

## The Career Compromise Strategy and its Impact on Job Performance

*Dong An, Xiaoyue Song and Qiao Zhihong*

Department of Psychology, Beijing Normal University, China

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**Abstract:** *Objective:* To investigate how do college students make career compromises and its impact on work performance and whether the career coping strategy will moderate the relationship between career compromise and work performance. *Method:* Study 1 asked the participants report the acceptance of works and divided into different acceptable areas, using the forced choice method collected the data of career compromises; and study 2 used the questionnaire to measure the coping strategy and work performance. *Results:* Across study 1, social prestige predicted choice when large compromises were required. Welfare treatment predicted choice when moderate compromises were required. And person–job interest congruence predicted choice when minimal compromises were required. Study 2 found that greater compromise leads to lower performance and career coping strategies can regulate the relationship. *Conclusion:* The order of career compromise of college students is interest, welfare treatment, social prestige and coping strategies can adjust the relationship between the degree of compromise and job performance.

**Key words:** Career Compromise Career Coping Strategy Work Performance

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### INTRODUCTION

Career compromise refers to the process in which individuals adjust their career aspirations or their own goals to adapt to the outside world for some reason [1]. The study of career compromise abroad originates from the 80 's, the most influential one is Gottfredson's Career Aspiration Development Theory. This theory mainly discusses the content and development process of career ambition and argues that occupation is the expression of individual social-self and psychological-self and the development of career ambition is the process of shrinking the scope of career choice. There are two aspects in the process, they are restriction and compromise. Restriction process is that people phase out and abandon those unacceptable options to build a specific area called social space that they believe acceptable. And the compromise process is a process that people narrow their own social space gradually, and give-up the ideal choices and accept the feasible choice when they are under pressure [2].

Gottfredson's theory defines different degrees of compromise based on different contexts and the low level of compromise refers to individuals have to choose their preferred career in a highly acceptable job option.

The moderate level of compromise means individual have to choose a career that he is more willing to engage in their own acceptable level of job choice. And a high degree of compromise is that individuals have to make choices in jobs that are difficult for them to accept. The theory is based on the protection of self-concept, holding that the order of people to compromise is to give up their interests, followed by social prestige and finally the sex type, but the conclusion of empirical research does not fully support the theory. First, the researchers found that although interest was the first factor to give up when a college student faced a choice [3], it was in line with Gottfredson's theory. However there are also studies that show whatever compromise situation in which the college students are, social prestige is the most uncompromising factor for them [4], in addition, gender types have no significant predictive effect on career compromises [5]. At the same time, referring to the vocational choice of college students in Chinese social background, some new factors should be taken into account, according to the qualitative research and quantitative research on the influential factors of college students' career choice, the welfare treatment is also a factor that college students value, even more than interest and there is no unified conclusion compared with the work prestige [6].

According to above research results, we can find that the compromise strategy adopted in college students' career decision-making has not reached a unanimous conclusion and we should explore some new strategies or introduce some new factors to consider career compromise. From the Trait theory to the Social Cognition theory, to the restriction compromise theory and the predecessor research results, they all emphasized the interest is an important aspect which affects the occupation decision-making [7], but it may be the most easily compromised factor [8]; In today's social context, after combining some qualitative research and values research, it is found that the welfare benefits are the factors that must be considered in the decision-making process of young people [9], however, its importance is not explored yet; Both theoretical and empirical studies have shown that social prestige is the most difficult factor to give up in decision making [10]. Therefore, this study makes the following assumptions about the career compromise strategy for college students:

**Hypothesis 1:** In the face of a highly compromised situation, college students' choice of work has a higher social prestige than the work not chosen and there is no significant difference in benefits and interest consistency.

**Hypothesis 2:** In the face of moderate compromise, college students' choice of work has better welfare benefits than the work not chosen and there is no significant difference in social prestige and interest consistency.

**Hypothesis 3:** In the face of low compromise situation, college students choose a job more in line with their own interests than the work abandoned, there is no significant difference in social prestige and welfare treatment

As the decisions are completed, the next question is how the decision will affect the individual. Individuals with more serious career compromises will have lower job satisfaction [11], health level [12] and job performance [13] and higher negative emotions [14], Occupational Barriers [15], career dilemmas [16].

Based on Bandura's theory of reciprocal determinism (individual, environment, behavior) and self-regulation it can be inferred that when the environment cannot be changed, the state of adaptation can only be achieved by changing its behavior [17]. Therefore, under stressful conditions or situations full of distress, individuals usually take some coping strategies to adapt. In the field of career, coping strategies are defined as an increase in the level of adaptability and it refers to the extent for readiness to respond to deterministic or uncertain tasks

[18]. Some studies have confirmed the positive correlation between the application of the strategy and the objective salary and the career readiness [19].

The impact of career compromises, previous research focused on the subjective feelings of workers, such as job satisfaction or subjective well-being [20], although these findings help us understand the importance of compromise, but for those who have difficulty in their work because of compromise, The help is limited; At the same time, there are also studies show that the college students who have just entered the workplace have a higher turnover rate and lower satisfaction, so they usually can not adapt to the workplace very well [21]. Therefore, this study focuses on job performance.

From the above theory and research, it can be seen that career compromise has a certain negative impact on the individual after entering the post, it will bring many aspects of poor adaptation, such as low satisfaction, high negative mood and more professional barriers, it is likely to affect the performance of individual work. The effective use of coping strategies may allow individuals to adapt to the plight of their current career through good coping. Therefore, we make the following assumptions:

**Hypothesis 4:** Compromise degree are negatively predicted the job performance of college students in the post-employment.

**Hypothesis 5:** Coping strategies have a moderating effect on the level of compromise and job performance. The higher the score of coping strategies is, the weaker the negative relationship between compromise and job performance will be, conversely, the negative relationship between compromise degree and work performance will be stronger.

In summary, this research takes career compromise as the breakthrough point and has designed two studies, study 1 mainly discusses whether the order of the compromise is the interest, the welfare treatment, the social prestige when the university students in the different compromise situation; Study 2 explores how the actual degree of compromise is linked to career development and job performance after choosing a career and the moderator role of coping strategies.

## **Study**

**Subjects:** The subjects were 426 senior students from four universities from Heilongjiang, Jiangsu, Inner Mongolia, Beijing, including 221 boys and 205 girls. The subjects were aged 23-27 years, with an average age of 22.36 years old.

**Procedure:** Five experts evaluated 110 common occupations of college students (occupations in the academic career guidance system for college students). Considering the social prestige, welfare benefits and interest types, 42 occupations are identified, so that their social prestige and welfare benefits are evenly distributed in level and Holland's interest types are evenly distributed. After that, three career experts rechecked them. The social prestige score is based on the corresponding social prestige assignment of the profession in Gottfredson's theory, which is revised by career experts. Welfare ratings are based on salary rankings of different industries published by China Education Network and SoHu Finance and Economics Network in the past three years. Using Gottfredson's paradigm, we studied college students' compromise strategies.

**Limitation Process:** Subjects were asked to report (with 7 points the highest score) the *acceptance* of 42 occupations and their consistency with their interests (1 = totally unacceptable; 7 = very willing to accept); similarly, the higher the score of consistency with their interests, the more in line with their interests.

**Compromise Process:** The subjects were asked to select up to four jobs from the items with *acceptance* scores of 6 and 7 as the low-level compromise group. Among the job options scored 3, 4 and 5, up to four jobs were selected as the moderate compromise group. Among the job options scored 1 and 2, up to four jobs were chosen as the high-level compromise group.

The average scores of interest, welfare and social prestige of the selected and unselected jobs in the compromise group were compared. SPSS22.0 was used to test the compromise strategies of college students in different compromise situations by independent sample test and logistic regression.

## RESULTS

Independent sample t-test showed that in low compromise situation, there were significant differences in interest ( $t = 20.17, p < .05, d = 1.02$ ), but no differences in welfare ( $t = -.90, p > .05$ ) and social prestige ( $t = .40, p > .05$ ). In the moderate compromise situation, there were significant differences in interest ( $t = -1.76, p < .05, d = .14$ ), welfare ( $t = 17.06, p < .05, d = .67$ ) and social prestige ( $t = 6.63, p < .05, d = .28$ ). In the high compromise situation, there were significant differences in welfare benefits ( $t = 6.24, p < .05, d = .20$ ) and social prestige ( $t = 18.43, p < .05, d = .91$ ).

T test results are consistent with some assumptions, that is, when faced with low compromise situations, individuals tend to choose careers that are more in line with their interests. But in the moderate and high compromise situations, we can not proof the compromise strategies only from the comparison of mean values. In order to further verify the hypothesis, binary logistic regression was applied to moderate and high compromise situations. The results are shown in Tables 1 and 2.

Regression analysis shows that only welfare benefits can predict job choices in moderate compromise situations, but the predictive effect of interest consistency and social prestige is not significant. In the context of high compromise, welfare benefits and social prestige play a significant role in predicting the outcome and social prestige has a greater explanatory rate than welfare benefits.

The compromise in career choice has a negative impact on the individual's career, but previous studies on the degree of compromise often measured the compromise in the virtual situation, with low ecological validity. Six months later, the subjects were connected and asked to report their current occupation. At that time, the subjects had changed from students to workers and had completed the career transition at the beginning of their career. At that time, the work can best represent the real career compromise.

## Study

**Subjects:** The subjects in study 1 were tested for the second time half a year. All the subjects retained here were working subjects, excluding those who were unemployed, entrepreneurship and studying. The total working time was more than three months. A total of 283 data were recollected, including 149 boys and 134 girls.

## Instruments

**Degree of Compromise:** The current occupation of each subjects reported in T2 time were extracted. Putting the current occupation of the subject into the 42 occupations of study 1. Get the score of his or her acceptance and compared with the acceptance of the ideal occupation reported in T1, the difference between the acceptance of the current occupation and the ideal occupation (the acceptable range formed by each participant in study 1), defined as the degree of compromise, range is 0 to 6. The greater the difference, the higher the degree of compromise.

**Work Performance Scale:** Yu Decheng (1996) revised it and it has 21 questions with 5 points. They were divided

Table 1: Logistic regression analysis table under medium compromise situation

Independent variable	B	Wald	p	Exp (B) (OR value)
Interest	.060	.14	.70	1.06
Welfare	4.281	31.42	.00	53.24
Social prestige	.111	2.00	.16	1.18

Table 2: Logistic regression analysis table under high compromise situation

Independent variable	B	Wald	p	Exp (B) (OR value)
Interest	-.127	1.06	.25	1.062
Welfare	1.33	21.173	.00	3.77
Social prestige	4.63	10.15	.00	10.20

into two dimensions: task performance and peripheral performance. The total internal consistency coefficient was .932 and the internal consistency coefficients of the two dimensions were .920 and .914, respectively.

**Coping Strategy Scale:** It was revised by Ke Jing (2006) and has five sub-scales, namely problem solving, logical thinking, seeking support, emotional regulation, emotional escape, a total of 20 questions. The total reliability is .870.

**Test of Common Method Bias:** Harman's One-factor Test was used to test the data. The results of the non-rotating principal component analysis showed that the

eigenvalues of nine factors were greater than 1 and the variance explained by the first factor was only 38.082%, which was less than 40% of the critical criteria. Therefore, there was no obvious deviation of the common method in this study.

**Descriptive Statistics and Correlation Analysis:** After doing the descriptive and correlation analyses of compromise performance, performance and coping strategies, the outcome is as follows:

Table 3 shows that the degree of compromise is negatively correlated with the total score of performance, task performance and peripheral performance; the degree of compromise is negatively correlated with the total score of coping strategies; and the total score of coping strategies is positively correlated with job performance.

**Moderator Effect Analysis:** SPSS22.0 was used for hierarchical regression analysis. As shown in Table 4, real compromises in job choices have a significant negative predictive effect on job performance after controlling gender, educational background and parental education level ( $\beta = -.23, p < .01$ ). Coping strategies can adjust the relationship between compromise degree and job performance ( $\beta = .62, p < .01$ ).

Table 3: Descriptive statistics and correlation analysis

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	LT	PS	SS	ER	EE	STS	TP	PP	TSOP	DOC
LT	15.52	3.28										
PS	14.61	3.30	.827**									
SS	12.89	3.04	.528**	.558**								
ER	14.58	3.305	.722**	.706**	.646**							
EE	9.29	3.50	-.110	-.019	.265**	.058						
STS	66.89	11.68	.807**	.838**	.814**	.848**	.347**					
TP	41.87	8.13	.759**	.734**	.524**	.67**1	-.088	.705**				
PP	38.84	7.51	.747**	.740**	.501**	.665**	-.101	.692**	.923**			
TSOP	80.71	15.34	.768**	.752**	.523**	.681**	-.096	.713**	.982**	.979**		
DOC	3.70	1.37	-.322**	-.342**	-.237**	-.287**	-.025	-.316**	-.426**	-.427**	-.435**	

note \* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\* $p < 0.01$  \* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\* $p < 0.01$  Logical thinking (LT) Problem solving (PS) Support seeking (SS) Emotional regulation (ER) Emotional escape (EE) Strategic total score (STS) Task performance (TP) Peripheral performance (PP) Total score of performance (TSOP) Degree of compromise (DOC)

Table 4: The moderating effect of coping strategies on compromise and job performance

Independent variable		B	SE	$\beta$	R <sup>2</sup>	F
Coping strategies	Step 1	Education	3.14	2.08	.64	.55
		Gender	1.15	1.28	.04	
		The highest level of education for parents	.39	.79	.04	
		Coping strategies	.82	.58	.62**	
		Degree of compromise	-3.58	.70	-.23**	
	Step 2	Education	4.51	2.10	.09	.57
		Gender	.87	1.27	.02	
		The highest level of education for parents	.47	.77	.02	
		Coping strategies	.25	.19	.20	
		Degree of compromise	-13.49	3.21	-.82**	
		Coping strategies*Degree of compromise	.16	.05	.62**	62.86

Table 5: Johnson-Neyman simple slope analysis

Coping strategy	Effect	SE	t	p
-36.8905	-8.8128	1.7516	-5.0312	.0000
-33.3905	-8.2672	1.5897	-5.2006	.0000
-29.8905	-7.7215	1.4314	-5.3944	.0000
-26.3905	-7.1759	1.2782	-5.614	.0000
-22.8905	-6.6303	1.1322	-5.8562	.0000
-19.3905	-6.0846	0.9965	-6.1062	.0000
-15.8905	-5.539	0.8758	-6.3241	.0000
-12.3905	-4.9933	0.7774	-6.4231	.0000
-8.8905	-4.4477	0.7104	-6.2607	.0000
-5.3905	-3.9021	0.6842	-5.7034	.0000
-1.8905	-3.3564	0.7033	-4.7727	.0000
1.6095	-2.8108	0.7643	-3.6777	0.0003
5.1095	-2.2651	0.8583	-2.639	0.0088
7.7168	-1.8587	0.9442	-1.9686	0.0500
8.6095	-1.7195	0.9759	-1.7619	0.0792
12.1095	-1.1738	1.1096	-1.0579	0.2910
15.6095	-0.6282	1.2542	-0.5009	0.6169
19.1095	-0.0826	1.4064	-0.0587	0.9532
22.6095	0.4631	1.564	0.2961	0.7674
26.1095	1.0087	1.7254	0.5846	0.5593
29.6095	1.5544	1.8898	0.8225	0.4115
33.1095	2.1000	2.0563	1.0212	0.3080

In order to show the essence of the interaction effect more clearly, Johnson-Neyman method is used for simple slope analysis. The results show that when the value of coping strategies is less than 7.716 (centralized data), the moderating effect of coping strategies on the degree of compromise and job performance is significant. When the coping strategy is more than 7.716, the moderating effect does not exist. In other words, when the scores of coping strategies are low, the degree of compromise has a significant negative effect on job performance. When coping strategies score is high, the degree of compromise has negative effect on job performance. Table 5 for details.

## DISCUSSION

The results of study 1 show that the compromise order of college students in the face of career choice is: interest before welfare treatment and the last one is social prestige. The results verified the assumptions 1 and 2. Hypothesis 1 is consistent with the previous results [22]: when the individual face a low level of compromise, the first thing to consider is his/her interest; Hypothesis 2 shows that job benefits are the primary consideration of college students when facing a moderate degree of compromise; this may be due to the increasing emphasis on self-esteem in the career choices of contemporary college students [23].

The results partially verify the hypothesis 3. When individuals make serious compromises, social prestige and welfare benefits significantly affects career choices, in which social prestige is more important than welfare benefits. This may be due to the fact that under the Chinese social background, prestige and welfare are highly related and for work with prestige, generally welfare is relatively high, while high-paid jobs do not necessarily enjoy the corresponding social status, leading to hypothesis 3 only partially verified.

The results of study 1 do not fully support the theory of Gottfredson. This may be due to the fact that, as the social division of labor is blurred, many jobs no longer have traditional gender concepts [24], so self-concept (gender type concept) may be less involved in the protection of job choices.

On the whole, career choice integrates many complex factors, such as self-identity, socialization and psychological needs [25]. The process of compromise is also the result of the interaction of these factors. The factors influencing compromise not only represent the changes of individual inner psychological process, but also reflect the changes of the whole society in work values.

### The Moderating Effect of Career Coping Strategies:

Hypotheses 4 and 5 have been verified. Career compromise negatively predicts job performance and career coping strategies moderate the relationship between career compromise and job performance. Negative correlation between career compromise and job performance indicates that when college students enter the workplace at the beginning, the compromise affects their job performance. On the one hand, from the perspective of mental health, career compromise is considered to be closely related to college students' self-concept and a part of their career development. A greater degree of compromise affects individual satisfaction, well-being and so on. Such negative results will damage the individual's social function, showing psychological and social maladjustment [26].

On the other hand, coping strategies can adjust the relationship between compromise and job performance, that is, good strategies can help individuals improve job performance. According to Bandura's reciprocal determinism, when individuals face imbalances, they will take active measures to adapt to the environment. However, the choice of strategy is related to many factors, such as personality and individuals with high openness are better at changing themselves to adapt to

the environment [27]. The social support obtained will also affect how individuals take action [28]. These are also important factors that indirectly affect the performance of university students. Further, for most people, the challenges and difficulties are unpredictable when they first enter the workplace. Proper use of strategies can help speed up interpersonal adjustment, gain psychological capital [29] and improve job confidence [30].

Research outcome and deficiency study explores the compromise strategies adopted by college students in the face of career choices and also verifies that coping strategies regulate the relationship between compromise and job performance. Subsequent studies can be mechanism study for how compromise affects individual career development. Such theoretical results are also critical to the practice of career counseling for college students. For career counselors, they can focus on those who have made compromises and help them maintain career confidence, thereby reducing the negative impact of compromise. In addition, there are some shortcomings in this study, such as the subjects are mostly not the university students from 211 project universities and the conclusion can not be extended to a larger group.

## CONCLUSION

For college Students' career compromise, first is interest and then welfare treatment and social prestige comes at last. That is, when faced with stress, the first thing to give up is interest, then welfare and finally retain social prestige; the degree of compromise will negatively predict performance. A good coping strategy can adjust the relationship between them. Appropriate strategies can guide college students to better adapt to the work.

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