



ECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS UNDER CROSS-STRAIT EXCHANGES - TAKE TAIWANESE COLLEGE STUDENTS AS AN EXAMPLE



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ABSTRACT

Article History

Received: 9 October 2018

Revised: 15 November 2018

Accepted: 17 December 2018

Published: 10 January 2019

Keywords

Employment intentions

Career awareness

Cross-strait relations

Cross-strait exchanges

College students

Entrepreneurial.

In the current development of cross-strait relations, Taiwanese college students are undoubtedly the most important ethnic group. In October 2015, at the Fifth Plenary Session of the 18th CPC Central Committee, the CPC proposed to deepen Cross-Strait economic cooperation in a mutually beneficial and win-win way and benefit more ordinary Taiwanese young people as well as the small and medium-sized enterprises. In 2017, Yu Zheng Sheng, chairman of the Mainland Political Consultative Conference, mentioned at the CPPCC National Committee meeting: "we will strengthen exchanges with Taiwan's grassroots people and young generations and build a solid foundation for the peaceful development of Cross-Strait relations". We can see that the fight for the goodwill and recognition of young people toward Mainland will remain the top priority of Mainland China's work on Taiwan. To win the recognition of Taiwanese youth for the Mainland has actually been implemented for years. In the past, Taiwanese students were invited to visit and explore Mainland China in summer and winter vacations, expected to enhance their feelings towards Chinese people and promote their recognition of the Mainland China. With the gradual opening up of Cross-Strait policies and the wide-and-deep exchange of views, the concrete result has become the focus of common concern across the Taiwan Strait. The empirical results from the questionnaire survey in this study explain the specific impact of Cross-Strait exchange on Taiwanese students. In particular, the study has indeed demonstrated its significant impact on many aspects of the college students' career and entrepreneurial awareness and willingness propositions.

Contribution/ Originality: The contributions of the study has demonstrated that cross-strait exchanges have significant impact on many aspects of the college students' career and entrepreneurial awareness and willingness toward Mainland China.

1. INTRODUCTION

In the current development of Cross-Strait relations, Taiwanese college students are undoubtedly the most important ethnic group. In any society, the young people are the main driving force for social changes, social reform and social development. From Taiwan's point of view, nearly two generations of Taiwanese young people have been estranged to mainland China since localization policy and de-China education began at the end of Lee Teng-Hui's presidency. Therefore, the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) is very optimistic about Taiwan's independence since this generation or even future generations can be mostly potential supporters of the DPP. The "natural

independence" is deep-rooted and time is conducive to DPP's "independent Taiwan". DPP, whether in power or not, it will consequently and inevitably continue its de-China education and firmly grasp young people's awareness and recognition.

On the Mainland side, since 1949, it has emphasized that Taiwan is the sacred territory of the motherland so that "unification" of Taiwan is definitely its inevitable goal. In the early stages of the division, the armed forces on both sides of the strait were not too disproportionate, combined with the factors of the United States, and the cross-strait reunification seemed to be unattainable. However, after five or six decades of development, the mainland today has surpassed Taiwan in terms of both its soft power and its overall strength. It is more than enough to unify Taiwan by force, but it is certainly not the case that "the Chinese people hit the Chinese", as flesh and blood is above every weapon. Since Deng Xiaoping set forth "peaceful reunification and one country under two systems," peaceful reunification has been the theme for mainland China's pursuit of Cross-Strait reunification. Hu Jintao's "peaceful development" and Xi Jinping's "life community, spiritual unity and integrated development" are of the same ideas. Like the DPP, Mainland China believes that with the advancing of time and the more mature development of the mainland, the unification of two sides of the Taiwan Strait will be just around the corner.

However, in the spring of 2014, "Sunflower Student Campaign" took place in Taiwan. Some protesting masses, mainly composed of undergraduates and graduate students, took over the Legislative Yuan Meeting Hall to oppose the "Cross-Strait Agreement on Trade in Services" adopted by the Legislative Yuan. As a result, further Cross-Strait economic and trade development has been hindered, and the KMT, which advocated the peaceful development of both sides of the Straits, failed in the ensuing two elections. The DPP, which advocates independence, has gained an absolute superiority at both the local level and the Central Government. This new development has alerted Mainland that the young people, especially the university students, occupy a crucial force in the development of Cross-Strait relations (Wang, 2015). In October 2015, at the Fifth Plenary Session of the 18th CPC Central Committee, the CPC proposed to deepen cross-Strait economic cooperation in a mutually beneficial and win-win way and benefit more ordinary Taiwanese young people, as well as the small and medium-sized enterprises. This discussion shows that the "13th Five-year Plan" of the CPC focuses on Cross-Strait economic cooperation in "three middle and one youth" and encourages Taiwanese youth to start their own business in the Mainland and provide preferential policies for SMEs in Taiwan. This will be the focus of work on Taiwan for the next five years (Yan and Jiang, 2016).

In March 2017, as the second leader in charge of Taiwan affairs, CPPCC Chairman Yu Zhengsheng mentioned at the CPPCC National Committee meeting: "we will strengthen exchanges with Taiwan's grassroots people and young people and build a solid foundation for public opinion in the peaceful development of Cross-Strait relations. It is obvious that fight for the goodwill and recognition of young people in Taiwan will remain the top priority of Mainland China's work on Taiwan. This study aims to explore Taiwanese college students' awareness and identification toward Mainland China, and further impact their career and entrepreneurial awareness and willingness.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The "National Taiwan Strait Association" in Mainland China and the "Summer (Winter) Camp" for young people in Taiwan have been cooperating for 30 years. They have implemented the earliest and most extensive event that attracts thousands of Taiwanese students to participate (Geng and Zeng, 2010). Another major unit for university student visits is the "ARATS". ARATS and the Chinese Culture Institute, the Taiwan Affairs Office of various provinces and municipalities and universities work together to conduct "Chinese culture study camps" every year during the winter and summer holidays (Zhao, 1998). Since 2001, about 2000 students have participated in the events each year. In addition, some mainland provinces, municipalities and Taiwan Affairs Office, social organizations and foundations also use special opportunities for related exchange activities. Since the universities on

both sides started to communicate, exchanges between schools have also been continuing. However, these exchange activities are relatively for a small number of students. The exchange activities for the above-said utilization of winter and summer holidays are usually conducted in about 8 to 10 days. It is obviously a little shorter for those Taiwanese students who wish to know more about the mainland. Since 2015, exchange activities have been increased with "experiential exchanges" and various "internship activities". On the one hand, students can experience the life of the Mainland in greater depth while lengthening the experience time. They even proposed various preferential policies such as the "Thousand Talents Plan", the "Hundred Talents Plan", the "popular entrepreneurship and the 10,000 kinds of innovations", so as to attract Taiwan's young people to start businesses in the Mainland.

Of course, the mainland spends a lot of money handling these activities for its own purposes (Huang, 2017). In the symposium on the 30th anniversary of the publication of the book on Taiwan compatriots, Hu Jintao made it clear: "in particular, it is necessary to strengthen exchanges between young people across the Strait and constantly add vitality to the peaceful development of cross-Strait relations. The willingness to negotiate Cross-Strait cultural and educational exchanges, and promote cross-Strait cultural and educational cooperation will be promoted to a broader and higher level. As for some Taiwan compatriots who, for various reasons, lack of understanding of the mainland motherland, or even misunderstand the development of cross-Strait relations, people in general not only wish to resolve and guide with the utmost tolerance and patience, but also will take more active measures" (Zhang, 2014). Of course, all the exchange activities are aimed at promoting understanding, resolving doubts and laying the foundation for the future "ultimate reunification."

As mentioned earlier, the mainland has spent so much money mobilizing so much manpower and material resources to achieve reunification. How about the outcome for the goal? There are different opinions among scholars on this issue, and the media coverage sometimes goes too far apart, especially after the Sunflower campaign.¹ It was even questioned if China's united front work on Taiwan has proved to be a fiasco. As mentioned above, the number of young people in Taiwan, especially college students and graduates, who visit mainland China every year is only a few thousands (Wang, 2015). And there are more than 1.3 million students in Taiwan. Proportionally, only a very small number of young people have their experience in the Mainland. And it might be ruthless to jump to the conclusion that the Mainland's youth exchange policy has failed.

For two or more ethnic groups of different cultural and value systems, how to enable them to avoid and reduce conflicts, and further accept each other can be summed up as the study of integration. From the theory of international relations to explore: If you hold liberalism, the main arguments are: (1) pay special attention to the norm function, especially how to achieve a fair and secure international order; (2) emphasis on individuals and the entire human race, exclude or criticize national interests, advocating that the accumulation of personal interests is the national interest, and that laissez-faire is the best policy of governance in the country. In addition, it places emphasis on the equitable distribution of international law and the overall human resources; (3) emphasize the importance of international interdependence, international interaction, norms and regimes. Countries should not rely solely on the pursuit of power as their sole objective and should be interdependent on each other (Zhao, 1998). Therefore, libertarians stress that the objective of achieving the prosperity of the country and international peace through interaction and interdependence will result in the expansion of interdependence; the breadth and depth of cooperation will increase, and the strength of opponents in competition can also create conditions for the prosperity

¹According to a long-term survey conducted by the Political Science Election Research Center, people in Taiwan regard themselves as the proportion of Taiwanese people, from 17.6% in 1992 to 60.6% in 2010, and 56.0% this year. For those who consider themselves Chinese, From 25.5% to 3.6%. On the issue of reunification alone, the rate of "independence" has been on the rise for a long period of time; the rate of "unification" has been on the decline. <http://esc.nccu.edu.tw/app/news.php?Sn=166#> • 2017.10.15 United Daily News survey center also had similar results. Wang Jiazhou research survey has a different conclusion.

of the country. From the constructivism to explore the theory of international relations emphasizes that, as an agent of the international community, the interaction between countries build international relations. Meanwhile, it also builds the country's identity in the international community, that is, the national and international structure made up of each other.²The interaction between nations constructs the international community and international norms and rules which forms a system. These are not static as subjective concept changes through interactions. Because of the change of mutual subjective concept and deeper influence on the society and the change of the norm and the system, they are a kind of endless and mutually constructive relationship. Society is constructed from the concept of communalism, so changes in perceptions make it possible to change international norms and rules.³The formation of ideas in international relations includes mutual understanding, common knowledge, values and norms. Through mutual exchanges, "mutual interdependence" has taken shape and international interaction has been formed. Therefore, the relations between conflicts, cooperation or coexistence that do not necessarily exist in different countries are entirely dependent on mutual determination of each other (Zhang, 2014). Therefore, only through constant exchanges and interaction and establishment of common values and identities in both different countries and societies can there be any possibility for peaceful integration and development.

There are also sociological and psychological perspectives, including two theories -- "social contact theory" and "social identity theory." The theory of social contact, a study by Gordon Allport, a scholar in the United States, on the ethnic conflicts in the United States, proposed in his research that the main factor which led to ethnic discrimination and conflicts was the prejudice among the groups caused by stereotypes. He believes that through frequent interactions and contacts between different ethnic groups, it is possible to alleviate tension, restlessness and hostility among different groups of people, and to familiarize, to understand and even to accept and integrate each other. Frequent contact helps break the stereotypes on both sides and avoids viewing other ethnic groups in ways that are too simplistic and categorical (Huang, 2017). According to a study by Geng Shu on the exchanges of Taiwan university students with the Mainland, "proper interpersonal communication and contact are important keys to reducing ethnic prejudices and resolving stereotypes" (Geng and Zeng, 2010).

Social Identity Theory argues that individuals in organizations are pursuing a positive self-image, categorizing themselves as members of a community, and projecting the identity of the community to themselves, recognizing and keen on what they belong to. At the same time thinking of themselves as having the same characteristics as the other members of the in-group, thereby differentiating themselves from other groups, elevating the status of in-group and derogating other groups to meet their own self-esteem. This is "in-group biased behavior". This kind of partiality and biased behavior can easily lead to prejudice and conflict among the groups.⁴According to the aforementioned study by Geng Shu, because of the deep-rooted differences between the two sides of the Taiwan Straits, Taiwan students feel that there are obvious differences between the two sides of the Taiwan Straits during their exchanges and visits to the Mainland, thus affecting their approval of the Mainland.⁵

3. METHODOLOGY

In order to examine whether Cross-Strait exchanges, especially the Cross-Strait college students, really enhance mutual understanding and resolve misunderstandings between the two sides of the Strait, or even further deepen their common sense of awareness and provide concrete and valid basis for their argument, this study uses the basic demographic data of Taiwanese students as a foundation. The survey was set up for two questionnaires

²See note 8.

³<https://nccur.lib.nccu.edu.tw/bitstream/140.119/33828/6/22001106.pdf>2017.10.25

⁴See note 13, p. 76

⁵See note 14. Wang Jiazhou's research results are similar to those of Geng Shu (note 8, p. 27). Both scholars believe that more exchanges will help promote Cross-Strait peace and development.

respectively on recognition of employment or entrepreneurship in Mainland China and intention to work or start business in the mainland. Random sampling is applied for questionnaire surveys.

The questionnaires were sent to a total of 1000 participants. With an valid data returned as 656, the questionnaire recovery rate is 66%. To analyze the data, T-test, variation analysis (ANOVA) with Scheffe post-hoc analysis, multiple comparison analysis at 95% confidence level were used.

4. EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS

1. Analysis of differences in cognitive employment or entrepreneurship in the Mainland

Empirical results show that there is a significant difference ($p < 0.05$) between gender, school attendance, department of study and the number of trips to Mainland China for cognition of employment or entrepreneurship in mainland China, proceeded with Scheffe's further comparison and analysis afterwards. The results obtained are as follows:

- a. There is significant gender difference for cognition of employment or entrepreneurship in mainland China, and females are higher than males (Table 1 in Appendix);
- b. The impact of attending schools on employment or entrepreneurship in mainland China shows significant differences between public universities and private science and technology universities and between private universities and private science and technology universities (Table 2 in Appendix);
- c. The impact of the department of study on cognition of employment or entrepreneurship in the Mainland shows significant differences between the Business Administration and Private Information Technology, and the Business Administration and Mass Communication and Design departments (Table 3);
- d. The impact of the number of trips to the mainland on cognition of employment or entrepreneurship in Mainland China is not only significant, but also positively correlated ($B = 0.08$) between the two variables (Table 4 in Appendix).

Obviously, there are significant differences in understanding whether to go to work or start a business on the mainland after the Cross-Strait exchanges between schools and departments of different genders and different schools. In particular, the frequency of visits to the Mainland was positively related to their perception of employment or entrepreneurship in the Mainland. More importantly, it not only proved the differences in the substantive effects of different variables on the Cross-Strait exchanges but also, to a certain degree, provided a concrete reference for the direction of future Cross-Strait exchanges by the relevant authorities.

2. Differences analysis of intention to go for employment or entrepreneurship in the mainland:

The empirical results show that there is still a significant difference ($P < 0.05$) between attending schools and departments and the number of trips to the mainland for students who intend to work or start a business in mainland China. The difference is that gender is no longer a significant variable. Further after Scheffe's comparative analysis, the results are as follows:

- a. Although the analysis of variance showed significant differences in the impact of school attendance on employment or entrepreneurial intentions in Mainland China, there was a significant edge ($P = 0.05$) between public universities and private science and technology universities, even afterwards. The basis for a "decisive decision" is that schools must even be excluded from possible explanations of the composition of employment or entrepreneurial intentions on the Mainland;
- b. The impact of the study department on the employment or entrepreneurial intentions in Mainland China shows significant differences between the business management department and the private IT department;
- c. The influence of the number of trips to mainland China on the employment or entrepreneurial intentions in the mainland showed not only significant but also positive correlations between the two variables ($\beta = 0.094$), that is, the higher number of trips to the mainland, the higher willingness to work or start a business in Mainland China.

Compared with the cognitive facet, the variables that affect the employment or entrepreneurial intentions in the Mainland are obviously more tightened. Not only is the gender variable not significant, schools also cease to be a decisive factor, based on "decisive decision". Among the possible variables that explain the conception of whether to go for work or start a business in the mainland, there seems to be another specific interpretation of "practice is much more complicated than mere word." As a result, the analysis focuses more precisely on the two variables of study department and the number of trips to the mainland in explaining the possible variables in the intentions of employment or entrepreneurship in the Mainland.

3. Cross-comparison on cognition and willingness to work or start businesses in Mainland China:

The empirical results are as follows:

- a. Gender shows significant differences in perceptions of employment or entrepreneurship in the Mainland, but not significant in employment or entrepreneurship in the Mainland.
- b. School attendance shows significant differences in perceptions and intentions of employment or entrepreneurship in mainland China;
- c. Major of study showed significant differences in cognition and intentions of Employment or Entrepreneurship in the Mainland;
- d. Origin of family has no significant difference in the recognition of employment or entrepreneurship in the Mainland, but it has a significant presence in the intentions of employment or entrepreneurship in the Mainland;
- e. Experience of visiting China has no significant difference in recognition of employment or entrepreneurship in the mainland, but it has significant differences in intentions of employment or entrepreneurship in Mainland China;
- f. Religions, Internet frequency and type and time used for social networking site showed no significant differences in perceptions and aspirations for employment or entrepreneurship in the Mainland; however, significant differences were found in the cognition and willingness of those who had used mainland websites for employment or entrepreneurship.

At the same time, cross-comparison and comparative analysis of the two aspects of cognition and willingness to get employed or start a business in the Mainland have been carried out. Some of the results obtained are the same as those of the positive analysis of the individual positive aspects mentioned above, such as gender, school attendance and major of study. There are also different results from the empirical analysis of the above-mentioned individual aspect or even the opposite. For example, the experience of visiting Mainland China has significant differences in the intentions, rather than the cognitions, of employment or entrepreneurship in the Mainland. And their perception of employment or entrepreneurship in the Mainland has become insignificant. This result is obviously different from the positive results of the above individual constructions, even on the contrary, and it is worth further exploration.

It is noteworthy that the results of cross-analysis also appear new variables that have not shown any significant differences in the empirical analysis of individual facets, such as significant differences in cognition and intention of employment or entrepreneurship in Mainland China for those who have used websites of China, and the origin of family as a significant factor for the intention to work or start businesses in the mainland. All this is illustrating the need for the empirical results of the cross-analysis of the two dimensions to supplement the lack of empirical analysis of individual constructs. In particular, for the authorities that are anxious to seek the substantive effect of Cross-Strait exchanges, the empirical results of the cross-analysis of the two dimensions will undoubtedly play an important role that cannot be ignored.

5. CONCLUSION

It is true that people on both sides of the Straits are of the same species and same origins. However, the differences between the two sides of the Strait in forming their identity and culture are also the indisputable facts. At a time when these two facts are not deadlocked, the ultimate goal of resolving the obstacles and differences in culture and identity due to the division of the two sides of the Taiwan Strait will eventually be toward "peaceful reunification" set by Deng Xiaoping or "peaceful development" by Hu Jintao or the thinking of Xi Jinping that "the community of life, the spiritual unity and the integration and development". Deepening exchanges are the only solutions to the Cross-Strait relations and there is no alternative.

With the gradual opening up of Cross-Strait policies and the wide and deep Cross-Strait exchange of views, only a concrete result can prove to be the focus of common concern across the Taiwan Strait. The empirical results from the questionnaire survey explain the specific impact of Cross-Strait exchange on Taiwanese students. This study has demonstrated its substantive impact on many aspects of Taiwan university students' career and entrepreneurial awareness and willingness propositions.

Firstly, the empirical results have confirmed that gender, school, department of study, and experience of trip to the mainland, the four variables on the cognitive plane, as a significant difference enhancing the substantive performance of Cross-Strait exchange. The authorities may even prove that the Cross-Strait exchange has a concrete effect on this proposition when there is a positive correlation between the number of trips to the mainland and the degree of cognition.

Secondly, as far as the employment or entrepreneurial intentions in the Mainland are concerned, when the statistically significant differences are limited to major of study and trip to Mainland China, the two variables, the effect of the difference between the words and the deeds is concretely manifested on the empirical results of the two aspects of cognition and will. When the subjective value judgments are scientifically verified, in addition to confirming the necessity of deepening Cross-Strait substantive exchanges, it also indicates that relevant authorities must take into account the dual expectations of rationality and pragmatism in formulating Cross-Strait exchange policy. In particular, while cross-analysis also showed that trip to Mainland China has no significant differences in perceptions of employment or entrepreneurship in the mainland while it does enhance intentions of employment or entrepreneurship in Mainland China. The aspiration for concrete achievements in Cross-Strait exchanges and the effectiveness of policy implementation surely cannot be ignored.

Finally, the importance of the cross-analysis results of the two facets is obviously no less than the empirical results of individual facets. The aforesaid variable "trip to Mainland China" may have political implication. The variable "origins of family" has no significant differences in "perception" of employment or entrepreneurship in the mainland, but it enhances the intentions for the proposition. There was ample evidence of significant differences in awareness and intention of employment or entrepreneurship in the mainland for those who had used the mainland websites. These are the multifaceted ways to enhance the effectiveness of Cross-Strait exchanges. The results of the research help with providing for the relevant authorities to develop a reliable basis for Cross-Strait peaceful development and make further concrete and effective contribution.

Funding: This study received no specific financial support.

Competing Interests: The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

Contributors/Acknowledgement: All authors contributed equally to the conception and design of the study.

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