



Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Journal of Hospitality, Leisure, Sport & Tourism Education

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/jhlste

Academic Papers

A cross cultural study of antecedents on career preparation behavior: Learning motivation, academic achievement, and career decision self-efficacy

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ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Cultural difference
Learning motivation
Academic achievement
Career decision self-efficacy
Career preparation

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to identify salient factors on students' career preparation behavior in the context of the hospitality and tourism education. A correlational study examined relationships between learning motivation, academic achievement, career decision self-efficacy, and career preparation behavior for 188 American students and 234 Korean students who major hospitality and tourism. The results reveal cultural differences between American and Korean students in terms of career preparation. A series of multiple regression analyses confirm the proposed relationship between the antecedents and career preparation behavior. The possible implications for students' career preparation are discussed.

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1. Introduction

Previous research has shown that career preparation among college and university students is a significant concern and represents a major developmental task (Skorikov, 2007). According to Jenkins (2001), about 80% of the surveyed college students in the hospitality and tourism management were looking for a job in the major-related field after graduating. Due to the applied characteristics of study, hospitality and tourism college students are greatly interested in issues and information relating to their future career (Richardson, 2009; White, 2006). Especially recent weak job market makes college students more concerned about their career following college graduation. In terms of career decision making, most hospitality and tourism college students have relied on career service programs and others' advice (Chuang & Dellmann-Jenkins, 2010). For better understanding career decision making, it is essential to examine salient constructs in college students' career preparation (Healy & Reilly, 1989; Sandler, 2000). In response, recent studies have attempted to identify multidimensional constructs for career preparation (e.g., Chuang & Dellmann-Jenkins, 2010; Niu, 2010).

With the realization, this study posits three important constructs in career preparation behavior to provide a more comprehensive picture of hospitality and tourism college student's career preparation behavior. In career decision-making, self-efficacy has received the most research attention relative to other domains of career preparation because it is central to successful educational and career outcomes (e.g., Betz & Luzzo, 1996). Another line of research focuses on learning motivation (e.g., Sandler, 2000) and academic achievement (Ryan & Deci, 2000). To investigate the causal effects on college students' career preparation, thus, the constructs used in this study are career decision self-efficacy, learning motivation, and learning achievement.

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In career development research, understanding cross cultural differences in different countries has provided insights to fully comprehending and promoting industries' strategies that address college students' career preparation (Hartung, Fouad, Leong, & Hardin, 2010). This comparative study has further implications for fostering adaptive learning strategies for success among college students. Although some studies have investigated limited constructs to evaluate when considering a career (e.g., Richardson, 2009; White, 2006), relatively little attention has been paid to relations between multidimensional constructs and career preparation within the hospitality and tourism contexts. Therefore, this empirical study focuses on identifying the relationships among salient predictors (i.e., learning motivation, academic achievement, and career decision self-efficacy) of career-preparation behavior among Korean and American college students within the context of the hospitality and tourism industry. The discussion provides insights into the construction of a conceptual framework and offers suggestions on how it can be applied in follow-up studies.

2. Literature review

2.1. Individualism and collectivism

Human behavior is defined as a function of both individual and environmental factors (Hui, 1988). Cultural theorists have agreed that cultural systems can be examined as the product of the interaction of people with their ecological and geographical environments and their climate (e.g., Kemmelmeier et al., 2003). Hofstede (1980) observed differences in certain behaviors and attitudes because individuals live in different cultures and societies. Hofstede's (1980) individualism and collectivism constructs have been discussed in many contexts in the social sciences. For example, individualism and collectivism appear to be semantic opposites (Hartung et al., 2010; Hui, 1988). Societies high in individualism are simultaneously low in collectivism and vice versa (e.g., Hofstede, 1980; Hui, 1988). In individualistic cultures and societies, people are autonomous and independent from their in-groups. "People prefer interdependent relationships with others and subordinate the goals of their in-groups to their own personal goals" (Shavitt, Lalwani, Zhang & Torelli, 2006). They behave primarily on the basis of their attitudes rather than in-group norms. In general, exchange theory adequately predicts the social behavior of individuals in individualistic cultures (Triandis, 2001). On the other hand, in collectivistic cultures, "people prefer interdependent relationships to others and subordinate their personal goals to those of their in-groups" (e.g., Hofstede, 1980; Triandis, 1995). They place more value on collective goals and are guided by group norms and traditional authority figures (Oyserman, Coon, & Kemmelmeier, 2002).

The utility of the individualism–collectivism construct is indisputable (Chiou, 2001). Hofstede's (1980) cultural values approach, which provided numerical values to measure culture, has been the most popular measure. This approach allows cultural differences to be used directly as independent variables to explain differences in behaviors in psychology and consumer behavior settings across different cultures (i.e., individualism and collectivism) (e.g., Hui, 1988; Nelson & Shavitt, 2002; Soh & Leong, 2002; Walker, 2010). Follow-up studies, however, have noted that even within individualistic or collectivistic cultures differences exist. In particular, Triandis (1995) argued that culture difference is multidimensional. For example, U.S. individualism emphasizes competition and status, whereas Sweden's individualism emphasizes equality (Soh & Leong, 2002; Triandis, 1995). In addition, according to Triandis (2001), many varieties of collectivism also exist. For example, Korean collectivism, which emphasizes hierarchy, is not the same as the collectivism of the Israeli Kibbutz, which emphasizes equality. Thus, according to Triandis (1995), both individualism and collectivism may be delineated further as either horizontal (i.e., emphasizing equality) or vertical (i.e., emphasizing hierarchy). This creates four typologies: horizontal individualism, vertical individualism, horizontal collectivism, and vertical collectivism, which are categorized as follows (Chiou, 2001; Nelson & Shavitt, 2002; Triandis & Gelfans, 1998): in horizontal individualism (HI), people tend to view as equal to others in status. In vertical individualism (VI), people prefer to distinguish themselves from others. In horizontal collectivism (HC), people merge themselves with their in-groups, whereas in vertical collectivism (VC), people submit to the authorities of the in-group and are willing to sacrifice themselves for their in-group (Shavitt et al., 2006; Triandis, 2001; Triandis & Gelfans, 1998).

Several researchers have investigated the validity of the distinctions among the four cultural patterns. Using a total of sixteen items, they measured the four patterns and subsequently supported both convergent and divergent validity (Triandis & Gelfans, 1998). The following types of studies have investigated the four patterns using various scales: studies to verify reliability and validity of the scales of the four cultural patterns (e.g., Chiou, 2001; Kemmelmeier et al., 2003); studies to measure the relationship between learning motivation and related values in cultural differences (e.g., Walker, 2010); and studies comparing the relationships between academic achievement and related values in cultural differences (e.g., Nelson & Shavitt, 2002; Soh & Leong, 2002). Based on previous studies, the present study aims to investigate the relationships between learning motivation and the four cultural patterns (HI, VI, HC, and VC). Cultural differences are used directly as independent variables to explain differences in individuals' behaviors. Learning motivation is formed by individual differences. Thus, this study hypothesizes that cultural differences will influence learning motivation (Hui, 1988; Kemmelmeier et al., 2003).

2.2. Learning motivation and academic achievement

Among the diverse studies and theories in the field of education, most research has been guided by the self-determination theory (SDT) of Deci and Ryan (1985) (Komarraju, Karau, & Schmeck, 2009; Pintrich & De Groot, 1990;

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