

The Relationship between Family Social Capital and College Students' Labor Competence: The Moderating Role of Core Self-Evaluation

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Abstract: Family is an important field for the formation of labor literacy among college students, but whether family resources can be transformed into labor literacy also depends on the individual's own psychological conditions. Based on 553 college student questionnaire data, this article distinguishes family social capital into internal relationship capital and external network capital, introduces core self-evaluation as the moderating variable, and uses correlation analysis and hierarchical regression to test its moderating effect. The results indicate that family social capital significantly and positively predicts various dimensions of labor literacy. The moderating effect of core self-evaluation is not significant in the dimensions of labor knowledge, labor attitude, and labor values, but is significant in the dimensions of labor skills and labor behavior, with the strongest moderating effect in the dimension of labor behavior. The simple slope test further shows that in the low core self-evaluation group, the predictive effect of family social capital on labor behavior is no longer significant. Family social capital has a stable direct transmission effect on labor concepts, while relying on the transformation of core self-evaluation for labor skills and behavior. College labor education should shift from unified supply to differentiated psychological support, helping students with low core self-evaluation to open up channels for the transformation of family resources into labor actions.

Keywords: family social capital; College students' labor literacy; Core self-evaluation; Regulatory effect; Labor education

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1. Introduction

The "Opinions on Strengthening Labor Education in Primary, Secondary, and Tertiary Schools in the New Era" issued in 2020 established labor literacy as the goal orientation of labor education, and clearly stated that "labor education is an important part of the education system of socialism with Chinese characteristics, directly determining the labor spirit, labor value orientation, and labor skill level of socialist builders and successors"^[1]. As the focus of labor education evaluation shifts from course supply and activity quantity

to the actual development of student literacy, the structural imbalance of college students' labor literacy gradually becomes apparent: labor attitude and labor values scores are generally high, while labor skills and labor behavior are relatively weak. The insufficient transformation of conceptual identity into practical ability has become an urgent issue that needs to be addressed in improving the quality and efficiency of labor education in universities.

Family is an important entry point for understanding the above gap, but whether family resources can be transformed into labor literacy also depends on the individual's own psychological conditions. Compared with economic capital and cultural capital, family social capital is embedded in parent-child relationships and external family networks, and can only be transformed into individual usable resources through continuous interaction and resource mobilization. This article uses core self-evaluation as the moderating variable and examines the path of the influence of family social capital on labor literacy based on 553 college student questionnaire data. The focus is on examining the differences in moderating effects in five dimensions: labor knowledge, labor attitude, labor values, labor skills, and labor behavior, in order to reveal the psychological conditions for the transformation of family resources into labor literacy.

2. Definition of core concepts and research hypotheses

2.1. Family Social Capital: Internal Relationship Capital and External Network Capital

The family has a prior role in the formation of labor literacy. Before the intervention of school labor education, individuals had already formed a preliminary understanding of the meaning, division of labor, and labor norms in their family life^[2]. The early formed labor habits formed an important foundation for subsequent school labor education and social labor education. The primacy of the family is not only reflected in the "early" time, but also in the initial conditions it sets for school labor education: what kind of labor experience and value orientation students bring to university directly affects the degree to which subsequent educational interventions can be accepted and internalized.

Family capital does not function in a single form. Economic capital is manifested as disposable material resources, cultural capital is manifested as education, knowledge, taste, and symbolic abilities, and social capital is embedded in relational networks and must be mobilized through trust, reciprocity, and sustained interaction. The effectiveness of family social capital, therefore, depends not only on the size of the network, but also on the quality of relationships and their degree of openness. Even if parents have extensive social interactions, without substantive communication and shared practice with their children, their online resources may not necessarily be transformed into labor information and opportunities that their children can perceive and utilize.

Based on this, this article distinguishes family social capital into internal relationship capital and external network capital. Internal relational capital refers to the quality of connections between family members, including the frequency and depth of parent-child interactions, intergenerational trust, the degree of parental involvement in their children's lives and studies, and labor norms within the family. External network capital refers to the radius of relationships that extend outward from the family, including the size and heterogeneity of the parents' social network, as well as the ability of this network to provide labor information, practical situations, and development opportunities. The former focuses on labor demonstration, emotional support, and internalization of norms, while the latter emphasizes information acquisition, situational entry, and

opportunity linkage. The two together form the foundation of the relationship between family influence and college students' labor literacy.

2.2. The Conceptual and Action Levels of Labor Literacy

Treating labor literacy as a homogeneous whole can easily obscure its internal structural differences. Existing research usually operationalizes the labor literacy of college students into five dimensions: labor knowledge, labor attitude, labor values, labor skills, and labor behavior. Studies have shown that the overall labor literacy of college students is close to a good level, but there are obvious shortcomings in labor skills and labor behavior, and the literacy structure of different groups also varies^[3]. Higher recognition at the conceptual level does not necessarily mean synchronous improvement at the action level. The formation of labor literacy may have an unbalanced mechanism of concept first and action later.

Conceptual literacy can be conveyed through value interpretation, exemplary demonstration, and normative evaluation, and students' understanding of the meaning of labor may not necessarily be based on personal practice. Action-level literacy varies. Labor skills need to be formed through repeated operations, while labor behavior needs to stabilize through continuous investment. Individuals usually need to first assess their ability to perform the task before deciding whether to invest, how to persist, and whether to continue after setbacks. Labor knowledge lies between concepts and actions, including principles, policies, and methods that can be taught in the classroom, as well as empirical knowledge that can only be accumulated in practice.

This article defines labor attitude and labor values as the conceptual layer, labor skills and labor behavior as the action layer, and labor knowledge as the transitional dimension connecting concepts and actions. The following text examines the moderating strength of core self-evaluation in different dimensions and uses this as the basis for analysis.

2.3. The regulatory positioning and research hypothesis of core self-evaluation

Whether family resources can be transformed into labor literacy depends not only on the amount of resources themselves, but also on whether individuals have the psychological conditions to identify, absorb, and put external resources into action. The core self-evaluation characterizes the psychological conditions that individuals possess in resource identification and action transformation. Scholars who defined the concept earlier believed that "core self-evaluation is a comprehensive and comprehensive assessment of an individual's self, as well as their primary cognition of their material possessions, status, values, etc." ^[4]. It includes four basic traits: self-esteem, general self-efficacy, locus of control, and emotional stability, but is often used as a single overall variable in empirical measurements. Unlike efficacy judgments that focus on specific contexts, core self-evaluation is a cross-situational, relatively stable personality tendency that individuals carry into various scenarios of family interaction, school education, and social practice.

The theory of resource conservation provides an appropriate framework for understanding the role of core self-evaluation. This theory suggests that when individuals acquire and protect the resources they value, macro-level factors such as social comparison can generate pressure and threat, which in turn deplete their core self-evaluation—a precious personal psychological resource^[5]. The above statement, although proposed in a stressful situation, reveals the general attribute of core self-evaluation as an individual psychological resource: it can be depleted by external pressure and can also amplify under conditions of abundant resources.

Family social capital belongs to structural resources embedded in relational networks, while core self-evaluation belongs to psychological resources stable within individuals. The two have different properties and transformation logics. Whether an individual possesses a high level of core self-evaluation determines whether they can recognize the information, opportunities, and support provided by their family as resources that can be called upon, and based on this, engage in continuous skill training and behavioral investment.

The interaction between two types of resources should show differences in different dimensions of labor literacy. Labor attitudes and values can be directly transmitted through observation, evaluation, and emotional identification in daily family interactions, and the transmission process relies less on individuals' judgment of their own abilities. Therefore, the moderating effect of core self-evaluation is relatively limited. Labor skills and labor behavior are different. Whether practice can be initiated and sustained largely depends on whether individuals believe they are capable and willing to endure setbacks in the process. To transform family resources into these two types of literacy, they must first undergo the test of core self-evaluation.

Core self-evaluation is a holistic judgment formed by the convergence of multiple personality tendencies. Some studies have pointed out that "core self-evaluation includes four basic traits: self-esteem, general self-efficacy, etc." ^[6], which are usually integrated into a single total score in empirical measurements. Core self-evaluation scales also commonly use a single-dimensional overall scoring method. Based on this, this article includes core self-evaluation as a global variable in the moderation effect test, and no longer divides it into four sub-dimensions.

Based on this, the following hypotheses are proposed: H1: Family social capital has a positive impact on college students' labor literacy; H2: Core self-evaluation plays a moderating role between family social capital and labor literacy; H3: There are differences in the intensity of moderation effects among various dimensions of labor literacy, and the moderation effect at the action level (labor skills, labor behavior) is significantly stronger than that at the conceptual level (labor attitude, labor values).

3. Research Design and Empirical Testing

3.1. Data source and variable measurement

This study used 553 college student questionnaire data as the analysis sample, including 237 urban students and 316 rural students. Develop a family social capital scale based on conceptual definition, consisting of 9 items and scored on 5 points. Five questions on internal relationship capital, measuring the frequency and depth of parent-child communication, the degree of negotiation when encountering problems, parents' understanding of their children's daily situations, family labor division agreements, and intergenerational trust; four questions on external network capital, measuring the scope of parents' social interaction, the number of relatives and friends who can provide labor practice opportunities, the industry and employment information available to the family, and the level of community participation. Each scale is scored based on the average score of each item, with higher scores indicating higher corresponding levels.

The Core Self-Evaluation Scale consists of 10 questions and adopts a 5-point scoring system with a single-dimensional structure. It includes reverse scoring questions, and the higher the score, the more positive the individual's evaluation of themselves. The Labor Literacy Scale consists of 54 questions, scored on a 5-point scale, including 12 questions on labor knowledge, 11 questions on labor attitude, 10 questions on labor values, 10 questions on labor skills, and 11 questions on labor behavior. Control variables include gender, place of origin, being an only child, and grade level. The data analysis includes reliability test,

Harman single factor test, descriptive statistics and correlation analysis, stratified regression analysis, and simple slope test.

3.2. Reliability test and common method deviation

Firstly, internal consistency tests were conducted on the scales of family social capital, core self-evaluation, and labor literacy, and the results are shown in **Table 1**.

Table 1. Reliability test results of each scale

Scale	Number of items	Cronbach's α
Family Social Capital (total)	9	0.83
Internal Relational Capital	5	0.81
External Network Capital	4	0.79
Core Self-Evaluation	10	0.82
Labor Competency (total)	54	0.93
Labor Knowledge	12	0.81
Labor Attitude	11	0.86
Labor Values	10	0.84
Labor Skills	10	0.79
Labor Behavior	11	0.78

The Cronbach's alpha coefficients of each subscale are all above 0.78, with a total household social capital scale of 0.83, a core self-evaluation scale of 0.82, and a total labor literacy scale of 0.93. The measurement tools have good internal consistency. The Harman single-factor method was used to test for common method bias, and a non-rotated exploratory factor analysis was conducted on all 73 items. A total of 9 factors with eigenvalues greater than 1 were extracted, and the first factor explained 19.8% of the variance, which is below the empirical judgment standard of 40%. There is no serious common method bias in this study.

3.3. Descriptive statistics and correlation analysis

The mean, standard deviation, and correlation coefficient of each variable are shown in **Table 2**.

Table 2. describes the statistics and correlation matrix (N = 553)

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1 Internal Relational Capital	4.04	0.55	—						
2 External Network Capital	3.56	0.60	0.410	—					
3 Core Self-Evaluation	3.63	0.54	0.165	0.155	—				
4 Labor Knowledge	3.94	0.51	0.363	0.392	0.332	—			
5 Labor Attitude	4.25	0.46	0.489	0.409	0.366	0.286	—		
6 Labor Values	4.34	0.43	0.443	0.390	0.226	0.201	0.319	—	
7 Labor Skills	3.80	0.57	0.272	0.277	0.433	0.241	0.267	0.211	—
8 Labor Behaviors	3.64	0.61	0.256	0.228	0.400	0.218	0.303	0.175	0.282

Note: All correlation coefficients are significant at the 0.01 level.

The average values of various dimensions of labor literacy show a structure of high concepts and low

actions: labor values are the highest ($M = 4.34$), followed by labor attitudes ($M = 4.25$), and labor behavior is the lowest ($M = 3.64$). Further analysis shows that the correlation between family social capital and labor attitudes and values is higher than its correlation with labor skills and behavior. The correlation between core self-evaluation and labor skills ($r = 0.433$) and labor behavior ($r = 0.400$) is relatively high, while the correlation with labor values ($r = 0.226$) is the lowest. The correlation patterns between the two variables show a cross distribution, indicating that the contribution of family social capital and core self-evaluation to conceptual and action level literacy is not the same.

3.4. Adjustment effect test

After controlling for gender, place of origin, only child status, and grade level, centralization was applied to family social capital and core self-evaluation, and their interaction terms were constructed. Hierarchical regression was used to sequentially test the moderating effects on each dimension, and the results are shown in **Table 3**.

Table 3. Hierarchical Regression Results of the Moderation Effect of Core Self-Evaluation

Dimension	R ² (Step 1)	R ² (Step 2)	ΔR^2	Family capital β	Core self-evaluation β	Interaction β	Interaction p
Labor knowledge	0.269	0.269	0.000	0.402	0.254	-0.008	0.834
Labor attitude	0.364	0.366	0.002	0.478	0.279	-0.045	0.193
Labor values	0.270	0.270	0.000	0.467	0.140	-0.009	0.804
Labor skills	0.252	0.272	0.020	0.264	0.377	0.140***	0.000
Labor behavior	0.208	0.271	0.063	0.234	0.355	0.252***	0.000

Note: The first step is to include the main effect, and the second step is to add an interaction term; Family social capital, core self-evaluation, and interaction coefficient are all standardized regression coefficients; *** $p < 0.001$.

On the dimensions of labor knowledge, labor attitude, and labor values, the coefficients of the interaction term did not reach a significant level (p -values of 0.834, 0.193, and 0.804, respectively), and the ΔR^2 after adding the interaction term was close to zero. Core self-evaluation did not have a significant moderating effect on these three dimensions. On the dimension of labor skills, the coefficient of the interaction term is 0.140 ($p < 0.001$), and ΔR^2 is 0.020. On the dimension of labor behavior, the coefficient of interaction term is 0.252 ($p < 0.001$), and the ΔR^2 is 0.063, indicating a significant increase in explanatory power compared to the dimension of labor skills. The regulatory effect increases from the conceptual level to the action level, and H3 is supported.

Further, the mean of core self-evaluation was divided into high and low groups by adding or subtracting one standard deviation, and a simple slope test was performed. The results are shown in **Table 4**.

Table 4. Results of Simple Slope Test

Dimension	High-group β	p	Low-group β	p
Labor skills	0.479***	< 0.001	0.149*	0.014
Labor behavior	0.616***	< 0.001	-0.019	0.774 (not significant)

Note: *** $p < 0.001$, * $p < 0.05$.

In the dimension of labor skills, the predictive effect of family social capital on the high core self-

evaluation group ($\beta = 0.479, p < 0.001$) is significantly stronger than that of the low core self-evaluation group ($\beta = 0.149, p = 0.014$), and both groups have reached a significant level of predictive effect, with an enhanced moderating effect. On the dimension of labor behavior, the predictive effect of family social capital on the high core self-evaluation group is also significant ($\beta = 0.616, p < 0.001$), while in the low core self-evaluation group, the predictive effect of family social capital is no longer significant ($\beta = -0.019, p = 0.774$). The main effects of family social capital on various dimensions of labor literacy are significantly positive, and H1 is supported. The moderating effect of core self-evaluation on labor skills and labor behavior dimensions is significant, and H2 is supported.

4. Regulation mechanism and its practical implications

4.1. Transformation and differentiation of high and low core self-evaluation groups

The moderation effect rises from a level close to zero in the conceptual dimension to 0.063 in the labor behavior dimension. This gradient should not be attributed to measurement errors, but should be understood as differences in the generation mechanisms of different literacy dimensions. Family social capital has a direct effect on maintaining stable labor attitudes and values, and labor concepts can be directly transmitted through parent-child interaction, family evaluation, and daily demonstrations. Children can gradually form corresponding labor tendencies by observing how their parents take on household chores, evaluate laborers, and discuss professional dignity, with less reliance on judging their own abilities.

The formation of action-level literacy requires the transformation of resources into action. Labor skills rely on continuous practice, and whether practice can be initiated and persisted depends on whether an individual believes they can complete the task. Labor behavior requires stable investment in the face of setbacks and setbacks, which places higher demands on core self-evaluation. In the low core self-evaluation group, the predictive effect of family social capital on labor behavior is no longer significant. Even if these students have relatively abundant family resources, it is difficult to transform them into sustained labor actions. They are more likely to doubt their own abilities when facing difficulties, and thus interrupt their attempts. As a result, the information and opportunities provided by their families remain at the level of external conditions and fail to enter into actual behavioral investment.

The above findings have direct implications for labor education in universities. The scores for labor attitude and labor values are relatively high, and the marginal effect of simply increasing value propaganda is limited. The shortcomings in labor skills and labor behavior need to be addressed by enhancing students' sense of competence. Educational practice should provide more low-threshold successful experiences for students with low core self-evaluation, so that they can gradually accumulate confidence in their own abilities in the process of completing specific tasks, and thus open up the channel for the transformation of family resources into labor actions.

4.2. Functional division of labor between two types of social capital

Internal relationship capital and external network capital serve different functions within family social capital. Internal relational capital depends on the density and feedback quality of parent-child interactions, while external network capital depends on the breadth and accessibility of parental social networks. The correlation between the two types of capital and labor attitudes and values is higher than their correlation with labor skills and behavior. Regardless of the type of family social capital, the transmission of conceptual

literacy is relatively direct, while the transmission of action literacy relies more on the transformation of core self-evaluation.

The impact of family social capital on behavioral differentiation is also constrained by cognitive processing. Research has found that family social class can influence college students' employment choices through cognitive mechanisms such as social dominance tendencies^[7]. Resource differences can only be transformed into behavioral differentiation through individual cognitive processing. The results of this article are consistent with the above judgment: the differences in family social capital itself do not directly determine the differences in labor behavior, and the level of core self-evaluation is the key link in the transformation chain. If educational intervention only focuses on expanding the supply of family resources and neglects the cultivation of individual psychological conditions, the effect may be limited.

Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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