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The role of Personality in the Career Choice Commitment of

university students in Hong Kong

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Statement of Originality

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text.   I give consent to this copy of my thesis, when deposited in the University Library, being made available for loan and photocopying subject to the provisions of the Copyright Act 1968.

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Abstract

Background

Previous research including Reed et al (2004), Wang et al (2006), Nauta (2007) and Tang and Newmeyer (2008) indicate that personality is influential in the career choice decision-making process of university and high school students. In this research, the Five-Factor Model of Personality and the Theory of Planned Behaviour are used to examine the role of personality in affecting career choice commitment of university undergraduate students in Hong Kong.

Summary of research and model

As the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) (Ajzen, 1991) suggests, attitude triggers intention and intention shapes behaviour. The current project applies this theory to students' career choice behaviour and investigates personality as a factor that influences attitude towards career aspiration. Based on the TPB, attitudes to career impact on intention and lead students to perform those behavioural actions necessary to enter the career they have chosen. Personality is identified as an influential factor in influencing attitude towards career choice commitment.

In this study, intention is regarded as (and measured by) the career choice commitment. Under the TPB, each personality trait of a person under the Five-Factor Model of Personality (FFM) influences one's attitude toward career aspiration which triggers intention (career choice commitment). Adopting a quantitative research design, this study surveyed more than 280 undergraduate students in universities in Hong Kong by anonymous questionnaire and useful data were collected. Using quantitative method and statistical techniques to analyze the data, several hypotheses were tested to investigate relationship between personality traits and career

Abstract

choice commitment, finally some important results and findings were obtained in this study. The most important findings are that the personality trait of a person is very fundamental to determine one's career choice commitment because four of the five personality traits namely extraversion, neuroticism, openness and conscientiousness influence one's attitude towards career goal very much, and attitude will cause intention (career choice commitment) logically. Attitude is also found to mediate the relationship between conscientiousness and career choice commitment. Therefore, understanding on their personality proved to be very important to university students for career planning and development.

Value and significance of the research

This study provides university curriculum planners with useful information to inform curriculum design for more compulsory academic courses good for students' self-understanding. It also provides career counselors with better understanding of characteristics of students (with strength in what personality trait) for a better and more tailor-made career planning, guidance and development services.

This study also makes a theoretical contribution by applying the TPB to career choice concept and exploring the link between personality and attitude at the same time in this context. Very little research has applied the TPB to the specific subject of career choice commitment and also simultaneously investigated the relationship between personality and career choice commitment before.

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