

Maintenance and Performance-Oriented HR Systems, Parents' Expectations, Perceived Behavioral Control, and Career Intention of College Graduates: An Example from China

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Abstract

Career choice is one of the most important and difficult decisions for college graduating students to make. This study sought to examine the relationships between perceived maintenance- or performance-oriented HR systems, parents' expectations, perceived behavioral control and graduating students' career intention of working at state-owned or private-owned enterprises using the theory of planned behavior. The snowball sampling technique was employed to collect data. 477 questionnaires were collected from graduating students from two universities in Chongqing, China. Partial least squares regression was used to analyze the data, which showed positive relationships between perceived maintenance-oriented HR system and career intention of working at state-owned enterprises, parents' expectations, perceived behavioral control and graduating students career intention of working at state-owned or private-owned enterprises. This study offers insights for enterprise managers in the design of human resource systems and college guidance programs as well.

Keywords: Maintenance-Oriented HR System, Performance-Oriented HR System, State-Owned Enterprises, Private-Owned Enterprises, Career Intention, Parents' Expectations

1. Introduction

There has been a huge increase in the last decades in the number of Chinese graduating from university. According to the Chinese College Graduates Employment Annual Report (MyCOS, 2018), the number of students graduating each year has increased from 1 to 7 million over the period 2002-2017 as college enrollment keeps expanding. Graduation is a significant turning point in the life of students as it ushers them into the working world and launches their careers. Making the proper career choice is important as it brings a sense of pleasure and satisfaction (Yue & Tian, 2016), ensures higher dedication to the job and leads to greater occupational achievement (Zhang, Ma, & Ma, 2018). A career can not only change

people's lifestyle but also affect their mental health (Song, 2017). Many graduating Chinese college students are typically torn between the following two choices: working at state-owned enterprises (SOE) or at private-owned enterprises (POE) (Jiang, 2014). Over time, the proportion of graduates joining SOEs or POEs has changed. During the period 2009-2017, the percentage of students opting to work at POEs increased from 40% to 60% and in the meantime, that of SOEs decreased from 25% to 19%. There has also been a rise in the percentage of students starting their own business from 1.6% to about 3% during the period 2011-2017. Student career intention toward starting one's own business after completing one's studies has been extensively researched and is well understood (Kolvereid, 1996b; Souitaris et al., 2007; Zellweger, Seiger, & Halter, 2010; Lee et al., 2011; Wang, 2017; Huo, 2018; Wang, 2019). However, while a number of research studies have also been carried out to explore the factors affecting organizational employment (Kolvereid, 1996a; Chapman et al., 2005; Warmerdam, A., Lewis, I., & Banks, T., 2015) far less is known about some of the factors influencing the career intention of college graduates in relation to salary-based SOEs or POEs. This is in spite of the fact that about 80% of the graduates in China choose a job that provides a steady monthly income as opposed to self-employment.

One of the factors little investigated relates to human resource (HR) systems. Yet human resource (HR) systems can play a critical role in employees' work. Given the paucity of knowledge in this area in the context of China, this study seeks to fill the gap. More specifically, it aims to investigate the career intention of graduates on the basis of a dual-concern HR model (a maintenance-oriented HR system and a performance-oriented HR system) together with parents' expectations and perceived behavioral control. Given that, as mentioned earlier, a majority of students graduating in China chooses a job that provides a steady monthly income, the career intention of students is investigated with regard to salaried occupations at SOEs or at POEs. The respondents in this study are graduating students from Chongqing University and Southwest University of China, whose major is management (1,350 and 2,550 students, respectively). It is the author's expectations that the results from this study will contribute to the lore of empirical evidence with regard the career intention of Chinese college graduates.

2. Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

Starting with SOEs and POEs, this section discusses the key operational concepts in this research study and the hypotheses developed as a result.

- SOEs and POEs

A SOE can be defined as a legal entity established to shoulder social functions and undertake commercial activities on behalf of an owner; the government (Zhang, 2001). SOEs are either centrally owned or owned by provincial or local governments (Szamosszegi & Kyle, 2011). Since SOEs enjoy the protection of the government, they may not have full autonomy to hire and fire employees (Chen & Lau, 2000). SOEs used to dominate every aspect of China's economy. In the late 1978, when reforms started in China, the industrial output of SOEs was 77.6%. By 1996, it had decreased to 28.8% (Lin, Cai, & Li, 1998). Although the performance of SOEs is not comparable to early periods, their GDP share remain fairly constant and they continue to play a critical role in the Chinese economy (Shi, 2019). As to POEs, they refer to legal entities that are owned by private investors either collectively or individually (National

Bureau of Statistics, 1998). Compared with SOEs, POEs have less institutional limitations and enjoy full autonomy. SOEs and POEs also differ in a number of other ways. First, since SOEs have been in existence for much longer than POEs and have vast resources and a huge number of employees, they tend to be more attractive to those who are talented (Yu, 2013). But given that they place more emphasis on the educational background and diplomas of the talents recruited, this may lead to some unreasonable job allocations (Zhang, 2019). POEs, on the other hand, pay more attention to the real capacity of graduates (Shao, 2009). Therefore, the allocation of talents tends to be more reasonable. Second, SOEs are more prone to egalitarianism and stable compensation packages than POEs (Yao, 2013), where more emphasis is placed on the value of those with talents who are entitled to higher compensation. This may result in a serious brain drain from SOEs (Zhang, 2019). Third, due to the emphasis placed on egalitarianism, SOEs' salaries and promotions are often arranged in order of seniority with less consideration given to an individual's capacity and skills whereas at POEs, effectiveness and personal ability are given top priority (Zhang, 2014). Fourth, whereas conservative mechanisms may hinder the development of SOEs, POEs focus on efficiency as they have fewer limitations (Zhang, 2014). Fifth, whereas SOEs have access to a large number of financing channels, only a limited number of POEs can get support from local financing institutions (Wu, Tian & Wang, 2000).

Moreover, while SOEs can easily get favorable long-term loans from banks, POEs have a more limited access. SOEs can also turn to the stock market to raise capital but POEs cannot. SOEs, however, have more opportunities to attract foreign investments than POEs (Wu, Tian, & Wang, 2000). In addition, the capital allocation of POEs is generally much better than that of SOEs but social relationships are weighing more in the case SOEs (Yu, 2013). Finally, due to institutional inertia, a number of SOEs continue to adhere a more traditional management style dominated by the maintenance-oriented HR system (Liang, Marler, & Cui, 2012). POEs, on the other hand, have adopted the performance-oriented HR system and can benefit from their emphasis on this system (Wei & Lau, 2005). Having said that, the relationship between HR system adoption and firm ownership types is not as strong as it used to be (Wei & Lau, 2005). All these considerations weigh on graduating students' career intentions.

- Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB)

As one of the extensions of the theory of reasoned action (TRA) introduced by Fishbein and Ajzen (1975), the theory of planned behavior (TPB) is an influential conceptual model to study and predict the action of human beings (Ajzen, 2015). The TPB theorizes that attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control influence intention, which in turn influences behavior (Ajzen, 1985). According to Ajzen (2002), the behavior of an individual is guided by three considerations. One is behavioral beliefs, beliefs about the possible consequences of the behavior. They produce a positive or negative attitude toward the behavior. A second one is normative beliefs, beliefs about the social expectations of people important to an individual. They lead to perceived social pressure, named 'subjective norms.' The third one is control beliefs; beliefs about factors that may be barriers or obstacles to performing the behavior, which result in perceived behavioral control. There has been a number of applications of the TPB in the vocational field. For instance, the employment status choice intention of Russian students and undergraduate students was explored with the help of the TPB by Tkachev and Kolvereid (1999).

In another study, the TPB was applied as a predictor of entrepreneurial intention among senior students (Solesvik, Westhead, Kolvereid, & Matlay, 2012). The study determined that 55% of the variance in students' intention to become self-employed could be explained. The TPB was also used to predict the entrepreneurial career intention of business undergraduates in Malaysia (Chou, Kuppusamy, & Jusoh, 2005). Moreover, the TPB has also served as the basis for various research studies about students' career intention in salary-based enterprises, such as for instance, the intent of students to find a part-time job (Creed, Doherty, & O'Callaghan, 2008), Taiwan college students' intention to engage in contingent employment (Huang, 2011), and the intention of Generation Y to work in ideal organization (Warmerdam, Lewis, & Banks, 2015). The TPB theorizes the positive relationship between attitude and intention. Significant positive relationships are also predicted between attitude and the intention of graduating college students to seek long term or temporary jobs (Caska, 1998; Huang, 2011; Song et al., 2006), though different variances exist in different contexts.

- Attitude toward Behavior: Maintenance- and Performance-Oriented HR Systems

The dual-concern model used in Human resource (HR) management was developed by Gong, Law, Chang, and Xin (2009) and is based on a seminal study from Katz and Kahn (1978), who believe that maintenance and production subsystems exist in all open systems. It consists of the maintenance-oriented HR system and the performance-oriented HR system. Literature suggests that the nature of an enterprise's exchanges with employees can be shaped by HR practices systems (Morrison, 1996). The performance-oriented HR system has been defined as a series of HR practices that mainly focus on the development of HR and offer motivations and opportunities for the use of their productivity (Gong et al., 2009). As to the maintenance-oriented HR system, it is defined as a series of HR practices that mainly ensure the well-being and quality of employees and is determined in terms of values that are not related to input-output ratios (Gong et al., 2009). According to Cohen (1992), resources provided in the maintenance-oriented HR system (e.g. stability and security) may be at a lower employee preference order than those provided in the performance-oriented HR system (e.g., skill development and personal promotion) which may satisfy the primary needs of employees.

- Subjective Norms: Parents' Expectations

As a social predictor, perceived subjective norms refer to an individual's perception of social expectations to perform a given behavior (Godin & Kok, 1996). In Asian cultures, parent expectations, which can be defined as the level that parents realistically hope their children will attain, is extremely important (Goldenberg et al., 2001). Due to the deep influence of Confucian philosophy, Chinese parents often sacrifice their own interests and invest huge amount of time, energy, and money on their children. In return, children are educated to obey and fulfill the expectations of their parents (Shek & Chan, 1999). Even though finding a job is a big step toward independence, graduates still view their parents as authority figures (Youniss & Smollar, 1985) and due to their strong attachment to them try to meet their expectations (Greenberg, Siegel, & Leitch, 1983). Even at present, parents' expectations are still regarded as one of the key social factors influencing college students' career intention (Ding, 2004; Miao & Dong, 2005; Huang & Zhou, 2016). However, it has been noticed that more empirical studies are needed on the topic of relationships between career choice upon graduation and family (Leung et al., 2011) as well, most notably on the linkage between

parental behavior and the career development of young adolescence (Whiston & Keller, 2004). When parental expectations match the attitude of a student toward the maintenance-oriented HR system, there will be a positive relationship with the career intention to work at an SOE. Conversely, if they contradict the attitude of the graduating student toward the maintenance-oriented HR system, a negative influence on a student's career intention to work at an SOE will emerge.

- Perceived Behavioral Control: Self-Efficacy and Controllability

Perceived behavioral control refers to an individual's perception of his/her ability to perform a behavior of interest (Ajzen & Madden, 1986). It has been theorized as the degree to which an individual perceives the ease or difficulty to enact the behavior. It includes two dimensions: (i) perceived self-efficacy and (ii) controllability. Perceived self-efficacy can be defined as an individual's understanding of whether it is easy or difficult to perform a given behavior. It is rooted in the social learning theory (Bandura, 1982). It is about people's strong beliefs about their skills and competencies to initiate "control over their own level of functioning and over events that affect their lives" (Bandura, 1982). Perceived self-efficacy influences the way people choose activities (Bandura & Adams, 1997) and has become a critical variable in understanding career development among different people (Bounds, 2013). Hackett and Betz' (1981) study was the first to incorporate self-efficacy as a variable in career choice process. Since self-efficacy is domain specific and will change with the tasks and situations considered (Wilson, Kickul, & Marlino, 2007), career decision-making self-efficacy is adopted in this study with regard to career exploration (Betz & Vuyten, 1997).

As to controllability, it refers to the degree to which performance is up to the individual (Ajzen, 2002). It is about the belief of individuals as to whether they have control over the behavior of interest or not (Ajzen, 2002). This is theorized as the belief that career outcomes are mainly dependent on one's own actions or on factors outside of one's control (Woodbury, 1999). As higher-order concepts of perceived behavioral control, both perceived self-efficacy and controllability are used in this study to measure the perceived behavioral control of college students in terms of career intention as was the case in previous studies (Conner & Armitage, 1998; Cheung & Chan, 2000). A high level of perceived behavioral control can strengthen persistent efforts to achieve the aim, even under pressure (Bandura, 1977). Therefore, individuals with high level of behavioral control are more likely to intend to work at POEs since POE employees need to have strong personal skills, will power, commitment, and task focus (Norman & Hoyle, 2004). Compared to POEs, SOEs may seem more attractive to individuals with lower perceived behavioral control, since uncertainty is lower due to the support from and protection of the government (Lee, 2009). Therefore, the career intention of individuals with lower perceived behavioral control may be expected to be at SOEs.

- Behavioral Intention: Career Intention

Behavioral intention is theorized as the effort that a person plans to exert in order to stick to the behavior (Fishbein, 1980). As mentioned earlier, this study adopts a two-dimensional career intention: SOEs and POEs. Song (2017) determined that the factors affecting college graduates' career intention and career choices can be divided into two groups: subjective and objective. Subjective factors essentially include inner personal factors, such as for instance,

personal interest, hobbies, personal specialties, ability display, career preparation, and so on. Objective factors on the other hand include social factors such as parents' expectations, the living environment, public opinion on the career, income, opportunities, social relations, location, and stability. One of the factors influencing Chinese college graduates' decision to work at SOEs or POEs is the education level. According to Zhu and Ye (2019), the higher the education level, the more likely students will elect to work at SOEs. Another important factor is social relations. They have always been a key element influencing the jobhunting process of college graduating students (Wang & Chang, 2019). Of course, family is also a significant factor that college students have to take into consideration as parents' career type and career position have been shown to have a significant positive relationship with college students' job intention (Huang & Zhou, 2016). Due to their concerns about the pressure and instability of POEs, more than 49% of parents hope their children could work at SOEs. Parents' expectations have a significant positive relationship with college students' career intention (Huang & Zhou, 2016). So does the frequency of parent-child communication (Han & Xu, 2019).

- Perceived Behavioral Control

Perceived behavioral control can be theorized as the degree to which an individual perceives the ease or difficulty to enact the behavior. Under the TPB, the attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control constructs have a positive relationship with behavioral intention. Sutton (1998) found that attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control can account for 40% to 50% of the variance in behavioral intentions.

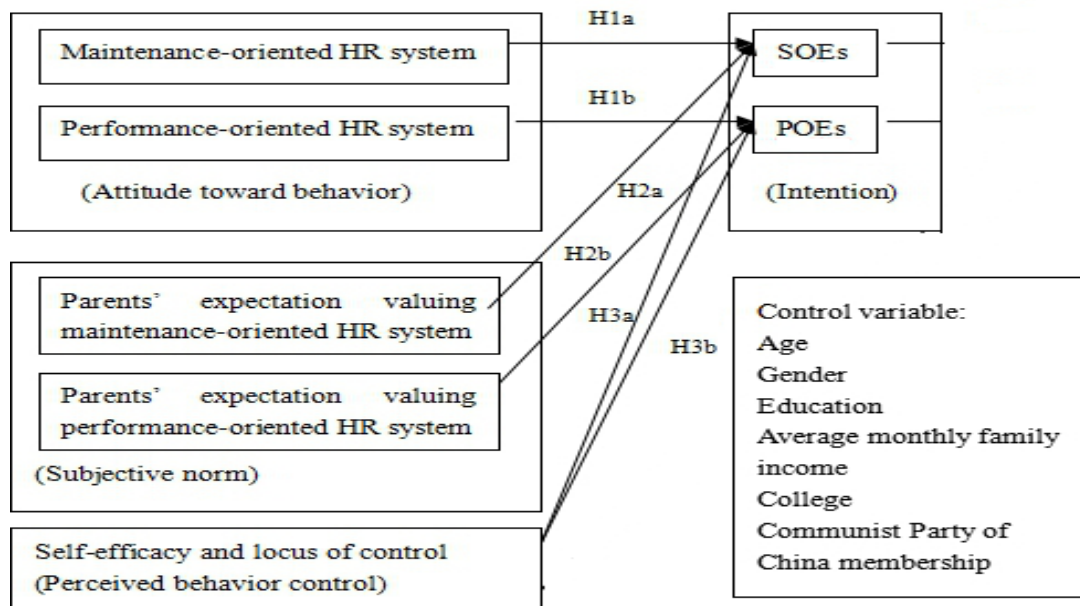


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Based on the above operative concepts and the conceptual framework, the following hypotheses have been developed:

Hypothesis One:

H1: *The more positive the attitude graduates have toward the maintenance-oriented HR system as compared to the performance-oriented HR system, the more likely their intention to work at SOEs as opposed to POEs.*

H1a: *Graduates' perceived maintenance-oriented HR system will have a positive relationship with the intention to work at SOEs.*

H1b: *Graduates' perceived performance-oriented HR system will have a positive relationship with the intention to work at POEs.*

Hypothesis Two:

H2: *The more parents' expectations value SOEs and the maintenance-oriented HR system, as compared to POEs and the performance-oriented HR system, the more influence parents' expectations will have on graduates' career intention to work at SOEs rather than at POEs.*

H2a: *There is a positive relationship between parents' expectations valuing SOEs based on the maintenance-oriented HR system and graduates' intention to work at SOEs.*

H2b: *There is a positive relationship between parents' expectations valuing POEs based on the performance-oriented HR system and graduates' intention to work at POEs.*

Hypothesis Three:

H3: *Perceived behavioral control is significantly positively related to graduates' career intention to work at POEs and SOEs and, the higher the graduates' level of perceived behavioral control, the stronger their career intention to work at POEs rather than SOEs.*

H3a: *The perceived behavioral control of graduates will be positively related to their career intention to work at SOEs.*

H3b: *The perceived behavioral control of graduates will be positively related to their career intention to work at POEs.*

H3c: *The higher the level of perceived behavioral control of graduates, the stronger their intention to work at POEs rather than at SOEs.*

3. Methodology

- Samples and Data Collection

The respondents in this study are graduating students from Chongqing University and Southwest University of China, majoring in management (1,350 and 2,550 students, respectively). Based on the sample size tables presented by Glenn (1992) and the size of the population of this study, the planned number of responses to be obtained is 400, where the confidence level is 95% and $P=0.5$. To obtain a diverse sample, the snowball sampling technique was used and data collected through an online questionnaire collecting platform, Questionnaire Star. Questionnaires were edited online and a QR code sent to students at different colleges, who further uploaded the QR code to QQ or WeChat groups, and distributed the questionnaires to their classmates and friends. In total 680 questionnaires were distributed to the respondents who were also informed that participation to this study is voluntary and anonymous. Out of this amount, 477 surveys were completely filled and

collected (3 were invalid), yielding a 70.15% response rate. The questionnaire was developed in English and translated into Chinese by an English lecturer at one of China's key universities with training in English-Chinese translation. In addition, a colleague of the translator performed back translation to check the original translation's accuracy. The three versions of the questionnaire are attached as appendix.

- Measures

The scales used to measure all the variables in the questionnaire are from previous research studies and have been validated. Some minor wording changes though were made to adapt the scales to the vocational context. The performance-oriented HR system was measured with a modified version of the 36-item performance-oriented HR system scale originally developed by Gong et al. (2009). The original scale was specifically designed to measure the perceptions of managers regarding their personal experience with the performance-oriented HR system. In this study, "manager" has been replaced with "employee" and "my firm" with "my future firm". The sample item reads as follows: "Employees' career aspirations with the future firm are known by their superiors". All items used a five-point rating scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

The maintenance-oriented HR system was also measured with a modified version of the scale of the 12-item maintenance-oriented HR system originally developed by Gong et al. (2009). Since the original scale was designed to measure the perceptions of managers regarding their personal experience with the maintenance-oriented HR system, a change was made by the author for this study and "manager" has been replaced with "employee" as well as "my firm" with "my future firm". So, the sample item is as follows: "My future firm will offer me a pledge of employment security". All items were arranged using a five-point rating scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Parental expectations (a subjective norm) were assessed with a slightly modified version of the scale developed by Arnold et al. (1998), which was originally two dimensional in order to measure whether parents or people who matter to the respondents agree with the students' decision to working for the National Health Service (NHS) as a nurse. The author replaced NHS with the maintenance- or performance-oriented HR system dimension. The sample items read as follows: "My parent expect me to work in a firm with a maintenance-oriented HR system" and "My parent would feel proud if I worked in a firm with a maintenance-oriented HR system". Moreover, the two items were expanded to four items, each using a five-point rating scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Perceived behavioral control was measured using a combination of self-efficacy and controllability. Betz, Klein, and Taylor (1983) developed the CDMSE Scale to measure the concept of self-efficacy and further proposed a CDMSE-SF (short form) with a total scale of 0.94. However, when the CDMSE-SF was tested in the context of Chinese college students, the model did not fit but a modified 13-item three-factor model was determined to have a reliability coefficient of 0.85 (Hampton, 2005). Therefore, the modified version was adopted in this study. A sample item reads as follows: "Define the type of lifestyle you would like". All items were arranged using a five-point rating scale, ranging from 1 (no confidence at all) to 5 (complete confidence).

Controllability was measured using the Career Locus of Control Scale (CLCS) from Millar and Shevlin (2007), initially designed to assess adolescences' engagement in career development and decision-making process. The 20-item scale was arranged using a five-point rating scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) and comprise aspects of internality, luck, helplessness, and powerful others. A sample item is: "If get the job I want, I will have to do well and try hard". Career intention was measured with the modified version of Huang's (2011) three-item scale. Whereas the original scale was designed to measure college students' intention to engage in contingent employment after graduation, "contingent employment" was replaced with "SOE employment" or "POE". A sample item reads as follows: "I intend to engage in SOE employment after graduating;" Moreover, the three-item scale was expanded into six and all of them were arranged used a five-point rating scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The demographic factors were included in the conceptual model as control variables. These factors include gender, age, education, college, the Communist Party of China (CPC) membership, and average family monthly income.

- Data Analysis

The hypotheses were tested with the partial least square regression (PLS), for comparison between multiple response and multiple explanatory variables. PLS is a multivariate statistical method which uses a number of covariance-based statistical technique (Tennenhaus, 1998).

4. Results

Before conducting a PLS analysis, the reliability and validity of the questionnaire were tested. Construct reliability, using Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability coefficients, was employed to ensure that the scale yielded the same response consistently. Nunnally (1978) recommends that Cronbach's alpha should be more than 0.70 and the composite reliability coefficients greater than 0.70 as well (Hair et al., 2009). The results shown in Table 1 indicate that both the Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability coefficient are greater than 0.70.

Table 1: Latent Variable Reliability Indicators

	MOHR	POHR	PEM	PEP	PBC	SOES	POES
Composite reliability	0.85	0.96	0.90	0.91	0.91	0.95	0.95
Cronbach's alpha	0,80	0.96	0.77	0.81	0.91	0.92	0.92

As to validity, two types of construct validity were examined: convergent and discriminant. Convergent validity is designed to ensure a high proportion of variance of each indicator of a given construct, which can be evaluated by using factor loading. It should be greater than 0.50 (Hair et al., 2009). The results of factor loadings indicate that the latent variables meet the standard. Discriminant validity is applied to ensure the differentiation of a latent variable from others, which is evaluated by the average variance extracted (AVE). The square root of the AVE of each construct should be more than that of the other correlations. As indicated in Table 2, the square roots of the AVE of each latent variable are significantly greater than those of the other correlations, which is satisfactory.

Table 2: Correlation of Variables

	MOHR	POHR	PEM	PEP	PBC	SOES	POES	AGE	GEN	EDU	FI	COL	CPC
MOHR	(0.57)												
POHR	0.56***	(0.64)											
PEM	0.32***	0.40***	(0.90)										
PEP	0.18***	0.36***	0.38***	(0.91)									
PBC	-0.04	0.06	0.04	0.28	(0.54)								
SOES	0.31***	0.25***	0.31***	0.18***	0.15	(0.93)							
POES	-0.05	0.05	-0.11	0.14**	0.32***	-0.15**	(0.93)						
AGE	0.01	0.14**	-0.01	0.06	0.08	0.09	0.03	1					
GEN	-0.14**	-0.05	0.01	0.07	0.14	0.03	0.07	0.17***	1				
EDU	-0.08	-0.03	-0.06	-0.03	0.05	0.03	-0.05	0.58***	0.04***	1			
FI	-0.12**	-0.03	0.01	0.13	0.10*	-0.03	-0.01	0.14	-0.04	0.01	1		
COL	-0.06	-0.22***	-0.02	-0.01	0.07	0.04	-0.05	-0.24***	-0.05	-0.27***	0.01	1	
CPC	-0.02	-0.13**	-0.04	-0.10*	-0.05	-0.06	0.03	-0.54***	-0.01	0.40***	-0.06	0.16***	1

Notes: PEM=Parents’ expectation valuing maintenance-oriented HR system; PEP=Parents’ expectation valuing performance-oriented HR system; PBC=Perceived behavior control (Self-efficacy and locus of control); SOES=Career intention of working at state-owned enterprises; POES=Career intention of working at private-owned enterprises; GEN=Gender; EDU=Education level; FI=Average monthly family income; COL=College; CPC=Communist Party of China membership.

The square roots of AVEs are reported in parentheses.

***, **, *: significant level at 0.1 percent, 1 percent, and 5 percent, respectively.

In addition, the full variance inflation factor (VIF) needed to be measured to ensure that multi-collinearity was not a major concern in the analysis. Multi-collinearity will lead to very high inter-correlations or inter-associations among independent variables that will result in bias. According to Petter et al., (2007), VIFs should be less than 5 and ideally less than 3.30. The PLS analysis shown in Table 3 indicates that all VIFs are less than 2, signaling that multi-collinearity is not a concern.

Table 3: Variance Inflation Factors

	MOHR	POHR	PEM	PEP	PBC	SOES	POES	AGE	GEN	EDU	FI	COL	CPC
VIF	1.62	1.85	1.41	1.41	1.28	1.27	1.22	1.98	1.10	1.60	1.08	1.20	1.47

Various indicators determine the goodness of fit in PLS estimations. They include the average path coefficient (APC), average R², average full collinearity, Simpson’s paradox ratio, R² contribution ratio, and statistical suppression ratio (Kock, 2012). They were all tested as well and reach the standards.

Hypothesis 1 predicts that the more positive the attitude graduating students have toward the maintenance-oriented HR system as opposed to the performance-oriented HR system, the more likely they will have the intention to work at SOEs rather than at POEs. For clarification purposes, the hypothesis is divided into two sub-hypotheses: hypothesis 1a

predicts a positive relationship between perceived maintenance-oriented HR system and intention to work at SOEs. The results show a positive and significant relation between the two ($\beta=0.21$, $p<0.01$), Hypothesis 1a is supported. As to Hypothesis 1b, it predicts a positive relationship between the perceived performance-oriented HR system and intention to work at POEs. The results show a negative relationship between the two, which, however, is not statistically significant ($\beta=-0.03$, $p=0.24$). In addition, there is a significant negative relationship between the perceived maintenance-oriented HR system and intention to work at POEs ($\beta=-0.10$, $p=0.01$), and a positive relationship between the perceived performance-oriented HR system and intention to work at SOEs ($\beta=0.02$, $p=0.30$), but they are not statistically significant. This means that Hypothesis 1a is supported, Hypothesis 1b not supported, and Hypothesis 1 partially supported.

Hypothesis 2 predicts that the more parents' expectations value SOEs with maintenance-oriented HR system, as opposed to POEs with performance-oriented HR system, the more positive the influence parents' expectations will have on graduate students' career intention of working at SOEs rather than at POEs. Hypothesis 2 is divided into two sub-hypotheses. Hypothesis 2a predicts a positive relationship between parents' expectations valuing SOEs with maintenance-oriented HR system and graduates' intention of working at SOEs. The results demonstrate a significant positive relationship between the two ($\beta=0.19$, $p<0.01$). Hypothesis 2b predicts a positive relationship between parents' expectations valuing POEs with performance-oriented HR system and graduates' intention of working at POEs. The results show a significant positive relationship between the two ($\beta=0.10$, $p=0.01$). In addition, there is a significantly negative relationship between parents' expectations valuing SOEs with maintenance-oriented HR system and intention of working at POEs ($\beta=-0.18$, $p<0.01$), and a positive relationship between parents' expectations valuing POEs with maintenance-oriented HR system and intention of working at SOEs ($\beta=0.03$, $p=0.24$), but not statistically significant. Thus, Hypotheses 2a and 2b are supported and so is Hypothesis 2.

Hypothesis 3 predicts perceived behavioral control will be significantly positively related to the career intention of working at POEs and SOEs, and the higher the level of perceived behavioral control of the individual, the stronger their career intention to work at POEs rather than at SOEs. Hypothesis 3 is divided into three sub-hypotheses: Hypothesis 3a predicts a positive relationship between perceived behavioral control of graduates and career intention of graduates working at SOEs. The results show a significant positive relationship between the two ($\beta=0.13$, $p<0.01$). Hypothesis 3b predicts a positive relationship between the perceived behavioral control of graduates and the career intention of graduates working at POEs. The results show a significant positive relationship between the two ($\beta=0.30$, $p<0.01$). Hypothesis 3c predicts that the higher the level of perceived behavioral control of the individual, the stronger the intention to work at POEs as opposed to SOEs. The results demonstrate a higher intention of working at POEs ($\beta=0.30>\beta=0.13$). Therefore, Hypotheses 3a, 3b, and 3c are supported as well as Hypothesis 3.

As to the control variables, the results show that there is a significant positive relationship between college and career intention of working at SOEs ($\beta=0.10$, $p=0.02$), and a significantly negative relationship between education level and career intention of working at POEs ($\beta=-0.13$, $p<0.01$). The results from the PLS analysis are reported in Figure 2.

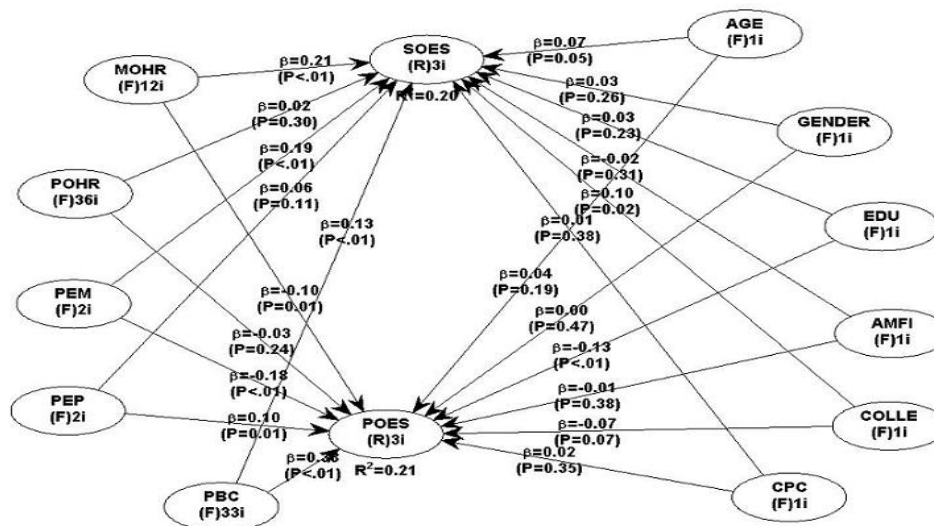


Figure 2: PLS Analysis Results

Notes: AMFI=Average monthly family income; COLLE=College

5. Discussion and Conclusions

This study explores the relationships between HR systems, parents’ expectations, self-efficacy and career locus of control on the one hand and graduating students’ career intention of working at SOEs or at POEs on the other. Applying the Theory of Planned Behavior, it provides empirical contribution to the current understanding of HR research, especially the relationship between the dual-concern model of HR systems (maintenance- and performance-oriented HR systems) and graduates’ career intention. Unlike most of the existing literature on HR management, which focuses on organizations in Western cultures (Jackson, et al., 2014), this study pays attention to HR management in Eastern cultures, contributing to a greater understanding of the functioning of HR systems with respect to career intention in emerging economies. This is an important departure from the research trend on this issue and perhaps a harbinger of things to come.

As the findings in this study show, an important dimension of graduates’ career intention is parent expectations. Whereas most of the studies on parent expectations pertain to their children’s performance and achievements and to various related psychological issues (Kean, 2005; Agliata & Renk, 2009; Guo, 2015), this study cast light on the direct link between parental expectations in terms of whether their children should work at SOEs or at POEs upon graduation and these children’s own career intention. As made clear in this study, the role of parental expectations on the career intention of their graduating sons or daughters remains significant. As noted earlier, much of it has to do with Chinese culture and the perception of parenting. Understandably, parents want the best for their children and overall job security and steady income and they want to be obeyed as they believe they have the wisdom to make key choices which their children may not have yet.

This is why they value SOEs with maintenance-oriented HR system and are far less inclined to recommend that their progeny find employment with POEs and their performance-oriented HR system, which they view as a source of pressure. Graduating

students may disagree with their parents' choice but it seems that at this point, few are willing to go against their mother and father's will. Cultures are not static though. They evolve and there may come a time when, if graduates' intentions conflict with their parents', they may resist their parents' wishes and do it their way. While it is unclear at this point whether such an outcome is likely to occur in the near future, this is clearly an area that warrants further research. This study also offers empirical contribution to perceived behavioral control and the link which this construct has with graduating students' career intentions. As explained earlier, prior studies typically rely on a single scale to measure perceived behavioral control (Arnold et al., 2006; Linan & Chen, 2009; Tsang, Wang, & Ku, 2015).

However, as Gerhart et al. (2000) noted, this may result in significant measurement errors. Consequently, in a departure from this approach, this study uses two different scales to rate perceived behavioral control – CDMSE-SF and CLOC, which it combines together. The mixing self-efficacy and controllability demonstrate considerable internal consistency (Cheung & Chan, 2000), making the results more reliable. If graduating students prefer the stable and secured HR system, they will choose to work at SOEs. But if they wish to have more challenges, more capability improvement, and more performance enhancement, they will most likely opt to work at POEs, assuming of course that this choice fits with their parents' expectations (unless they manage to convince them that POEs are best for them). Recall from above that, while the variable 'attitude' is mainly individually-based, the subjective norm, on the other hand, is more other-based and concerned with what others, for instance, parents, think what the individual should do (Song et al., 2006).

More than 70% of all the respondents majoring in management indicated they would choose to work at SOEs. It thus can be inferred that most of the students who opted for SOEs still regard stability and security as their top concerns when choosing a job. One possible explanation is that they may lack courage or confidence, something which universities can develop by encouraging students to challenge themselves more, in which case, training sessions could also be offered to improve those graduating students' career skills. Another plausible explanation (one that ties up with the above discussion) is that this choice may reflect parents' expectations more than their genuine sentiments. As obedient well-behaved children and in line with the prevalent social norms, they just follow the dictates of their parents. But of course, this may just also be the case that parents and their progeny feel the same way about what matters in a career and that stability and security dwarf any other considerations, including income levels and company location (traffic can be a major issue in China).

Finally, this study offers some valuable managerial insights for colleges as well. For one, it shows that the age of college graduates is positively related to their career intention toward working at SOEs. The older they are at the time they graduate, the more likely they are to choose SOEs for a career. Therefore, when providing career guidance to graduating students, colleges can take this criterion into consideration and then to better target their future job and career prospects. Valuable career related information and robust career guidance programs should be set up on campus to make sure students better understand their true needs and wants in relation to their future jobs and enhance their ability to think for themselves.

Limitations and Recommendations

This study is not without limitations. First, the snowball sampling technique may result in bias due to the non-adoption of probability sampling, which made it difficult to generalize the results to the large population of interest. Therefore, probability sampling technique is recommended in future research to generalize the results to a large population of interest. Second, a self-reported questionnaire may result in social desirability bias. In addition, the relatively low R^2 indicates that more variables could be added to explore the relationships, for instance, the salary and bonus, the location of the enterprise, the prospects of personal and enterprise development. Finally, it would be valuable to examine the samples from different countries and to compare the similarities and differences of college graduating students' career intentions.

This research study also provides some practical suggestions for both students and parents. Graduating students should not simply follow their parents' expectations but look inside and find out more about their true needs; a high order given the traditional emphasis in Chinese culture on child obedience, as we just saw. In addition, students should place more emphasis on self-actualization, independence, and self-improvement and enhance their capacity to comprehensive themselves. With professional knowledge and skills, right judgment, amazing resilience, the college graduating students could set up right employment outlook, choose the most suitable jobs rationally, and develop their own career path in a way consistent with their true needs.

For parents, as one of the most influential forces for graduating students, more communication about their children's career intentions is strongly encouraged, not only between parents and students, but also between parents and colleges. Some parents lack information about career status and policy and end up placing more emphasis on the comparatively comfortable, stable, and decent jobs, thereby discouraging students' personal development and stifling their personalities (Huang & Zhou, 2016). Parents should therefore advance their education on employment outlook and find out more about majors, career prospects and societal demands. Furthermore, when offering practical and well-meant suggestions, parents should respect the needs and wishes of their children and avoid making graduates' career decisions too dependent on their parents' prerogatives and perceptions.

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