

## **Relation between Filial Piety and Study Abroad Intention among Chinese Youth: Toward a Theoretical Model**

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**Abstract:** This study explores the relationship between traditional Confucian values – Filial Piety and intention to study abroad for Chinese undergraduate students. The findings show that overseas study intention is significantly associated with positive attitudes and evaluated results, family and peer influence, and ability issues. Given that overseas study may improve family reputation and save face, young people are motivated with willingness. Parents rather than children decide main issues and young people listen to parents with a sense of filial piety. Based on the conceptualization of TPB (theory of planned behavior), filial piety relates to behavior belief, normative belief, and perceived control belief. This study extends the behavior model by linking with traditional culture. The newly developed theoretical model may provide an advanced understanding of: 1) How the Confucian value of filial piety influences individuals' intention to study abroad; 2) Under filial piety value, what roles parents and children play in terms of overseas study.

**Keyword:** Intention, filial piety, attitude, parents' influence, peer influence, social norms, ability

### **1. Introduction**

Overseas study is a prevalent phenomenon in the whole world. Globalization improves international education interactions dramatically and makes the world interculturally integrated across nations (Friedman, 2005; Owen & Quinn, 2016; Relyea, Cocchiara & Studdard, 2008). The number of international students has recently multiplied more than threefold (OECD, 2015). Among all international students, Chinese youth have become one of the largest and fastest expanding groups over the past decades (Zwart, 2012). The data shows that Chinese overseas students rank as the top proportion in eight countries: the US, the UK, Canada, Germany, Japan, Korea, and New Zealand (China Education Online, 2017; Li, 2012; Ramia, Marginson & Sawir, 2013; Statistics Canada, 2016).

The number of Chinese overseas students has been increasing steadily because of a series of social changes in China, such as the one-child policy executed in the past decades, the Great Reform which promoted the striking development of the economy, and the trend of globalization of

education in the whole world (Chao, 2016; Knight, 2008; Li, Dipetta & Woloshyn, 2012). It looks smooth for Chinese parents to send their children to study in international universities. Moreover, studying abroad may bring many benefits that students cannot get in their home country, for example, a steppingstone for migration, higher education quality, international recognition, entering a global competition, global citizenship, world-mindedness, intercultural competence, more chances for future jobs, and family prestige and individual fame (Cant, 2004; Douglas & Jones-Rikkens, 2001; Fischer, 2008; Shaftel, Shaftel & Ahluwalia, 2007; Tarrant, Rubin & Stoner, 2014; Vincent-Lancrin, 2008; Waters, Brooks & Pimlott-Wilson, 2011).

Across the global education industry, scholars pay close attention to the large group of Chinese overseas students. They have examined the importance of the expanding group from a variety of perspectives, such as motivation, preference, study experiences, adjustment, and returning intentions (Cheung & Xu, 2015; Dimmock & Ong Soon Leong, 2010; Quan, He & Sloan, 2016; Shu & Scott, 2014; Sablina, Soong & Pechurina, 2018; Wu, 2014). Most previous studies focused on Chinese behaviors, choices, and intentions. From the Confucian cultural perspective, this study intends to adopt the grounded theory approach to explore motivational factors, attitudes, and social norms and their influence on the intentions, especially the relation between filial piety and study abroad preference.

## 2. Cultural Context

In traditional Chinese culture, filial piety (*Xiao*) is the most prominent virtue guiding the relationship between parents and their children and how children interact with their parents, such as showing respect and taking care of their elders (Sung, 2007). Filial piety underpins the principles of how children should treat, respect, care for their parents, and protect their family reputation (Yang, 1997; Whyte, 2004). The traditional authoritarian filial piety suppresses personal wishes and independence, requires children to comply with parental wishes, maintain the household reputation, continue the family lineage, and show absolute obedience (Yeh, Yi, Tsao & Wan, 2013). In pace with globalization, Chinese people gradually accept western values, so that traditional filial piety has potentially been changed (Yeh et al., 2013; Yi, 2013). The updated concept of reciprocal filial piety allows children to make their choices to care for their parents emotionally, physically, or financially based on their parental gratitude (Yeh & Bedford, 2003). The new filial piety value makes children be more independent and have more personal choices. The overt characteristics of the traditional and changed filial piety values coexist in contemporary China and correlate with each other positively (Leung, Wong, Wong & McBride-Chang, 2010).

In the filial piety culture, the hierarchical parent-child relation likely continues to influence how the offspring decide about their career and future, such as academic motivations and psychosocial adjustment (Hui, Sun, Chow & Chu, 2011; Leung et al., 2010). In the twenty-first century, Chinese

students still have strong beliefs of filial piety, and their academic outcomes and success are significantly associated with parental involvement, such as attached importance, educational values, and expectations (Sheng, 2012). Chinese parents regard education as a primary path of improving the family's social status (Zou, Anderson & Tsey, 2013). Students are strongly motivated by studying well, getting honors, and repaying their parents (Zhou, 2014). Overseas Chinese doctoral students admit that their studying motives are affected by parents (Lee & Morrish, 2012). This study explores the determinants of social norms and how they influence study abroad intention from the point of view of filial piety.

### **3. Theoretical Framework**

In this study, a social psychological theory – the theory of planned behavior (TPB) – is used as the theoretical framework to analyze Chinese students' intention toward overseas studying. TPB is an extension of the theory of reasoned action (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). Ajzen (1985; 1991) developed the TRA with the added factor of perceived behavioral control, in addition to attitude and subjective norm, as three predictors of behavioral intention. In other words, behavioral, normative, and control beliefs influence attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control, respectively (Ajzen, 1991). Given that the theory of planned behavior contributes to predicting intention and behavior (Ajzen & Driver, 1992), this study applies the three beliefs of TPB to conceptualize the framework and conduct the theoretical analysis within it.

The first determinant of TPB is the behavioral belief, which refers to an attitude toward behaviors and describes the degree that individuals evaluate a specific behavior positively or negatively. It measures whether individuals' assessment of one behavior's outcome will be favorable or unfavorable (Ajzen, 1987; Ajzen & Driver, 1992). In terms of overseas studying, the educational systems are entirely different between China and foreign countries (Henze & Zhu, 2012). The enhanced number of Chinese overseas students indicates a positive perception of getting a degree in foreign countries among Chinese young people (Bartlett, Han, & Bartlett, 2018). This study investigates whether Chinese students' attitudes towards the outcomes resulting from studying abroad are advantageous or disadvantageous.

The second determinant factor of intention is the normative belief, a social norm which refers to the social pressure perceived by an individual to act or not to perform a behavior and regards the specific people's approval or disapproval of the action (Ajzen, 1987; Ajzen & Driver, 1992; Bartlett, Han & Bartlett, 2018; Gross, Whitbred, Skalski & Liu, 2013). Chinese people have immersed themselves in Confucian culture for a long time and would like to adjust individual differences and compromise with social perceptions (Bond, 1993; Sun, 2020). According to Hofstede (1984), Chinese people emphasize agreeableness and unity. Therefore, Chinese students particularly care about the opinions of their parents, relatives, peers, even the whole society. Studying abroad is a

complicated issue including economic, political, cultural, and other perspectives' developments (Henze & Zhu, 2012). In this study, normative belief focuses on the perception and pressure that the Chinese undergraduates get from their surrounding people, for example, parental social norms and their evaluation of studying overseas.

Another determinant – perceived control belief – refers to the perceived ease or difficulty of performing a behavior. It regards all factors that may facilitate or block action and represents experiences and predicted issues (Ajzen & Driver, 1992; Beck & Ajzen, 1991). The control belief depends on individual perception of ability and may influence the intention to perform a final behavior (Bartlett, Han & Bartlett, 2018). In this study, the control belief reflects Chinese students' viewpoints of their capability to study and gain a higher degree overseas successfully. That is, all relevant perceived facilitators and obstacles are explored accordingly in this research.

This study explores how the above three beliefs influence Chinese undergraduates in their studying abroad. Based on the theory of planned behavior, the following research questions are proposed:

RQ1: What is Chinese students' attitude toward studying abroad?

RQ2: What factors concerning consequence evaluation may influence Chinese students' intentions of studying abroad?

RQ3: What factors concerning social norms may influence Chinese students' intentions of studying abroad?

RQ4: What factors concerning ability may influence Chinese students' intentions of studying abroad?

## **4. Method**

### **4.1 Sampling**

This study used a purposive sampling method and attempted to look for the sample of senior undergraduates who prefer to go abroad for higher education. A total of 22 college students were recruited. Among them, twenty-one females made up 95% while the one male was the remaining 5%. All of them were Year 4 students of the Communication program, who will prepare for graduation and think about higher education in foreign universities (see Table 1).

Table 1. The Demographic Information of Participants

Characteristics of Samples		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Female	21	95%
	Male	1	5%
Age	18-24	22	100%
Marital Status	Unmarried	22	100%
	Married	0	0%

## 4.2 Interviewing, Coding, and Analyzing

This study conducted four focus groups respectively in 2018. Each focus group comprised four to five participants and lasted around two hours. All group interviews were recorded and transcribed in full and verbatim. A Ph.D. holder translated the questionnaire into Chinese, moderated all focus groups, and translated the transcript into English.

Based on prior studies (Boyce & Neale, 2006; Sun, 2020), this study developed one interview protocol to guide and guarantee the administration and fulfillment of four interviews, such as illustrations, follow-up questions, consistency, and reliability. All interviews used a predetermined questionnaire with a total of nineteen open-ended questions. For instance: “In your opinion, what are the differences between studying in China and overseas?”, “Whether your family may influence your decision for studying abroad?”, “What are your main concerns for studying abroad?”, “Where do you get the information for overseas studying?”, and “Whether your peers who study in foreign colleges may impact your decision for further education?”.

The study used NVivo-11 for basic coding because this software helps to improve the validity and reliability (Zapata-Sepúlveda, López-Sánchez & Sánchez-Gómez, 2012). This study used the grounded theory approach (Corbin & Strauss, 2008) to conduct the analysis. The grounded theory enables scholars to interpret personal views, develop existing theories, and invent new ones (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). This study adopted this qualitative approach and explored the relations between attitude, consequences evaluation, social norms, ability, and behavioral intention. Based on Strauss and Corbin’s methodology (1998), this study examined raw data in the initial analysis, categorized key factors in the open coding, and generalized core elements in the axial coding.

Specifically, the first coding included the following issues: reasons for studying abroad, improving self-accomplishment, comparison between Chinese and western educational system, differences between studying in China and foreign countries, gaining others’ approval, family influence, peer influence, saving face, and looking for information. In the second coding, consequences evaluation, attitudes, social praise, filial piety, ability to decide, ability to get information, and main concerns were generalized. In axial coding, core categories such as behavioral belief, normative belief, control belief, and general opinion were identified by

interconnecting the raw data (see details in Table 2). This study used all the main and sub-categories in interpretation.

Table 2. Open and Axial Coding Categories

First Coding	Open Coding		Axial Coding
	Second Coding		
Reasons for studying abroad	Consequences Evaluation		
Improve self-accomplishment			
Comparison between Chinese and western educational system	Attitudes		Behavioral Belief
Differences between studying in China and foreign countries			
Gain others' approval	Social Approval		
Peer influence			
Family influence	Filial Piety		Normative Belief
Save face			
Which age stage will you prefer for studying abroad?	Ability to Make Decision		
Where do you get information for overseas studying?	Ability to Get Information		
Looking for information actively or passively?			Control Belief
What information will attract you more?			
What factors will you pay more attention to when choosing foreign colleges?	Main Concerns		
Intentions to go back to China after graduation in the future			General Opinion

## 5. Findings

### 5.1 Attitudes towards Studying Abroad (RQ1)

Due to globalization, more and more students choose to study abroad. This study investigated the participants' attitudes toward overseas studies. Tracking this clue, all participants mentioned their opinions toward the Chinese and western educational systems, respectively.

Firstly, participants were asked to mention their recognized differences between Chinese and foreign education styles. Most of them talked about self-achievement. Among various achievements, more than half of interviewees thought that learning to survive in a completely unfamiliar environment was the most important achievement for themselves. That is, it is a self-enhancement for psychological independence. One girl mentioned that it would be a big challenge because she never lived isolated or dealt with everything by herself. She imagined that she would be very proud when she settled down smoothly. Another girl also preferred to stand on her own feet, especially compared to those who continued to enjoy their parents' care. Besides psychological achievement, the other participants mentioned different skill improvements, such as cooking, learning a foreign language, driving, and haircutting. According to these participants, they believed that they would improve their self-independence and life skills when studying abroad. Notably, both psychological and physical developments are related to self-accomplishment.

Secondly, the participants showed their attitudes towards the western and Chinese education systems, respectively. Some of them combined their own experiences and referred to the distinctions between the two systems, for example:

*In China, students are very stressed in senior school due to the entrance exam for college. They will feel relieved after entering college. In western countries, high school students are relatively relaxed. When they go to colleges, they may suffer pressure due to the higher requirements, such as heavy assignments and independent projects [S4].*

*In my opinion, western students are more active in learning. Professors give one topic and ask students to research by themselves. In China, professors prefer to release a model template and ask students to follow or imitate it. Students' learning looks a little passive [S16].*

*In my eyes, the main difference is personal independence. Western students know what they want in the future, while Chinese students comply with their parents' opinions about the future [S17].*

*Western education focuses more on practice. Studying abroad will increase individual practical ability [S22].*

*In terms of higher education, I think that western education is prominent. For*

*elementary education, the Chinese style is better [S21].*

According to the findings, most participants showed a positive attitude toward the overseas education model. They used the following keywords to extol it: creative, practical, free, open, and applicable. They also showed a positive attitude to the Chinese basic education style. Based on their own experiences, they agreed that the rigorous teaching accompanying high pressure could help students to lay a solid foundation, brought them confidence, and made them capable of higher education.

On the other hand, some interviewees mentioned their views from different perspectives. Three girls thought that access to a foreign college was much easier than entering a Chinese one. One participant worried that the difficulties encountered in a strange circumstance would be more formidable than academic pressure. Two other girls were afraid that they would feel lonely and tired in dealing with all life issues by themselves. Even so, on the whole, most participants held hope and confidence despite difficulties and barriers.

## **5.2 Factors Concerning Behavioral Belief (RQ2)**

This study mainly explored the participants' reasons for planning overseas studying. The findings showed that most reasons were about the predicted good outcomes. Future employment was a significant reason for overseas study. Some participants were sure that they would be more qualified for employers' requirements if they could get a higher degree in western universities. A few girls mentioned that the current Chinese companies were more welcoming to overseas graduates (*Hai Gui*). Some others held similar opinions that they would be more competitive and get better chances for a career after studying abroad. For example:

*For the current companies, the threshold of recruitment is graduated [S1].*

*In my internship, I noticed that most of my workmates were overseas graduates[S6].*

*Employers are more interested in those who owned overseas degrees when recruiting new employees [S7].*

*Hopefully, I can gain some chances when studying abroad, for example, overseas journalist [S11].*

Besides employment, the other motivations looked colorful: a better living situation, experiencing a foreign lifestyle, broadening one's mind, learning more advanced knowledge in different fields, improving language ability, comfortable environment, and better education. For instance:



*It sounds easy for me to get used to the western educational system because my current college applies a similar teaching system [S3].*

*If I study abroad, I will get a master's degree in a shorter time. It usually takes three years to finish a master's program in China. However, it only takes one and a half years in the UK or Hong Kong [S2].*

*I wish to go abroad to experience a different life [S5].*

*I think that I will be more competitive when getting a foreign degree [S9].*

*In terms of higher education, it will be a better choice to study abroad for the free teaching style is more suitable for students [S8].*

*Language is my main concern to decide to study overseas [S14].*

*It is a chance to learn more different knowledge [S13].*

*I will get more choices after my graduation [S19].*

Another influential factor is family honor. Filial piety has been regarded as the primary value in China and other Asian countries for a long time. Children are supposed to respect their parents, defer to parents' wishes, and maintain the family's reputation (Deutsch, 2006; Li, Zou, Liu, & Zhou, 2012). Based on the participants' opinions, family honor was the principal concern in their overseas studying intention, such as:

*In my opinion, studying abroad is more related to family achievability than an individual's accomplishment [S14].*

*Parents will feel good when they tell other people that their son or daughter study abroad. The child may not have such a good feeling because there are too many overseas students, and not everybody can do a good job [S17].*

*My grandparents will think that their granddaughter is so brilliant that she can go abroad to study. They will feel much more glorious than me [S21].*

*My father wants to send me out only because most of his colleagues' children studied abroad. If I do not go, I will lose the family face [S6].*

In comparison to the above examples, one negative case was interesting. One girl mentioned that her cousin's academic records were weak. In order not to lose family face, his parents kicked him into a foreign college. The findings showed that studying abroad looked more meaningful for family and parents in terms of family reputation. For the children, the importance was filial piety rather than studying abroad itself.

### 5.3 Factors Concerning Normative Belief (RQ3)

Considering the social norms, more than eighty percent of the participants referred to their parents and family's influence on their intention. Examples include:

*My parents wish me to go abroad to get a master's degree. In their opinion, a foreign degree will polish my resume [S18].*

*I must tell my parents that their money will not be in vain. I will try my best to strive and return to them [S12].*

*My father has not had a college education. He wishes me to get a higher degree to make up his regret [S9].*

*In my parents' case, many of their friends' children studied abroad. They think that I should go abroad earlier [S20].*

*My cousin is one of the top students in her high school and can go to Tsinghua University smoothly. However, her parents want to send her out because they worry that their daughter will be under much pressure in this famous Chinese university [S7].*

*Instead of allowing their children to enjoy life freely, Chinese parents always push their children to go to school, find a job, and get married at an earlier age [S4].*

*My sister studies in Spain. All elders of my family press me to learn from her [S19].*

In this study, it was apparent to see the association between parents' approval and young people's intention. The results indicated that the strongest motive was the *face*. Parents follow the social trend and send their child into foreign universities to save face and get other people's compliments. The other important factor was the traditional idea of getting success as early as possible. Given that overseas students differ from Chinese ones in accomplishing a master's education within a shorter time, parents wanted to support their children to study abroad. Chinese parents wish their offspring to finish tasks in different life stages at a younger age. Another reason was that parents had a high expectation for the potential outcomes of studying abroad. On the other hand, somewhat surprisingly, some parents regarded study abroad as a better choice for students with poor academic grades. Finally, being asked whether they will go back to China after finishing a master's education, most respondents expressed their willingness to go back home. In their minds, they have responsibilities to stay with family members and take care of the parents and grandparents. For instance:

*I am the only child in my family, and I will return to China and live together with my parents and grandparents in the future [S21].*

*I prefer to live in mainland China after gaining a master's degree because all my*

*relatives live here [S22].*

*If I cannot find a high-salary job in a foreign country, my family will support me financially. I should return home and get one ideal job [S17].*

*Many friends of my mother live separately from their children. No one takes care of the elderly at home. It is not easy for the old and embarrassing for the whole family [S6].*

The findings implied the following plausible explanations: (1) They reflected a typical Chinese parent-child relationship and communication style. That is, parents had a significant influence on their children's behaviors, particularly on education issues. In terms of the decision to study abroad, parents played a more important role than their child. (2) All parents' concerns were tightly related to Chinese traditional values, such as comparison to others, face-saving, and family reputation. (3) For the children, social approval mostly came from family and parents. In terms of overseas studying, parents' influence was more important than other issues, for example, peer influence. The prime reason why children would like to listen to their parents' arrangement was filial piety. (4) Due to a strong belief in filial piety, young people intend to go back to their hometown to return to their families after studying abroad.

#### **5.4 Factors Concerning Control Belief (RQ4)**

This study explored what actions young people could control from the following perspectives: time decision, information searching, and the most important concerns. Being asked what time they preferred to go abroad if they could decide by themselves, more than half of the participants thought it would be better to go to college abroad after senior school rather than in China. One quarter of the participants preferred to go abroad during the high school or middle school period. The rest inclined to study overseas at a master's level. The sample opinions include:

*If I could choose, I would go abroad for high school. It is too hard studying in a Chinese high school [S6].*

*High school students are more capable of accepting new things and resisting pressure [S11].*

*I would study abroad after high school if I can decide by myself [S5].*

*It is not very good to go abroad for graduate studies. The time is too short, and I can neither build a social network nor experience local life thoroughly [S14].*

*College should be better, and we can live independently in a foreign country. High school is too early [S19].*

*I used to rely on my parents for everything. It is appropriate for me to go abroad after high school [S16].*

*I got a better preparation in my college period. Now, I am ready to go abroad [S13].*

Among various replies, it was clear to know that the youth could not decide on timing. They listened to their parents' minds of what time they may go abroad. The findings were consistent with the filial piety value. In terms of looking for information, most participants said that they searched the relevant information by themselves. Some of them indicated that it was the first time they looked for messages without asking for help from parents. They liked to surf the websites for specific information, consult an agency, and communicate with friends. Being asked what information they paid much attention to, their most important interest was the ranking of universities. Some participants cared more about the academic situation, while others were concerned about the university's popularity. Other considerations were about course majors and opportunities for internship or work. There was a clear division of tasks between parents and children: parents were responsible for financial support, while children focused on the university and studies.

Notably, these interviewees also mentioned academic and social capabilities:

*Many people go abroad for college because they cannot pass the college entrance examination in China. They only want to get a diploma there [S15].*

*Learning ability is crucial to success. If one cannot study well in China, they will not do it well in a foreign country [S9].*

*Even though my brother got good grades in America, he felt uncomfortable. He could not find a person to chat with and had to face the internet for a whole day [S5].*

Through the participants' discussion, there were some indications: firstly, most parents rather than children chose the time for studying abroad because parents would pay for the fee; secondly, young people would like to do the preparation actively to comply with parents' decision; thirdly, neither the parents nor the children had enough evaluation about the difficulties involved in studying overseas, for example, interpersonal communication, food, and academic problems.

## **6. Theoretical Development**

### **6.1 The Influence of Attitude on the Intention of Studying Abroad**

The existing findings show the correlation between attitude and studying abroad. For example, individuals' attitudes, beliefs, values, obligations, barriers, and opportunities can influence the intention (Perna 2006; Salisbury, Paulsen & Pascarella, 2011). Students' decisions are based on their habitus, which refers to the accumulated beliefs, attitudes, expectations, values, and insights framed

in specific family, social, and cultural environments (Bourdieu & Passerson 1977; St. John, Asker, & Hu, 2001). Specifically, the more positive an attitude to study overseas is, the stronger the intention to go abroad will be (Salisbury, Paulsen & Pascarella, 2011).

Attitudes towards study abroad can be positive or negative depending on encouragement or constraint of social and cultural capital (St. John et al., 2001). Social capital refers to access to information. Individuals try to look for information from the media, organizations, networks, and experts. The more information they get, the higher abilities they may have to make a better choice (Massey, Charles, Lundy, & Fischer, 2003; Perna & Titus, 2005). Culture capital describes personal knowledge of culture, language skills, educational level, and college-related information. Notably, the family and parental social status decide the amount of cultural stock (Bourdieu, 1986). Both meaningful messages and rich resources of the social and cultural capital motivate the intention to study abroad. On the other hand, negative attitudes and perceptions can substantially impede the ambition to study in foreign countries (Nguyen, 2014).

## **6.2 Family and Peer Influence on Intention of Studying Abroad**

A prior study mentions that social norm is the strongest predictor of overseas study intention (Petzold & Peter, 2015). Social norm refers to the social pressure of individuals' perceived approval or disapproval from other people, like parents, family members, and peers (Ajzen & Driver, 1992). Other studies echoed this sentiment. Mazzarol and Soutar (2002) found that family plays an important role in motivating young people's intentions. Parental influence is associated with students' academic performance (Fischer, 2013; McMahon, 2011; Wei et al., 2007). In Chinese culture, children's academic achievement may polish the family's honor and will gain applause in terms of filial piety (Kim, Li, & Ng, 2005). When parents emphasize the importance and link family reputation with their child's academic accomplishment, young people may intend to attend high-ranked universities in foreign countries to improve their educational feat (Tang, Collier, & Witt, 2018).

International mobility is particularly valuable to improve a family's social rank (Brooks & Waters, 2011; Findlay, King, Smith, Geddes, & Skeldon, 2012; Waters, 2012). Overseas education is a strategic path for social mobility and career development among Asian families (Harvey 2011; Waters, 2006). For global mobility, the household social and cultural backgrounds mainly influence the intentions; meanwhile, family support decides their final action (Hercog & Laar, 2017). In China, parents look for better educational chances for their children, encourage them to study abroad, invest in their overseas education, and place great pride in their academic performance (Gatfield & Chen, 2006; Shanka, Quintal & Taylor, 2005). On the other hand, children express a heavy dependency on their family and listen to their parents to show their respect (Sánchez,

Fornerino, & Zhang, 2006; Zwart, 2012). With such a dependent relationship between family and children, Chinese parents decide places (countries) and time issues for children's international education (Tang, Collier, & Witt, 2018). Given the importance of parents' influence and the family name, Chinese overseas students have obligations towards family that take precedence over individual intentions and initiatives.

Besides parental influence, peers' role cannot be under-estimated in influencing study abroad intentions (Farrell et al., 2010; Haynie, 2002). Peer influence describes the fact that young people of the same age meet regularly and share experiences (Farrell, Thompson, & Mehar, 2017). Peers with similar cognitions and behaviors easily make friends and keep close relations (Ledbetter, Griffin, & Sparks, 2007). Young people are inclined to believe the information from similar people (Caron, Godin, Otis, & Lambert, 2004) and imitate their behaviors (Akers, 1998). In terms of overseas study, individuals have the ideas because their friends or classmates talk about the issue. They like to follow their peers' choice to choose an adjacent location and keep a close distance (Zwart, 2012). The tight bond enables young people to have more communication (Leong, 2015). As a result, they may help each other and keep a good relationship when they go abroad (Yuan, 2011).

Based on the discussion and original findings, this study developed a theoretical model to explain the theory of planned behavior in terms of studying abroad and in the context of the Chinese culture of filial piety (see Figure 1).

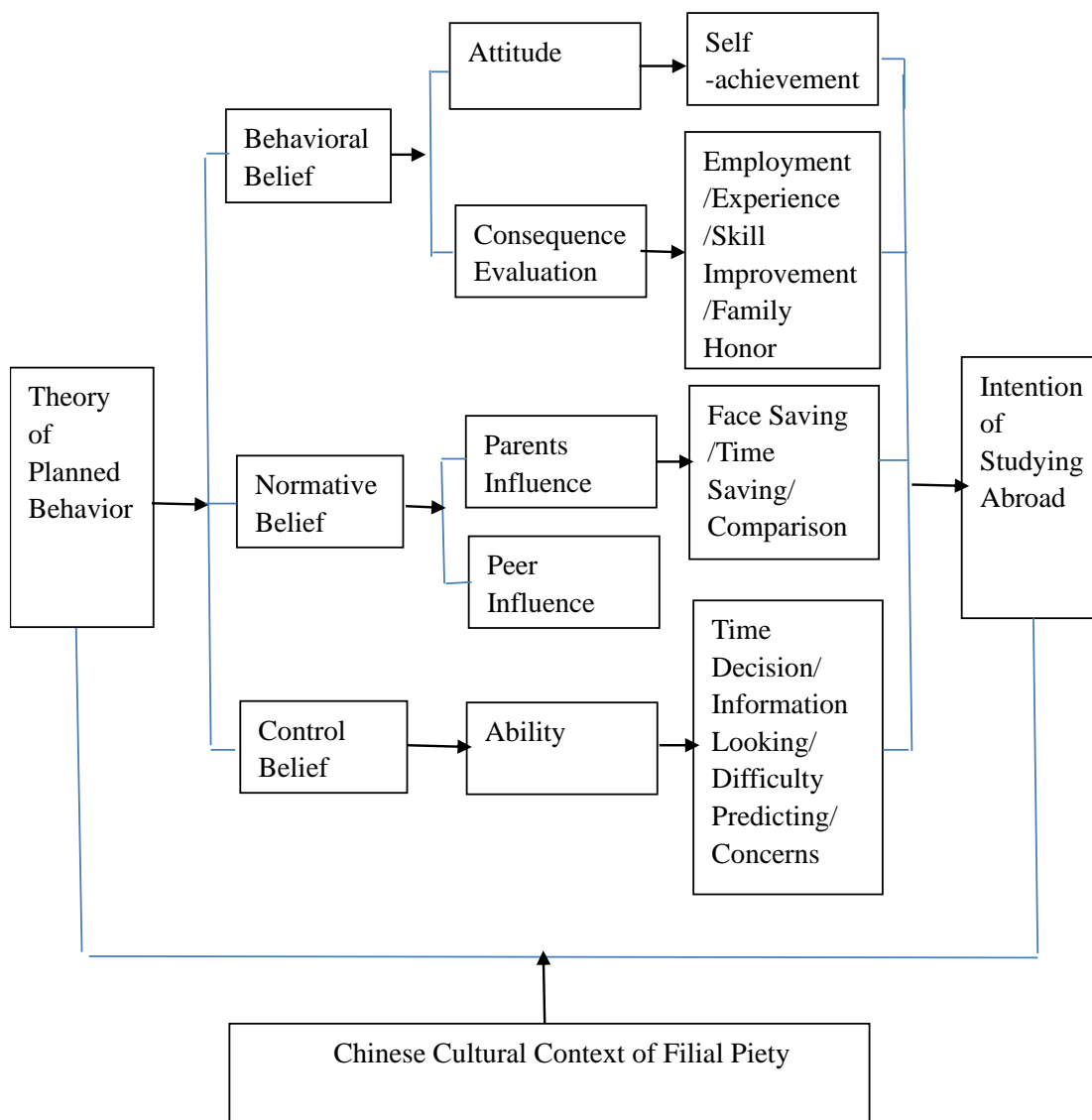


Figure 1. A Theoretical Model of Studying Abroad Intention and Its Antecedents

## 7. Conclusion and Discussion

Overseas study is a globalized phenomenon, and Chinese people also like to follow international trends. However, their intention is significantly associated with traditional filial piety values. According to the findings in this study, the inclinations to study abroad definitely depend on a positive attitude, evaluation of gains, family and peer influences, and perceived personal abilities. Furthermore, attitudes, outcome assessment, and the relation between parents and children all conform to filial piety values. Specifically, improving family honor and reputation is the first predicted consequence of the overseas study. For international education, young individuals show a heavy dependency on their parents. Parents act as approvers, financial providers, and

decision-makers. Notably, parents are motivated mainly by face-saving, time-saving, and comparison. Chinese parents get used to comparing their child with other young people. Parents always push the child who has a better academic performance to finish higher education earlier, find an admired job in advance, and be successful at a younger age. Parents are proud of their filial academic achievements that can bring honor to the whole family. For those who cannot pass the Chinese college entrance examination, their parents would like to send them to go a foreign college for the same reason – to save face.

In terms of perceived individual abilities, the findings show that parents rather than children decide the time and places to pursue overseas education. Young people are tightly attached to their parents. Cooperating with the parental decisions, children actively look for information and do the preparations. Beyond the harmonized relation between parents and their child, filial piety is the fundamental reason. Immersed in this traditional value, young people show respect to their parents, try to make them happy, and believe the overseas study will increase honor to their family.

In terms of attitude, individuals keep a positive attitude to western higher education and Chinese foundation education. They want to gain self-achievements via studying abroad, such as independence, new skills, open-mindedness, foreign language ability, and rich experiences. Employment is another major issue. Young people believe that they will enhance their competitive ability and have more chances to get a better job in the future.

This study explores the relationship between traditional Chinese cultural values and study abroad intention – a globalized phenomenon. The findings develop the theory of planned behavior (TPB) from a psychological and social perspective to a cultural one. The developed theoretical model in this study offers an opportunity to understand how traditional Confucian values influence the tendency to study abroad, and what are the different roles that parents and children play in the overseas educational issue. The theoretical model may help overseas education-related scholars and practitioners notice the profound influence of traditional values on young generations in the unique Confucian cultural context. When they do further study, this model will put cultural impact into their consideration and take into account the role of parents and family.

However, as the subjects recruited for this study were predominantly female, resulting in insufficient data to differentiate between genders, future studies could explore the role of gender in terms of consideration and intentions. In terms of filial piety, the relation between individual, family, and social interest will be another study path in the future.

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