

Original Paper

Major Selection and Career Intentions under TCM Culture Entering Campuses—Evidence from a Questionnaire Survey

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Abstract

Purpose: This study aims to explore the impact of exposure to traditional Chinese medicine culture in primary and secondary schools on college students' professional choice and career intention. Method: Adopt a combination of convenient sampling and online questionnaire survey. The data is collected through the "Questionnaire Star" platform. Results: College students generally have a positive attitude towards traditional Chinese medicine. Compared with students who have not been exposed to traditional Chinese medicine culture, students who have been exposed to traditional Chinese medicine culture are significantly more affected in terms of professional choice and career intention. Conclusion: Exposure to traditional Chinese medicine culture has a significant positive impact on the academic and career choices of college students. Therefore, it is recommended to strengthen the construction of traditional Chinese medicine culture on campus, improve the curriculum system of traditional Chinese medicine, expand the communication channels of traditional Chinese medicine education, and further deepen the integration of traditional Chinese medicine culture and primary and secondary education.

Keywords

Traditional Chinese medicine culture entering campuses, major selection, career intention

1. Introduction

In recent years, with the advancement of national policies, the integration of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) culture into school education has become an important issue within China's national education system. The Outline of the Strategic Plan for the Development of Traditional Chinese Medicine (2016–2030) explicitly proposed promoting TCM culture “into campuses, communities, villages, and families.” In addition, the Opinions of the CPC Central Committee and the State Council on Promoting the Inheritance, Innovation, and Development of Traditional Chinese Medicine emphasized the need to “integrate TCM culture throughout national education” and to further enrich

TCM cultural education in primary and secondary schools (Jin & Ma, 2025). Despite the increasing policy support, people still pay insufficient attention to the long-term educational impact of traditional Chinese medicine culture entering the campus, especially its impact on college students' major choices and career intentions.

2. Research Background

The research on the integration of traditional Chinese medicine culture into school education has been quite rich. Teng Guohua and others have explored an innovative education model of "Chinese medicine + labor education". By establishing a practice base of "one mu of traditional Chinese medicine field" on campus, students are encouraged to plant traditional Chinese medicinal materials according to the rules of the season, so as to experience traditional Chinese medicine culture through practice (Teng, Qiu, Yan et al., 2p25). Huang Zhiyan et al., using the "Kunyi Club" of Zhejiang University of Traditional Chinese Medicine as an example to argue that the student organization of traditional Chinese medicine colleges is an important driving force for the dissemination of traditional Chinese medicine culture and plays a unique role in promoting traditional Chinese medicine culture to enter the campus (Huang, Yan, Zhou et al., 2025). These studies mainly focus on curriculum development, labor-oriented educational practice and student community activities, showing that this field has gradually shifted from policy advocacy to practical application.

At the same time, some scholars began to study the professional identity and career intention of students majoring in traditional Chinese medicine. Chen Chen pointed out that many traditional Chinese medicine students tend to ignore career interests, rely excessively on interest evaluation, and form rigid career preferences, which weakens the feasibility and sustainability of career planning, and ultimately affects professional identity and employment quality (Chen, 2021). Xia Qing et al. proposed the concept of "whole-process" vocational education, advocating continuous vocational awareness and planning education from college admission to graduation to enhance students' career development ability and employment initiative (Xia, Wang, Q. L., Wang, Q. Q. et al., 2022). Ren Jiayu et al., majoring in management at Beijing University of Traditional Chinese Medicine and found that "understanding of majors" and "satisfaction with campus life" are the key factors affecting the matching of employment and majors, and "fit between occupations and interests" shows different configuration effects on academic/administrative and technical/business career paths (Ren, Zhang, Zhou et al., 2024). These studies reveal the complex mechanisms affecting the professional identity and career intention of traditional Chinese medicine students from the perspective of career interest, vocational education and employment choice.

However, the existing research mainly focuses on vocational education and employment guidance at the university level, while there is relatively little research on how exposure to traditional Chinese medicine culture in primary and secondary schools affects students' subsequent major choices and career intentions. Most studies focus on activity design and short-term educational outcomes, while

research on long-term effects and their potential mechanisms is not sufficient.

3. Research Gaps

Although previous studies have provided a valuable theoretical and practical basis for understanding the entry of traditional Chinese medicine culture into the campus, there are still some important research gaps.

First of all, there is a lack of longitudinal research. Most existing studies rely on cross-sectional surveys or short-term evaluations of educational activities. There are few studies on long-term tracking of primary and secondary school students who receive traditional Chinese medicine culture education to examine how these experiences affect their professional choices and career intentions after entering college. Therefore, there is still limited direct empirical evidence on whether early exposure to traditional Chinese medicine culture really affects the choice of university majors.

Secondly, insufficient attention is paid to the perspective of the student's recipient. Most of the existing studies are from the perspective of policymakers and education practitioners, and there is relatively little discussion on the actual experience, perception and long-term impact of primary and secondary school students. Although Liu Shanlin and others investigated the students' "interest level" and "willingness to participate", they did not further explore how these early educational experiences can be transformed into future academic and career choices (Liu, Xu, Yu et al., 2025).

Thirdly, the relationship between traditional Chinese medicine culture entering the campus and career intentions has not been fully clarified. Guan Cuiling and others have confirmed the intermediary role of "cultural identity of traditional Chinese medicine" between campus cultural construction and cultural inheritance of traditional Chinese medicine. However, whether this mechanism can also explain the impact of primary and secondary education experience on college major selection and career intentions has not been directly verified (Guan, Chen, & Gao, 2020).

4. Materials and Methods

4.1 Participants and Survey Methods

This study targeted university students currently enrolled in higher education institutions and adopted a combination of convenience sampling and online questionnaires. The questionnaire was designed, distributed, and collected through the "Questionnaire Star" platform. To ensure sample diversity, targeted distribution was conducted through class groups, campus forums, and course platforms, covering both general universities and TCM universities. The survey was conducted in April 2026, resulting in 99 valid questionnaires. After strict screening procedures, invalid responses were excluded from subsequent analyses.

The exclusion criteria included questionnaires completed by non-university students, incomplete questionnaires, responses exhibiting obvious patterns, abnormally short completion times, and

duplicate submissions.

4.2 Questionnaire Design

Campuses on College Students' Major Selection and Career Intentions. The development process was as follows: first, six relevant studies concerning TCM cultural dissemination, vocational psychology, and higher education were reviewed to establish an initial item pool. Secondly, we invited three experts (including traditional Chinese medicine education experts and questionnaire survey methods experts) to evaluate the validity of the content of the questionnaire, including the relevance, clarity and dimensional classification of each question. According to their feedback, we have modified, added and deleted some questions. Third, we conducted a pilot test on 33 college students in addition to the formal survey sample. Based on the feedback of the participants and the results of the analysis of the questions, we have modified four questions, including combining several multiple-choice options, changing some open-ended questions to single-choice questions, and optimizing the logical order of the questions.

The final questionnaire mainly revolves around three core dimensions: (1) traditional Chinese medicine cultural cognition, measuring students' understanding of the basic knowledge and cultural concepts of traditional Chinese medicine; (2) the impact on professional choice, measuring whether traditional Chinese medicine culture affects students' decision to apply for medicine or traditional Chinese medicine-related majors; (3) the impact on career intentions, weighing Whether the culture of traditional Chinese medicine affects students' willingness to engage in traditional Chinese medicine-related professions in the future.

The questionnaire consisted of six sections: basic demographic information, experiences with TCM culture entering campuses during primary and secondary school, cognition and attitudes toward TCM, influence on major selection, career intention, and open-ended questions. Among these variables, experiences with TCM culture entering campuses served as the primary independent variable, while influence on major selection and career intention served as the primary outcome variables.

4.3 Statistical Analysis

Excel was used for data organization, and SPSS 26.0 was employed for statistical analysis. Frequencies, percentages, and mean values were used to describe participants' demographic characteristics and the levels of major variables. Independent-samples t-tests were conducted using prior exposure to TCM culture entering campuses as the grouping variable in order to compare differences in major selection influence and career intention between groups. A p-value of less than 0.05 was considered statistically significant.

5. Results

5.1 Participant Characteristics

A total of 99 valid questionnaires were collected. Among all the respondents, 18 majored in traditional Chinese medicine-related majors (18.18%), 20 majored in traditional Chinese medicine (20.29%), 16

majored in acupuncture (16.16%), 14 majored in the combination of traditional Chinese and Western medicine (14.14%), and 31 majored in non-traditional Chinese medicine-related majors (31.31%). In terms of gender, 42 people were men (42.42%) and 57 people were women (57.58%). In terms of grade, 15 are freshmen (15.15%), 29 are sophomores (29.29%), 20 are juniors (20.20%), 27 are seniors (27.27%), and 8 are senior students (8.08%).

5.2 Major Selection and Career Intention

The average score of students' attitudes towards traditional Chinese medicine is 3.98 (out of 5), indicating that most students have a positive attitude towards traditional Chinese medicine. The average score of the impact of traditional Chinese medicine culture on professional choice is 3.54 points, and the average score of the impact on career intention is 3.64 points, indicating that the entry of traditional Chinese medicine culture into the campus has a moderate positive impact on students' academic and career choices. The average scores of cognitive improvement and interest enhancements are 3.38 and 3.46 points respectively, both of which are higher than the midpoint level. These results show that the entry of traditional Chinese medicine culture into campus activities can improve students' awareness and interest in traditional Chinese medicine to a certain extent, but the improvement is relatively limited. As shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics

Indicator	Average
TCM Attitude	3.98
Impact on Major Selection	3.54
Career Intention	3.64
Cognitive Enhancement	3.38
Interest Enhancement	3.46

Based on whether participants had been exposed to “TCM culture entering campuses” or similar activities during primary and secondary education, respondents were divided into an experienced group (n = 80) and a non-experienced group (n = 19).

Regarding major selection, the non-experienced group obtained a mean score of 2.74, whereas the experienced group obtained a mean score of 3.73. The difference between the two groups was statistically significant ($t = -4.42$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that students with prior exposure to TCM culture entering campuses were significantly more influenced in their major selection.

Regarding career intention, the non-experienced group obtained a mean score of 3.14, while the experienced group obtained a mean score of 3.75. This difference was also statistically significant ($t = -2.50$, $p < 0.05$), suggesting that students with prior exposure were more inclined to pursue TCM-related careers in the future. As shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Influence of TCM Campus-Culture Experiences

Category	Experienced Group (n=80)	Non-Experienced Group (n=19)	t-value	p-value	Significance
Major selection	3.73	2.74	-4.42	0.000025	Significant (p<0.001)
Career intention	3.75	3.14	-2.5	0.0139	Significant (p<0.05)

6. Conclusion

This study explores the impact of traditional Chinese medicine culture entering the campus on the professional choice and career intention of college students. The research results show that college students generally have a positive attitude towards traditional Chinese medicine, and exposure to traditional Chinese medicine culture on campus can improve students' awareness and interest in traditional Chinese medicine to a certain extent. However, the overall impact is still moderate, indicating that there is still a lot of room for development and improvement. The research results also show that exposure to traditional Chinese medicine culture on campus significantly affects the professional choice of college students. Compared with students who have not participated in relevant activities, students who have been exposed to traditional Chinese medicine culture are more likely to be affected by factors related to traditional Chinese medicine when choosing a major, which shows that early exposure to traditional Chinese medicine culture plays an important guiding role in academic decision-making. In addition, the entry of traditional Chinese medicine culture into the campus also has a positive impact on career intentions. Relevant experiences enhance students' willingness to engage in traditional Chinese medicine-related careers in the future, showing that the dissemination of traditional Chinese medicine culture not only shapes students' short-term cognition and interest, but also affects their long-term career development. Despite the above findings, some limitations need to be pointed out. First of all, the sample source is relatively concentrated, so the universality of the research results needs to be further verified. Secondly, this study mainly relies on questionnaires, and the specific mechanism behind these effects has not been explored in depth. Future research should expand the sample range and adopt a variety of research methods, such as interviews and longitudinal tracking research, to further explore the long-term impact of traditional Chinese medicine culture entering the campus and its mechanism.

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