

A Survey From West of China: The Factors Affecting the Selection of College Students' Returning to Work in Their Hometowns

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Abstract

College graduates will be more important in the development of China. Chinese higher education has made great progress but fewer and fewer graduates are willing to return to a rural community. We developed a survey by 2013-2014 with western college students to find how factors are affecting college students' work area. Students' attitudes, college courses and family are the focus of this research. The interaction between attitudes and college lives, attitudes and family influence are discussed. The result shows that the college students hold a neutral attitude which has no significant sexual differences. The significance exists in ethnicity. There are significant correlations among 3 dimensions.

Key words: College study; Major; Minorities; Rural education; Urbanization

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INTRODUCTION

Education serves the society. College graduates are valuable human resources as the educational output. College graduates will be more important in the development of China. Chinese higher education has made great progress that 35.6 million students got

enrolment in 2014 (Ministry of education of PRC, 2014). After graduated, they are great power of the construction. The report of the 18th CPC National Congress forward "promoting to achieve higher quality of employment" (Hu, 2012). However, most of these future graduates will stay in the cities, find a job and locate here but not work back to their hometown. There is critical unbalance in Chinese society. The urbanization centralizes policies, fortune and human resources into cities meanwhile rural areas trend to destitution. Rural development becomes the hot spots of China these years.

Huge educational huge unbalance is emerged. In Mr. Pan Guang-dan's view, the modern education is an education which causes learners to forget their origins (Pan, 1999). Ruralization and urbanization are two models in the development of rural education, but which is better is still under dispute (Yu, 2008). The local education is also a very effective method of linkage between country and city in multi-culture integration (Gu & Wu, 2012). Generally, students' knowledge and abilities which are learned from primary school to university are adapted to cities more, and they leave further away from the country. All the universities and colleges are located in cities in China. A student becomes a "urban guy" when he/she gets into a college. They live in cities and learn urban-guided courses. On the other hand, after the graduation, fewer and fewer graduates are willing to return to rural community. The promotion of rural area needs highly educated young people. With the economic and social development, particularly rural economic development.

Certain researches have been done to discuss the college students' work-in-country wishes. Ma Peng-Peng reported that nearly 3/4 college students had no willing to work in rural area even in the economic crisis (Ma, Yang, & Zhang, 2010), but this report did not declare who were the responses. Tian Yu-Jiao identified that there are obvious differences between rural and urban college students' first employment. That is the rural students are

more likely to work in towns or countries (Tian, 2014). Cui's master thesis clarified that there were a small number of rural grass-roots employment, high turnover rate, and depression, poor initiative (Cui, 2010).

We developed a survey by 2013-2014 to find how factors are affecting college students' work area. Factors have been studied before. Analysis from Zhejiang province shows that undergraduate students' will be to work in rural areas are affected by individual major, the government's policies, pressure under social prejudice, self-development opportunities and higher education system (Lou & Guo, 2008). In this research, we focus on students' attitudes, college courses and family. The interaction between attitudes and college lives, attitudes and family influence are discussed here. The following parts of this manuscript cover the details of this study including the methodology, results and their interpretations, as well as a discussion of the college courses design.

1. METHODOLOGY

1.1 Instrument

A survey instrument based on brainstorm works and interviews with typical students are used in the research. 4 parts are included in a self-administered questionnaire. There are demography message, attitude and thought, colleges and courses, family and hometown. Responses should fill a table to offer their demography messages. The latter four parts are considered as the 4 dimensions of the factors which affect college students to work in their hometowns when they finish their learning. Attitude and Thought part helps the researchers to know how the

college students think when we talk about working back in their hometown. Colleges and courses in dimension are used to understand the impact of students' learning experiences in collages. The family and hometown part purposes to find out how the parents and other factors of hometown could be taken into account by a finding-job student.

Attitude and Thought part contains 5 closed questions while the other two parts contain 6 ones each. 3-5 items are applied to each question. The assignment is designed that the 1 point means the most possibility for their returning to hometown for work, while 5 point means the least possibility. Table 1 shows the reliabilities of the 3 dimensions. Each Cronbach's α reaches middle level would be considered "acceptable".

Table 1
The Reliabilities of Dimensions

	Cronbach's Alpha	Item
Attitude and thought	.501	5
Colleges and courses	.559	6
Family and hometown	.451	6

1.2 Participants

In total 216 valid responses in colleges were obtained with convenience sampling. Nearly 1/3 of responses answered the questionnaire on line while others did on paper. Responses' colleges all locate in the west of China. We got a general balance in the percentage of male and female. Most responses' hometowns should be categorized to a rural area. Nearly 3/4 responses are minorities. Ethnical and regional distribution embodies the truth that most minorities live in rural area. Figure 1 illustrates the scale of responses' sex, region and the ethnic groups in the survey.

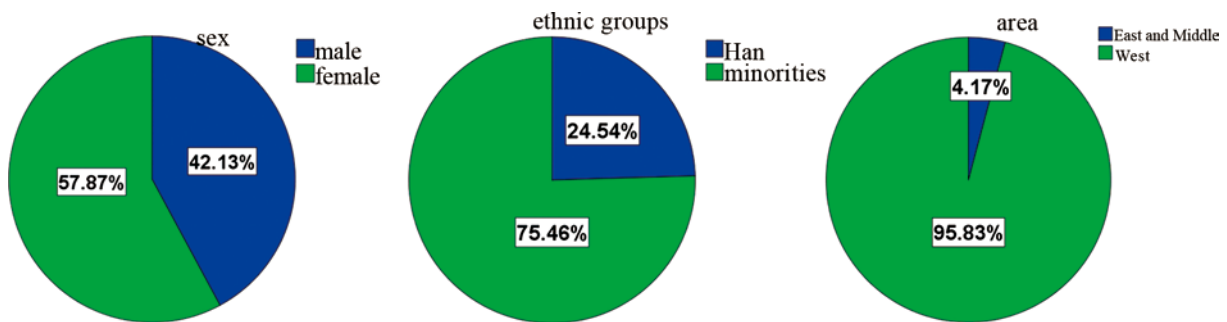


Figure 1
The Sexual, Ethnical And Regional Distribution of Responses

2. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

2.1 The Wishes of College Students Working in Hometown

As shown in Table 2, the highest score 2.47 appear in the question "Go back to hometown for job". But responses get 2 point approximately in other questions. Considering the regional distribution of responses, we can say the point means that the students think working in a rural area is acceptable but not so attractive. They

prepare for urban life and rural life. When they graduate and find a job, environmental or external factors could influence their decision easily. The result is different from the Ma Peng-Peng' conclusion. Most responses' hometowns should be categorized to a rural area, however, they don't have a stronger desire to work in a rural area. The Chinese traditional local emotion has no advantage. In a sense, the result proves the version that the education makes the young man go to the city.

Table 2
Scores of Attitude and Thought Dimension

	N		Mean	Mode	Standard deviation
	Valid	Missing			
Choose a major useful for hometown	216	0	1.92	2	.761
Go back to hometown for job	216	0	2.47	1	1.558
They think their majors helpful for hometown	214	2	2.0607	2	.69946
The wish to work in hometown	216	0	2.05	2	1.064
College students should work in hometown or not	216	0	2.02	2	.621
Sum	214	2	10.5187	13.00	2.89359

2.2 The College Experiences Involve to Work Field Choice

The responses get more than 2 and nearly 3 points in average approximately in each question of this dimension. Under the condition of 1 point is defined as the most possible to work in a rural area, points express that the college life tends to make the young people apart from their rural hometown further. That is not only physical but mental separateness. The highest mean 3.01 marks on the question “the learning plans and instructions involve your hometown”. The second highest point 2.88 appears on the question “practices involve your hometown” while the third highest 2.86 is found on the question “the courses in college relate to your hometown or not”. These three

questions summarize the main learning experiences of college students. The high point of almost 3 states the fact that college curricula are city-oriented. Students prepare for serving cities by finishing the curricula. Therefore, students can't pay enough attention to the development and the culture of their hometowns.

Colleges and their courses must be changed. Consequently, learning plans, the instructions from teachers, the practices for professional skills should change to be more diverse. There should be space for native knowledge and local culture. Some researches show that some colleges have attempted to find some parties and societies of students to study and practice their local knowledge and culture (Li, 2014). Our interview records confirmed the fact.

Table 3
Scores of Colleges and Courses Dimension

	N		Mean	Mode	Standard deviation
	Valid	Missing			
The courses in college relate to your hometown or not	216.00	.00	2.86	2.00	1.04
Societies or organizations in college make your know more about your hometown	215.00	1.00	2.50	2.00	.95
You pay attention to your hometown in college life	216.00	.00	2.46	2.00	1.17
The learning plans and the instructions involve your hometown	216.00	.00	3.01	3.00	1.19
The practices involve your hometown	216.00	.00	2.88	3.00	.85
The knowledge in college guide your job	216.00	.00	1.96	2.00	.76
Sum	215.00	1.00	15.68	14.00	3.37

2.3 Family and Hometown Have Delicately Different Influences

The responses get 2 at mean approximately in the dimension (Table 4). But noticeably there are some interesting results in this part. The mode of “Parents hopes you to go back to hometown” is 3 while the modes are only 1 both in the question “Your major can help for hometown” and “How the fellow-townsmen think about the college students”. That could be described that the parents don't want their children in college to go back to work in a rural area even their major can be applied there and the college students are welcome by

fellow-townsmen. Moreover, score 2.25 at the question “The development of hometown guide your job choice” implies that the hometowns are not so attractive for college students. The highest mean score of the part is 2.37 at the question “The students working in hometown feel deserving”. The score shows that the experiences of the guys who went back and worked in rural areas cannot encourage the new graduates to work back in the hometown. We can deduce that the rural area would draw young men if these areas promoted. Country development and human resource abundance must be complementary to each other.

Table 4
Scores of Family and Hometown Dimension

	N		Mean	Mode	Standard deviation
	Valid	Missing			
Parents guide your job choice	216.00	.00	1.89	2.00	.80
Parents hope you go back to hometown	216.00	.00	2.24	3.00	.87
Your major is helpful for hometown	215.00	1.00	1.82	1.00	.90
How the fellow-townsmen think about the college students working back hometown	216.00	.00	1.94	1.00	1.03
The development of hometown guide your job choice	216.00	.00	2.25	2.00	.89
The students working in hometown feel deserving	216.00	.00	2.37	2.00	1.10
Sum	215.00	1.00	12.47	11.00	2.89

2.4 Sexual and Ethnical Differences in the 3 Dimensions

Ma Peng-Peng pointed out that male was inclined to work in a rural area (Ma, Yang & Zhang, 2010). But our

research opposes the opinion. Table 5 shows that there are no significant differences between male and female of 3 dimensions. The male and female almost get the same point.

Table 5
Independent Sample T Test of Sexual Differences

	Sex	N	Mean	Std. deviation	t	Sig. (2-tailed)
Sum of attitude and thought	Male	89	10.4494	2.95808	-.295	.768
	Female	125	10.5680	2.85775		
Sum of colleges and courses	Male	90	15.7000	3.61784	.077	.939
	Female	125	15.6640	3.18754		
Sum of family and hometown	Male	91	12.7143	3.13506	1.062	.289
	Female	124	12.2903	2.69831		

Han and minorities have a similar attitude meanwhile their families and hometowns affect nearly the same. However, significant difference exists in the Colleges and Courses dimension ($t = 4.95, p < .01$). Table 6 exhibits the details. Han scores total mean 17.57 while minorities score 15.06. According to the rules of scoring fewer scores means more possible to work in a rural area, minorities students connect their hometown to the college courses even they face the same college

surroundings as Han. That means Han and minorities experience their college lives in totally different way. As mentioned above, college curricula are city-oriented, but minorities still try to keep eyes on their hometown. Obviously the growth environment in which the minorities have been should be the significant reason. On the other hand, this is a good news for rural area because minorities who are born in rural area do care more about there.

Table 6
Independent Sample T Test of Ethnical Differences

	Ethnic	N	Mean	Std. deviation	t	Sig. (2-tailed)
Sum of attitude and thought	Han	53	11.1132	2.89336	1.733	.085
	Minorities	161	10.3230	2.87577		
Sum of colleges and courses	Han	53	17.5660	3.50554	4.953**	.000
	Minorities	162	15.0617	3.08813		
Sum of family and hometown	Han	53	12.9245	3.17350	1.321	.188
	Minorities	162	12.3210	2.78785		

Note. ** is significant level at 0.01 (2-tailed).

2.5 Correlations Among 3 Dimensions

As the research supposed, the numbers showed in Table 7 demonstrate the 3 dimensions have relativities. The Pearson Correlation of $r = .411 (p < .01)$ between the “Colleges and Courses” part and “Family and Hometown” part indicate a strong positive relationship

of them. The Pearson Correlation of $r = .355 (p < .01)$ between the “Colleges and Courses” and “Attitude and Thought” states a moderate positive relationship of them. The Pearson Correlation of $r = .251 (p < .01)$ between the “Family and Hometown” and “Attitude and Thought” conveys a positive relationship but not so

strong. Generally, 3 dimensions are under a regularity of transformation on the whole. The 3 dimensions influence

the students' inclination of choosing work fields in the same direction.

Table 7
Correlations Among 3 Dimensions

	N	Pearson correlation	Sig. (2-tailed)
Sum of attitude and thought & sum of colleges and courses	213	.355**	.000
Sum of attitude and thought & sum of family and hometown	213	.251**	.000
Sum of colleges and courses & sum of family and hometown	214	.411**	.000

Note. ** is significant level at 0.01 (2-tailed).

CONCLUSION

Analysis of 3 dimensions in this research interprets the findings of our survey. The factors effecting college students' work area are discussed. The responses' colleges all locate in western area of China and most responses' hometowns should be categorized to rural area. Nearly 3/4 responses are minorities. The data analysis shows that the college students hold a neutral attitude which has no significant sexual differences. The significance only exists in ethnicity. In the city, the college life is making young people part from their rural hometown. Families and other surroundings do not encourage the graduates to work back in the hometown. There are significant positive correlations among 3 dimensions. In brief, Colleges courses must be changed to be more diverse for native knowledge and local culture. Rural development and human resource abundance must be complementary to each other.

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