Chinese students’ views on motivation to pursue postgraduate studies

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Abstract

This study aimed to investigate the motivation of whether pursuing postgraduate study or not among Chinese students in Inner Mongolia University and Dalian Nationalities University. All in all fourteen specific questions were designed in the questionnaire. Psychodynamic theory, social cognitive theory and Bronfenbrenner’s ecological theory have been employed to analyze the data. The results indicate that students’ motivations to pursue postgraduate studies have both internal and external causes. For those who want to pursue postgraduate studies, the internal causes can be listed as following: a higher degree for a decent job and students’ thirst for knowledge. The external causes include peer influence and extra expectation to fulfill parents’ dreams. Those who do not want to pursue postgraduate studies hold more than a different idea on the relation between a better job and a higher degree. They think they can find a good job without a higher degree, and higher education level will not make any difference.

Keywords: Motivation, Social network theory, Social cognitive theory, Psychodynamic theory, Bronfenbrenner’s ecological theory
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1 Introduction

In China, students who want to pursue postgraduate studies need to satisfy prescribed scores to have the chance to pass postgraduate entrance examination as well as the following interviews after four years undergraduate study. A lot of candidates will be eliminated at the first round, and the second round is more demanding in every respect. Besides that, most students need to pay the tuition fees which impose a burden on a family. However, more and more students still choose to pursue postgraduate studies after graduating from universities. But, why do the numbers of students in pursuit of further study increased dramatically in recent years? What are the motivations of choosing postgraduate studies? The expansion of enrollment cannot be neglected while the real reasons still reside in students themselves. In order to investigate students’ motivations to pursue postgraduate studies, we conducted a survey in Inner Mongolia University and Dalian Nationalities University. Through carefully analyzing the survey results conducted in these two universities with relevant theories, we wanted to investigate the motivations of pursuing postgraduate studies.

1.1 Background

2013 is described as "the hardest year for finding a job" since 6.99 million graduates would graduate this year in China (Guan, 2013). The number of graduates reached the peak in 2013, but the number of jobs could not satisfy the demand. Meanwhile, in order to relieve pressure of employment, many universities began to expand their enrollment from 2009 (Guan, 2013). Therefore, in order to find a better job, many undergraduates decide to pursue postgraduate studies since it is easier for a postgraduate student to find a good job. However, there is also a trend that many enterprises prefer to recruit undergraduates than postgraduates since the former are younger and requesting lower salary than the latter. Therefore, some undergraduates
decide to pursue postgraduate studies, while others decide to find a job.

In China, many researches are engaged in the motivation of pursuing postgraduate studies since it has become a spirited social debate. The number of undergraduates has increased year by year. In 2013, the graduates’ employment will be much harder than that of previous years as there is a big gap between the number of the undergraduates and that of occupations. In order to find a job in Beijing, even forty students live in one single room due to high rent (Guan, 2013). Facing this problem, more and more students decide to take postgraduate studies to avoid fierce employment competition. At the same time, in order to relieve the employment pressure, many universities expand the enrollment of postgraduates. However, some problems occurred. For one thing, job opportunities cannot meet the undergraduate students’ needs, unemployed students will increase family burden and incur some social safety problems. For another thing, if more jobs be provided but fewer candidates, many companies would fail to hire qualified workers, which will negatively influence the development of those companies and the development of social economy. Therefore, it is very important to balance the number of jobs and the number of student candidates. In order to solve this problem, motivations of pursuing postgraduate studies need to be searched out. There are different motivations for pursuing postgraduate studies, including enhancing their knowledge and peer influence etc.

This paper investigates views of students in Inner Mongolia University and Dalian Nationalities University. Inner Mongolia University is a research university, and the admission requirement is stricter (Inner Mongolia University, 2014). While the Dalian Nationalities University is an average one in which students are easier to be admitted compared with the former one (Dalian Nationalities University, 2014).

1.2 Aim and purpose
This study aimed to investigate the motivation of whether pursuing postgraduate
studies or not among Chinese students in two universities.

1.3 Research questions
1. What are the motivations for the undergraduates who want to take postgraduate studies?
2. What are the motivations for the undergraduates who do not plan to take postgraduate studies?

1.4 Connection to social work
The undergraduates’ choice on furthering their education or not will affect social safety and domestic economic development. When the number of job seekers is larger than that of job occupations, some of them will fail to find a job, which may lead to waste of labor resources. If too many undergraduates do not work, they would stay at home and lay a burden to their family and society, which imposed bad effects on social safety. On the contrary, when the number of job seekers is smaller than that of jobs occupations, some enterprises would fail to find suitable employees, which may weaken their competence and influence the company’s development. If companies do not have enough qualified employees, it would be hard for them to survive and the current employees in those companies have to do extra work than they really need to do. Eventually, staffs’ complaint or job-hopping become unstable factors in the society. Moreover, if fewer domestic companies can meet job seekers’ demands, large foreign enterprises will attract more job seekers. In this way, domestic economy will be affected severely. Therefore, government needs to enact various policies to prevent the occurrence of the two conditions above except just expanding the postgraduate enrollment. As a consequence of this, many undergraduates would confront a choice on whether to pursue postgraduate studies or not. This study is trying to investigate the reasons.
2 Theoretical perspectives

We have chosen four theories, namely, social networking theory, psychodynamic theory, cognitive theory and Bronfenbrenner’s ecological theory. Hereby these four theories will be used to analyze the data.

2.1 Theory of social network

There are many definitions about social network theory. A social network can be defined as a social structure consisting of a group of social roles, which complicate suits of dyadic ties. Social network is a social frame composed of numerous social factors, such as organizations and individuals. The perspective of social network provides us with a clear method of analyzing the composition of whole social entities (Wasserman & Faust, 1994).

We organize some investigations on the survey’s result, that is, the motivation of whether pursuing postgraduate studies or not mainly engages in the concept of strong or weak ties, and structural role theory.

2.1.1 Strong and weak ties

In the social network theory, social relationships are regarded to be constituted in forms of ties and nodes. Ties refer to the relationships among actors, and nodes refer to the individual actors within the networks. There can be several types of ties between the nodes. A social network can be viewed as a mesh of all relevant ties between the nodes (Wasserman & Faust, 1994).

As for the thesis, there are two ties involved, namely, strong ties and weak ties. According to Krackhardt (1992), the strong ties refer to the affective character of ties, including the relationship between family members, familiar friends, and classmates.
and so on, who live in a relatively similar context and share similar information.

The weak tie is originally stated by Anatol Rapoport in 1957, in which if A is linked to both B and C, then there is a greater-than-chance probability that B and C are linked to each other, and the link between B and C can be called the weak ties (Rapoport, 1957).

It illustrates that the weak ties connect the whole society. Because of the weak ties, information can be shared with different race, ethnicities, class and geography. (Granovetter, 1982) The frequency of interaction between social actors, the tightness one social actor feels with another, the lengths of time one social actor knows another will influence the information shared in the weak ties.

Information, attitude, behavior in the weak and strong ties will influence decisions and behavior’s social actors (Wasserman & Faust, 1994). Moreover, information shared from the weak ties is more useful, because it will contribute a lot when the undergraduates are finding a job, and influence the decision of the undergraduate students. For example, if there is information about a new job opportunity, the undergraduates may change the plan, but cherish the chance of getting a good job and stop pursuing postgraduate studies.

2.1.2 Role theory

The mind and the self are the precursors to role theory (Hindin, 2007). Role theory refers to most of daily activities and behavior to be acted out of socially defined column. Everyone acts different roles in the society. In the school, they are teachers and students; in family they are parents and children; in a market they are buyers and sellers; above all behaviors should fit the role one plays. The role can also be defined as a specific social position, based on one’s behavior. Some theorists also put forward
the perspective that roles are expectations of how an individual should behave in a
given condition while some regard it similar to how an individual behaves in a given
social position (Hindin, 2007).

The role theory influences the behavior of social actors; the behavior of one social
actor should be in accordance with his or her social position. This theory will be
employed to analyze the motivation of whether pursuing postgraduate studies or not.
When deciding whether to pursue postgraduate studies or not, the role acted as a child
and that role may affect the decision of whether furthering postgraduate studies or not.
In the following part, we will discuss this issue in detail.

2.2 Psychodynamic theory
Psychodynamic theory is a systematic study of the psychological driver of human
behavior, feeling and emotion. It is also engaged in a dynamic relationship between
conscious motivation and unconscious motivation, and was applied by Sigmund
Freud (1856–1939) and his followers to describe the processes of the mind as flows of
psychological energy in an organically complex brain (Bowlby, 1999).

Psychodynamics also can be defined as a study of interactive relationship between
different aspects of mind and personality, which is related to unconscious mental,
emotional and motivational forces. (Freud, 1923) Mental forces engaged in
psychodynamic theory can be commonly divided into two aspects. One aspect is on a
subconscious level, which emphasizes interrelationship of emotional and motivational
drives in the influence of behavior and mental condition. The second aspect
emphasizes emotional and motivational drives that influence the behavior and state of
mind.

Behavior and motive of people are often related to their early experience (Freud,
1923). For example, if one is bit or hurt by a cat, he or she may be afraid of cats,
although cats are lovely pets in most people’s minds. The one who scares cats will hide when he or she meets them. From this simple example, we can perceive that the early experience will influence the behavior and the mind of a person. However, this relationship is not fixed. In the process of growing up, if the one experiences some different experience, it may break the previous impression and one will not be afraid of cats or even love them.

2.3 Social cognitive theory

“Social cognitive theory indicates that the human behavior can be related to the observation of others within the context of social interactions, experience and outside media influence” (Parrish, 2010,p.110). The replication of the actions of others can reflect the humanity and display a sense of belonging. One will not feel left behind but attach to a group. However, whether the behavior of others will influence oneself or not is also related to the outcome of behavior. In most circumstances, only rewarded behavior will be copied. Furthermore, media also provides models for people in various conditions. By imitating those observed behaviors, the individual observers can consolidate the learned actions and can be rewarded with positive reinforcement (Miller, 1941).

“Social cognitive theory involves the procedure of knowledge acquisition that is directly related to the observation of models” (Hollins, Radhakrishna and Ingram, 2009, p.3). These models can arouse people around them or from the media. Effective models can teach general rules as well as regulations for dealing with different circumstances.

Social cognitive theory revolves around the process of knowledge acquisition or learns correlated to the observation of models. Effective modeling teaches general rules and strategies for dealing with different situations (Answers.com, 2014).
In the process of reenact others' actions; the imitator does not expect the actual reward or punishment but only hope that similar outcomes will take effect. Actions influenced by the experience and context around it. For example, if the punishment of one country is less strict than that of another country, more crime cases are tending to be committed in this country.

As for the motivation of whether pursuing postgraduate studies or not, the social cognitive theory also plays an important role in designing questionnaires. In the latter part, this theory’ influences on the motivation of further postgraduate studies will be explained in detail.

2.4 Bronfenbrenner’s ecological theory

Bronfenbrenner developed the ecological theory after recognizing that individuals are neglected in other theories of human development, which mainly focus on the surroundings of the development. In Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory, not only experience of the early stage influences the development of people, but also time, which acts as an important role in the way that people and environment change (Bronfenbrenner, 1998).

He also laid stress on procedures and the role of ecological model. The Process-Person-Context-Time Model (PPCT) has become the basis of the ecological model. The reciprocal actions between the four concepts shape the basis for the theory (Bronfenbrenner, 2006).

Process - Bronfenbrenner regarded proximate procedures as the basic principle for development.

Person – Bronfenbrenner confirmed the part that individual characteristics play in the social reciprocal actions (Bronfenbrenner, 1998).

Context - Context concerns five interrelated systems. The microsystem expounds environments such as family or school where children spend the most time on interaction. Meso-systems are in an interactive relationship with microsystems.
Meso-systems refer to the connection among two or more systems in which children, parents and family live (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Meso-systems provide the connection between the frames of the child’s micro-system (Berk, 2000). The ecosystem clarifies issues that carry essential indirect weight on evolution (Bergen, 2008). It defines the larger social system in which children function indirectly. These frames in this level can impact one child’s development by interacting with some frames in the child’s micro-system (Berk, 2000). The macro-system is a peculiarity of any group that shares the same values and belief systems. It is related to the overall patterns of ideology and organization that characterize a particular society or a social group. Macro systems can be exploded to describe the cultural or social circumstances of several types of social groups such as social classes, ethnic groups, or religious affiliates (McLaren&Hawe, 2005). The chrono-system represents historical contexts that influence situations at all other levels. (Bronfenbrenner, 1998) Elements within this system can be either external, such as the timing of parents’ divorce, or internal, such as physiological changes that occur when parents divorce. Family dynamics need to be structured in the historical context as they occur within each system (Bronfenbrenner, 1989)

Time – Time plays an essential part in development model. It can be divided into three levels, namely, micro, meso and macro. Micro-time indicates what occurring during the definite period of proximate procedures is. Meso-time indicates the scope to which the processes happen in an individual's condition, such as over the course of days, weeks or years (Tudge et al., 2009). Macro-time zooms in on the transferring anticipates in an expansive culture. This function can influence the proximal processes through the whole lifespan and across generation. (Bronfenbrenner, 2006)

The Bronfenbrenner’s ecological theory lays stress on the interaction between a person’s development and environmental system around individuals. Bronfenbrenner has explained the ecological in different aspects, which helps to explain the motivations based on ones’ behaviors.
3 Previous research

Some studies have conducted the motivation of whether to pursue postgraduate studies or not (Yan & Zhou, 2011; Wang, 2012; LvJie, 2012). In our research, we carried out a survey in Inner Mongolia University and Dalian Nationalities University respectively, two universities in China.

3.1 Previous researches

We chose three previous related studies, two studies are real case studies conducted in two universities, and the third one is found in a published paper. The two real studies are quite similar to the one we conducted. One survey was conducted in Tianjin University of Technology and the other one was conducted in Sanxia University. These two universities are different, one of which is a science and technology university and the other is a comprehensive university (a comprehensive university refers to universities with all kinds of majors and are not only limited to either liberal arts or science).

The first study, conducted in the Tianjin University of Technology by Yan Shuanquan and Zhou Wenen in the year of 2011, focused on the motivation of whether taking postgraduate studies or not (Yan & Zhou, 2011). The data is collected through questionnaires.

There were 900 respondents who finished the questionnaires. According to the result, 28 percent of the respondents decided to take postgraduate studies while 72 percent decided not to. The result showed that most students had a clear idea of whether pursues postgraduate studies or not. Among the reasons of not taking postgraduate studies, lack of perseverance and too much pressure of pursuing postgraduate studies were the main obstacles on their way of furthering education. There were also
students who thought that taking postgraduate studies only postponed the graduation time also considered it wastes money and time. Moreover, in the process of taking postgraduate studies, they could not enhance their ability. Some students argued that they could not estimate the employment status when they complete their postgraduate studies. There were also a few students arguing that they valued practice ability more than academic knowledge, and they thought more practical knowledge can be learned in the working process. In the group who decided to take postgraduate studies, the motivation of pursuing postgraduate studies can be listed as following: 45 percent for a better job, 22 percent for a higher education level, 18 percent for academic study, 7 percent for escaping from employment pressure, 5 percent for following others and 3 percent for other reasons (Yan & Zhou, 2011).

In conclusion, this previous study showed that whether to take postgraduate studies or not depends on personal career planning. For those who plan to pursue postgraduate studies, they had a clear aim of getting more knowledge and finding better jobs. Moreover, a master degree provides them with a high platform. In the procedure of taking postgraduate studies, they cherish the sweat and tear (Yan & Zhou, 2011).

The second study, conducted in Sanxia University by Wang Hong in 2012, focused on the motivations of whether taking postgraduate studies or not (Wang, 2012). There were totally 500 respondents who answered the questionnaires. Sanxia University is one of Chinese comprehensive universities. A survey conducted in the year of 2012. The form of conducting the survey was by Skype interviews (Wang, 2012).

The result showed that 56 percent of the students did not plan to take postgraduate studies while 44 percent of the students did plan to take postgraduate studies. For those who did not plan for further postgraduate studies, reasons were listed as following: 55 percent of the students thought they had studied for more than ten years, they did not want to study anymore; 37 percent thought they could find good jobs
without taking postgraduate studies; 32 percent quite due to economic reasons, 20 percent thought their grades were not ideal, so they did not anticipate to be enrolled by postgraduate schools (Yan & Zhou, 2011,p. 5).

As for those who wanted to take postgraduate studies, the reasons and percentage were listed as following: 60 percent students thought a bachelor degree did not have any advantages, and a master degree would be more useful for future employment; 46 percent students thought they liked the major they chose and wanted to enhance themselves academically to a higher level; 27 percent students thought the encouragement from parents made them want to take postgraduate studies and fulfill the dream of their parents; 17 percent students thought they wanted to escape from social pressure and continue campus life; 17 percent students just did not have clear career goals, so just followed the trends of others to take postgraduate studies (Wang, 2012, p 8).

Except the above two studies in Tianjin University of Technology and Sanxia University, there was another study presented by Lv Jie in Jiangsu University of Science and Technology (LvJie, 2012).

In this study, 50 percent of the respondents planned to take postgraduate studies, 27 percent respondents decided not to take postgraduate studies, and 23 percent respondents had not decided yet. In her study, the motivations of taking postgraduate studies were for acquiring more knowledge, finding a better job, fulfilling parents’ expectations and self-improvement, solving the household problems and following others’ steps. However, the percentage of taking postgraduate studies was quite high in this study. The reason was that, among all the respondents, over half students were in their third year studies. Compared with students in their first year and sophomore year, these students had a clear idea about pursuing postgraduate studies or participating in workplaces. Most of them wanted to take postgraduate studies. Since juniors account for more than half of all the respondents, the percentage of taking
postgraduate is high. Lv Jie found that, from the perspective of grades, sophomores were still hesitating of whether taking postgraduate studies and only around 16 percent respondents were in favor of it. In the respondents of juniors, 48 percent students decided to take postgraduate studies. As for respondents in their sophomore year, the percentage of who have decided to take postgraduate studies even reached 86 percent (Lv Jie, 2012).

There are some similarities between the survey results of the above three researches. Therefore, motivation of taking postgraduate studies can be concluded as following: finding a better job, acquiring knowledge, escaping from social pressure, following others, academic pursuit, choosing a satisfactory major, and fulfillment of parents’ dreams.

On the contrary, the motivations of not taking postgraduate studies can be concluded as following: lack of perseverance, too much pressure of pursuing postgraduate studies, wasting much money and time, worries about development space in postgraduate studies, unpredictable employment status, value of practice ability more than academic knowledge, finding a good job without taking postgraduate studies, barriers to pass the postgraduate entrance exam, low interests in study, financial problems.

There are theoretical foundations behind the above motivations, all of which can be explained in social network theory, psychodynamic theory, social cognitive theory and Bronfenbrenner’s ecological theory.

4 Method

We have described the concepts from theoretical perspectives, which will be used in
our survey and analysis previous researches. Now, we will look at the survey we did and detailed procedures will be described.

This survey adopted a questionnaire (see appendix), and disseminated all questionnaires through websites. Every question had related theoretical foundation. The questionnaire was used to perceive the motivations of whether to pursue pursuing postgraduate studies or not of students in Inner Mongolia University and Dalian Nationalities University.

4.1 Preliminary understanding

With the above concepts and previous researches, we found that the motivations of pursuing postgraduate studies were in high consistency. The first motive in the previous studies for pursuing postgraduate studies was for finding a better job. In a same manner, in order to check whether these motivations can be applied to the Inner Mongolia University and Dalian Nationalities University, similar questions have been made. For instance, when we tried to check the motives of pursuing postgraduate studies, we listed following choices including acquiring knowledge, escaping from social pressure, following others, choosing a satisfactory major and fulfilling parents’ dreams.

Motivations of not taking postgraduate studies found in the previous researches are listed as following: lack of perseverance, too much pressure of pursuing postgraduate studies, postpone of the graduation time and wasting much money and time by taking postgraduate studies, worries on self-development in the process of taking postgraduate studies, unclear the employment status at the time of postgraduate graduation, and value of practice ability rather than academic knowledge, being able to find a job without taking postgraduate studies, unwillingness to study anymore ,and economic problems (Yan & Zhou, 2011; Wang, 2012; LvJie, 2012). Several questions related to the above motivations have also made in our questionnaire as well.
The internal causes for those who will pursue postgraduate studies are their belief in the relationship between a better job and a higher education level; they are thirsty for enriching their knowledge and social pressure. The external causes for pursuing postgraduate studies are pressures from their parents, boyfriends, girlfriends and classmates (Yan & Zhou, 2011; Wang, 2012; LvJie, 2012).

The internal causes for those who will not pursue postgraduate studies are their belief that social practice and experiences are more important than academic study, or they are lack of interest and perseverance in further study. The external causes for not pursuing postgraduate studies mainly lies in the financial burden (Yan & Zhou, 2011; Wang, 2012; LvJie, 2012).

4.2 Research design
The study was designed to ask respondents to answer a questionnaire according to their actual situations. These questions were designed in accordance with the reasons found in the three studies we presented above.

4.3 Study group
The surveys were made in two universities in China, namely, Inner Mongolia University and Dalian Nationalities University. Each university has over 10,000 students, including the undergraduates, postgraduates, exchanges students and foreign students. We contacted with our friends who studied in these two universities helping us to put questionnaire on their school website. Theoretically, all of the undergraduates could see the questions if they look through their school website, however, it is impossible for us to know how many students who saw the questionnaire and did not choose to participate. All in all 147 participants answered the questionnaires.
The reasons to choose these two universities were firstly that we have friends studying in the two universities, and they could help us by posting the questionnaires on their school website. The second reason was that these two universities had different teaching aims. Inner Mongolia University lays stress on academic study, while Dalian Nationalities University places emphasis on art and skills training for students.

4.4 Research procedure

4.4.1 Literature search and preparation

We carried out an empirical study ourselves to check whether we predicted above was correct based on previous research. Because what we wanted to investigate were the motivations of whether to pursue postgraduate studies or not in China; therefore, the literature we chose were also related to China’s conditions. In this way, we used the Google to search the keywords like “whether to pursue postgraduates study or not”, “motivations for taking postgraduate” “parents’ expectations on children’s education”, “peer influence on ones’ choice on pursing postgraduate studies” etc. Besides, we also asked friends in China to search related materials in their library, published journals or papers and online sources.

4.4.2 Data collection

In order to carry out the research smoothly and thoroughly, we first studied theory and previous researches related to the motivations of whether pursuing postgraduate studies or not, as well as related theories. Then some assumed conclusions were drawn for what we wanted to conclude from the survey. Questions were designed according to those who wanted to pursue postgraduate studies and who did not. There were fourteen questions, among which the first nine questions were compulsory (See
appendix). Questions were designed on the basis of previous researches we had discussed in the above discussion. Moreover, these questions could be divided into the theories discussed above. Then from item ten, the questions were divided into two parts. Questions number seven to ten were designed for students who wanted to pursue postgraduate studies, and questions number eleven to fourteen were designed for students who did not want to take postgraduate studies. Questions number from seven to ten were divided into eleven detailed questions, among which eight questions were related to the motivations of pursuing postgraduate studies, and those eight questions could also be divided into four groups: one group was taking postgraduate studies for finding a better job and a relatively high salary; one group was taking postgraduate studies for realizing parents’ dreams, following others and for accompanying boyfriends or girlfriends; one group was taking postgraduate studies for a better major, better school and gaining more knowledge; and the last group was taking postgraduate studies for avoiding pressure and continuing campus life.

After designed all the questions, our friends in Inner Mongolia University and Dalian Nationalities University posted the questionnaires on their school website. From April 25, 2013 to May 24, 2013, there were 147 students finished the questionnaire and all the questionnaires are effective. You can find the detailed questionnaires in appendix or on the Website http://www.sojump.com/jq/2261985.aspx. The time span of the survey results was about one month. All the questions were answered according to the actual situation of the respondents.

4.5 Tools of analysis
After getting the results, a suitable analyzing tool should be adopted in order to understand the motivations of whether pursuing postgraduate studies or not. The analyzing tool we decided to use was SPSS.

After collecting the entire questionnaire, the results were analyzed by the application of SPSS. Bar charts and frequency distribution were used for getting direct and clear
ideas about the survey results.

4.5.1 SPSS

SPSS is the short form of Statistical Product and Service Solutions, which is software designed by IBM Company. It is used to analyze and calculate the statistics, data mining, and predictive parsing. It is now widely used to analyze statistics which is a very useful tool for us.

4.6 Essay credibility
This essay is a report which analyzes the motivations of whether pursuing postgraduate studies or not on the basis of a survey research done online.

4.6.1 Reliability and validity

Among the complete 147 questionnaires in these two universities, they indicated all the participants were having thorough understanding of all the questions in it. We drew the conclusion from these 147 questionnaire results, using SPSS to analysis and separating percent proportion for the relative reliability of this questionnaire.

All the questions designed in the questionnaire were based on three studies we presented above. Since all the questions we designed had foundation on the previous similar studies, we hoped the results of questions were valid and reliable.

4.6.2 Generalization

All the recipients came from various majors ranging in different places. It is reasonable to assume that these students were more clear about if they would go on with postgraduate studies or not and more clear about that the motives for it would be
Motivations of whether pursuing postgraduate studies or not are important because the supply-demand relationship is important in human resources field. Therefore, finding the motivations is the first step. Many studies related to this field have done, and the results are in high consistency as we have discussed in the above part. Generally speaking, motivations for pursuing postgraduate studies are mainly for finding a better job, for a higher salary, and for fulfilling their dreams. On the contrary, for those who do not want to pursue postgraduate studies do not think higher education level brings higher salary and better jobs.

4.7 Ethical standpoints
The ethical principles are respecting human rights, human dignity as well as social justice. Students’ rights of making their own choices and participating in this survey are fully respected. Respondents could choose to do the questionnaires or not according to their will and they can stop at any stage. No private information of respondents was asked, and their efforts were fully respected. Their personal information can be kept well by not asking their names.

4.8 Limitations
With the survey conducted smoothly, there were also some limitations in the survey. In the sample, the main limitation was the low response rate which means that our results cannot be generalized to the whole population. Another limitation is that the respondents are mainly students in the third and fourth year of university education. Meanwhile, an important limitation for us is that is difficult to know how many students could saw the questionnaire and did not want to participate.
5 Results and analysis

Below the table shows various elements investigated in the study, like sex, parents’
expectation, academic results, peer influence, and participants own willing of
deepening knowledge. The students’ major includes Natural subjects, Financial
Management subjects, Liberal subjects, Linguistics and Literature subjects, Medicine
subjects, Education Science subjects, Journalism and Communication subjects, and
Art subjects. Most students choose to pursue undergraduate study in order to fulfill
their dream on furthering studies on the major they liked.

Similar to LvJie’s report, 76 percent students among the respondents in our study
decided to take postgraduate studies. And for respondents in their fourth year of
higher education, the percentage of deciding to take postgraduate studies even
reached 84 percent, from which we can perceive that the higher grade the students are,
the higher percentage of whom in favor of taking postgraduate studies is. The reason
may be their love for campus life deepens. Moreover, teachers with higher education
level are preferred if they want to find a job in universities. For a stable job, called as
“iron bowl”, people should have at least a master degree if they want to get a chance
to get a job in universities, which also explains the reason why the percentage of
taking postgraduate studies is so high among the respondents, nearly seventy percent
students who participated in our research are in their third and fourth year in
university.

5.1 Presentation of results and analysis
### Table 1 Number of respondents in different groups and proportion (%) taking postgraduate studies by sex.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Take postgraduate studies (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Men</td>
<td>Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants</td>
<td>n (%)</td>
<td>n (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade</td>
<td>Men</td>
<td>Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One</td>
<td>8 15%</td>
<td>8 9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two</td>
<td>15 28%</td>
<td>18 19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three</td>
<td>22 41%</td>
<td>48 52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four</td>
<td>9 17%</td>
<td>19 20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude</td>
<td>Men</td>
<td>Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>toward</td>
<td>n (%)</td>
<td>n (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>university</td>
<td>Interesting</td>
<td>18 33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fine</td>
<td>19 35%</td>
<td>29 31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boring</td>
<td>5 9%</td>
<td>2 2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>major</td>
<td>Interesting to Boring</td>
<td>4 7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boring to Interesting</td>
<td>8 15%</td>
<td>9 10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scores</td>
<td>n (%)</td>
<td>n (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>7 13%</td>
<td>34 37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In</td>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>45 83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University</td>
<td>Bad</td>
<td>2 4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on the figures, among all the participants, 80 percent are women. In our sample, women seem to be more willing to take postgraduate studies; as well as getting better scores in their studies. In our sample also the proportion of women with extremely high scores is much higher than that of men. Moreover, in our sample score plays an important role when one is considering whether to pursue postgraduate studies or not and all the respondents with excellent academic performance want to take postgraduate study for advancing knowledge.

Based on the sample, most of respondents decide to pursue their postgraduate studies. Among all the respondents, 70 percent of male students decide to take postgraduate studies, while 80 percent of the female students decide to do so. Below table 2 indicates different reasons for taking postgraduate studies or not among men and women, in which the largest percent for not taking postgraduate studies is attaching more importance to working capacity than school diploma and theoretical knowledge. And in our sample men’s proportion is larger than women’s; while financial burden
accounts for the smallest percentage, which indicates most students choose postgraduate study mainly on their own willing instead of the economic burden.

Based on the sample reasons for taking postgraduate includes getting better jobs, achieving advance knowledge, avoiding pressure from social work, parents’ expectations, the desire to study in famous schools, following others. And reasons for not taking postgraduate studies include pursuing work opportunities rather than academic knowledge, lack of interest in further study, going abroad and financial burden which makes them difficult to afford tuition fees.

We collect following statistics from the attached questionnaire. Based on question 8, the reasons for why men and women in our sample choose postgraduate studies can be concluded. And the question 12 shows the reasons why both genders refuse to further their education.
Table 2 Most importance motivations to choose postgraduate or not to choose postgraduate studies or not. Percent (%) answering "right" or “basically right” in all and by sex. (#)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Choose</th>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Men (%)</th>
<th>Women (%)</th>
<th>Overall (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>38</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postgraduate</td>
<td>Famous school</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n=</td>
<td>Better jobs</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Parents’ will</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Follow others</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Avoid pressure</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not postgraduate</td>
<td></td>
<td>16</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n=</td>
<td>Plan to find a job</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Work experience</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>more important</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not interested</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tired of studies</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pressure on Graduate exam</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Financial burden</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Go abroad</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Impact of friends</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Postgraduate recommendation</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In accordance to the figures in the table above, we can conclude that in our sample, more women choose further study than men do. In our sample most of these girls are looking forward to achieving knowledge and finding better jobs while others aim to
conform to parents’ will and avoid pressure. Moreover, in our sample men’s motivation is mainly on achieving knowledge and finding better jobs after graduation in few years.

In our sample, for other motivations to further education includes choosing a more satisfactory major, peer influence and avoiding employment pressure, accounting for high percentage in continuing postgraduate studies. In our sample, those who do not want to take postgraduate studies, the biggest motivations are wanting to find a job directly after graduating, valuing working experience more than education level, getting tired of studying, lacking of interest in taking postgraduate studies and avoiding the pressure of taking postgraduate studies.

Based on Table 2, one of the motivations in stimulating the undergraduates to further the education is parents’ will. In table 3, it is going to show student's response to parents’ expectations when they decide to pursue postgraduate studies or not.

Table 3. Students’ numbers and proportions in continuing postgraduate studies according to expectations from parents. Proportions (%) by sex.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The expectation from parents prompts me to take graduate study</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>(%)</td>
<td>n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No answer</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fits greatly</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fits</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not know</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fits hardly</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fits not at all</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As we expected, in our sample the proportion of women requested by parents to take postgraduate studies is higher than that of men.

In our sample, for women among those who response to parents’ expectations, 37 percent agreed that they pursue postgraduate studies in order to meet the expectation
of their parents, while only 17 percent of men want to follow their parents’ expectations. An explanation is that women are easier to obey parents’ request.

In the sample analyzed below, another motivation for pursuing postgraduate studies is for furthering academic study to a higher-level. It is known that the knowledge learned in postgraduate studies is much harder than that of undergraduate study, therefore, only those with high scores in undergraduate study will consider pursuing postgraduate studies. Based on our sample, women's scores are better than those of men. This can also explain why the proportion of women who want to pursue postgraduate studies is higher than that of men. Before pursuing postgraduate studies, one has to take the postgraduate study entrance exam. In our sample, only the score is high enough, then he or she can pursue postgraduate studies, therefore, without ideal scores, one could not pursue postgraduate studies even though one really wants to.

According to table 4, it shows the importance of scores, which plays an important role in one’s decision on furthering education. In the sample, the figures also confirm that scores in university influence one’s decision on pursuing postgraduate studies, which is for deepen knowledge.

**Table 4. Pursuing postgraduate studies for deepening knowledge separated by scores in university. Numbers and percent (%) in all and by sex.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>For Deepening knowledge</th>
<th>Scores in university</th>
<th>Excellent scores (n=36)</th>
<th>Middle Scores (n=76)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fits greatly</td>
<td>11       31%</td>
<td>20         26%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fits</td>
<td>23       64%</td>
<td>48         63%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not know</td>
<td>0        0%</td>
<td>0          0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fits hardly</td>
<td>1        3%</td>
<td>1          1%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fits not at all</td>
<td>1        3%</td>
<td>7          9%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In our sample the motivations of pursuing postgraduate studies are also influenced by peers (For detailed information please refer to table 5).
Table 5. Taking postgraduate studies by being influenced by others. Numbers and proportions (%) in all and by sex.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expectations from others</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n (%)</td>
<td>n (%)</td>
<td>n (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fit greatly</td>
<td>2 5%</td>
<td>3 2%</td>
<td>5 5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fit</td>
<td>17 45%</td>
<td>37 25%</td>
<td>54 48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not know</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>1 1%</td>
<td>1 1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not fit</td>
<td>9 24%</td>
<td>8 5%</td>
<td>17 15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fit not at all</td>
<td>10 26%</td>
<td>25 17%</td>
<td>35 31%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For the women in our sample, the percentage of choosing postgraduate studies due to peer influence accounts for 27 percent. While for the men, the percentage is 50 percent.

In our sample, another motivation of pursuing postgraduate studies is for deepening knowledge (see table 6).

Table 6. Taking postgraduate studies according to willing of deepening knowledge. Numbers and proportions (%) in all and by sex.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>For deepening knowledge</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Overall</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n (%)</td>
<td>n (%)</td>
<td>n (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fits greatly</td>
<td>11 29%</td>
<td>20 27%</td>
<td>31 28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fits</td>
<td>23 69%</td>
<td>48 65%</td>
<td>71 63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not know</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fits hardly</td>
<td>3 8%</td>
<td>5 7%</td>
<td>8 7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fit not at all</td>
<td>1 3%</td>
<td>1 1%</td>
<td>2 2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the sample, for men, 98 percent of them taking postgraduate studies is for deepening knowledge while the proportion for women who taking postgraduate studies for deepening knowledge are 92 percent. Based on our sample, the result shows that most of students who take postgraduate studies are for deepening knowledge.
In our sample, besides the above three motivations of pursuing postgraduate studies, namely, obeying parents ‘request, peer influence and increasing knowledge, there are another three motivations agreed by respondents, namely, getting a better job, avoiding pressure and realizing their dreams of studying in a famous university. However, there are also three motivations that most people disagree with, namely, pursuing postgraduate studies to avoid social pressure, accompanying others and choosing another major.

In the sample, according to the answers of question 11 to 14, the first reason for not taking postgraduate studies is lacking interest in further study and desire for accumulating working experience.

Based on our sample, motivations of not pursuing postgraduate studies also include internal causes and external causes. Internal causes are valuing working experiment than education, getting bored of studying at school, lacking interest in taking postgraduate studies and being afraid of the pressure of taking postgraduate studies. External causes are mainly economic problems.

To investigate the motivations of whether pursuing postgraduate studies or not is of great importance for the society. Since in China, more and more students choose to take postgraduate studies, which leads to many changes in the employment market. If we fail to balance the employment market and education, great damages will be caused as we have mentioned. Therefore, if we can understand the motivations for pursuing postgraduate, we can try to find a balance between the supply and demand in the employment market, and take postgraduate studies as a tool to strike this balance.

5.2 Theoretical foundations
As we have discussed above, the theoretical foundations of our survey are social network theory, social cognitive theory and Bronfenbrenner’s ecological theory.
For the major motivations, social network theories can be used to explain that the motivation to pursue postgraduate studies is forced by parents’ requests.

As shown in the sample, parents are important. The information they share with other individuals will definitely influence their children’s choice. When parents think that postgraduate studies is good, they will pass on the information or give indications to their children (Krackhardt, 1992). Moreover, they will concentrate on collecting all the information related to postgraduate studies and share the information with their children. Some useful information may influence their children’s decision on whether taking postgraduate studies or not. Close classmates of the individual are the strong ties and other unfamiliar schoolmates are the weak ties (Krackhardt, 1992). When the students surrounding the individuals all want to pursue postgraduate studies and share some information about the benefits of pursuing postgraduate studies, the individuals may be affected by that information and change his or her mind. For instance, one does not want to take postgraduate studies after undergraduate study, because he or she thinks that it is difficult for him or her to be enrolled by a postgraduate school. However, if his or her parents pass on information that it is not difficult to be admitted to a postgraduate school and tells him or her that someone who is a “bad” student in school but admitted to postgraduate studies. Being exposed to this information constantly, the individual may change his or her mind that being admitted to postgraduate studies is not difficult and decide to take postgraduate studies. In this situation, we can say strong ties affect individuals. If students who the individuals are not familiar with pass information, we can say the weak ties are influencing an individual. The functions of weak ties are stronger than the strong ties, because the information shared in the strong ties are highly repeated (Rapoport, 1957).

However, since the ranges of weak ties are widespread, information shared in the weak ties is more than that shared in the strong ties. Useful information can pass
through weak ties (Granovetter, 1982).

Besides strong ties and weak ties in the social network theory, the role theories also contribute to the motivation of whether pursuing postgraduate studies or not. In a family, people act as parents and children. For the role of parents, they should protect children from danger, shelter them, feed them and educate them. Children should respect their parents, obey parents, make parents happy and support parents when they get old (Hindin, 2007). In China, being filial is one of the traditional virtues that our Chinese people value the most. Obeying parents’ decisions and making them happy are regarded as being filial. Therefore, when parents want their children to take postgraduate studies, the students may be under pressure of being filial, and take postgraduate studies then. The reasons why parents want their children take postgraduate studies are various, for instance, they do not receive higher education in their teenage and they want their children to realize their dreams; they want their children to take postgraduate studies because they think higher education is equal to a better job. the reasons can be countless. When facing the pressure from parents who hope their children to take postgraduate studies, under most circumstances, students have to follow parents’ request and take the postgraduate studies. As a child, one needs to obey parents’ request and makes them happy, therefore, they may change their mind and decide to take postgraduate studies (Hindin, 2007). In this way, the motivation of whether pursuing postgraduate studies or not is influenced by the role.

In Bronfenbrenner’s ecological theory, not only experiences of the early stage influence the development of people, but also time acts an important role as well (Bronfenbrenner, 2006). The four concepts, which play important roles in the Bronfenbrenner’s ecological, are process, person, context and time (Bronfenbrenner, 2006). In the early stage of an individual, one has no idea about the higher education level or the satisfactory major, and he or she has not taken any specific plans to realize these dreams. However, as time passes by and being influenced by people around, one has a clear idea of getting a higher education and what his or her
satisfactory major is (Bronfenbrenner, 1998). All these motivations will divide individuals into two groups, one pursues the postgraduate studies for one’s own preference and others are influenced by others. Parents based on Bronfenbrenner’s ecological, play an important role in building the behavior of an individual. What parents say or want will absolutely influence the behavior of an individual a lot. The information passed on by parents can also alter a child's decision (Bronfenbrenner, 1998). Because children will think what parents think or want must be right, therefore, children will change his mind according to parents' request, and children’s behavior will change accordingly. For this reason, many students may decide to pursue postgraduate studies just to follow the request of their parents.

Social cognitive theory can be applied to the motivation that pursuing postgraduate studies is for imitating others. Social cognitive theory argues that one will imitate the behavior of models around individual and media (Parrish, 2010). The expected outcomes of imitating the behavior also influence the imitation. When the outcome turns to be positive, the models tend to be imitated, but when the outcomes of the behavior turn to be negative, the actions do not tend to be imitated (Miller, 1941). Motivations from the outer part like finding a better job and fulfilling parents' dreams can be explained by the social cognitive theory. When there is a model that getting a better job after postgraduate studies, a positive outcome encourages others to imitate the behavior of the model and they will decide to take postgraduate studies. Motivations come from the inner part like enhancing knowledge to a higher level, escaping from the social pressure, academic study and choosing a satisfactory major can be also explained with the social cognitive theory (Parrish, 2010). However, for the inner part, psychodynamic theory may play a more important role than the social cognitive theory. When models around individual enhance their knowledge by taking postgraduate studies, choose their satisfactory major, get better academic study and escape from the social pressure, and the outcome is positive, then individuals around the models will be encouraged to imitate the behavior of models and expects the same results (Bowlby, 1999). Moreover, there are also some models shown by the media
that, after postgraduate studies, one enhances his or her knowledge a lot and knows much more than in undergraduate study. Individuals will be encouraged to take postgraduate studies, because he or she expects the same outcome. The motive of following others can completely be explained with the social cognitive theory since it is the direct expression of this theory. Human beings are social beings (Parrish, 2010).

We always want us to be in accordance with others, because in this way we will not feel lonely, and we will not look wired. As for the undergraduate students, if all students around them are deciding to take postgraduate studies and once the class is over, students will come to individual study room to study together. Then no one wants to be left, and the individuals will decide to take postgraduate studies since all students around him or her are going to take postgraduate studies. If he or she does not, he or she will be an outsider, and he or she will feel lonely. Therefore, they will want to take postgraduate studies, even if they do not want at first, and their motivation of being admitted to a postgraduate school is not high in the beginning. They even do not know why they want to take postgraduate studies, but just because others do. This motivation of taking postgraduate studies is the most irrational motivation, since they just follow others' behavior but not follow their heart.

Bronfenbrenner’s ecological theory can be applied to the motivation that pursuing postgraduate studies is for increasing professional knowledge. Social network theory and psychodynamic theory can be applied to the motivation that people pursue postgraduate study for accompanying with others (Wasserman&Faust, 1994). Bronfenbrenner’s ecological theory can be applied to the motivation that pursuing postgraduate studies is for choosing a more satisfactory major (Bronfenbrenner, 1998).

For motivations that not wanting to pursue postgraduate studies, namely, valuing experience important than education level, getting tired of studying, lacking interest in taking postgraduate studies and the pressure of taking postgraduate studies, it can also
be explained with the above theories.

For instance, the concepts of strong and weak ties as well as role theory will also be involved to explain the motivations of not taking postgraduate studies. All we have mentioned above, information passed by weak ties are massive (Raport, 1957). Among the information, much information related to good job opportunity will be provided. Hearing about such information, individuals will believe that without taking postgraduate studies, they can also find a good job since there are so many job opportunities around them. The role's theory also involves the role of acting as parents and children in the family (Hindin, 2007). Parents have to pay much money for their children in order to receive good education. After more than ten years' education, they think that the children have enough knowledge for a job. For some children, after graduating from college and university, they should earn money to repay the love of their parents. The aim of repaying what parents have done for them will drive them to find a job as soon as possible.

Social cognitive theory argues that the individual will imitate the behavior he or she observes; especially when he or she expects the same result of the model he or she observes (Parrish, 2010). Therefore, taking postgraduate studies only postpone the graduation time but also waste much money and time; ability cannot be enhanced in the process of taking postgraduate studies; the employment status is not clear at the time of graduating from postgraduate studies; and the undergraduate are being able to find a job without taking postgraduate studies; all of these can be explained by the social cognitive theory. There can be models around the individuals or on the media that people with a bachelor degree can find the same good job or even better job than those with a master degree. Moreover, because taking postgraduate studies cost two or three years. If an individual fails to find a better job at that time, the time spent on postgraduate studies can be said to be a waste. There are also models around individuals or on the media that some students spend much time and money in taking the postgraduate studies, but they do not concentrate on the study but do other things.
Only at the time of taking exams, will they recite some definitions in order to pass the exams. Not much knowledge is learned, and at the time of graduation from postgraduate school, their knowledge is not enhanced but only time and money is wasted. The negative results of the models leading individuals to behave in a different way from those models and decide not to take postgraduate studies. Moreover, the conditions are not clear at the time of postgraduate graduation. There are also models that some previous popular majors turn to be unpopular at the time of graduation. Under normal circumstances, postgraduate studies will take two or three years. After two or three years, no one can assure the major will still be popular at that time. If one does not seize the opportunity, then this good opportunity will disappear. Take the major of English for example, in the previous years, it is much more popular than other majors, because English talents are in shortage. However, with so many students choosing English majors, English talents in the market increase rapidly but the jobs for English major students are not sufficient. Students of English major need to learn knowledge in another field in order to find a good job because only the command of English is not enough, let alone a large number of students that are English major and do not study well. For them, finding a job is much more difficult. Some students will get negative influence from some failure examples and dare not to take postgraduate studies anymore.

For those who do not want to take postgraduate studies, some students give these reasons like they agree with previous ideas mentioned above, while some students give these reasons because they hear others say so, and they think these thoughts are right, therefore, they choose not to take postgraduate studies. And then these kinds of motives can explained by social network theory. Because those thoughts passed on from others are information passed through strong or weak ties (Raport, 1997). There is also a third situation; some students give these reasons of not wanting to take postgraduate studies because they observe others say so. If the outcomes are positive, they will accept the reasons and behave in the same way. Then these motivations can be explained with the application of social cognitive theory.
Perseverance is a type of psychological quality. Not everyone owns the quality of perseverance; it fosters at the early days of an individual. Therefore, not wanting to take postgraduate studies because of lacking perseverance can be explained with the psychodynamic theory. If there is too much pressure of pursuing postgraduate studies and they are unable to pass the exam of postgraduate can be ascribed to lack of confidence. Lacking of confidence is also the psychological motive, leading to the behavior of not taking postgraduate studies. On the contrary, they hold an idea that they can find a job without taking postgraduate studies is a symbol of being confident. Being confident is also a psychological motive, which drives them to not take postgraduate studies since they are confident to be able to find a good job without taking postgraduate studies. The motivations of valuing practice ability more than book knowledge and not wanting to study any more are the opinions. These perspectives belong to the psychological category, and different psychological motives will lead to different actions.

If the motivations of not pursuing postgraduate studies give too much burden on individuals, their ability would be difficult to enhance in the process of taking postgraduate studies, thus they are unable to pass the exam of postgraduate and economic reasons can explain with the use of Bronfenbrenner’s ecological theory (Bergen, 2008). In the early days of childhood, everyone may have some ideas about the level of education that they will receive when they grow up. However, as time passes by, the more information they absorb, the clearer they know about what they want and which career is suitable for them (Bronfenbrenner, 2006). The ideas that too much pressure of pursuing postgraduate studies will ensue, they cannot enhance in the process of taking postgraduate studies, they are unable to pass the exam of postgraduate are all fostered in the process of growing up. In the beginning, not many ideas about taking postgraduate studies are related. However, as time passes and the day of making a choice draw near, they have to face more practical questions and the above ideas may come into mind. Then they may change their minds in
pursuing postgraduate studies and choose to find a job at the time of undergraduate graduation. Besides, Parents are required to provide tuition for students. In order to lease the burden of parents, students may give up the mind of pursuing postgraduate studies and decide to take a job, earn money by themselves.

6 Discussion

In the survey, all the respondents’ account for less than 10 percent of the total population in Inner Mongolia University and Dalian Nationalities University, therefore, the result cannot be used to explain the whole population. All the data and results are based on our sample. In order to clarify the detailed reasons for different choices in taking postgraduate studies or not, we used the attached questionnaire and separated participants by gender, major and grade as well as asking them various questions such as attitude toward undergraduate study major, scores, whether and when to take graduate studies, the potential advantages in taking postgraduate studies or work on graduation, reasons to choose major, biggest difficulty in exams, plans for future, and attitudes to people who hold opposite choices.

In our sample, we can see that most students give up further studies because they do not want to study anymore, and they can find good job without taking postgraduate studies; while most students choose postgraduate studies because they believe a master degree is more useful for future employment and they like their major and knowledge, in which more women are willing to choose postgraduate studies than men do.

To put it more simply, in our samples, there are gender differences in the motivation of whether pursuing postgraduate studies or not. According to our samples, more women want to pursue postgraduate studies than men do mainly for two reasons: one is that more women in our samples tend to obey the parents' request, and the second
reason is that women in our samples have better scores than men do.

In the questionnaire, the most important part is as follows: gender, major, grade, attitude toward major, grade, whether to take graduate study, when, motivation (better jobs, the famous school, parents’ willing, follow others, enrich knowledge, avoid pressure, accompany friend, study or career plan, attitude to other choices, difficulty of exams, opposite motivation), and the results are presented in table 1. In our sample, the proportion of women taking postgraduate studies is higher than that of men, as both main variables are parents’ expectation. Participants are mostly in middle scores, being influenced by others, and are willing to deepen knowledge.

However, there are also some limitations in this research, such as lack of enough participants, which would confine the accuracy of the investigation result. Our results cannot be generalized to a larger population. Among all the respondents, the percentage of junior and senior accounts for more than 70 percent of the respondents, which is the reason why the percentage of students who take postgraduate studies is so high. Because the higher grade they are in, the clearer they know about the career plan, while more freshmen and sophomores still wonder and hesitate on the problem of taking postgraduate studies or not. So some of them choose not to answer the questionnaire this time as shown in our sample. However, it is helpful for them to arouse awakening on this problem and create a life plan as earlier as possible. So the further research will concentrate more on college students in lower grades.

This could mean that the proportion in our sample of how many that will go on with postgraduate studies could be overestimated and that motivation seems to be clearer than they are in reality, because more junior and senior students choose to take postgraduate studies than lower grade students in college.
6.1. Conclusion

In our sample the internal causes for major motivations of pursuing postgraduate studies are: belief in better job and salary with a higher education level; thirst for increasing professional knowledge and dreams of studying in a famous university.

We found in our sample that there are more women who choose to pursue postgraduate studies than men, which could be explained by the fact that there are more women than men with excellent or middle scores in our sample. Only with relatively good scores, can students have a chance to pursue postgraduate studies. Since before the entrance to postgraduate studies, there will be a test to see whether one is qualified to take postgraduate studies.

A central limitation of the studies is the fact that we not have a random selection of students. Respondents are only those that have chosen to answer the questionnaire placed on the school website. We have also made the study in two universities which were not randomly selected. This of course means that the possibility to generalize the result is limited.

Further research would concentrate more on broadening data source using various kinds of investigation methods with participants separated in various groups.

Moreover, further research needs deeper analysis by collecting more data on detailed reasons and different motivations. It would also be of interest to study how many participants actually benefit from taking postgraduate study and on what extent work experience is more important than academic knowledge.
References


LvJie (2012). Whether to pursue postgraduate studies or not. Jiangsu University of Science and Technology. p.10.


Appendix

Questionnaire

Firstly, thanks for spending time to complete this questionnaire. We are students studying in the University of Gävle, and our major is International Social Work. This questioner is designed by us to investigate the motivation for the undergraduate students take or not take graduate study.

Secondly, this questionnaire survey is absolutely anonymous; definitely it will not have any negative influence on your life and study.

Thanks for your participation again.

1. What’s your gender?
   A. Female
   B. Male

2. What’s your major?
   A. Natural subjects
   B. Financial Management subjects
   C. Liberal subjects
   D. Linguistics and Literature subjects
   E. Medicine subjects
   F. Education Science subjects
   G. Journalism and Communication subjects
   H. Art subjects

3. What’s your grade?
A. Grade one
B. Grade two
C. Grade three
D. Grade four

4. What’s your attitude toward your major during undergraduate study?
A. It’s interesting
B. Fine
C. It’s not interesting
D. At first not interested in my major, but now interested in it because understanding.
E. At first interested in my major, but now regret to choose this major.

5. How about you grades in university study?
A. Great
B. Normal
C. Poor

6. Do you think you will take graduate study?
A. Yes
B. No (Skip to question 11)

7. When you decide to take graduate study?
A. Before take undergraduate study
B. Grade one
C. Grade two
D. Grade three
E. Grade four

8. From your personal aspect, what level of acceptance for the following questions?
(1) According to the severe employment situation, take graduate study will help to increase the possibility find a better job.
A. Right
B. Basically right
C. Basically wrong
B. Wrong
E. Not sure

(2) Want to entrance famous school
A. Right
B. Basically right
C. Basically wrong
B. Wrong
E. Not sure

(3) The expectation from parents prompts me to take graduate study.
A. Right
B. Basically right
C. Basically wrong
D. Wrong
E. Not sure

(4) I do not have clearly plan, and just following others to take graduate entrance exam.
A. Right
B. Basically right
C. Basically wrong
D. Wrong
E. Not sure

(5) I want take graduate study, because I want to have deeper understanding about my
major, enlarge my horizons and improve own quality.
A. Right
B. Basically right
C. Basically wrong
D. Wrong
E. Not sure

(6) To avoid the pressures caused by society, and continue to live in campus.
A. Right
B. Basically right
C. Basically wrong
D. Wrong
E. Not sure

(7) My boyfriend/girlfriend will take graduate study, in order to get along with him/her also take graduate study.
A. Right
B. Basically right
C. Basically wrong
D. Wrong
E. Not sure

(8) From your personal perceptive, do you have any other reason to take graduate study?

_________________________________________________________________________________________

9. Have you decided the school and major for your graduate study?
A Have determined both of school and major
B Have determined major but not yet school
C Have determined school but not yet major
D Either of them has not determined

10. What factors affect you to choose the major for your graduate study? (Multiple-choice)
A Whatever
B By the influence of parent or teachers
C To choose an unusual specialty and less competition
D To change the major and learns the knowledge of other professional
E To choose the major that is good to find a job because of social needs
F Personal interests
G According to the study level to choose

11. What do you think the biggest difficulty in graduate exam?
A Lack of willpower
B To choose the different major or school with bachelor study but have no clue
C Don’t know much about the inclination school for graduate study
D An unfavorable score
E Don’t has enough time to prepare the graduate exam
F The economic condition of family is not allowed
G A lot of pressure on take graduate exam

12. Why you don’t take graduate study?
A Not interested in graduate study
B Don’t has a good grades and no ability to pass the graduate exam
C Plan to find a job after graduation
D The financial burden
E Think of work experience is more important than academic qualification
F Get tired of study and don’t want to continue to learn
G A lot of pressure on take graduate exam
H The impact of friends or classmates
I choose to go abroad
J To choose postgraduate recommendation

13. What is your planning in the future if you don’t take graduate study?
A Not think very much
B To continue to work hard and try to get more certificates in order to find a good job
C Go aboard
D To start a business
E To be a volunteer
F Others

14. What is your attitude about student who chose to take graduate studies?
A Have completely different values
B Bookworm or a bookcase
C Good luck with that
D Admire their stamina
E No views

Thank you very much.