

# IMPACT OF CAREER SOCIAL SUPPORT ON EMPLOYABILITY AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN SHANDONG, CHINA

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**Abstract:** *This study investigates the impact of career social support including encouragement from family, friends, and teachers, helps with career decision-making, reduces anxiety about the future and builds confidence through guidance. Employability including ability to secure and retain employment involves skills, attitude, and adaptability, influenced by education and experience and essential for career success. The study utilised a quantitative methodology, employing a structured survey administered to 100 university students in Shandong province. Descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and multiple regression are used to identify how career social support affects employability outcomes. The correlation results showed that there is a moderate positive correlation ( $r = 0.487$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ) between career social support and employability among university students. This indicates that students who receive greater support from family, peers, and educators are likely to view themselves as more employable. Also, regression analysis shows that career social support accounts for 23.7% of the difference in employability ( $R^2 = 0.237$ ), with an adjusted  $R^2$  of 0.229 and a standard error of 0.278. This means that social support is a useful way to predict employability outcomes. The study emphasises the necessity of integrating career support systems into higher education to enhance graduates' employability. Family, friends, and teachers all help students feel more confident about getting and keeping a job. These findings underscore the necessity for universities to establish organised and supportive environments that foster student adaptability, self-confidence, and career preparedness. These findings enhance the literature on educational leadership and provide pragmatic guidance for policymakers and university administrators.*

**Keywords:** *Career Social Support, Employability, University Students*

## Introduction

In today's global competitive job market, employability takes care of the interest of university students as they prepare to graduate and move from education to employment. One of the factors affecting employability, career social support, that is the resources supplied by family members, peers, teachers and school to promote students' career development, is of those that are significantly shaping their readiness and success in careers. It is important to study the relationship between career social support and employability due to its implication that universities, families, and policy-making organisations would better prepare graduates for work. Research found that the social support network is a strong predictor of students' career adaptability, job acquiring skills, and their overall employability outcome (Jiang et al., 2024; Antonio & Chiesa, 2024). In addition, perceived social support also predicts career adaptability, career decision-making self-efficacy and resilience which are all predictors of employability (Lubis, 2024; Cho & Cho, 2023). The study targets university students who are considered one of most fragile categories in the transition process to work. Career services offering assistance is present; however, impacts on enhancing employability are not equal across gender, type of university or discipline in Shandong, China (Xia et al., 2020).

Notwithstanding greater awareness of the importance of social support in career development, there is still little empirical evidence explaining what differentiated effects each source of support may have on aspects of employability (Veronika, 2023). Furthermore, demographic and institutional characteristic variables such as gender, type of university and field of study are also left relatively unexamined, despite evidences regarding the effect of these factors both on social support level (Cho & Cho, 2023) and career outcomes (Abdullah & Roslan, 2021).

There are five objectives for this study. (i) To identify the level of career social support perceived by university students. (ii) To determine the level of perceived employability among university students. (iii) To examine the relationship between career social support and employability among university students. (iv) To analyze the influence of different sources of support on specific dimensions of employability and (v) To investigate whether gender, university type, or field of study significantly affect levels of career social support and employability.

## Literature Review

### Career Social Support

The role of career social support tests differences in the mediating role of appraisal. The literature on career development emphasizes the importance of family, friend, and educator encouragement as providing essential assistance to university students as they make their decisions about careers. The importance is the issue of employability defined as providing a graduate with the skills, attitudes and flexibility to gain and sustain employment. The association between these two constructs is commonly considered through Career Construction Theory and it stresses the role of social and personality resources in career results. The studies have been conducted recently which confirmed that career-related support is positively associated with the employability, since supportive networks seem to buffer student from career demands and can therefore enrich job readiness.

Career social support has been shown to be beneficial for assisting university students to adjust and thrive in their career development. Family, teachers, friends provide both emotional support as well as practical advice or stability during times of career indeterminacy. This support would

help in effective career decision-making by students, giving them the self-assurance and information necessary to assess their situation and make an educated choice (Xia et al., 2020). Studies show that this kind of support can effectively decrease anxiety on the future, especially in facing education to work transition (Lubis, 2024). Moreover, the support given to students by someone whom they trust enhances their confidence as well as their personal belief in his ability and guidance according to what is targeted (Cho & Cho, 2023; Abdullah & Roslan, 2021). Together, these results provide support for the need of building strong social support to improve students' career readiness and psychosocial welfare.

### **Employability**

Employability is an individual's ability to gain and retain employment, though gainful employment is the term used in various institutes of higher education. Employability typically depends on the ability to secure subsequent job offers and maintain employment by developing a high degree of professional expertise. It includes not just a good formal education, but also a mix of soft skills, positive attitudes and being willing to adjust as job market demands evolve. These characteristics empower the fresh graduates to meet the changes of employers and employment (Jiang et al., 2024). The educational and occupational experience, notably internships and commitment to extracurricular activities are particularly important for the development of employability skills' (Antonio & Chiesa, 2024). With employers valuing transferable skills and flexibility rather than academic performance alone, employability becomes the key to durable career success in today's fast-paced labor market.

### **Related Theory for Career Social Support on Employability**

The study is theoretically based on Career Construction Theory (CCT) which constitutes a useful frame that explains how individuals can influence in an active way in their career development through internal and external systems. Founded by Savickas, CCT holds that career adaptability a psychosocial construct comprising concern, control, curiosity and confidence is crucial when navigating transition in the world of work. Support that comes from family, peers, and instructors increases these adaptability resources and leads to an increased capacity of employability (Alvita & Erlin, 2025; Lubis, 2024). In the context of this study, CCT is used to investigate how different career social support sources influence different dimensions of employability, that is skills, attitudes and adaptability. It would also be helpful to explore how demographic variables, such as sex, type of university and field of study, maybe combined with social support to predict students' career outcomes. By adopting the CCT, this research seeks to gain insights into how social support helps work ready and successful university students.

### **Previous Research Relationship between Career Social Support on**

#### **Employability**

Research evidence indicates that career social support has a significant impact on the enhancement of employability through self-confidence, adaptability and good decision-making abilities. Emotional and practical resources are derived from family, peers and mentors who cushion students towards the future challenges.

### **Perceived Level of Career Social Support Among University Students**

The role of perceived social support in influencing academic and career outcomes for students has been well-documented. For example, support from family, school and government of university students is negatively related to their passive wish to change major through flow

fostering mental states, self-efficacy promotion and improvement of cognition on major sectors (Wang et al., 2025). Similarly, in Shandong, students with secure attachment and higher level of self-differentiation reported more social support, and it was positively associated with decision-making confidence (Wang & Liu, 2025). The results of research on student well-being have also evidenced that the relationship between social support and psychological resilience is significantly positive, students receiving support are more likely to effectively cope with academic- and career-related challenges (Yuan et al., 2024).

### **Perceived Level of Employability Among University Students**

A study in Shandong Province was conducted to assess the perception of employability among university students, due largely to competitive nature of job markets and economic requirements. In research on international trade students, curriculum relevance to the market and industry connection enhances confidence and job readiness for future graduates (Zhang, 2024). Another example is that, based on a local case study, many graduates were considered to have low perceived employability due to inadequacies in tertiary curricula and job-related skill demand mismatches and warned about the importance of early career advice and skills formation (Yuan et al., 2022). In addition, studies of human resources development demonstrated that training programs contributed to people's employability, which implies tailored education and mentoring would be productive means for equipping students with future-oriented careers (Wang & Jiang, 2024).

### **Relationship Between Career Social Support and Employability Among University Students**

With emerging social support at career, the relationship between it and employability among Chinese university students has been increasingly explored. A three-university study noted that secure attachment and strong social support network enhanced students' self-efficacy and effectiveness regarding career decision-making, which is one of employability (Wang & Liu, 2025). Further examination of student wellness found that social support positively affected self-efficacy and psychological hardiness, which in turn indirectly contributed to adaptability and job search confidence (Yuan et al., 2024). Likewise, national research involving Shandong university students indicated the role of social support in the development of career adaptability and self-differentiation, two important psychology resources during labor market transition (Yang & Ye, 2025). The lessons from all of these studies taken together is that a supportive school and family environment contribute to the development of self-confidence, flexibility, and the kind of judgment skills that are important in job success.

The influence of different sources of support on specific dimensions of employability has been widely explored in existing studies. The effects of teacher support, family support, and peer support on student adjustment. The results indicate that teacher support had a stronger association with academic outcomes, whereas family support influenced emotional well-being and motivation all associated with resilience, self-esteem, decision-making abilities, which are all key for employability (Zhang, 2024). One Shandong study demonstrated that various sources of support related to different psychological attributes for employability: teachers promoted curiosity and planning, peers' confidence and coping but parental support had almost no influence on career maturity (Cho & Cho, 2023). Additional research evidenced also that school support had more profound effects than family support especially in the development of adaptability, problem-solving and self-efficacy, characteristics which are fundamental for employability (Yuan et al., 2024).

Gender, university type, or field of study significantly affect levels of career social support and employability. Recent studies in Shandong province illustrate that gender, university type and discipline have a pronounced influence on perceived social support and employability. Female students perceived having more than enough social support and self-efficacy, thereby enabling female students to exhibit higher adaptability and confidence in career decision-making than male students, including those majoring in science and engineering (Yue et al., 2024). University type matters: students from public or higher-ranked institutions reported stronger perceived employability, in part because of the provision of mentoring programs and career services accessibility (Niu et al., 2024). The field of study also affected the outcomes: students in humanities and social sciences had much more social support and adaptability than those who were technically oriented. Also, graduates of leading schools or programs focused on management had shorter job searches, while gender gaps in pay and opportunities lingered. Together, these results emphasise that employability interventions should be context specific for demographic and institutional.

### Methodology

The current research adopted quantitative method as recommended by Creswell and Creswell (2018), which is appropriate to investigate the relationships among variables that can be described numerically with statistical test. A structured questionnaire was developed and administered to 100 university students from Shandong Province, China. The survey consisted of standardised items for measuring the level of career social support and employability perceived in various aspects, including adaptability, confidence, and job readiness. Descriptive statistics were conducted to summarize participants' responses and the relationship between career social support and employability after correlational analysis was made. In a final step toward examining predictive relationships, multiple regression analysis was undertaken to assess the roles that various forms of social support played in employability outcomes. This approach is consistent with Creswell and Creswell (2018), who urge using statistical procedures to examine hypotheses and explain the degree of this focus on statistical analyses to test hypotheses, as well as to account for how strong or weak the relationship among variables is in social science research.

The content and face validity of Career social support, employability scale was initially determined through expert judgments and appropriate statistical methods. A group of six experts in HR, OB, and employability reviewed the items for their appropriateness, readability, and relevancy. Item-level Content Validity Index (CVI) scores of all items were in the range of 0.83 to 1.00, indicating very good content validity. A pilot study was conducted with 100 students to test reliability. On the other hand, Cronbach's alpha of Career Social Support was 0.973 and that of Employability (Cronbach alpha = 0.973), reflecting excellent internal consistency. The corrected item-total correlations for both constructs ranged between 0.46 and 0.69, which are substantially higher than the recommended cut-off point of 0.30, according to Streiner et al. These findings support the validity and reliability of the measure in assessing the relationship between social support and employability-related outcomes.

### Results and Discussions

This section presents the findings on demographic, university students' perceptions of career social support, perceived employability among university students, relationship between career social support and employability. The results are analyzed using descriptive, correlations, regression and interpreted in light of previous research to highlight the significance of social support in students' employability.

### Demographic

Information on the demographic of informants is crucial for interpreting findings from the study. Table 1 provides an overview of the university students' gender, type of university, and field of study.

**Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents**

|                    |            | Respondents (N) | Percent (%) |
|--------------------|------------|-----------------|-------------|
| Gender             | Male       | 45              | 45%         |
|                    | Female     | 55              | 55%         |
| Type of University | Public     | 46              | 46%         |
|                    | Private    | 54              | 54%         |
| Field of Study     | Business   | 34              | 34%         |
|                    | Management | 32              | 32%         |
|                    | Economic   | 34              | 34%         |

Table 1 showed the demographic characteristics of the 100 university students included in this study. With respect to gender, subjects included in the sample were 45% male ( $n = 45$ ) and 55% female ( $n = 55$ ), with a slightly higher percentage of female participants. The nature of university attended was reported with 54% ( $n = 54$ ) attending a public and private universities each; indicating an even distribution between the two institution types. As a field of study, students were almost equally distributed into the three academic fields; 34% ( $n = 34$ ) from Business, 32% ( $n = 32$ ) from Management and another 34% ( $n = 34$ ) from Economics. This balanced perspective can be expected to yield a variety of academic backgrounds in the examination of career social support and employability.

### The Level of Career Social Support Perceived by University Students

The significance of Career Social Support (CSS) for students Cannot be overemphasized in their career development as a result of support in terms of encouragement, advise and emotional assurance. Table 2 presents the perception of students on four types of support that has assisted in measuring how much students feel they are supported by family, friends and teachers.

**Table 2: University students' Perceptions of Career Social Support**

| Career Social Support                            | Mean (M) | Std. Deviation (SD) |
|--|----------|---------------------|
| Encouragement from family, friends, and teachers | 3.680    | 0.721               |
| Helps with career decision-making                | 3.610    | 0.685               |
| Reduces anxiety about the future                 | 3.590    | 0.702               |
| Builds confidence through guidance               | 3.660    | 0.698               |
| Average  | 3.636    | 0.702               |

Table 2 shows the descriptive statistics of university students' career social support perception in accordance with four major subscales. For this list of items, the mean scores ranged from feeling "Encouragement from family, friends and teachers" ( $M = 3.680$ ,  $SD = 0.721$ ) to receive little support to go after their career goals with these numbers suggesting that students generally feel well supported by close educational and social relations when it comes to reaching for career goals were concerned. A close second was "Builds confidence through guidance " ( $M = 3.660$ ,  $SD = 0.698$ ), indicating that the support on this construct is very important to their career self-confidence. The "Helps with career decision-making" ( $M = 3.610$ ,  $SD = 0.685$ ) and "Reduces anxiety about the future" ( $M = 3.590$ ,  $SD = 0.702$ ) dimensions also both received

moderate-high scores—demonstrating that students may regard career support helpful in reducing their uncertainties and making informed decisions as well. The mean and standard deviation were 3.636 (0.702) for the overall average career social support, suggesting a positive perception of career-related social support among university students in Shandong province as a whole. The small standard deviations for all items show stable answers throughout the sample.

These findings align with previous research. For example, support from family and institutions reduces students' passive desire to change majors by fostering self-efficacy (Wang et al., 2025). Students with secure attachments also report more support and greater decision-making confidence (Wang & Liu, 2025). Moreover, social support enhances psychological resilience, helping students cope with academic and career stress (Yuan et al., 2024).

### The Level of Perceived Employability among University Students

Perceived employability refers to students' belief in their capability of obtaining and maintaining a job after graduation. Table 3 shows a summary of students' self-assessment along key dimensions with respect to employability and include statements about how ready do they believe, at the end of their studies, for the labor market.

**Table 3: University students' Perceptions of Employability**

| Employability                               | Mean (M) | Std. Deviation (SD) |
|---|----------|---------------------|
| Ability to secure and retain employment     | 3.410    | 0.684               |
| Involves skills, attitude, and adaptability | 3.470    | 0.701               |
| Influenced by education and experience      | 3.380    | 0.667               |
| Essential for career success                | 3.425    | 0.695               |
| Average                                     | 3.421    | 0.687               |

Table 3 Descriptive statistics for the university students' perceptions of employability by the four principal dimensions. The item with the highest mean was "Involves skills, attitude and adaptability" (M = 3.470, SD = 0.701), which anew reinforces that students are connected the employability concept to personal attributes and soft skills. "Essential for career success" (M = 3.425, SD =0.695) and "Ability to secure and retain employment" (M = 3.410, SD=0.684), followed this with Indicating a common belief that employability is critical in realizing long-term goals about a career security. "For being influenced by study and experience" yielded the lowest mean score (M = 3.380, SD = 0.667), which is still relatively high, indicating that students do believe in the importance of academic background and practical experience; however, this factor seemed less to be effective than personal characteristics and attitudes. Total mean employability was measured as 3.421 and standard deviation was calculated between 0.687 which suggested moderately positive perception regarding employability among the respondents and similar type of sample response across the population.

Students also reported a moderately positive perception of employability, with the highest agreement on employability involving skills, adaptability, and attitude. This aligns with the CCT framework, which argues that employability is not only based on qualifications but also on how individuals adapt and respond to changing work environments. Prior studies in Shandong have shown that students who engage in career development programs or gain work-integrated learning experiences tend to develop stronger perceptions of their employability (Zhang, 2024; Yuan et al., 2022). However, the lower ratings for influenced by education and experience suggest a possible gap between university curriculum and perceived job market

requirements, echoing past findings that call for more applied, skills-based learning environments.

### The Relationship between Career Social Support and Employability among University Students

Understanding the relationship between career social support and employability can provide insights into the mechanisms by which social support and guidance affect students' readiness for the job market. The correlation between these two variables is summarized in Table 4, showing how strong and what direction their relationship manifests.

**Table 4: Correlation University Students' Perceptions of Career Social Support on Employability**

|                       | Career Social Support | Employability |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|---------------|
| Career Social Support | 1.000                 | 0.487         |
| Sig. (2-tailed)       | —                     | 0.001         |
| Employability         | 0.487                 | 1.000         |
| Sig. (2-tailed)       | 0.001                 | —             |

Table 4 showed the Pearson correlation analysis of perceptions of career social support and employability by undergraduates. The two variables are moderately positively correlated ( $r = 0.487$ ) and this relationship is statistically significant with  $p < 0.001$ . Presumably the more and better career-related social support, students receive the employees they see themselves in that field with regard to employability. In other words, more family, friend and school support has been found to be related with higher perceived confidence of finding a job and/or doing well at the workplace. The  $p < 0.01$  on level of significance indicates that this correlation cannot be attributed to chance, supporting the study's hypothesis that career social support has a positive effect on employability.

A moderate positive relationship was found between career social support overall and employability, meaning the more mentoring and advice students receive from others the more they see themselves as employable. The finding strongly supports CCT, wherein social support enhances career adaptability resources specifically confidence and control which then affects perceived employability. Studies conducted on Shandong university students also explained the above phenomenon, and social support could directly predict CSME and job readiness (Wang & Liu, 2025; Yang & Ye, 2025). These results support the claim that employability is not only functional related to technical competence, but also emotional and social capital, which are developed through supportive networks.

### The Influence of Different Sources of Support on Specific Dimensions of Employability

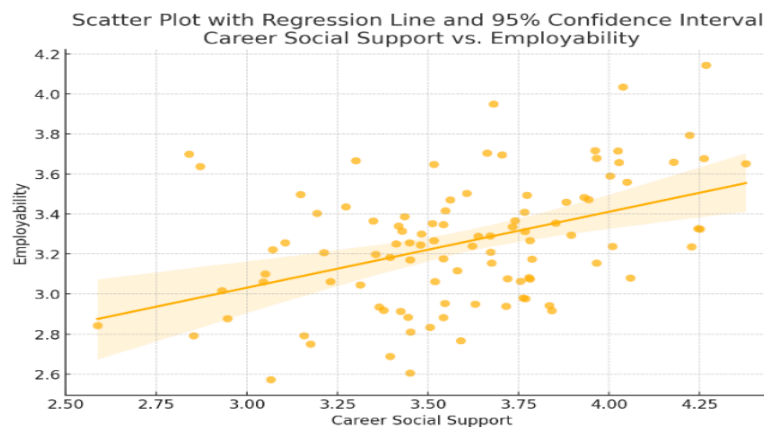
Career social support can affect a broader range of employability areas like work readiness, adaptability, and positive self-image. The regression analysis of the support from family, friends and educators predicting overall employability among university students is shown in table 5.

**Table 5: Model Summary of Regression: Relative Contribution of Career Social Support to Employability**

| <b>Model Summary of Regression</b> |       |          |                   |                            |
|------------------------------------|-------|----------|-------------------|----------------------------|
| Model                              | R     | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate |
| 1                                  | 0.487 | 0.237    | 0.229             | 0.278                      |

Table 5 shows the result of a simple linear regression analysis for career social support as predictor of employability among university students. The model has a good empirical fit: the correlation coefficient (R) is 0.487 and demonstrates moderate positive relation between Cronbach's alpha and coefficients of variation. The R Square ( $R^2$ ) is 0.237, indicating that career social support explains 23.7% of the variance in employability. The  $R^2_{adj}$  of 0.229 demonstrates that the model does not have a worse fit after correcting for sample size and number of predictors. The standard error of the estimate is 0.278, indicating that the mean employability scores predicted by career social support were fairly close to actual employability scores and the prediction error was small. Overall, this model suggests that career social support has a meaningful and statistically significant impact on students perceived employability.

As regard career social support and employability, a positive correlation was also found in Figure 1. The positive slope of the regression line suggests that those students with more support are reporting greater perceived employability. The 95 % confidence band confirms the persisting trend.



**Figure 1: Description of the Scatter Plot: Career Social Support vs. Employability**

In Figure 1, the scatter plot in which, on the x-axis are reported career social support and on the y-axis students' employability; a regression line with interval of confidence at 95% is presented. The individual data points fall positively on the linear trend, which suggests that higher levels of perceived career social support are associated with higher levels of perceived employability. The line of best fit rises, indicating this positive correlation. The shaded band around the line is the 95% confidence interval, which provides a range in which the true regression line would be expected to fall. The relatively tight slot means an intermediate degree of predictability and level of confidence in the relationship between these two variables. In general, the plot is consistent with the statistical results ( $r = 0.487$ ), which reveal a modest positive correlation between career social support and employability. Although there is some variation, the trend is clear: higher social support corresponds with greater employability levels.

Results indicated that different sources of social support are related to several types of employability. Teacher support seems particularly to support skill development in curiosity and planning, whereas peer support is found to contribute to confidence and flexibility. Interestingly, emotional forms of parental support seemed to be less directly associated with employability-related outcomes, but were seen as important. This nuanced result is also consistent with Cho and Cho (2023), who found that teacher and peer support had a greater effect on career maturity than did parental support. These findings are significant in illustrating the importance of context-specificity within CCT, with support type and source influencing the degree to which individuals internalize career-related resources. It suggests the importance for institutions to enhance formal mentoring, academic advising and peer – learning practice to more actively support employability development.

### Gender, University Type, or Field of Study Significantly Affect Levels of Career Social Support and Employability

Demographic differences may affect students' perspectives on support and employability. To examine whether gender plays a significant role for students as regard their career social support and employability, t-test was used to compare male and female students in Table 6.

**Table 6: Independent Samples t-Test Results for Gender, Career Social Support and Employability**

| Gender | N  | Career Social Support |                         | Employability |                         | t(df)         | P-value |
|--------|----|-----------------------|-------------------------|---------------|-------------------------|---------------|---------|
|        |    | Mean (M)              | Standard Deviation (SD) | Mean (M)      | Standard Deviation (SD) |               |         |
| Male   | 45 | 3.502                 | 0.205                   | 3.385         | 0.234                   | t(98) = -4.70 | 0.000   |
| Female | 55 | 3.691                 | 0.193                   | 3.474         | 0.207                   | t(98) = -1.99 | 0.049   |

A comparison of male and female university students' career social support and employability feelings. The results of an independent samples t-test comparing male university students with female university students in career related social supports and employability feelings are presented in Table 6. In the area of career social support, female students scored significantly higher (M = 3.691, SD = 0.193) than male students (M = 3.502, SD = 0.205). The two runs have significantly different durations,  $t(98) = -4.70$ ,  $p = 0.000$ , indicating a strong contrast in how men and women perceive their career support. Similarly for employability, female students scored slightly higher (M = 3.474, SD = 0.207) than male students (M = 3.385, SD = 0.234). Such a distinct is also statistically significant,  $t(98) =$  There is also statistical evidence  $p = 0.049$ , although the difference is less. These results indicate that female students experience higher career social support and employability opportunities compared to males, and that this difference is significant.

The nature of the institution a student attends may influence their access to career-related support and confidence in employment. The t-test results of students in public and private universities on the levels of career social support and perceived employability are depicted in Table 7.

**Table 7: Independent Samples t-Test Results for Type of University, Career Social Support and Employability**

| Type of University | N  | Career Social Support |                         | Employability |                         | t(df)         | p-value |
|--------------------|----|-----------------------|-------------------------|---------------|-------------------------|---------------|---------|
|                    |    | Mean (M)              | Standard Deviation (SD) | Mean (M)      | Standard Deviation (SD) |               |         |
| Public             | 46 | 3.554                 | 0.250                   | 3.434         | 0.279                   | t(98) = -3.02 | 0.003   |
| Private            | 54 | 3.694                 | 0.203                   | 3.424         | 0.211                   | t(98) = 0.19  | 0.847   |

Table 7 presents the independent samples t-test analysis conducted to test differences between students in public and private universities on career social support and employability perceptions. There were significant differences in mean scores by career social support between students at private (M = 3.694, SD = 0.203) and public universities (M = 3.554, SD = 0.250). This difference is significantly  $t(98) = -3.02$ ,  $p = 0.003$ , which means private university students feel more encouraged towards their career. Regarding employability, the average scores between private (M = 3.424, SD = 0.211) and public (M = 3.434, SD = 0.279) students were very close to each other. The difference is nonsignificant,  $t(98) = 0.19$ ,  $p = 0.847$ . These findings imply that while university type affects the social support perceptions of students there seems to be no significant effect on student perceived employability.

Varied discipline background could affect student attitudes to careers guidance and preparedness for work. A One-Way ANOVA is carried out in order to compare Business, Management and Economics students on career social support and employability in Table 8.

**Table 8: One-Way ANOVA Results for Type of Major, Career Social Support and Employability**

| Dependent Variable    | Source         | df | F     | p-value |
|-----------------------|----------------|----|-------|---------|
| Career Social Support | Between Groups | 2  | 2.573 | 0.081   |
|                       | Within Groups  | 97 |       |         |
| Employability         | Between Groups | 2  | 0.416 | 0.661   |
|                       | Within Groups  | 97 |       |         |

Table 8 shows the results of a One-Way ANOVA to determine if students' field of study (Business, management, economics) has an impact on their perceptions of career social support and employability. Regarding CSJ career support, the ANOVA result indicates  $F(2, 97) = 2.573$ ,  $p = 0.081$ . There is however quite a bit of variation between the different majors, and although above 0.05 the P value remains meaning there appears to be no strong difference. For employability, the outcome is  $F(2, 97) = 0.416$ ,  $p = 0.661$ : not significantly different. Drawing on expectation states and social identity theories, these findings demonstrate that students' perceptions of career social support and employability are relatively stable across fields. In other words, students from the Business and Management's 'household' warrant have perceptions of support and employability similar to those in Economics departments.

This study also reported gender facet and institution type significantly influenced students' perception of career social support and employability, except for field of study. Female students also reported higher levels of support and employability, which is consistent with previous

findings indicating that females are more likely to engage in help-seeking and relationship-building (Yue et al., 2024)]. These students from private college reported greater level of social support, perhaps suggesting a more individual attention in terms of sourcing for future employment and greater faculty student ratio albeit both public and private university students perceived similar employability. These results support CCT's argument of the role of situated individual and institutional career development these findings add support to CCT's assertion that career development is a function of differentiated context. This lack of differences across academic areas indicates possible absence of effects on career outcome and that development, support systems and student engagement may override curriculum.

## Conclusion

This study explores the association between career social support and employability among university students in Shandong Province from the perspective of career construction theory finding indicated that in general, there is a moderately high perception of student on career social support especially from the family and friends but also with educators which has significant relationship to higher employability. Those with a higher perception of support had more confident in getting and keeping a job, particularly through personal attributes such as flexibility, attitude and decision-making. Furthermore, education level of the university and gender were both found to impact perceived support and employ-ability levels, however field of study demonstrated no significant effect.

These results are consistent with the Career Construction Theory, and indicate that social and environmental support play an essential role in increasing students' career adaptability. Educators and peers play a significant role in furthering students' career confidence and preparedness, the research reveals. The findings suggest that factors influencing male students' career planning need to be addressed more systematically in future support. Universities, particularly public universities, need to enhance mentoring and peer support structures that enable students to receive reliable advice. Systematically embedding career readiness throughout the curriculum will ensure employability is a right of all students. Last, policy makers and educators need to establish certain career development strategies that are sensitive-based on gender and inclusive of both sexes based on the successful experiences of private universities. These initiatives will help prepare students for the workplace and lead to better employability prospects for graduates.

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