 studies used in this review. More than half of the studies recruited participants from China ($n = 16$), and the other studies recruited participants from the following countries: Bangladesh, Korea, and Malaysia. For the measure of employment anxiety, one study had a larger sample size of 3104, and the remaining sample sizes ranged from 214 to 648. A total of 10,297 college students were involved in the included studies, of which 3,757 were male, 6,056 were female, and 484 were of unknown gender. In the selection of the study population, 12 studies considered students in different years of university and 7 studies were conducted only among students in their final year of university. As for disciplinary background, five studies focused on employment anxiety among medical students, two studies reported employment anxiety among teacher training students, and one study focused on employment anxiety among Tibetan students. In Table 1, employment anxiety is abbreviated EA.

Table 1

Details of Studies Included in the Systematic Review.

First author	Sample (demographics, region, gender)	Research design (quantitative/qualitative)	Instrument for assessing employment anxiety	Key findings
Md. Ashraful Alam (2022)	N=387, male: 207, female: 180. Bengal.	Quantitative: investigative and deductive reasoning methods to test hypotheses	Employment Anxiety Scale (Hagquist & Starrin 1996).	EA, Financial Worry, and Knowledge of COVID-19 Positively Affected College Students' Depression.
Kim, Jeoungmi (2022)	N=360, male: 105, female: 255. South Korea.	Quantitative: descriptive cross-sectional study	Job Search Anxiety Tool (Cho, 2008)	(1) College students who cannot tolerate uncertainty have EA. (2) College students who have high level of EA show higher employment readiness behavior.
Wang Lu (2022)	N=297, male: 109, female: 188. China	Quantitative: Questionnaire	College Students Employment Anxiety Diagnostic Questionnaire (Zhang 2005)	(1) The EA level of medical students is at a moderately high level. (2) Human capital played a mediating role in the relationship between medical

First author	Sample (demographics, region, gender)	Research design (quantitative/qualitative)	Instrument for assessing employment anxiety	Key findings
				students' EA and self-efficacy.
Li Chen (2021)	N=550, male: 135, female: 415. China.	Quantitative: Questionnaires to test hypotheses	Revision of Employment Anxiety Scale (Zhang & Yao 2011)	(1) In the context of COVID-19, Intolerance of Uncertainty (IU) is significantly positively correlated with EA, and career planning is also significantly negatively correlated with EA. (2) Career planning moderates the relationship between IU and EA.

First author	Sample (demographics, region, gender)	Research design (quantitative/qualitative)	Instrument for assessing employment anxiety	Key findings
Fan Junqiang (2022)	N=3014, Male: 1250, Female: 1764. China	Quantitative: questionnaires and empirical research	Employment Anxiety Scale for College Students (Zhang 2004)	(1) The degree of EA of college students is mainly moderate. (2) Social support and employ-ability are protective factors for alleviating EA of college students under COVID-19. (3) Employment pressure is significantly positively correlated with EA.
Liang Huihua (2022)	N=314. Men: 141. Women: 173. China	Quantitative: random sampling and questionnaires	Employment Anxiety Questionnaire (Lee 2021)	(1) Most college students have EA. (2) In the multi-dimensional perfect psychology, worrying about mistakes has a significant positive correlation with EA.

First author	Sample (demographics, region, gender)	Research design (quantitative/qualitative)	Instrument for assessing employment anxiety	Key findings
Li Juan (2021)	N=484, China.	Quantitative: Questionnaire	Self-compiled "College Students' Mental Health During the Pandemic" Questionnaire	After the outbreak of COVID-19, the situation of college students' "EA or worries about studies" increases with the growth of grades.
Li Cuiping (2022)	N=648, Male: 276. Female: 372. China.	Quantitative: "Self-compiled + mature scale" for investigation	Depression/Anxiety/Stress Mood Level Scale (DASS-21) (Lovibond 1995)	(1) Medical students mainly have a moderate degree of EA. (2) The EA of medical students is significantly positively correlated with employment depression and employment pressure.

First author	Sample (demographics, region, gender)	Research design (quantitative/qualitative)	Instrument for assessing employment anxiety	Key findings
Saidan Almamat (2022)	N=267, male: 97, female: 170. Setting: China.	Quantitative: cluster sampling, questionnaires	self-rating anxiety scale, SAS), (Zung 1971)	(1) 46.40% of college students have EA, and the degree of women is higher than that of men. (2) EA is negatively correlated with psychological resilience, and positively correlated with employment pressure.
Zhang Jinming (2020)	N=214, Male: 91, Female: 123. China	Quantitative: Questionnaire	Employment Anxiety Questionnaire (Ren 2010)	(1) There are significant differences in EA scores in terms of gender, whether college students come from rural areas or urban areas, and whether they were come from one-child families. (2) The score of EA of sophomores

First author	Sample (demographics, region, gender)	Research design (quantitative/qualitative)	Instrument for assessing employment anxiety	Key findings
				and juniors is significantly higher than that of seniors
Wang Niannian (2022)	N=496, male: 178, female: 318. China	Quantitative; questionnaires, latent profile analysis.	Employment Anxiety Questionnaire (Ren 2010)	The subjective feeling of EA of Tibetan college students is higher than that of Han college students.

First author	Sample (demographics, region, gender)	Research design (quantitative/qualitative)	Instrument for assessing employment anxiety	Key findings
Qin Xiaoxin (2020)	N=271, Male: 94, Female: 177, China	Quantitative: Questionnaire Qualitative: Semi-structured interview	College Students Employment Anxiety Diagnostic Questionnaire (Zhang 2005)	(1) 64.6% of college students have moderate EA, with women scoring higher than men. (2) The EA of college students with low-ranked universities is much higher than that of high-ranked universities. (3) The influencing factors of EA include: employment situation, university training methods, social prejudice, family factors.

First author	Sample (demographics, region, gender)	Research design (quantitative/qualitative)	Instrument for assessing employment anxiety	Key findings
Xu Shouping (2020)	N=415, male: 136, female: 279. China	Quantitative: Questionnaire	Employment Anxiety Scale for College Students (Zhang Xiaoqin, 2004), Cronbach α is 0.91	(1) The EA among medical students is mainly middle or high anxiety, and the anxiety proportion of females is higher than that of males. (2) Family economic status is the main influencing factor of EA of medical students.

First author	Sample (demographics, region, gender)	Research design (quantitative/qualitative)	Instrument for assessing employment anxiety	Key findings
Chen Wei (2020)	N=301, male: 126, female: 175. China	Quantitative: Questionnaire	Employment Anxiety Questionnaire (Ren 2010)	(1) Employment social support and personal ability are both significantly negatively correlated with EA. (2) Personal power has a partial mediating effect between employment social support and EA, and the mechanism has significant differences in gender.

First author	Sample (demographics, region, gender)	Research design (quantitative/qualitative)	Instrument for assessing employment anxiety	Key findings
Chai Lihong (2020)	N=345, Male: 158, Female: 187. China	Quantitative: Questionnaire	Employment Anxiety Questionnaire (Zhang Yuzhu and Chen Zhong, 2006)	(1) There is no significant difference between gender and major in the EA level of college students. (2) There is a significant negative correlation between EA and psychological resilience, and a non-significant negative correlation with positive coping. (3) The relationship between EA and negative coping has a very significant positive correlation

First author	Sample (demographics, region, gender)	Research design (quantitative/qualitative)	Instrument for assessing employment anxiety	Key findings
Gao Xiaoqian (2020)	N=449, Location: Men: 126, Women: 323. China	Quantitative: Questionnaire	Employment Anxiety Questionnaire (Zhang & Chen 2006)	<p>(1) After COVID-19, the EA level of college students is at a moderately high level. The severity of the virus is positively affecting EA.</p> <p>(2) The EA level of females is significantly higher than that of males.</p> <p>(3) The social support of college students could not only directly affect EA, but also affect EA through the mediating role of self-efficacy.</p>

First author	Sample (demographics, region, gender)	Research design (quantitative/qualitative)	Instrument for assessing employment anxiety	Key findings
Noman, Mohammad (2021)	N=436. Male: 188, Female: 288. Malaysia.	Quantitative: Questionnaire	Employability Scale (Rothwell, Herbert, & Rothwell, 2008)	EA significantly affects college students' well-being, but does not have any discernible effect on their life goals.

First author	Sample (demographics, region, gender)	Research design (quantitative/qualitative)	Instrument for assessing employment anxiety	Key findings
Chen Haoran (2022)	N=431, male: 123, female: 308. China	Quantitative: Questionnaire	Employment Anxiety Questionnaire (Ren 2010)	<p>(1) The EA score of medical students is higher than that of previous studies.</p> <p>(2) The sense of professional mission and achievement motivation of medical students are negatively correlated with EA.</p> <p>(3) Achievement motivation of medical students plays a partial mediating role between professional mission and EA.</p>

First author	Sample (demographics, region, gender)	Research design (quantitative/qualitative)	Instrument for assessing employment anxiety	Key findings
Tu Jiabao (2022)	N=618, male: 257, female: 361. China	Quantitative: Questionnaire	Chinese version of Trait Anxiety Subscale (Dai 2014)	<p>(1) The total score of employment stress and trait anxiety of normal students is significantly higher than that of non-normal students.</p> <p>(2) There are significant gender differences in the total score of employment stress and trait anxiety.</p> <p>(3) College students' trait anxiety and negative coping all have an impact on their employment pressure; internship experience is the interference of trait anxiety affecting college students' employment</p>

First author	Sample (demographics, region, gender)	Research design (quantitative/qualitative)	Instrument for assessing employment anxiety	Key findings
				pressure factor.

Research Methods and Design

One study used a mixed research approach, and all 18 studies used a quantitative research approach. There was a large variation in the choice of instruments used for the measurement of employment anxiety. For the four papers in the English-language library, researchers from different countries used four completely different scales. The 17 papers in the Chinese language library also used 8 different scales. Of the included studies, one study took the Hagquist and Starrin scale of employment anxiety (1996), one study used the Job Search Anxiety Instrument developed by Cho (2008), one study used the Self-Perceived Employment Competence Scale Rothwell et al (2008) to measure students' employment anxiety, one study used the Self-rating anxiety scale, which can be abbreviated as SAS Zung (1971), and 1 study

utilized the Chinese version of the Trait Anxiety subscale Dai (2014). One study used the depression/anxiety/stress mood level scale, which may also be called DASS-21 (Lovibond & Lovibond 1995) and one study self-administered the questionnaire Li (2021). For the remaining studies, four of the measurement instruments were chosen from two different versions of the Job Choice Anxiety Questionnaire for College Graduates developed by Zhang (2006, 2011), four studies used different versions of the Employment Anxiety Scale for College Students developed by Zhang (2004, 2005), and four studies quantifying college students' employment anxiety took the Employment Anxiety Questionnaire by (Ren, 2010).

The results of the quantitative studies were subjected to SPSS for statistical description, independent samples t-test, correlation analysis, and regression analysis, according to the needs of different research questions. The qualitative part of the mixed study used semi-structured interviews to achieve the purpose of the study.

Key Findings

As mentioned earlier, the 19 studies included in this systematic evaluation examined employment anxiety among college students during COVID-19. Among the included studies, 2 studies analyzed the causes of the development of employment anxiety and 3 studies described the adverse psychological outcomes that can result from employment anxiety. 11 studies reported on the level or demographic distribution characteristics of employment anxiety. The majority of studies ($n = 15$) focused on the correlation between employment anxiety and other variables.

The main findings of these studies are divided into four sections: the causes of the development of current employment anxiety, the level of employment anxiety among college students, the consequences resulting from employment anxiety, and the mechanisms for coping with employment anxiety in terms of correlations with other factors.

Levels of Employment Anxiety Among College Students

All studies mentioned higher levels of employment anxiety among students during COVID-19. The study by Gao (2020) focused on the provinces ranked among the top 5 confirmed COVID-19 cases in China, identifying them as the virus severe areas and the remaining provinces as the virus common areas, and the data showed that the employment anxiety scores of college students in the virus severe areas (68.58 ± 11.78) were significantly higher than the anxiety levels of students in the virus common areas (64.71 ± 13.62).

Some of the studies have made detailed explanations through the data. The study conducted by Qin (2020) focused on students from freshman to senior year, and the valid 271 questionnaires showed that the high anxiety group contained 53 people, accounting for 19.5% of the total number of subjects; the moderate anxiety group contained 175 people, accounting for 64.6% of the total number of subjects. Fan (2022) yielded little difference after testing for pre-graduation college students, in which 454 (15.06%) scored high anxiety and 1984 (65.83%) scored moderate anxiety. In the survey of Li (2021), which divided the two groups of graduates and then non-graduates, the percentage of graduates was as high as 46%, while only 4% of non-graduates, regarding their worries about future employment. It can be seen that the degree of employment anxiety among college students during this period is dominated by medium anxiety, which is more pronounced among graduates compared to non-graduates, and Geng's (2022) study supports this view.

Reasons for the formation of current employment anxiety

Among the studies that met the review criteria, two articles mentioned intolerance to employment uncertainty as the cause of employment anxiety among college students during COVID-19. Li's (2021) quantitative study was conducted among college graduate students in China, and he first proposed the hypothesis of the relationship between graduates' intolerance to uncertainty and employment anxiety, and the data from the questionnaire survey were stratified. Multiple regression analysis of the data found a positive correlation between intolerance of uncertainty (IU) and employment anxiety, and the predictive effect of IU on employment anxiety was significant. For graduating college students, the job search process itself faces many uncertainties, and COVID-19 amplifies the uncertainty. Another article also mentioned that college students who do not tolerate uncertainty have a tendency to become anxious when choosing a career (Kim et al., 2022). This study from Korea, although the majority of the study participants were female, also found that for nearly one-third of the students, COVID-19 exacerbated these conditions. The presence of persistent intolerance for uncertainty can undoubtedly have a negative impact on an individual's psychological and social adjustment, resulting in employment anxiety.

Consequences of Job Anxiety

Kim's (2022) study used a descriptive cross-sectional design using a self-report questionnaire to analyze and identify the relationship between job search anxiety and job readiness behaviors among undergraduate students from two different majors and found that both the level of job anxiety and job readiness behaviors were higher than moderate among majors, while undergraduate students with higher job search anxiety exhibited higher job readiness behaviors.

A quantitative study from Malaysia (Noman et al., 2021), which constructed a construct model, confirmed that job anxiety is one of the most important stressors for college graduates in the current period and that job anxiety significantly affects their well-being but does not have any significant effect on their life goals. It may be because students perceive Covid-19 as a temporary crisis that will end soon. They did not see the crisis as an adversity that would change what for them was a long-term commitment to their life goals.

Both Li's (2022); Fan's (2022) quantitative studies illustrated the positive correlation between employment anxiety and employment stress, although they used different scales. Tu (2021) classified employment anxiety as trait anxiety, then after controlling for the gender variable, trait anxiety significantly and positively predicted employment stress, especially affecting college students without internship experience more significantly. It is worth mentioning that in Liang (2022) argued that employment anxiety and employment stress are causally related to each other, that is, employment stress can lead to anxiety, and in turn anxiety can influence graduates' employment stress.

Coping Mechanisms and Interventions

With regard to coping mechanisms, the included studies focused on different types of coping mechanisms. Liang's (2022) study focused on the impact of multidimensional perfectionist psychology on employment anxiety; these dimensions included fear of mistakes, parental expectations, and personal standards. When he examined the data, he found that multidimensional perfectionism among college students was directly related to employment anxiety. COVID-19 brings more "imperfections" to employment, and if schools can help college

students realize that absolute perfection does not exist and learn to accept their imperfect selves, it can certainly alleviate anxiety.

Chen's (2022) study referred to career vocation due to its close relationship with individual psychological states He (2020), and the data from the sample illustrated that the higher the level of career vocation of medical students, the lower their level of employment anxiety. COVID-19 management policies in China do lead to medical students' doubts about their career choices, and enhancing career vocation also makes individuals' The enhanced sense of career mission also leads to better career planning and career preparation, thus reducing employment anxiety.

Because career planning is also significantly and negatively related to employment anxiety, Li's (2021) hypothesis is supported by the argument that career planning moderates the relationship between IU and employment anxiety. That is, college graduates with high employment anxiety can benefit from career planning, i.e., they are less anxious when supported by a sense of purpose despite facing more severe stressful events.

Psychological resilience is another psychological trait for coping with employment anxiety, which refers mainly to the individual's ability to adapt to changes in the situation Gao et al (2021), especially in the face of a special change like the coronavirus pandemic, which has never been seen before, and the state of psychological resilience of college students has a closer impact on mood. In a related work, Sayidan (2022) conducted a whole-group sampling, and statistical analysis showed that employment anxiety and psychological resilience were negatively correlated, and Chai (2022) conducted a survey among 345 students, and correlation analysis among factors also yielded consistent results. This implies that enhancing psychological resilience is an important way to alleviate by employment anxiety.

Self-efficacy has also been mentioned in studies on employment anxiety, with three studies all pointing out that self-efficacy can negatively affect college students' employment anxiety, and when other variables are added, self-efficacy can play a moderating role, between employment anxiety and perfectionist personality Geng et al (2022) can mediate between social support and employment anxiety Gao et al (2020), and also through human capital achieve for employment anxiety reduction (Wanget al., 2022). Overall, college students with higher self-efficacy are less likely to experience employment anxiety in the face of COVID-19. There is another important coping mechanism that needs to be considered - social support. A quantitative analysis by Gao (2020) reveals a negative relationship between social support and employment anxiety; the higher the level of social support an individual has in the face of the dramatic changes in the employment environment brought about by COVID-19, the more he or she can actively cope with the different changes in society and increase confidence in controlling the unknowable factors in life, thus reducing employment anxiety. Some studies (Chen et al.2020) found that social support does not play a direct role, and the employment social support of recent college graduates indirectly influences their employment anxiety through personal manpower, and the mechanism has significant differences among college students of different genders, and female students are more likely to be influenced by employment social support compared with male students.

Discussion

The purpose of this systematic evaluation was to review what researchers have done related to job or career anxiety among college/university students during the Covid-19 period. In summary, 19 studies met the inclusion criteria for this systematic evaluation.

The effect of the COVID-19 period on the level of employment anxiety in the college student population is also evident notably, most medical students have moderate or even high levels of employment anxiety (Li et al., 2022; Wanget al., 2022; Xu et al., 2020). Despite the fact that COVID-19, as a serious public health event, requires the involvement of more health care professionals, the anxiety of medical students about it has increased rather than decreased. The reason for this is because the process of working is tremendously stressful for medical college students, but not going for a job in a related specialty is even more difficult in a job market that lacks positions (Chen et al., 2022; Seyidanet al., 2022). Another disciplinary background characteristic included in the study was teacher education students, whose job anxiety was elevated during COVID-19 because of the shrinking market for teaching talent Tu (2022), in addition to the fact that COVID-19 also changed the perception of teacher education students' employment (Li & Chen, 2021).

The data show that those with severe and moderate anxiety are overwhelmingly represented (Qinet al., 2020; Li et al., 2022; Fanet al., 2022). The gender differences in employment anxiety are equally significant, with women, who are more emotionally sensitive, having higher levels of anxiety than men in most studies (Gaoet al., 2020; Kim et al., 2021; Tu, 2022).

From the results, there is evidence that COVID-19 complicates the employment situation (He, 2020). Employment anxiety is related to students' tolerance for instability in the employment environment. Li (2021) described that the higher the IU, the stronger the employment anxiety. this study by Kim (2022) also supports that college students who cannot tolerate uncertainty will show anxiety tendencies when choosing a career because they cannot cope effectively without knowing the exact outcome.

As for the consequences of employment anxiety for college students, they are multifaceted. Psychologically, the well-being of college students is affected because of employment anxiety, but it may end with the continuation of the COVID-19 pandemic worldwide (Nomanet al.2021). In addition anxiety about employment is considered to be the greatest stressor for college students, and stress can bring about a series of adverse physical and psychological reactions that are harmful to mental health (Liang, 2022; Tu, 2022). Behaviorally, employment anxiety leads to higher job search readiness, which seems to be a good effect, but students remain apprehensive and confused if they lack school and parental support in this process (Kimet al., 2022).

Considering the factors that influence job anxiety, researchers have also suggested a number of measures. Career planning is a measure that can be considered because it helps college students to establish reasonable goals when they are employed (Li & Chen, 2021). Also research has shown that it is crucial for the psychological development of college students in employment. For example, perfectionist psychology Liang(2022), professional responsibility Chenet al (2022), psychological resilience Chaiet al (2022); Seyidanet al (2022) and self-efficacy Gao (2020); Geng (2022); Wang (2022), and enhancing these psychological qualities can be important supports against employment anxiety. Of course, these supports are also adaptive in nature and need to be improved by the training programs of universities. In addition social support is an important influencing factor to alleviate college students' employment anxiety Gao (2020), and the support given by schools and families can work not only directly but also through other factors (Chen et al., 2020).

It is noteworthy that all studies were conducted in the Asian region, with studies conducted in China accounting for the majority even when the literature search was made in general that include databases from CNKI, Vipshop, Scopus, and Web of Science. Perhaps this is

because COVID-19 does have a greater impact on the economies of developing countries Bottanet al (2020); Rodelaet al (2020), where the "Great Embargo" and restrictive business policies have resulted in high demand for labor in the service sector (Tenget al.2021) and transportation (Shao 2020). The demand for jobs has shrunk significantly. College students cannot be excluded from the impact (Shen et al., 2021; Tsurugano et al., 2021). In addition, in the past three years, China has insisted on a "dynamic zero" policy to protect people's property security, and has had to restrict mobility or close down at the expense of college students, who have had to resort to In addition, China has insisted on a "dynamic clearing" policy to protect people's property security in the past three years, and has had to restrict mobility or close at the expense of college students who have had to find jobs by "cloud job search" Wang et al (2021) or defer employment (Heng, 2021).

Conclusion

This study is the first discursive study on employment anxiety among college students during COVID-19. Studies related to employment anxiety among college students since the outbreak of the self-pandemic were collected comprehensively in this systematic evaluation to more comprehensively assess the extent and influencing factors of employment anxiety among college students since the COVID-19 outbreak and to analyze coping mechanisms to alleviate employment anxiety. This can provide a reference for the development of prevention and intervention plans to reduce employment anxiety among college students during the COVID-19 period. Alleviating employment anxiety not only keeps college students' mental health in a good state, but also allows them to focus on their current studies and lives, on their academic development and development of employability skills, thus providing them with a positive influence on their future career trajectories.

This study shows that the level of employment anxiety among college students increased significantly during the COVID-19 period. It was more pronounced among female, medical, and teacher training students. This study recommends that families, universities, society, and the government take a series of effective measures to help alleviate the employment anxiety of college students. The society and the government should increase the training and requirements for mental health workers so that they can take measures to enhance the training of college students in various psychological qualities. Universities should invest more in career planning for students. In addition, families and teachers, who are the main sources of social support for college students, should develop targeted support systems for college students to ensure that they are provided with employment advice as well as better mental health assistance.

Generalising findings of the reviewed literature: 'warn' readers that the literature included in this review were studies done in Asian countries despite the research of internationally recognized databases. Findings may not represent the issue in other parts of the world.

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