The Factors Influencing the Career Choices of Western students and International Students: The Role of Culture

Xin Zhou

565324881@qq.com

Abstract: *Positive career choices bring university students a sense of fulfilment in life, but they are impacted by culture. However, most existing research has neglected the issue of career choice among international students, particularly from a comparative, cross-cultural perspective. Accordingly, this work analyses the existing literature on the career choices of Western students and international students using an extended literature review method and a three- dimensional framework including intrinsic, extrinsic and interpersonal factors. A total of 47 pieces of literature are included in the review and the findings suggest that international students focus more on combining personal interests and social responsibility, occupational social prestige and family/social obligations in their career choices than Western students. Furthermore, culture only influences students' career choices to a certain extent. Further research should explore the relationship between extrinsic factors and the career choices of international students, with a particular focus on the impact of the pandemic. Consequently, this study can help universities and educators deepen their understanding of students' career choices from a cultural perspective and thus help prepare students to become more productive members of the workforce.*

Keywords: International students; Western students; Culture factors; Three-dimension framework; Career Choice.

1. BACKGROUND AND CURRENT RESEARCH STATUS

Recently, research on career choice has attracted the attention of educators and young graduates alike. Gati and Saka (2001) argue that the complexity of career decisions increases with age. This suggests that there is a higher degree of complexity in the career choices faced by university students (undergraduate, postgraduate, doctoral) than those who have not entered higher education (Howard and Walsh, 2011). As such, the career decisions of university students deserve significant attention.

However, current research on students' career decisions has mainly focused on adolescents (Akosah-Twumasi et al, 2018), including primary and secondary school students (Amin et al, 2018b; Robust, 2007). Moreover, there is a particular paucity of research conducted at the undergraduate, postgraduate and doctoral levels. However, a few studies have examined this population and concentrated on students pursuing degrees. For example, Crockett and Hays (2011) focused on the career decisions of international students studying in the US, Liaw et al (2016) investigated the future career expectations of Singaporean students studying in the UK, and Gorard et al (2021) identified the career preferences of UK undergraduate students. Another important aspect is that only Purohit et al's (2020) study has provided a systematic review of all factors in the career choice process of undergraduate and graduate students. However, the influence of culture on students' career decisions was neglected in their study. It especially lacked a comparative analysis of career choice factors across cultural groups (Purohit et al, 2020). Therefore, this study seeks to survey the existing literature through thematic analysis to explore the factors influencing university students' career choices.

Furthermore, given the influence of cultural values on career choices and the increasing intercultural exchange, examining the scope and limitations of existing research on university students' career choices is essential, as is focusing on how cross-cultural mobility affects the career decisions of bicultural students. The current research largely ignores the career choices of bicultural groups and focuses more on the development of monocultural groups (Akosah-Twumasi et al, 2018), as in the career survey of UK students (Gorard et al, 2021). However, the current research also reveals that the career choices of bicultural students may be influenced by different factors than their home country peers (Popadiuk and Arthur, 2014; Hou et al, 2018). Consequently, this research may help policymakers and educational researchers to develop and integrate sound career support systems for students to help them become a more effective workforce.

In this paper, 'international students' refers to Asian students from collectivist cultural backgrounds who were born

and raised in Asian countries. However, they study at higher education levels, such as Bachelor's or Master's degrees in Western countries with individualistic cultures. In addition, 'Western students' refers to university students who grew up and studied in a Western individualist culture, such as British university students and American PhD students. As such, International students, Western students are the main subjects of this research. The research question is: How does culture influence the career choices of Western students and International students?

2. RESEARCH METHOD AND RESEARCH PARADIGM

2.1 Research Method

Although some literature focuses on the career choices of university student groups, few comprehensive studies capture the factors that influence the career choices of Western and international students. Therefore, based on the research gap, this paper chose a literature review as the research method and used existing research to compare the differences in career choice between the two student groups to obtain a relationship between culture and career choice.

Furthermore, this paper chose the extended literature review approach to address the research questions. Although narrative, traditional literature reviews are sufficiently focused on research questions to conduct a literature review (Coughlan et al, 2007; Polit and Beck, 2006). Nonetheless, this study is a cross-national comparison with Western and international students, so the research questions are not very focused. Besides, the researcher could not gather enough literature to conduct a narrative literature review for the time being as there is not enough academic investigation of bicultural groups. Thus, based on the current situation, this study opted for the more liberal and extensive ELR method of conducting a literature review using existing literature. Overall, this paper uses a literature review as the research method and employs ELR to complete the study.

2.2 Research Paradigm

Existing studies have used more qualitative research to explain the career choices of Western and international students. Interpretive and qualitative research data collection methods were chosen primarily because they allow one to explore the lived experiences of young people who have made career choices (Bryan and Guccione, 2018; Grimpe et al, 2019). Firstly, interpretive researchers interpret the 'world of human experience' (Cohen et al, 2018).

They prefer to collect data from personal experiences, understandings and perceptions as a basis for interpreting social reality (Willis et al, 2007). This dissertation studied the career choices of Asian international students based on three dimensions: instinct, extrinsic and interpersonal factors. The aim was to reveal the typical relationship between university students' career choices and culture. Most of the researchers discussed in this study used an interpretivist paradigm to explain the students' personal experiences and explore the participants' world.

Secondly, interpretivism is concerned with shifts in specific cultural contexts. In an assessment by Willis et al (2007), he argued that researchers should be aware of contextual factors when gathering information, especially regarding intercultural differences. This view was echoed in Moskal's (2020) study: she chose to study Chinese international students working towards a master's degree in the UK and found that they were influenced by both traditional Chinese culture and mainstream British culture in their career choices. Hence, her research presented a shift between the two cultures (Moskal, 2020).

2.3 Keywords

Three themes – career choice, university students and factors – were selected for this paper during the literature search for the secondary sources required. These themes were intended to clarify the relationship between university students' career choices and the factors in these decisions. Moreover, keywords were used to obtain search results for the target articles using Boolean operators (OR/AND) (Pham, 2018).

However, some of the keywords were modified during the literature search. For example, in the initial search for 'career development', it was found that this term was often used in the 2004–2014 literature (Whiston and Keller, 2004; Tanova et al, 2008), but 'career choice' and 'career choice' and 'job decision making' were used more frequently in recent articles (Workman, 2015; Amin et al, 2018a). Furthermore, some of the keywords were not sufficiently broad and were revised. The term 'university students' was revised to include undergraduate students,

postgraduate students and PhD students. Therefore, the following keywords were used in the search for this literature review.

• 'Career choice' theme

(Career choice OR Career decision OR Career selection OR Career motivation OR Career development OR Career decision making OR Career exploration OR Career guidance OR Jobs OR Occupation OR Occupational OR Job-seeking OR Careers OR Vocations OR Vocational)

• 'University students' theme

AND (university students OR undergraduate students OR Master's students OR PhD students OR International students OR International student OR Asian returnees OR Chinese returnees OR Vietnamese returnees OR Vietnamese international students OR Thai OR Indonesia OR Malaysia OR UK university students OR England university students OR US students OR American students OR American graduates OR Canada students OR New Zealand students OR Australian students OR Millennials)

• 'Factors' theme

AND (Intrinsic OR Extrinsic OR Interpersonal OR Parents factors OR Parent values OR Friends OR Work environment OR Personal interest OR Growth opportunities OR Individual freedom OR Cultural OR Culture OR Cultures OR Individualistic OR Collectivist OR Cross-cultural)

2.4 Inclusion Criteria

In the reading and review process, chose not to limit their search to journals from a particular period because there were few studies on graduates' employment choices. Furthermore, English was the language used for data collection, as the study lacked the time and personnel to translate studies published in other languages. Next, qualitative research methods were collected for this thesis, because the paradigm chosen for the study was interpretivism. In addition, to ensure that the information collected was high quality, only peer-reviewed literature was included. Peer review is considered an effective method of improving the quality of papers (Gielen et al, 2010).

Based on these inclusion criteria, the data collection period was 21 July 2023 to 30 August 2023. These databases repository was initially used to collect data and 5,316 documents were collected for the next validation stage. Secondly, the titles were checked for consistency with the study topic and only 455 articles were found to meet the methodological requirements.

2.5 Exclusion Criteria

Despite the use of keywords as a criterion for literature collection, some studies did not meet the requirements of this review because they addressed vocational training or students' choice of major. As a result, the author identified irrelevance to the purpose of this paper as an 'exclusion criterion', leaving 68 articles for further research. Next, 21 articles were excluded because they did not use a qualitative approach to investigate the reasons for university students' career choices. Ultimately, Appendix 1 shows 47 articles that met the requirements were extracted and collected using EndNote as a document manager.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Career choice is a complex process in which students choose the field of work that best suits their individual needs (Lent et al, 2002; LeBlanc, 2010). Currently, most research focuses on the career path decisions of adolescents and university students. Lent et al (2002) and Gokuladas (2010) argued that career choice is a matter of personal choice. However, contemporary critical realists disagree; they believe that career choice is a process in which subjective experience and objective reality are mutually constructed (Layder, 1993). Specifically, the freedom to choose a career solely based on one's will without being bound by market conditions is a naïve expectation in the real world. For this reason, career choice requires the consideration of necessary objective realities, such as the rigidity of supply and demand in the job market and the persistence of institutional and systemic discrimination and segregation in employment (Özbilgin et al, 2005). These social factors may impact students' or graduates' career

choices and their future success (Wang and Wanberg, 2017). Thus, career choice is a complex social phenomenon.

The definition of employment choice suggests that an individual's choice of career is a combination of personal subjective factors and real-world objective factors (Krumboltz et al, 1976). Bandura (2002) suggested that individual, environmental and behavioural factors contribute to students' learning behaviours and work outcomes. Similarly, Lent et al (2002) found that dynamic interactions between the person and the environment contribute to youth career choice, leading to the development of Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT), one of the common theoretical frameworks in the field today.

SCCT suggests that perceived self-efficacy, outcome expectations and goal- setting behaviors influence students' career choices. Moreover, the theory emphasizes the significant impact of factors such as financial need, family pressure and educational constraints on university students' career decision-making processes (Lent et al, 2002). For example, Erdogmus et al (2005) conceptualized the job search process of MBA students in the UK, Israel and Turkey as a micro-level personal choice, comprising the freedom to choose their career, education and training, the possession of competencies and skills, and the social resources that family and friends can provide. Similarly, Shin and Kelly (2013) used SCCT and a quantitative questionnaire to analyze variables such as intrinsic motivation and family ties among Korean and American university students. As such, SCCT can be used to study the career choices of university students in the context of the 21st century.

However, when applying SCCT to research, quantitative surveys and questionnaires are generally used (Shih and Brown, 2000; Shin and Kelly, 2013; Moreau, 2015). For example, Erdogmus et al.(2005) used a questionnaire to survey the aforementioned MBA students about the problems they faced in choosing a career. This quantitative approach allows researchers to examine a large sample of data, which is not possible with qualitative methods. Nevertheless, quantitative methods provide a static understanding of career choices. In other words, they can only collect subjects' attitudes towards their career choices at a given time and do not allow for interpretive analysis. Therefore, supplementary qualitative data is considered valuable.

Another essential theoretical framework of the factors influencing students' career choices comes from the studies of Carpenter and Foster (1977) and Beynon et al.(1998). Carpenter and Foster (1977) and Beynon et al (1998) developed a commonly used theoretical framework on the career choices of university students, which differs from the SCCT as it assumes that students and graduates are influenced by intrinsic, extrinsic and interpersonal factors when choosing a career (Beynon et al, 1998). However, the SCCT largely ignores the impact of interpersonal factors on students' career choices. The intrinsic refers to the values that individuals place on a particular discipline or field of work. The extrinsic factor refers to aspects of the environment, such as job opportunities and well-paying careers. The interpersonal factor represents the influence of society on the individual, which can include parents, friends and teachers. Specifically, an individual's choice of career may be based on parental expectations. Therefore, this framework can be used to understand the career choices of university students from various perspectives.

Furthermore, recent studies using a three-dimensional framework to analyse university students' career choices typically used qualitative interviews (Monk et al, 2012; Liaw et al, 2016; Akosah-Twumasi et al, 2021). For example, Keddie (2012) conducted in-depth interviews with 19 Asian international students studying in Canada and reported that Asian students' career choices were determined by a combination of the workplace (extrinsic motivation), personal interests (intrinsic) and family relationships (interpersonal).

Similarly, Crockett and Hays (2011) conducted interviews with students in the US and found that international students' career choices in the US were limited due to self-efficacy(intrinsic factors), visa issues (extrinsic factors) and family influences (interpersonal factors). Although this three-dimensional framework is not used in all relevant studies, most studies discuss the main factors that influence university students' career choices, which still consist of intrinsic, extrinsic and interpersonal factors.

The three-dimensional framework is most relevant to the purpose of this thesis. Because the framework may be more appropriate for analyzing large amounts of qualitative data. While SCCT can explain students' career choices, the existing literature using this framework tends to be quantitative and include empirical studies. More specifically, SCCT is used to explain the relationship between a range of variables, such as young people's career choices and interests. As such, a three-dimensional framework is the theoretical framework appropriate for the purposes of this paper.

4. THE THREE-DIMENSIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR CAREER DECISION-MAKING

Theme 1: Intrinsic Factors

This part identifies four intrinsic factors relevant to students' career choices:

i) personal interest, ii) self-efficacy, iii) outcome expectations and iv) professional knowledge and training. In this part, the selected literature is described and critically analysed based on the collection methods described in the Methodology section to explore the influence of various factors on career choices.

- **Personal Interest**

Personal interest appears to be an essential factor in choosing a career trajectory (Ouyang et al, 2016; Moreau, 2015; Singaravelu et al, 2005; Akosah-Twumasi et al, 2018; Spooner et al, 2017). For example, Li and Jung (2021) found that university students in mainland China all recognised interest as a factor influencing job choice. More specifically, the participants indicated that the pursuit of high income and social status can be ignored due to the desire to pursue a career one will enjoy (Li and Jung, 2021). Likewise, American students pursuing a PhD at a US university showed the influence of personal interests on career choice. In particular, one doctoral student said that he abhorred the business culture of the traditional private sector and that an academic career was his ultimate goal because he could contribute to solving practical problems or issues (Monk et al, 2012). Hence, personal interests can have a significant influence on an individual's career choice.

Additionally, Lent et al (2002) confirmed that personal interests influence young people's career choices but argued that this influence is based on cultural context. To be precise, university students in a social environment where an individualistic culture prevails, such as the UK, USA and Italy, are more focused on personal career choices (Monk et al, 2012; Shin and Kelly, 2013; Gorard et al, 2021). For example, UK undergraduates studying education indicated that they might choose to become teachers in the future because they enjoy working with children (Gorard et al, 2021; Moreau, 2015); master's students in the USA also showed a preference for academic careers and indicated that they had the option to continue their studies (Monk et al, 2012). Thus, university students who grew up in an individualistic culture make career choices highly correlated with personal interests.

Nevertheless, the relationship between the career choices and personal interests of international students from collectivist cultural backgrounds (i.e. bicultural students) is controversial (Singaravelu et al, 2005; Arthur and Flynn, 2011; Nunes and Arthur, 2013; Hou et al, 2018). On the one hand, the career choices of Asian students are influenced by their interests. For example, Korean students studying in the US had personal interests that dominated their career choices (Shin and Kelly, 2013). Similarly, Chinese students studying in Canada expressed their aspirations to stay in Canada after graduation (Nunes and Arthur, 2013). Hence, this evidence demonstrates that personal interests influence the career choices of some bicultural youth.

However, while some international students report that personal interests play an essential role in their career choices, they also need to consider social realities and responsibilities. A critical study was conducted by Ouyang et al (2015) on the career choice factors of university students in Macau. Macanese university students who participated in the survey indicated that there was no room for negotiation between the careers they were interested in and those that would enable them to earn a living in Macau (Ouyang et al, 2015). In other words, university students' career choices need to be in line with social realities and thus are Sangerville economically and socially motivated.

Some Asian international students tend to ignore economic factors and respect their interests in their career choices. However, this tendency seems to be due to individual differences; international Asian students are diverse in terms of languages and values (Shih and Brown, 2000). Nevertheless, many scholars agree that Asian international students from collectivist cultural backgrounds tend to consider both personal interests and social responsibilities when choosing their careers (Singaravelu et al, 2005; Crockett and Hays, 2011; Popadiuk and Arthur, 2014). In other words, they aim to balance the two factors, while Westerners are more interested in pursuing personal desires, a difference between the values of the two cultures.

- **Self-Efficacy**

Self-efficacy is considered an essential intrinsic factor in the career decision- making process of Western students (Fan and Leong, 2016; Shih and Brown, 2000; Shin and Kelly, 2013; Hui and Lent, 2018). Self-efficacy is a student's self-assessment of their ability to perform a particular type of work. Hui and Lent (2018) reported differences in self-efficacy between Asian international students and American students due to their home country's cultural background in a US university setting. Specifically, in collectivist cultures, Asian students' self-efficacy was related to their level of congruence with their parents. In individualistic cultural settings, such as the United States, families encourage students to become self-sufficient and independent (Singaravelu, 2005; Nunes and Arthur, 2013; Crockett and Hays, 2011; Li and Jung, 2021; Fan and Leong, 2016). As a result, Western students are perceived to have more self-efficacy in the process of career choice.

- **Outcome Expectations**

Outcome expectancy is a factor in which students feel that the reward they reap from doing a particular job is sufficient to make it worth their while. In the course of the review, two studies on bicultural students reported that students' outcome expectations were contingent/dependent on the degree of perceived congruence with their parents (Crossman and Clarke, 2010; Fan et al, 2012). An article is examining outcome expectations of university students in an individualistic cultural context reported that substantial career maturity, confidence and outcome expectations were culturally based among students in the UK (Tomlinson, 2017).

- **Professional Knowledge and Training**

Both Western university students and Asian international students identified the courses they took and their expertise as crucial factors influencing their career choices (Singaravelu et al, 2005; Liaw et al, 2016; Parola, 2020). For instance, medical students in the UK believed that their career choice was related to their professional knowledge and training (Hirudayaraj and McLean, 2018). Likewise, UK teaching students expressed that their professional knowledge impacted their career choice (Moreau, 2015; Gorard et al, 2021). For example, in Gorard et al 's (2021) survey from the UK on teaching students' career choices, it was found that good academic performance in a subject and a qualification in a particular skill affected students' career choices. Thus, the career choices of Western university students in an individualistic cultural context are influenced by their professional skills.

Moreover, international youth similarly noted the importance of professional knowledge and training in their career choices (Dryden-Peterson, 2016; Hou et al, 2018). International students from Singapore majoring in nursing felt that they would like to apply their subject knowledge to obtain a relevant career (Liaw et al, 2016). Similarly, Asian international students pursuing a PhD in liberal arts in the US expressed the importance of professional knowledge in their career decisions. Interestingly, one liberal arts PhD candidate appeared to have no interest in an academic career but ended up choosing one because her faculties were poorly suited to careers outside of academia (Monk et al, 2012). Her career choice is aligned with the previously mentioned tendency of bicultural youth to balance their personal interests with the needs of the social reality. As such, the field of study they choose upon entering university can impact their future career choices.

Despite this, the impact of professional knowledge and training on students' career choices does not appear to be absolute and is influenced by the nature of the discipline. For example, Robst (2007) pointed out that the ultimate match between degree fields and careers is uncertain. In his survey, it was found that 20% of respondents did not consider their professional knowledge to be relevant to their career choice. Moreover, 20% of respondents were mainly concentrated in the humanities and social sciences. A similar survey appears in Xiong and Mok's (2020) survey of Asian international students pursuing an MA in Education in the UK. However, despite differences in the choice of country and time between the studies by Robst (2007) and Xiong and Mok (2020), similar findings emerge. Thus, targeting university students in soft disciplines such as social sciences leads to a mismatch between career choices and subject knowledge, as expertise does not have the same economic value as it does in hard sciences such as Medicine or Physics.

Overall, regarding the influence of professional knowledge and training on career choice, the cultural background of university students does not seem to have much influence. However, differences in the field of specialisation (e.g. Humanities or Natural Sciences) correlate with these factors.

Theme 1. Conclusion

In summary, intrinsic factors make a difference in the career decisions of both Western students and international students, although the decisions of Western students are more likely to be based on individual needs. In contrast, the career decisions of international students are more likely to be consistent with family expectations and social realities.

Theme 2: Extrinsic Factors

The extrinsic factors refers to university students' concerns about financial compensation and employee benefits, job stability, professional prestige and cultural barriers. These factors are related to the principle of fairness and industry trends and are explained below.

- **Financial Rewards and Employee Benefits**

Most studies support the general view that financial compensation and employee benefits are the main influences on graduates' job searches and decision making (Arthur and Popadiuk, 2010; Liaw et al, 2016; Yao et al, 2020). Nunes and Arthur (2013) found that salary was an important factor in why Asian students chose to work in Canada. The participants indicated that if they returned to China, they would find it challenging to support their families or even themselves despite working hard (Arthur and Flynn, 2011; Nunes and Arthur, 2013). A possible contributing factor contributing is the exchange rate issue between the Canadian and Chinese currencies. Thus, economic factors (salary and exchange rate) are partly responsible for attracting Asian students to stay and work in their host countries.

Similarly, the influence of salary is reflected in the career choices of Western university students. For example, nursing graduates in the UK explicitly expressed envy of the salaries available to medical graduates (Spooner et al, 2017). PhD graduates in Geography who chose an academic path in the US also expressed distress about their future salaries (Monk et al, 2012). Canadian master's students also expressed a preference for higher-paying positions when making their career choices (Nunes and Arthur, 2013). Thus, financial compensation has a significant impact on graduates' career choices.

Research shows that additional employee benefits, such as time off and a positive working environment, are factors that graduates consider when choosing a career. For example, some Chinese students who chose Canada as a career destination cited the cleaner environment, slower pace of life and greater freedom as reasons for their decision (Arthur and Flynn, 2011). Likewise, some international students from India chose to work in the United States because of a desire for the rule of law and a perception that the legal system in the United States was better than that in India (Arthur and Flynn, 2011). The desire for a just legal system was also mentioned in interviews of students from Thailand and Indonesia (Pham, 2018). Furthermore, the importance of employee welfare is also present in the career choices of Western university students. A teacher training student in the UK stated that she chose teaching as her future career because of its flexible working hours and regular holidays, which would help her take better care of her family (Kemmis et al, 2014; Moreau, 2015). Thus, the desire for a supportive social and work environment contributes to the career choices of both Asian bicultural youth and Western university students.

- **Job Stability**

Italy (Capsada-Munsech, 2015; Parola, 2020), the UK (Waters, 2005; Iannelli and Huang, 2014; Moskal, 2017; Lehmann, 2019) and Canada (Arthur and Flynn, 2011; Connelly and Xu, 2019; Lehmann, 2019) are all individualistic environments where job stability and security are considered essential factors in young people's career decisions. For example, job security was a motivation for teacher training graduates in the UK to choose teaching as a career (Gorard et al, 2021). Especially in the aftermath of the pandemic, Italian graduates' desire for stable, formal contract work has gradually increased.

Parola's (2020) study suggested that the pandemic damaged the development of people's careers, so students were willing to forgo higher salaries to obtain a stable contract job. Thus, Gorard et al 's (2021) and Parola's (2020) findings are inconsistent with the uncertainty avoidance index proposed by Hofstede (2016), and the reason for this discrepancy may be that the pandemic has increased youth thinking about future uncertainty in an individualistic cultural context.

- **Career Prestige**

Some graduates hope to have access to a well-established and respected career. Asian students from collectivist cultural backgrounds identified occupational prestige as an essential determinant of their career decisions. The prestige and social respect attached to some occupations strongly incentivise young people from collectivist cultures to choose careers such as civil service. According to Ko and Jun (2015), in their social survey of the career preferences of Asian international students at a US university, students from Singapore, China and South Korea expressed strong interest in having socially respected careers. However, Korean international students seemed less inclined to choose public sector jobs. Similarly, international students from India and Iran also expressed the importance of having a respectable career (Arthur and Popadiuk, 2010; Nunes and Arthur, 2013; Purohit et al, 2020). Moreover, female international students from Iran expressed that having a respectful career would help them have a successful marriage (Arthur and Popadiuk, 2010). Thus, having a respectable career may help Asian students from collectivist cultures achieve a sense of fulfilment, as well as have stable marriages and families, in specific social contexts.

An interesting finding was that, in collectivist countries, many interviewees mentioned stereotypes of career choices. For example, they divided careers into 'male careers' and 'female careers'. For example, a male student from Singapore studying for a master's degree in nursing in the UK said that nursing seemed to be exclusive to women in his country, which discouraged many men from choosing this career(Liaw et al, 2016). Similarly, a Muslim woman from Iran who was studying in Australia expressed a similar view(Arthur and Popadiuk, 2010); she identifies with gender stereotypes in career choices in her home country. Thus, gender differences are, to some extent, a barrier to career choice for graduates in collectivist countries. However, gender stereotypes are also present for some occupations in individualist countries (Gorard et al, 2021). However, the literature does not indicate whether such gender differences influenced individuals' initial or final career choices. This difference may be that, in individualistic countries, graduates place more emphasis on personal interests and ignore the influence of social prestige on career choice.

Most likely, Western students with individualistic cultures do consider the prestige of their careers when making career choices. However, only one report of the influence of professional prestige on students' career choices was found in the literature, concerning the professional career choices of teachers in the UK (Gorard et al, 2021). The reasons for this result may be related to the specific nature of the teaching profession. Teaching is considered to be a highly sacrificial profession and one that can benefit society (Monk et al, 2012). Therefore, professional prestige may not significantly impact the career choices of local students in the UK, USA, and Australia.

- **Cultural Barriers**

The literature on the impact of cultural barriers on young people's career choices mainly concentrates on Asian international students (Shih and Brown, 2000; Popadiuk and Arthur, 2014; Hou et al, 2018). Cultural and language barriers arise in two primary ways: (i) choosing to seek employment in the host country and (ii) returning to the home country for employment.

For Asian students who choose to stay in the host country to find employment, language and cultural barriers make it challenging to integrate with the local population. Chinese students who chose to stay in the US for employment reported that cultural barriers seriously affected their ability to prepare job search documents and participate in the interview process. This is consistent with the view of Gale and Densmore (2000), who argued that 87% of Asian students are entirely unfamiliar with US CVs. Moreover, specific cultural differences in Western corporate culture, such as appropriate dress, confidence and maintaining direct eye contact, were reported by Asian students to be overwhelming (Yao et al, 2020). Furthermore, visa restrictions for Asian students may also influence their career choices. Tidwell and Hanassab (2007) found that the longer international students studied and lived in the US, the more knowledge they needed about immigration regulations and visa requirements. Similarly, Asian students who chose to obtain a permanent visa in Canada reported that visa acquisition was not easy (Nunes and Arthur, 2013). Accordingly, language and cultural barriers can impact the career development of Asian students who choose to work in developed countries such as the US and Canada.

Nonetheless, 78% of Asian students in the UK eventually return to their home country for employment (Mok et al, 2020). This employment trend is also seen among the international student populations of the US, Canada and Australia. However, Asian students who return to their home countries for employment also experience culture shock. Gaw (2000) proposed the theory of 'reverse culture shock' to explain the process of readjustment and reassimilation into one's home environment over a considerable period. There is now extensive literature on the inbound experiences of people who have spent time abroad as international students (Mok and Xiong, 2018). For

example, Crawford et al (2016) mentioned that returning international students need to re-learn to acknowledge social hierarchies when interacting with people in the employment environment of their home country. These cultural conflicts can cause distress for Asian international students who choose to return to their home countries for employment.

Still, a small group of bicultural students perceive this difference between individualistic and collectivistic cultures to be helpful in their career choices and development. Specifically, some Chinese students feel at home in both the UK and China or do not consider themselves to belong to either world. Likewise, some returnees say they have not forgotten to do things in the Chinese manner. A typical example is bringing back souvenirs from abroad to give to friends and family, even though it is a chore (in terms of money and effort). However, this gift-giving tradition also represents the individual remembering relatives, friends and traditional Chinese culture. Consequently, for such Asian students who can adapt to a bicultural identity, this may be helpful in their professional development.

Theme 2. Conclusion

To sum up, there are differences between the career decisions of Western students and bicultural students in terms of extrinsic factors. More specifically, both groups of students value economic factors in their career decisions. However, Western students appear to place greater importance on job stability, whereas bicultural students are more influenced by professional reputation and cultural barriers in their career decision-making.

Theme 3: Interpersonal factors

Interpersonal factors are reflected in the process of personal socialisation (Singaravelu et al, 2005). The literature discusses the extent to which the career choices of university students are influenced by family members, educators, and friends and peers.

• **Family Members**

The behaviours and values of family members can influence the career choices of graduates. The behavioural factors discussed in the literature can be divided into three categories: (i) financial support from parents; (ii) family and social obligations; (iii) family members as role models.

Firstly, parents' financial support was mainly discussed in relation to Asian international students (Singaravelu et al, 2005; Arthur and Flynn, 2011; ul Islam et al, 2020). Some international students from mainland China stated that their parents had made financial sacrifices to help them obtain an overseas degree, so they wanted a job that would help them 'earn back' the cost of their studies (Fan and Leong, 2016). Similarly, bicultural youth from Macau expressed that their parents put pressure on them to choose a 'good job' that was financially stable and socially acceptable, rather than pursue self-growth and self-fulfilment (Ouyang et al, 2015).

However, as the economies of East Asian countries develop, international students from Asia may be more likely to have access to opportunities for personal career development than those from relatively poorer countries or families (Singaravelu et al, 2005). According to Savickas's (2001) survey of economic and occupational freedom in various countries, as affluence increases, so do opportunities for personal development and exploration of career options. For instance, international students from Asian countries such as Japan, Korea, China and Singapore have more opportunities to make their own employment choices than university students from relatively poor African countries (Fouad et al, 2008; Pham and SpringerLink, 2019). Thus, as individuals value self-development, these international students from Asia may be drifting away from collectivist cultural values, making the role of the family a secondary factor in their personal career choices. However, as the literature shows, the career choices of these international students are still influenced by parental expectations, despite the economic development of Asian countries.

Secondly, family and social obligations can also influence young people's career decisions, as suggested by Nunes and Arthur's (2013) and Arthur and Flynn's (2011) studies on the responsibilities of international students from Asia towards their families. One participant from China stated that he had to provide for his wife and parents, and being responsible for both families led him to choose to stay and work in Canada (Nunes and Arthur, 2013). Similarly, Akosah-Twumasi et al (2021) suggested that obtaining parental consent is crucial to the career choices of some international students, despite their dislike of the restrictive obligations set by their parents. The reason is that, in the home cultures of these Asian students, their parents are obliged to meet their educational and

developmental needs when they are young; when they grow up, they have the same obligation and responsibility to care for and support their parents (Ouyang et al, 2015). Thus, family and social obligations appear to be derived from collectivist cultural traditions. Due to the limited scope of this literature review, the influence of family and social obligations on the career decisions of Western university students was not analysed. However, it is clear that family obligations influence the career choices of bicultural Asian youth.

Thirdly, regarding family members as role models, Akosah-Twumasi et al (2021) argued that fathers have a primary role in the career decisions of young people. In their study, one participant from India indicated that he relied on his father's career to figure out his career path because he perceived his father as a professional. This is in line with the patriarchal tendencies of Indian society. Similarly, in Singaravelu et al 's (2005) study, it was suggested that values conveyed by parents affect the career planning of Asian graduates. However, Hartung et al (2010) disagreed with the idea that fathers' careers and values influence their children's employment decisions in Canada's individualistic society. One Canadian student indicated that his choice of career was different from what his father expected at the outset because he did not want to repeat his father's life. Altogether, these differences in findings may be due to different cultural contexts. Thus, in countries with individualistic cultural backgrounds, families support their children's education by encouraging them to be self-sufficient and independent-minded. In contrast, parents in collectivist countries want their children's career decisions to be integrated with their values (Shin and Kelly, 2013).

Overall, examining the relationship between career choices and family members among international students and Western students, the key finding is that university students from Asian cultural backgrounds follow a dependent decision-making style (Hou and Leung, 2011). Accordingly, the career choices of international students from collectivist cultural backgrounds such as China, Thailand and India tend to meet the expectations of their families. In contrast, the career decisions of Western students tend to follow an intuitive decision-making style (Lockhart and Miller, 2016). In other words, family expectations and family members are less relevant in influencing the career choices of Western university students, while parental support plays an essential role in the career decisions of bicultural students, reflecting the influence of collectivist family-oriented social values.

- **Educators**

Educators are essential figures in the career decisions and development of university graduates (Singaravelu et al, 2005; Akosah-Twumasi et al, 2021; Jung et al, 2021). Singaravelu et al (2005) and Li and Jung (2021) reported that, in both collectivist and individualist cultures, teachers are seen as facilitators who can provide meaningful and valuable advice that drive students' career choices. Likewise, Popadiuk and Arthur (2014) noted the influence of teachers on the career choices of US students and that, among their study participants, the main reason for pursuing a PhD in Geography was a good relationship with a mentor. Thus, for students pursuing academic careers, relationships with teachers, mentors and tutors may encourage them to take the next step. One possible explanation is that teachers can recommend academic conferences and help students publish academic papers, which can be crucial in an academic career (Marini, 2019).

- **Peer Influence**

Studies conducted in both cultural contexts showed that peer influence is another influential factor in youth career choices. On the one hand, peers can provide advice. For example, in Popadiuk and Arthur's (2014) interviews with Chinese students studying in Canada, some participants indicated that their peers positively helped them with their career choices. They believed their peers had the same experiences as them and thus could provide a more realistic analysis than their family and friends in China. Likewise, young people from individualistic cultural backgrounds in the US, UK, and Italy sought advice from friends when making career choices (Liaw et al, 2016; Parola, 2020; Roberts and Li, 2017). Thus, most bicultural students and Western students want to get advice from their peers when making career decisions.

On the other hand, peers also seem to exert pressure on young people's career choices. The participants in Li and Jung's (2021) study expressed concerns about 'violent' competition from peers in the job search process. Specifically, one participant from mainland China felt that he encountered many competitors in the Hong Kong job market. This sense of competition could either provide an opportunity for participants to strengthen their overall abilities or create a barrier to their career development.

Theme 3. Conclusion

In general, Western students and international students exhibit different attitudes towards interpersonal factors in career decision-making. Specifically, international students value the advice of others in their career decisions and development, so their career decisions are dependent. This is significantly different from those of Western students.

5. FINDINGS

This study's findings indicate that culture does, to some extent, influence the career choices of Western students and international students. Firstly, it was found that there were differences in the intrinsic, extrinsic and interpersonal factors of career choice between Western and international students. Specifically, in terms of intrinsic factors, Western students countries strongly expressed the importance of personal interests in their career choices. In contrast, international students implied that their interests needed to be subordinated to social realities and family responsibilities. Furthermore, this study found that Western students emphasised career stability in terms of extrinsic factors, while international students were more concerned with career prestige. In addition, in terms of interpersonal factors, this study concluded that family members influence both Western and international students' career decisions. To be precise, Western students were influenced by their family members in the sense of role models; among international students, this factor was reflected in their obligations to their family and society. Thus, the evidence from this study provides ample evidence that the factors involved in career decisions affect Western students and international students in different ways. Consequently, cultural values can have an impact on students' career choices.

However, students may also choose careers independent of their cultural background. For example, Popadiuk and Arthur's (2014) study found that some Chinese students studying in Canada (bicultural) did not find their parents' opinions helpful in their career choices, as their parents did not seem to understand their actual situations. Similarly, some young Macanese people disagreed with the idea that their family members could significantly influence their career choices; they felt that socioeconomic circumstances were the key contributor to their decisions (Ouyang et al, 2015). For this reason, although there is a large body of research demonstrating that students from different cultural backgrounds display different career choice patterns, because of individual differences and the influence of socioeconomic circumstances, culture does not fully dictate their decisions.

6. EVALUATION AND CONCLUSION

The findings suggest that there are differences between the two groups. However, the results of this study may differ from previous studies, especially in terms of extrinsic factors. Previous research has suggested that students from international backgrounds may place more importance on secure and stable careers (Ko and Jun, 2015; Shin and Kelly, 2013; Ouyang et al, 2015) as this is a way of avoiding risk in collectivist cultures. Nonetheless, this study explored the current literature and found that Western students place equal – if not greater – emphasis on career stability as do international students. This discrepancy may be due to differences in context. Much of the literature on the career choices of Western students considered in this paper arose from post-pandemic research (Parola, 2020; Gorard et al, 2021), while much of the literature suggesting that international groups value career stability to a greater extent came from 2011–2015. Therefore, time may be an underlying reason for the differences between the findings of this paper and previous studies. Nevertheless, this dissertation concludes that Western students value career stability more than international students.

An interesting finding is that the three-dimensional framework of career choice does not highlight the impact that gender factors have on students. However, in the compilation and analysis of the literature conducted in this paper, it is clear that the gender factor must also be considered in consideration of students' career choices. Because gender differences in job choice in the 21st-century work environment are the focus of current research (Li and Jung, 2021; Monk et al, 2012)and are not incorporated in the three- dimensional framework, this finding is consistent with those of Purohit et al (2020), who, in a systematic review of the literature on university students' career choices, found that factors such as gender and social system were not included in the three-dimensional framework proposed by Carpenter and Foster (1977). Consequently, gender needs to be added to the three-dimensional framework as an important factor in the study and analysis of students' career choices.

Overall, there are differences in the career choices of Western students and international students in terms of intrinsic, extrinsic and interpersonal factors. Moreover, when students from different cultural backgrounds make career decisions, they are also influenced by individual differences and socio- economic backgrounds. As a result, culture only influences the career choices of these two groups to a certain extent. Furthermore, this study addresses

the neglect of current research on the career choices of bicultural students from a comparative, cross-cultural perspective. Thus, this study can help stakeholders (universities, educators, policymakers) gain a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between the career choices and respective cultures of Western students and international students.

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