

# Impact of the Theory of Planned Behaviour on University Students' Commitment to Career Choice — The Case of Wuyi university

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to explore the influence of Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) on university students' career choice commitment and to conduct an empirical study using Wuyi University as an example. The study applies the theory to the field of university students' career choice in order to analyse how factors such as university students' attitudes, perceived social pressures and their own abilities affect their career choice commitment.

**Keyword:** Theory of Planned Behaviour university Students Career Choice Commitment

## INTRODUCTION

With the rapid advancements in economy and science and development, the issues of employment among university students in China have gained immense interest (Bilous et al., 2022). Wuyi Mountain (at Fujian Province) is one of China's first national parks and recognised as the world's heritage site of both culture and nature. This is where Wuyi University is located. Accordingly, contemporary university students are of the generation born after 2000 following the influence of the one-child policy. They clearly display personalised characteristics that have substantial effects on their career choice commitment. They are more likely to not follow the conventional concept of employment—they intend to go for a job that they are interested in. Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) provides a theoretical framework for understanding career choice. This paper takes Wuyi University as an example to explore the influence of TPB on University students' commitment to career choice. Therefore, exploring the relationship between Theory of Planned Behaviour, TPB and career choice commitment among university students from Wuyi University is deemed noteworthy in obtaining better understanding of university students' career preferences and decision-making process and providing valuable theoretical and practical insights for career guidance and counselling services in the university.

## Overview of the Theory of Planned Behaviour

TRA has been regarded as a highly predictive and persuasive theory for application prior to the introduction of TPB. According to TRA, the action comes with a specific reason as behavioural intention directly leads to action. Later on, an extended version of TRA emerges—that is, TPB. It has also become one of the most predictive theories of persuasion.

As postulated by TRA (LaCaille, 2020) and TPB itself, attitudes affects behavioural intention, and behavioural intention leads to behaviour. According to TPB, attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control collectively influence one's behavioural intention and action. Prior to assessing the interrelationships of these key components, it is imperative to first explore these components individually. As for this study, specific personality traits and the concept of career choice commitment are jointly incorporated into the theoretical framework of TPB to explore the influence of personality on career choice commitment. Considering the TPB

framework, the this study recognises the influence of varying factors on attitudes, which then stimulate their intention to pursue their career goals and then adopt behaviours of pursuing and committing to the career of their choice. Attitudes towards the career choice can influence behavioural intention and subsequently, prompt the formation of effective behavioural outcomes for the career of their choice. Based on the study's findings on the relationship between personality and career choice commitment, behavioural intention can be observed accordingly. Adding to that, based on these findings, the career development process in terms of curriculum and career counselling can be further improved.

TPB provides the underlying theoretical basis for the this study in examining the relationship between personality and career choice commitment among university students from Wuyi University. This study hypothesises the influence of attitudes on behavioural intention and behaviour in regards to career choice. Adding to that, this study views personality as an influential factor in influencing university students' attitudes, which has been discussed in literature. For instance, Penn (2024) focused on university students and identified perceptions and thinking as key influencing factors of their career choice commitment process. TPB elucidates how a specific behaviour emerges through the interactions of different components. As an extended version of TRA, TPB suggests that a behaviour is not completely voluntary and can be influenced by behavioural beliefs, normative beliefs, and control beliefs, which are discussed in the next subsections.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A cluster sampling method was used to select full-time undergraduate students from the first to third grade in Wuyishan area as research subjects. As for this study, the self-administered survey method is deemed the most fitting method (to collect the relevant data from university students) among the many survey methods available, such as door-to-door survey, executive survey, mail-based survey, and telephone survey. Considering the objectives of this study in assessing the hypothesised relationships, this study opts for a quantitative approach. The selection of the self-administered survey method is due to its efficiency to operate and the ease of completion for the survey respondents to provide their responses and return the completed questionnaire. After all, the survey method is a widely used quantitative method to determine the underlying patterns in the data (Tong, 2020) or to test the proposed hypotheses (Hadi et al., 2019; Harris et al., 2020). In this study, a sample of 350 university students from Wuyi university was selected by questionnaire survey method to collect data on their attitudes, subjective norms, perceived behavioural control and commitment to career choice, and the data were analysed using SPSS.

### Expected results

#### Attitudes and Career Choice Commitment

The prospective study found that university students' attitudes toward a particular career will directly influence their level of career choice commitment. Specifically, when university students have a positive, upbeat attitude toward a particular career, they are more likely to have a strong sense of commitment to that career. This positive attitude may stem from interest in the career, optimism about the future prospects of the career, or recognition of the personal value and sense of achievement that the career can bring. Therefore, we expect a positive relationship between attitude and career choice commitment, i.e., the more positive the attitude, the higher the career choice commitment.

#### Subjective norms and career choice commitment

In addition, university students are often influenced by social groups from family, friends, teachers, and other sources during the career choice process. The expectations, perceptions, and attitudes of these social groups

toward particular careers constitute the subjective norms perceived by university students. Anticipation studies have found that when university students perceive stronger subjective norms, they are more likely to be influenced by those norms, resulting in a higher sense of commitment to the career. Such subjective norms may be expressed in the form of a family member's recommendation of a career, a friend's successful experience with the career, or a teacher's positive evaluation of the career. Therefore, we expect that there is also a positive correlation between subjective norms and career choice commitment, i.e., the stronger the subjective norms, the higher the career choice commitment.

### **Perceived behavioural control and career choice commitment**

Finally, university students' confidence in their ability to succeed in a particular career, i.e., perceived behavioural control, is also an important factor influencing their career choice commitment. The prospective study found that university students are more likely to develop a strong sense of commitment to a particular career when they are confident that they are competent in that career and that they have sufficient resources and abilities to meet the challenges of the career. This confidence may stem from one's professional skills, practical experience, educational background, or clear plans and expectations for future career development. Therefore, we expect the same positive relationship between perceived behavioural control and career choice commitment, i.e., the higher the confidence, the higher the career choice commitment.

In summary, through empirical research, we expect to be able to verify the positive influence of attitude, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control on university students' commitment to career choice, so as to provide scientific basis and reference for career guidance work in colleges and universities. At the same time, these findings will also help university students to have a clearer understanding of their career interests and strengths, and to make more informed and determined career choices!

## **DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Discussion**

Combining the results of the study, we found that attitudes, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control work together to form a complex interactive mechanism for university students' career choice commitment.

First of all, attitude, as an individual's emotional inclination and value evaluation of a specific object (in this case, a career), directly affects university students' perception and acceptance of a career. Positive career attitudes can stimulate college students' intrinsic motivation, make them have strong interest and enthusiasm in their careers, and thus enhance their career choice commitment. On the contrary, negative career attitudes may lead to university students' resistance to careers and reduce career choice commitment.

Second, subjective norms, as the expectations and pressures from social groups perceived by university students, have a significant impact on their career choice commitment. When university students perceived subjective norms are compatible with their own career interests, they will be more determined in their career choices and develop higher career commitment. On the contrary, when subjective norms are contrary to their own career interests, university students may feel confused and ambivalent, thus lowering their career choice commitment.

Finally, perceptual-behavioural control, as university students' confidence and self-efficacy in their ability to succeed in a particular career, is an important support for their career choice commitment. When university students are confident that they can be competent in a particular career, they will be more actively engaged in

career preparation and practice, thus enhancing career choice commitment. On the contrary, university students who lack confidence and self-efficacy may be hesitant to engage in a career for fear of failure, thus lowering their career choice commitment.

When exploring the influencing factors and mechanisms, we also need to be aware of some possible interfering factors, such as personalities, family backgrounds, and social environments. These factors may act indirectly on university students' career choice commitment by influencing variables such as attitude, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control. Therefore, in the follow-up study, we need to further explore in depth the interactions among these factors in order to understand the formation mechanism of university students' career choice commitment more comprehensively.

## Recommendations

In response to the findings of the study, we put forward the following educational interventions and policy recommendations:

1. Strengthen career planning education: Colleges and universities should offer career planning courses to help university students understand their career interests, abilities and values, and clarify their career goals and development directions. At the same time, by inviting industry experts and alumni to share their experiences, university students can gain a deeper understanding of the characteristics and requirements of different careers and enhance their career awareness.
2. Enhancing the employability and self-efficacy of university students: Colleges and universities should strengthen their co-operation with enterprises and provide more internships and practice opportunities for college students, so that they can exercise and enhance their vocational skills in practice. At the same time, by organising activities such as career planning competitions and mock interviews, they can help university students enhance their self-confidence and self-efficacy and improve their employment competitiveness.
3. Guiding university students to establish correct career concepts: Colleges and universities should strengthen the education of university students on career concepts and guide them to establish correct career, value and life outlook. By holding career planning lectures and career planning counselling, they can help university students understand the diversity and uncertainty of career development, and cultivate positive career attitudes and the ability to cope with career challenges.
4. Strengthening home-school co-operation and jointly promoting the career development of university students: Colleges and universities should strengthen communication and co-operation with parents, and jointly pay attention to the career development of university students. Through parent-teacher conferences, home-school contact platforms and other means, they can provide timely feedback to parents on the career development of university students, guide parents to set up correct career expectations and attitudes, and provide support and help for the career development of college students.

To sum up, by strengthening career planning education, enhancing university students' employability and self-efficacy, guiding university students to set up correct career concepts and strengthening home-school co-operation, we can effectively promote university students to form a more stable and positive commitment to their career choices and lay a solid foundation for their future development.

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