Employment Decisions Based on Class and Ability: The Role of Social Dominance Orientation

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Abstract

In order to explore the role of decision makers' social dominance orientation in employment decisions based on class and ability of job seekers, 70 subjects with high social dominance orientation and 74 subjects with low social dominance orientation were recruited in this study. The subjects were asked to evaluate the employability of job seekers according to the class information and ability information in the profile. The findings are as follows: (1) Both the class information and the ability information of job seekers affect the employment decision. The employability of high-class job seekers and high -ability job seekers is higher than that of low-class job seekers and low-ability job seekers; (2) Social dominance affects decision-makers' consideration of the class and ability of job seekers in employment decision -making. The employability evaluation of high-class job seekers and low-ability job seekers shows that the subjects with high social dominance orientation are higher than those with low social dominance orientation; (3) the decision-makers with high social dominance orientation scored higher than those with low social dominance orientation on high-class and low-ability job seekers. The results show that class, as a complementary factor of ability, affects employment decision making, and social dominance orientation enhances the degree of emphasis that decision-makers attach to class of job applicants when making employment decision.

Keywords

Social class, Employment decision, Social dominance.

1. Introduction

The problem of class solidification has become a challenge faced by many countries today. A large number of domestic and foreign studies have found that children of parents of low class are more likely to remain in low class when they grow up [1][2][3][4]According to the traditional[5][6][7]But only focusing on access to higher education is not enough. If students from lower-class families want to make the class transition, they must successfully find a job after graduating from university. For many people, the first job is particularly important, which will affect their subsequent career development and income increase [8]. [8]However, few studies have explored the difficulties faced by lower-class college students in finding a job after graduation.

In a job search, a person's ability to get a job depends on the decision maker's decision to hire them. These decisions are called hiring decisions. Hiring decision refers to the decision maker selecting suitable applicants for corresponding positions based on the information provided by the applicants[9]. Previous studies have found that employment decision making is a complex process, and decision makers will consider many factors, including the gender, age, profession, skills, personality and practical experience of job seekers[10][11]but the core of many factors is the ability level of job seekers [12][13][12][13]. In recent years, some studies have found that

the social class of job seekers is also an important factor in employment decision-making[14]and is closely related to job seekers[2][5][15].

social class is based on the perception of objective material resources (income, education and career prestige)[16][17]. Social class not only affects an individual's own psychology and behavior[18]but also affects the process and outcome of interpersonal communication[19][20]. The research finds that people will form corresponding stereotypes according to the social status of the group, and the stereotypes on the ability of people of low social class are negative, believing that people of low social class should show a worse ability level[21]. According to social cognitive theory, stereotypes are not only limited to cognitive structure, but also affect subsequent information processing, perception and behavior[22]thus causing people to treat people of low class in an unfair way[23][24]. For example, Batruch et al. (2017) found that teachers ignore and devalue high level Reactions from poor children in test ratings as' low class high power 'threats to the social hierarchy, and Restorative Reactions are reactions. This can lead to devaluing the performance of poor students[25]. According to the theory of social domination, there is a psychological orientation to maintain the existing hierarchical order in hierarchical society -- social domination orientation. social dominance orientation ([26][27]and is the individual variable most closely related to bias[28]. It has been found that individuals [29]with high dominance orientation have stronger class stereotypes [29]. Enhancing a social context, hierarchy-enhancing, that enlarges class gaps[30]. Therefore, the present study speculates that decision-makers with higher social dominance will take job applicants' class into greater consideration when making employment decisions.

In short, previous studies have proved that decision-makers consider both social class and ability level of job seekers in employment decision-making. At present, the mechanism of how social class affects employment decision-making is still unclear. The purpose of this study is to explore whether decision-makers' consideration of social class of job seekers in employment decision-making is influenced by their own social dominance orientation. We hypothesize that decision-makers with different social dominance orientation consider job seekers' ability level and class level to different degrees when making employment decisions, that is, decision-makers with higher social dominance orientation will pay more attention to job seekers' social class when making employment decisions.

2. Methods

2.1. Subject

The online simulation experiment was conducted on the network platform, and 157 data were received. 13 subjects who did not answer seriously were excluded, and 144 valid data were obtained. The Chinese version of SDO6 scale compiled by Sidanius and revised by domestic researchers Xu Lun and Lin Chongde (2012) was used for measurement. The results showed that 70 subjects (M = 4.86, SD = 0.55) with higher than the overall mean (M = 4.37) were divided into the high SDO group, and 74 subjects (M = 4.03, SD =0.23) with lower than the overall mean were divided into the low SDO group. On examination, the high and low SDO groups differed significantly (p < 0.01).

2.2. Research Tools

2.2.1. Experimental materials

The experimental material is a brief introduction of job seekers, which contains three aspects: basic information, ability information and level information. The basic information included name, age and education background. The influence of social dominance on bias is significant in the hierarchical reinforcement situation [30]. Some studies believe that lawyers belong to the occupation of hierarchical reinforcement [31], and it can be considered that the recruitment

of trainee lawyers belongs to the hierarchical reinforcement situation, and the professional ability grouping of lawyers can be clearly reflected in the profile. Therefore, this study chooses the recruitment of trainee lawyers as the employment decision situation.

To avoid the influence of the name, the applicant's name is replaced with a letter symbol. They must be 22 years old and have a bachelor's degree in law from a University of Political Science and Law. Class information is divided into high and low class groups by household registration, parents' occupation and hobbies. The hukou of high class job seekers is "economically developed big city", while the hukou of low class job seekers is "economically backward rural". For reference to Lu Xueyi (2002) 's occupational division of classes [32], the father occupation of high-class job seekers is "company executive" and the mother occupation is "university teacher", while the father occupation of low-class job seekers is "construction worker" and "supermarket shopping guide". According to the study of Zhou Changcheng (2021)[33]" are listed as high-class activities, while "watching TV series, playing games and shopping" are listed as low-class activities. Ability information is divided into clear high and low groups based on professional ability, language ability and additional skills. The indicators of professional competence were obtained or not, "already obtained" was high ability, "not yet obtained" was low ability; The index of language ability is the national English Test level for College students, "6" is high ability, "4" is low ability; The index of additional skills is the National Computer Rank Certificate, "Level 2" is high ability, "Level 1" is low ability. Materials are divided into four categories according to ability and class, namely low level low ability, low level high ability, high level low ability and high level high ability.

Synopsis:

"Y classmate, 22 years old, fresh graduate of law major of a Political Science and Law University, from [economically developed city/economically backward countryside], father is [company executive/construction worker], mother is [university teacher/supermarket shopping guide]. Y likes to watch concerts, play basketball, read classics/watch TV series, play games and go shopping. Y [has/has not yet] obtained the national unified Legal professional qualification Certificate, has college English [CET-6 / CET-4] certificate and National Computer [Level 2 / Level 1] certificate, skilled in office, Photoshop and other office software."

2.2.2. Social Dominance orientation Scale

The Chinese version of SDO6 scale compiled by Sidanius and revised by domestic researchers Xu Lun and Lin Chongde (2012) was used to measure the level of social dominance orientation of the subjects. There are 16 questions on the scale. In this study, 7-point scale was adopted, and the subjects were required to report the degree of agreement on the statements of each question, with 1 indicating "strongly disagree" and 7 indicating "strongly agree", among which the 9th to 16th were reverse scoring questions. After the reverse scoring, the average score of the 16 questions indicated the social dominance orientation of the subjects. The higher the score, the higher the social dominance orientation. In this study, the internal consistency coefficient α of the scale of social dominance orientation was 0.69.

2.3. Experimental procedure

The experiment was published on the network platform in the form of a questionnaire, and the subjects used electronic devices to scan the two-dimensional code to enter the experiment interface. The subjects first filled in the demographic questionnaire, including gender, grade, etc., then filled in the social dominance orientation scale, and finally conducted the simulated hiring experiment. The subjects were required to complete each step in accordance with the corresponding instructions. In the simulated hiring experiment, participants were asked to rate, on a seven-point scale, "Based on the profile presented, the social class, ability level and employability of the person in the profile (how likely they are to become a lawyer)," with 1 being very low and 7 being very high.

2.4.   Experiment design and data statistics

The experiment adopted a mixed experimental design of 2 (subjects' social dominance orientation: high and low) ×2 (job seekers' class: high and low) ×2 (job seekers' ability: high and low), in which social dominance level was the inter-subject variable, job seekers' class and ability were both internal variables, and the dependent variable was subjects' employability rating of the job seekers in the profile. SPSS 25.0 was used to process the experimental data.

3.   Results

3.1.   Validity test of class and ability grouping

The paired sample T-test was carried out on the subjects' evaluation of the high and low class of job seekers in the materials. It was found that the class score of the subjects on the high class job seekers (M = 5.48, SD = 0.65) was significantly higher than that on the low class job seekers (M = 3.49, SD = 0.93). $t(143)= 25.82$, $p < 0.001$, Cohen's d = 2.49. Indicates that the high and low level grouping of material Settings is valid.

The paired sample T-test was conducted on the evaluation of high and low ability of job seekers in the materials. It was found that the ability score of the subjects on the high ability job seekers (M = 5.33, SD = 0.77) was significantly higher than that on the low ability job seekers (M = 4.07, SD = 0.96). $t(143)= 15.71$, $p < 0.01$, Cohen's d = 1.09. Indicates that the high and low capacity grouping of material Settings is valid.

3.2.   The effect of class and ability on employability

Score employability on a scale of 2 (decision maker's social dominance: high, low) x 2 (job seeker's class: High, low) x 2 (job seeker's ability: The variance analysis of high and low) shows that the main effect of job seeker's class is significant $F(1,142) = 75.59$, $p < 0.001$, $\eta p^2 = 0.35$, the main effect of job seeker's ability is significant $F(1,142) = 228.81$, $p < 0.001$, $\eta p^2 = 0.62$, The interaction between job seeker's class and decision-maker's social dominance orientation was significant $F(1,142) = 14.04$, $p < 0.001$, $\eta p^2 = 0.09$, interaction between job seeker's ability and decision-maker's social dominance orientation was significant $F(1,142) = 4.17$, $p < 0.05$, $\eta p^2 = 0.03$, The interaction between job seeker's ability and class was significant $F(1,142) = 7.82$, $p < 0.01$, $\eta p^2 = 0.05$. Further analysis shows that the employability of high-class job seekers (M = 5.12, SD = 0.93) is significantly higher than that of low-class job seekers (M = 4.34, SD = 0.99), $t(143)= 8.23$, $p < 0.001$, Cohen's d = 0.81. The employability of high-ability jobseekers (M = 5.44, SD = 0.84) was significantly higher than that of low-ability jobseekers (M = 4.01, SD = 1.07), $t(143)= 15.02$, $p < 0.001$, Cohen's d = 1.49. When evaluating the employability of high class job seekers, the high SDO decision-makers' score (M = 5.39, SD = 0.89) was higher than that of low SDO decision-makers' score (M = 4.86, SD = 0.89), $t(142) = 3.50$, $p < 0.01$, and when evaluating the employability of low class job seekers, There is no significant difference between the scores of high and low SDO decision-makers (Figure 1); When evaluating the employability of low ability job seekers, high SDO decision-makers (M = 4.21, SD = 1.17) scored higher than low SDO decision-makers (M = 3.83, SD = 0.94), $t = 2.13$, $p < 0.05$, and when evaluating the employability of high ability job seekers, There was no significant difference between the scores of high and low SDO decision-makers (Figure 2).
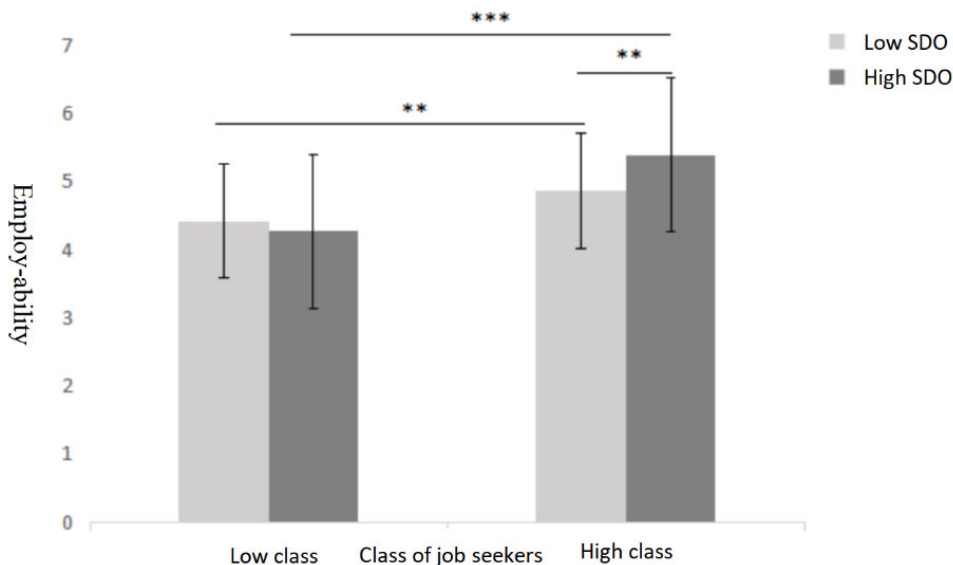
Figure 1. Employability of job seekers with different classes
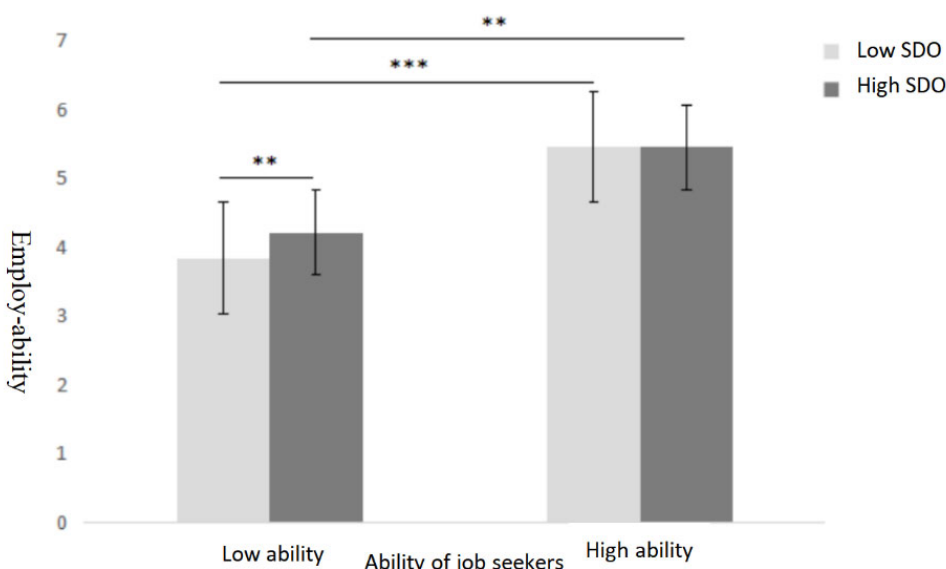
Figure 2. Employability of job seekers with different abilities

4. Discussion

Previous studies have shown that both class and ability of job applicants influence employment decisions. This study aims to explore whether the degree to which decision-makers consider these two factors in making employment decisions is influenced by social dominance orientation. The results showed that subjects with high social dominance propensity tended to use class information to evaluate the employability of job candidates, while subjects with low dominance propensity tended to use ability information to evaluate the employability of job candidates.

First of all, our results show that the main effects of both class and ability of job seekers are significant when evaluating target employability, indicating that subjects' evaluation is based on both class and ability of job seekers. In employment decision making, ability is often regarded as the most important factor to be considered, but we found that class information also affects employment decision making, which is consistent with previous research results [34]. Secondly, we also found that subjects' social dominance propensity has a significant

interaction with job seekers' ability and class, that is, decision-makers with high SDO have a significantly higher evaluation of the employability of job seekers with high levels of SDO than decision-makers with low levels of SDO, and subjects with high SDO have a significantly higher evaluation of the employability of targets with low levels of SDO than subjects with low levels of SDO. At the same time, this indicates the influence of social dominance orientation on employment decision making, that is, decision-makers with higher SDO will measure job seekers' employability more by class and less by ability.

More importantly, the study found that the social dominance of decision makers plays a different role under different abilities and classes of job seekers, and there are complementary effects. Specifically, there is no difference between high and low SDO decision-makers' evaluation of the employability of low-class job seekers, and high and low SDO decision-makers' evaluation of low-class job seekers with high ability is greater than that of low-class job seekers with low ability, which indicates that decision-makers mainly consider the ability of job seekers in this case, and when job seekers are of high class, There are significant differences between high and low SDO decision-makers in their evaluation of employability, which indicates that high SDO decision-makers pay more attention to the class of job seekers. There is no difference between high and low SDO decision-makers in evaluating the employability of high-ability job seekers, indicating that decision-makers do not consider the class of high-ability job seekers, while there is a significant difference between high and low SDO decision-makers in evaluating the employability of low-ability job seekers, indicating that decision-makers pay more attention to the class level of job seekers when their ability is not outstanding. The above shows that, on the one hand, when the applicant is not prominent, the decision maker will only consider his or her ability and SDO will not play a role; when the applicant is prominent, the decision maker will consider his or her class level more due to a higher SDO; On the other hand, when the applicant is not outstanding in class, the decision maker will consider his or her class more to make SDO work, on the contrary, when the applicant is outstanding in class, the decision maker will only consider his or her level of competence as a factor in hiring. According to the theory of social class cognition, people of high class are often considered to have higher ability level, namely the "class = ability" effect [21]. Different from previous theories, this study found that class and ability are not completely equivalent factors in employment decision-making, but as complementary factors that play a role in decision makers' behaviors, that is, when one factor is low, the other factor will receive more attention. This complementarity is moderated by social dominance, that is, the higher the level of SDO, the more they think class and ability complement each other. In conclusion, social dominance affects employment decision making through the complementary effect of class and ability, that is, decision makers with high social dominance orientation consider job seeker class as a complementary or substitute factor for ability.

Shortcomings and future prospects of this study. Firstly, the selected subjects are mainly college students and postgraduates. Since individuals with higher education degrees have higher SDO[35]SDO of the subjects in this study is higher than that of other studies [36]Secondly, this study believes that the decision-maker's consideration of social class in employment decision making is due to its psychological effect on maintaining the social hierarchy order, but the category of social hierarchy includes not only social class, but also other categories such as gender and ethnicity [37]. This study has not yet explored the influence of other hierarchical factors on employment decision-making, and more factors can be included in the future.

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