Research on Employment Intentions of Rural Minority Youth Labor Force from the Perspective of Psychological Resilience Theory

Yunqian Zhou*, Yangbin Ye, Mingxi Li, Linxuan Wen
School of Journalism and Communication, Nanchang University, Nanchang, Jiangxi, China
*Corresponding Author.

Abstract: This study empirically examines the process mechanism and influencing factors of employment intentions among rural minority youth labor forces based on the theory of psychological resilience, and constructs a process analysis model for their employment intentions. The findings indicate that both unemployment anxiety and employment anxiety are significantly negatively correlated with the employment intentions of rural minority youth labor forces, with the adoption of internet technology serving as a mediating factor that positively facilitates this process. Therefore, this research, starting from the individual psychological aspects of unemployment and employment anxiety, reveals their negative impact on employment intentions. At the same time, the information and human capital channels inherent in internet technology offer effective mechanisms for addressing issues of unemployment anxiety and employment anxiety, providing empirical reference for relevant decision-making departments in managing the employment intentions of young people, particularly rural youth from minority ethnic groups.

Keywords: Unemployment Anxiety; Employment Anxiety; Adoption of Internet Technology; Minority Youth Labor Force; Employment Intentions

1. Introduction

Since the initiation of the reform and opening-up policy, the transformation of China's economic structure and the acceleration of urbanization have led to a significant shift in the employment aspirations of the rural workforce. This shift reflects a transition from traditional agricultural employment to a more diversified range of job opportunities. Particularly in the past decade, the rapid advancement of digital technologies, including the internet, has resulted in notable changes in the employment intentions of rural youth, especially among ethnic minority youth in rural areas. However, existing research on the employment intentions of ethnic minority rural youth predominantly focuses on macro and micro-level analyses.

At the macro level, the research primarily examines the influence of factors such as internet technology, policy support, ethnic characteristics, and the employment environment on the employment intentions of rural youth from ethnic minorities. Conversely, the micro level focuses on exploring how individual experiences, employment perceptions, and family backgrounds of these rural youths impact their employment outcomes. While these studies offer significant insights into the employment status of rural youth from ethnic minorities and the factors influencing it, several critical questions remain inadequately addressed.

Existing research predominantly focuses on the mobile population in urban areas, with limited studies specifically addressing the labor force of rural youth from ethnic minorities. Rural youth represent a significant demographic among rural internet users, demonstrating a high rate of internet utilization. Their employment aspirations are crucial for advancing new rural development and achieving rural revitalization. In terms of research content, the existing literature primarily concentrates on objective employment issues, with scant attention given to subjective factors such as unemployment anxiety and job anxiety and their effects on employment intentions. From a research perspective, scholars have largely investigated

the relationship between internet technology and wage income or mobility within the labor market, with few conducting quantitative analyses of the employment intentions of rural youth from ethnic minorities in relation to internet technology.

To address the existing gaps in research, this study aims to explore the employment intentions of rural youth from minority groups, drawing on the primary challenges they face in the labor market and grounded in the theory of psychological resilience. Specifically, the research focuses on two key questions: First, do unemployment anxiety and job search anxiety negatively affect the employment intentions of rural youth from minority backgrounds? Second, does the adoption of internet technology alleviate their unemployment and job search anxiety, thereby enhancing their employment intentions?

Based on the aforementioned discussion, the following research hypotheses are proposed:

H1: Unemployment anxiety negatively affects the employment willingness of rural youth from ethnic minorities.

H2: Employment anxiety negatively impacts the employment willingness of rural youth from ethnic minorities.

H3: The adoption of internet technology mediates the relationship between unemployment anxiety and the employment willingness of rural youth from ethnic minorities.

H4: The adoption of internet technology mediates the relationship between employment anxiety and the employment willingness of rural youth from ethnic minorities.

Grounded in the theory of psychological resilience and incorporating the mediating role of internet technology, this study constructs a research model to examine the mechanisms influencing the employment willingness of rural youth from ethnic minorities. This model aims to explore how unemployment anxiety and employment anxiety affect the employment willingness of this demographic through the adoption of internet technology, as illustrated in Figure 1.
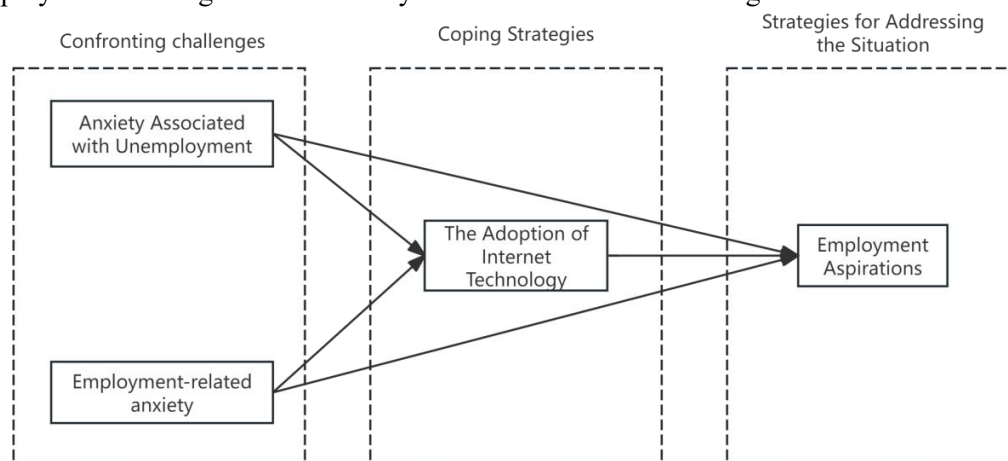

Figure 1. Illustrates the Model Depicting the Mechanisms Influencing the Employment Intentions of Rural Youth from Minority Ethnic Groups

2. Research Design

2.1 Variable Measurement and Model Evaluation

In this study, unemployment anxiety and employment anxiety are established as independent variables, with the mediating variable of internet technology adoption incorporated. The dependent variable is the employment intention of ethnic minority rural youth. Specifically, the unemployment anxiety scale refers to the research results of Hu Sanman,[1] containing 9 items. The employment anxiety scale is based on the research of Liu Zhonghua,[2] encompassing 14 items. The internet technology adoption scale is derived from the research of Wang Xuefen et al.,[3] comprising 12 items. The employment intention scale is based on the research by Broeck et al.,[4] encompassing 11 items. For items sourced from English literature, this study employs the back-translation method to ensure accurate expression of the original intent.[5] All independent variables, mediating variables, and dependent variables in this study are evaluated using a summed rating scale (Likert

scale, 5-point) (Note: an increase in values from 1 to 5 on the scale indicates an increasing level of agreement).

2.2 Data Sources

This study employs a snowball sampling method, utilizing an online survey platform for data collection. Additionally, given that the research targets young ethnic minority rural laborers, the research sample was filtered as follows,[6] following the practices of existing literature: the age of the sample was restricted to 18-35 years old, and among them, only those with rural household registration status and belonging to an ethnic minority were selected. After the aforementioned filtering process, the remaining sample size was 534, with specific sample information detailed in Table 1.The existing research in academia suggests that the minimum sample size required for structural equation modeling should be ten times the number of items in the variable with the most items or ten times the number of path relationships.[7] In this study, the variable with the most items is employment anxiety, which has 14 items in total; the number of path relationships in the structural equation model is 4. Therefore, the research sample for this study must be at least 140 or 40. This demonstrates that the sample size in this study meets the criteria for structural equation modeling.

Table 1. Basic Information of the Samples

The project	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age	14-18 years old	144	27
	19-25 years old	258	48.3
	26-35 years old	132	24.7
Sex	Male	249	46.6
	Female	285	53.4
Educational Background	High school and below	138	25.8
	Junior college or bachelor's degree	315	59
	Master's degree or above	81	15.2
Marital Status	Unmarried	351	65.7
	Married	180	33.7
	Divorced	3	0.6
	Widowed	351	65.7
Minority	Man Minority	84	15.7
	Hui Minority	3	0.6
	Zang Minority	3	0.6
	Miao Minority	147	27.5
	Zhuang Minority	90	16.9
	Tu Jia Minority	48	9
	Bu Yi Minority	3	0.6
	Dong Minority	3	0.6
	Yao Minority	12	2.2
	Bai Minority	9	1.7
	Ha Sa Ke Minority	3	0.6
	Dai Minority	15	2.8
	Li Su Minority	9	1.7
	Wa Minority	3	0.6
	She Minority	9	1.7
	Jing Po Minority	3	0.6
	Ke Er Ke Zi Minority	21	3.9
	Da Wo Er Minority	3	0.6
	Bu Lang Minority	9	1.7
	Ge Lao Minority	3	0.6
	A Chang Minority	12	2.2
	Pu Mi Minority	3	0.6
	Korean Minority	3	0.6
	Russian Minority	3	0.6
	Ewenke Minority	12	2.2
	De Ang Minority	12	2.2
	E Lun Chun Minority	9	1.7

2.3 Data Analysis and Hypothesis Testing

Table 2. Reliability and Convergent Validity Analysis Results of Measurement Scales

Variables	Items	Factor loadings	Cronbach's α value	CR value	AVE value
Anxiety Associated with Unemployment	1. I worry that my job will be the first to be cut if economic difficulties arise.	0.792	0.802	0.804	0.785
	2. I worry about my ability to keep my current job in the long term.	0.872			
	3. The thought of being laid off really terrifies me.	0.783			
	4. The idea of unemployment worries me.	0.776			
	5. I worry that my current job may not last.	0.761			
	6. I worry about being fired at any moment.	0.755			
	7. The instability of my current job worries me.	0.766			
	8. The possibility of losing my current job soon makes me uneasy.	0.78			
	9. I fear it will be hard to find a job comparable to my current one if I lose it.	0.798			
Employment-related anxiety	1. My parents' occupational backgrounds are not ideal.	0.787	0.784	0.786	0.778
	2. My family's economic foundation is weak.	0.747			
	3. My parents' social status and family network do not offer significant help in job-seeking.	0.79			
	4. My school ranks relatively low.	0.791			
	5. The educational quality of my school is inadequate.	0.787			
	6. The school's career guidance education is insufficient.	0.791			
	7. My school does not effectively promote its graduates.	0.79			
	8. The prospects for the development of my major are not promising.	0.73			

	9. The employment rate of my major or related fields has been unsatisfactory historically.	0.749			
	10. The mismatch between the specialized courses offered by the school and the demands of society makes it difficult for me to find employment.	0.76			
	11. Lack of social practice experience.	0.786			
	12. Disagreement with my parents' career perspectives.	0.78			
	13. Insufficient language expression skills.	0.788			
	14. Weak interpersonal communication abilities.	0.789			
The Adoption of Internet Technology	1. I can create or join friend circles focused on specific topics or issues.	0.796	0.78	0.785	0.795
	2. I can easily and quickly find relevant professionals.	0.724			
	3. I can directly communicate in real-time with other users I desire.	0.772			
	4. I can share job search-related information and resources with other job seekers.	0.781			
	5. I can directly contact companies or positions.	0.73			
	6. I can manage and expand my personal network.	0.736			
	7. I can accurately search for job positions.	0.737			
	8. I can conveniently and quickly apply online or submit resumes.	0.75			
	9. I can receive timely updates on my job search progress and feedback.	0.768			
	10. I can track real-time updates on job postings.	0.763			
	11. I can effectively assess my professional capabilities.	0.704			
	12. I can efficiently edit a professional resume.	0.739			
Employment Aspirations	1. Work is the most important thing in life.	0.84	0.857	0.862	0.798
	2. I love working, even just for the salary.	0.788			
	3. Work makes me feel like a part of society.	0.844			
	4. Even if I won the lottery, I would still want to keep working.	0.849			
	5. Work adds meaning to my life.	0.867			
	6. Getting a job is always better than being unemployed.	0.845			
	7. Unemployment is the worst thing that could happen to me.	0.829			
	8. Even with high unemployment benefits, I prefer having a job.	0.852			
	9. Finding a job is very important to me.	0.801			
	10. As an unemployed person, I feel inadequate.	0.852			
	11. In summary, I hate being unemployed.	0.817			

This study employs Smart PLS 3.0 software to analyze the collected data, primarily for assessing the measurement model and verifying the research hypotheses. As shown in Table 2, the factor loadings of all items range from 0.704 to 0.872, all above the recommended value of 0.6. The Cronbach's α values for each variable are between 0.780 and 0.857, all above the recommended value of 0.7, indicating good internal consistency for each variable. The CR values for each variable range from 0.785 to 0.862, all above the recommended value of 0.7, indicating good reliability of the items for each variable. The AVE values for each variable range from 0.778 to 0.798, suggesting good convergent validity for each variable.

As shown in Table 3, the square root of AVE for each variable is greater than the Pearson correlation coefficients between the variables, indicating good discriminant validity among the four variables in this study.

Table 3. Results of Discriminant Validity Analysis

Variables	Anxiety Associated with Unemployment	Employment-related anxiety	The Adoption of Internet Technology	Employment Aspirations
Anxiety Associated with Unemployment	0.993			
Employment-related anxiety	0.957	0.989		
The Adoption of Internet Technology	0.009	0.217	0.835	
Employment Aspirations	-0.047	-0.236	0.783	0.834

Note: Bold diagonal elements represent the square roots of AVE, and the lower triangle represents Pearson correlation coefficients between variables.

To further verify the impacts of unemployment anxiety, employment anxiety, and internet technology adoption on the employment willingness of ethnic minority rural youth labor, this study employs the bootstrapping method (with the number of resampling set at

5000 times) to test Hypothesis H3 and Hypothesis H4 proposed in this research, with specific numerical values shown in Table 4. In the mediation model effect test, mediation path 1: Unemployment Anxiety → Internet Technology Adoption → Employment Willingness (H3: β=1.168, P=0.001 < 0.05), indicating that internet technology adoption mediates the influence of unemployment anxiety on the employment willingness of ethnic minority rural youth labor, thus further validating Hypothesis H3; mediation path 2: Employment Anxiety → Internet Technology Adoption → Employment Willingness (H4: β=1.246, P=0.000 < 0.001), indicating that internet technology adoption mediates the influence of employment anxiety on the employment willingness of ethnic minority rural youth labor, thus further validating Hypothesis H4.

Table 4. Mediation Effect Test Results

Mediation Influence Pathways	Indirect Effects	T-statistic	P-value	Mediation Effect
1. Unemployment Anxiety → Internet Technology Adoption → Employment Intention	1.168	3.331	0.001	Hold
2. Employment Anxiety → Internet Technology Adoption → Employment Intention	1.246	3.505	0	Hold

This study employed the bootstrapping method in Smart PLS 3.0, sampling 5,000 times, to test the four research hypotheses set in this study. In terms of the influencing factors on the employment intentions of ethnic minority rural youth, unemployment anxiety (β=-1.214, P=0.006 < 0.01), employment anxiety (β=-1.251, P=0.004 < 0.01), and internet technology adoption (β=0.544, P=0.000 < 0.001) all significantly impact the employment intentions of ethnic minority rural youth, with specific values shown in Figure 2.
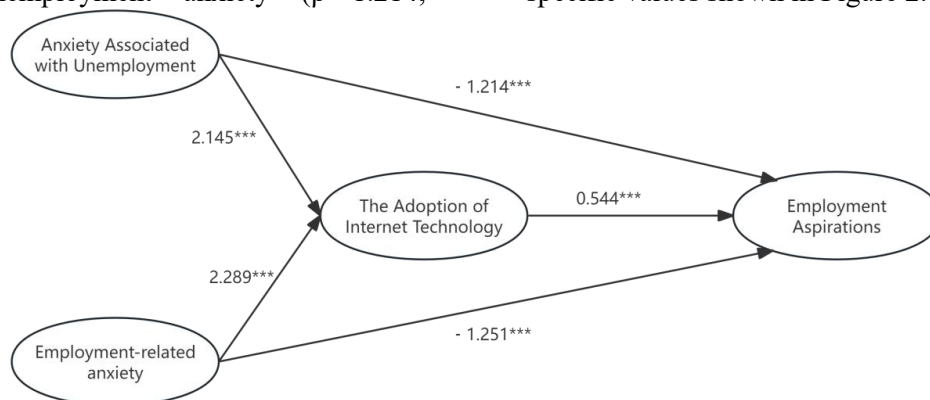

Figure 2. Standardized Path Coefficients among Variables
Note: ***p<0.001; **p<0.01; *p<0.05

2.4 Research Findings

Achieving high-quality employment for young laborers, particularly rural youth from ethnic minority groups, is a crucial foundation for the stable operation of China's economy and society. General Secretary emphasized: "Strengthen the employment-first policy, improve employment promotion mechanisms, and promote high-quality and full employment." As we embark on a new journey toward building a strong nation and national rejuvenation, we must address employment issues with a global perspective, ensuring that the employment-first policy delivers more concentrated and effective results, and earnestly prioritize employment as the most critical livelihood issue.[8] When unemployment anxiety and employment anxiety spread throughout society and become a pervasive negative psychological phenomenon, they also highlight the unemployment and employment anxieties faced by rural youth from ethnic minority groups. Against this social backdrop, this study collects data on the employment intentions of rural ethnic minority youth through online platforms, aiming to explore the role and mechanisms of internet technology adoption in alleviating unemployment and employment anxiety in the current employment landscape. The main conclusions are as follows:

First, unemployment and employment anxiety negatively affect the employment intentions of

rural youth from ethnic minority groups. According to the Affective Load Theory,[9] which analyzes the emotional burden of individual psychological stress, the antecedent factors of psychological stress stem from environmental uncertainty (in the labor market, primarily manifested as unemployment and employment anxiety), and this uncertainty intensifies over time, further influencing individual behavioral intentions. This theory highlights the critical role that an uncertain social environment plays in shaping individual behavioral intentions. The findings of this study confirm this argument, demonstrating that unemployment and employment anxiety among rural ethnic minority youth directly lead to a negative feedback effect on their employment intentions.

Second, as an intermediary factor, internet technology adoption significantly alleviates the negative psychological effects of unemployment and employment anxiety for rural ethnic minority youth experiencing such anxieties. This conclusion holds even after being tested through variable measurement and empirical analysis. Specifically, the human capital and information channels facilitated by internet technology make rural ethnic minority youth more inclined to use the internet to reduce unemployment and employment anxiety. This decision-making behavior is closely related to the three basic psychological needs proposed by Self-Determination Theory: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Autonomy refers to the individual's emphasis on the freedom of choice and decision-making regarding their own behavior; competence is the sense of accomplishment individual gain from task completion; and relatedness involves the interaction and interdependence between individuals and others. In the process of adopting internet technology, the autonomy, competence, and relatedness needs of rural ethnic minority youth are met, thereby alleviating their unemployment and employment anxieties, and subsequently enhancing their employment intentions.

3. Insights and Reflections

This study, starting from the theory of psychological resilience, constructs an explanatory framework and analytical approach for the employment intentions of rural youth from ethnic minorities, and on this basis, proposes targeted service solutions to enhance their employment intentions.

First, accelerate the advancement of information infrastructure construction in rural areas, particularly emphasizing the construction of information infrastructure in remote areas of the central and western regions inhabited by ethnic minorities. According to the 52nd "Statistical Report on the Development of China's Internet,"[10] the issues of imbalanced and insufficient development in China's information infrastructure construction remain prominent: as of June 2023, the number of internet users in China reached 1.079 billion, with an internet penetration rate of 76.4%. In contrast, the number of rural internet users reached 301 million, accounting for 27.9% of the total internet user population. Moreover, the internet penetration rate in urban areas of China stands at 85.1%, while that in rural areas is 60.5%. Despite the near-universal coverage of rural internet infrastructure, there are still 333 million non-internet users in China. Regionally, non-internet users are predominantly in rural areas, accounting for 59.0% of the total, which is 23.8 percentage points higher than the proportion of the rural population nationwide. To address this issue, the government should allocate special funds to prioritize and support the development of information infrastructure in remote areas of the central and western regions, particularly among ethnic minorities, and promote the extension of internet broadband networks to rural households. At the same time, it is necessary to reduce internet usage fees, such as continuously offering discounts of 50% or less on basic communication service fees to rural households lifted out of poverty,[11] thereby enhancing internet penetration and ensuring that all residents in minority rural areas have convenient access to and use of the internet. This approach can effectively narrow the digital divide between different regions, urban and rural areas, and various groups, achieving more equitable opportunities for information access and communication.

Second, while bridging the "digital divide," it is crucial to focus on the optimization and upgrading of internet technology service quality, thereby strengthening the mechanism through which internet technology enhances the employment willingness of young rural

laborers from ethnic minorities. Specifically, internet technology expands the channels of information and human capital to improve the employment willingness of young rural laborers from ethnic minorities. In the aspect of information channels, the labor market inherently exists as a supply-demand relationship. On the supply side of labor, one can utilize vocational ability assessment models such as the EPA Occupational Personality Test, MBTI Occupational Personality Test, or DISC Personality Test to systematically and comprehensively analyze the vocational abilities of young rural laborers from ethnic minorities, allowing them to better understand their strengths and make more targeted career choices. On the demand side of the labor market, leveraging big data technology, the professional competency assessment results of ethnic minority rural youth are intelligently matched with the job requirements of employers, achieving bidirectional accurate information delivery and reducing the search-matching costs for these youth. Secondly, relying on administrative forces, proactive vocational skill training initiatives are carried out. Internet platforms are utilized to integrate educational resources, offering online education to enhance the human capital levels of ethnic minority rural youth. Additionally, vocational skills training should accurately gauge the labor market's job demands and optimize vocational skills training programs around emerging economic elements such as internet digital economy and artificial intelligence, enhancing the employment capabilities of minority rural youth in new economic sectors.

Third, it is crucial to address the negative impact of unemployment anxiety and employment anxiety among minority rural young laborers on their employment willingness. Although unemployment anxiety and employment anxiety have become widespread phenomena in the labor market, presenting common challenges for employers and their employees, it would be unwise to blindly eliminate all external factors causing these anxieties at great effort without guaranteed effectiveness. In other words, providing social support and psychological counseling is of paramount importance in dealing with the prevalent unemployment and employment anxieties in the labor market.

Specifically, a specialized support network can be established to provide services such as psychological counseling, career planning guidance, and legal knowledge related to employment. These social support networks can be implemented through internet platforms. They offer a safe, open space for rural minority youth to express their inner pressures and anxieties, receiving help and advice from professionals. Alternatively, peer groups can be formed to allow rural minority youth to exchange, share experiences, and confide in each other. These groups can be established through online social platforms, local community organizations, or relevant associations. They provide a supportive, understanding, and collaborative environment for minority rural youth, alleviating anxiety and enhancing their willingness to seek employment.

4. Conclusion

Previous studies have predominantly focused on the relationship between individual psychological factors and employment intentions, without further elucidating the specific pathways through which individual psychology, in conjunction with other factors, influences employment intentions. This research explores the specific mechanisms by which unemployment anxiety and employment anxiety among minority rural youth affect their employment intentions, incorporating "internet technology adoption" as a mediating variable and constructing a model of the influencing mechanism on the employment intentions of minority rural youth. The analysis of direct and mediating effects within the model reveals that both unemployment anxiety and employment anxiety negatively impact employment intentions, while internet technology adoption plays a mediating role in the process through which these anxieties influence employment intentions. The establishment of these research hypotheses clarifies the factors related to media usage and psychological cognition that influence the employment willingness of ethnic minority rural youth, summarizes the two paths through which unemployment anxiety and employment anxiety affect the employment willingness of ethnic minority rural youth, namely direct impact and the mediating effect of internet technology adoption. The study of

unemployment anxiety, employment anxiety, and internet technology adoption in this paper integrates the theory of psychological resilience, enriching to some extent the theoretical framework concerning individual psychological factors and media technology factors, and promoting the enrichment and deepening of this research field. However, this study still has limitations in the following aspects, which can be further supplemented in future research. The study used data samples from minority rural youth labor, limiting the generalizability of the conclusions, which may not be applicable to other types or regions of rural youth groups. Additionally, all the data used in this study were cross-sectional at static time points, lacking dynamic longitudinal data analysis. As a result, the research results can only show the current employment willingness level of minority rural youth labor. In future studies, a longitudinal design could be considered to explore the unemployment anxiety, employment anxiety, internet technology adoption, and employment willingness of minority rural youth labor at different stages, aiming to conduct a more in-depth and scientific study on the issue of "employment," the largest livelihood concern.

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