

# *Analysis of the Reasons for the Youth Employment Difficulties in Today's China*

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**Abstract:** Nowadays, Chinese society has entered a stage of rapid development, and a large number of knowledge-building talents are needed to help China's future development. As the main force of China's future development, young people must have a rich knowledge background as well as good physical and mental health, so as to firmly guarantee the future of China. However, the fact is that, recently, a large number of graduates are unable to find a job or they take jobs that are low-paying, unstable, or less people-oriented. Over time, young people will be less positive at work, and their enthusiasm for work will be greatly reduced, which is not conducive to China's future development. In this case, this paper studies the employment dilemma of contemporary Chinese youth and the reasons behind it, drawing the conclusion that at present, Chinese youth are faced with a dual employment dilemma of the changing employment situation and changing employment preferences, which is caused by the increase in the number of outstanding graduates, the impact of the COVID-19 epidemic, the turnover wave of Generation Z, and the structural problems of youth employment.

**Keywords:** Employment Difficulties, Chinese Youth, Employment Situation, Employment Preferences

## 1. Introduction

With the complex and changeable international situation, the employment problem of contemporary youth is becoming more and more serious. In recent years, the issue of youth unemployment is urgent to be addressed, especially for college graduates, resulting in a waste of talents. Having a job is not only for the youth's survival but also for their better development in the future, so the employment problem is an issue both for young individuals and society. In 2022, the report of the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China clearly stated that "the whole Party should focus on youth work as a strategic work", further emphasizing the strategic positioning and great significance of youth work. To correctly understand and grasp the strategy of youth employment, for one thing, there is a need to stay at the level of "what is youth employment", for another, it is necessary to adhere to the problem orientation, systematically answer "why", and fundamentally understand why youth employment must be regarded as a piece of strategic work [1]. It can be seen that the strategic work of youth employment is of great significance to the development of China. On this basis, this paper summarizes the employment dilemma faced by contemporary Chinese youth and analyzes the reasons behind it. How to solve the employment of Chinese youth today will

be a problem of the times. By clarifying the employment dilemma of contemporary Chinese youth and its causes, this paper attempts to provide guidance and constructive suggestions for the future employment development of Chinese youth.

## **2. Youth Employment Difficulties in Today's China**

### **2.1. Changes in the Youth Employment Situation**

First of all, as a new generation in the reform and opening up, young intellectuals are in the stage of entering the workplace and starting to play an important role. With a large number of new enterprises pouring into the Chinese market, the need for young intellectuals is increasing day by day. Therefore, in general, the youth should be in high demand in the labor market. However, relevant surveys show that only a small number of young intellectuals can be qualified for work in a short time, which makes some recruiters lose enthusiasm for the recruitment of young people [2]. Over time, a negative situation was formed. Besides, relevant surveys also suggest that more than half of the new generation of educated young people quit their jobs, changed their jobs, or returned to the state of between jobs within one year. According to the survey results of recruitment websites such as 51Job.com, the turnover rate of the new generation of knowledge workers is still increasing.

Secondly, China entered the peak of employment in the 1990s, and the pressure of the total population made the job market become saturated. In addition, many positions in government agencies, state-owned enterprises, and public institutions are no longer lifelong posts, where a job cut is announced and optimizations are processed [2]. They are no longer the main channels to receive college graduates, and a large number of the new generation of intellectual young people have to enter the "socialized" job market the way of "independent job selection". Moreover, the entire employment situation has also undergone fundamental changes. On the one hand, this can help the new generation of intellectual young people do their best; on the other hand, it also leads to a large number of vacant positions and a large number of intellectual young people who are not able to take these positions. As a result, an employment dilemma of the new generation of intellectual young people in a specific historical period in China is formed.

### **2.2. Changes in the Youth Employment Preference**

Most of the new generation of intellectual young people are the only child. Compared with the previous generation who lack education, they generally grow up in a better environment and have higher expectations for themselves. However, because they have been on campus for education for a long time, they lack the realistic education that can help them adapt to the social environment. The lack of experience in life also leads to their vulnerability and immaturity in the face of difficulties. It is precisely under this circumstance that many new generations of intellectual young people, in order to find more attractive jobs, prefer to stay unemployed in big cities rather than working in other regions or lower-paying positions [2].

In addition, many large enterprises and institutions are in large and medium-sized cities, and the employment conditions are constantly rising, but how to better meet the needs of employee growth and development is not fully considered. Therefore, on the one side, this has resulted in a sharp increase in the migrant population in large cities such as Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangzhou. Competition in the job market has intensified, and the new generation of intellectual young people who have not entered the workplace find it difficult to obtain employment in big cities. The new generation of employed young people change their jobs frequently because of the changes in workplace conditions, inadaptation of existing jobs, or the inability of their development potential to meet their own needs [3], which further intensifies the employment competition, promotes the employment dilemma of various industries in large and medium-sized cities, and lowers the

expectation of employment in various industries. On the other side, this also causes a lack of talents in the third- and fourth-tier cities, as well as in the enterprises with poor conditions. Consequently, the development motivation is not strong enough, and job positions are insufficient, aggravating the employment dilemma of the new generation of intellectual young people in a specific historical period in China.

### **3. Reasons for Youth Employment Difficulties in Today's China**

#### **3.1. An Increasing Number of Excellent Graduates**

According to a survey, the number of college graduates in China in 2022 has reached the highest in the history of previous years. The data show that the total number of college graduates was 9.09 million in 2021, 10.76 million in 2022, and 11.58 million in 2023. It can be seen that the number of graduates has exceeded 10 million since 2022, and the increase is very obvious [4]. Relevant research institute personnel said in an interview that the increase in the number of graduates and "delayed employment" is closely related. Many secondary school students want to study in colleges, and many college students want to study further for a master's degree. The number accumulates year by year, resulting in a peak number of job seekers in 2022. For example, Xi'an Jiaotong University released a report on the employment quality of graduates in 2021, showing that only 33.12% of undergraduates chose to obtain employment, 57.07% continued their studies in China, and 8.41% studied abroad. Among the undergraduate graduates of the Beijing University of Posts and Telecommunications, 64.02% chose to study in China or go abroad. A higher proportion of undergraduate graduates from Tsinghua and Peking universities continued their studies [4].

Lu Feng pointed out that a pragmatic choice must be made between continuing to study and entering society for employment experience. Postgraduate study is good, but it is also important to actively face job difficulties and avoid unconscious avoidance, because, in the end, one has to enter the workplace." According to the data from the seventh census, the proportion of people with a college degree has been rising rapidly in major cities over the past decade. Based on the statistics of The 21st Century Business Herald, it is found that among the trillion-GDP cities, Beijing has 41,980 people with a college diploma per 100,000 people, and in Nanjing, Shanghai, Wuhan, and Xi'an, there are more than 30,000 people with a college diploma per 100,000 people. It can be seen that with an increasing number of graduates, a college degree will no longer be an advantage [4].

#### **3.2. The Impact of COVID-19 on Youth Employment**

Under the impact of the COVID-19 epidemic, many large and small enterprises have halted production, resulting in the interruption of corporate capital chains. In order to stay afloat, companies eventually choose to lay off workers. With the continued impact of the COVID-19 epidemic and increasing uncertainties in the external environment, China's economy is facing multiple pressures, the overall employment situation has become more complex and severe, and the market demand for graduates has been weakened. According to the survey and analysis of the operation and employment of small, medium, and micro enterprises carried out by the Labor Science Institute of the relevant Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security, one-third of small, medium, and micro enterprises in the fourth quarter of 2021 laid off staff, and 47.6% of enterprises have not recruited workers since 2021, which makes a large reduction in job positions [5]. The sharp decline in employment positions has reduced the number of jobs that college graduates can choose, resulting in a difficult situation for college graduates to obtain employment. The survey found that since the outbreak of the COVID-19 epidemic, the proportion of enterprises with the intention to enroll in colleges and universities has declined year by year. In the first quarter of 2022, the proportion of enterprises that were willing to enroll in colleges and universities

accounted for only 8.2%, down 1.6 percentage points year-on-year. Many enterprises even refused to recruit employees during the epidemic, which indirectly affected campus recruitment during the graduation season, thus affecting the employment rate of college graduates.

### **3.3. A Wave of Resignation of Generation Z**

Generation Z refers to the young people born between 1995 and 2009. They grew up in an era of rapid economic and technological development in China. Most of them are well educated with distinct personalities and a good sense of self-awareness. According to the survey, China's Generation Z population accounts for about 19 percent of the total population, as many as 264 million people. With the continuous development and improvement of the Internet, the term Generation Z is gradually popular. "Generation Z will become the generation with the most serious unemployment rate", "post-00 young people reorganize the workplace", and other hot search topics frequently appear, reflecting the different ideas of this generation of young people [6]. According to the survey, in the new wave of "resignation", the turnover rate of Generation Z is much higher than that of other generations, and they are more willing to pursue innovative and self-fulfilling work opportunities. A large number of Generation Z also respond that their ability to withstand pressure is low, and as the social competition becomes more and more fierce, the competition among employees within the enterprise is also becoming fierce. The overtime work of employees within the enterprise has become the norm, and employees can not get enough rest on weekdays and weekends. In addition, useless competition appears among employees, in order to get promotions and pay rises. This dual competition, both internal and external, is causing Generation Z to lose confidence in their jobs.

### **3.4. Structural Problems in Youth Employment**

Affected by the downward economic situation in recent years, many young people are more stable in their job-hunting mentality and tend to apply for job positions such as civil servants. However, these jobs are highly competitive. According to relevant surveys, the number of applicants for the 2023 national exam reached 2,597,700, an increase of 474,700 over the last year [7]. Among the most popular positions, the ratio of applicants reached 6,000:1. From the perspective of job search expectations, there is a big gap between young people's expectations of their working cities, industries, and salaries and the reality. Big cities have become the first choice for young people, but trapped in the fierce competition in big cities, most of them can not face the long-term pressure and choose to resign. In addition, the training of talents in colleges and universities is not closely related to society, and the training of practical ability is not paid enough attention to. There are many academic and research talents but few applied and technical talents. Since many jobs in society require skilled personnel with rich experience, the shortage of applied and technical talents has become a major factor in the difficulty of youth employment. Many young people in colleges and universities responded that compared to students with a lack of qualifications, it is even more difficult for them to obtain employment. As time goes by, many young people become disillusioned with receiving a higher education. In the face of today's fierce competition in society, some young people choose to postpone their employment, which leads to a serious shortage of manufacturing talents. The consumer services sector, on the other hand, is more attractive to young people because of its higher salaries and more flexible working hours.

## **4. Conclusion**

To sum up, the change in the youth employment situation and preference has led to the employment dilemma of the new generation of intellectual young people in China. For one thing, some

employers have lost their enthusiasm for the recruitment of intellectual young people, the turnover rate of young people has a further increasing trend, and the pressure of the total population makes the job market become saturated. For another, in order to find more attractive jobs, many intellectual young people prefer to stay in big cities rather than working in other cities or lower-paying positions. At the same time, the employment standard of many large enterprises and institutions is also rising, which leads to further intensification of employment competition. The reasons for this employment dilemma are as follows: first, with an increasing number of outstanding graduates in recent years, a college diploma will no longer be an advantage, and many college graduates choose to postpone their employment, which leads to an increase in the proportion of studying in China and abroad and a decrease in the number of college students who actually choose to obtain employment; secondly, the impact of the COVID-19 epidemic also made many companies shut down or even go bankrupt, affecting campus recruitment. In addition, the dual competition from internal and external working environments makes Generation Z gradually lose their confidence in work; finally, the talent training of colleges and universities can not be well in line with society, leading to the shortage of applied and skilled talents needed by enterprises, further aggravating the employment dilemma of contemporary Chinese youth. In future research, empirical analysis such as a questionnaire survey or interview can also be introduced to more comprehensively analyze the employment dilemma faced by contemporary Chinese youth and the reasons behind it.

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