

Investigating the Influence of ACGN Culture on Chinese Undergraduate Students' Career Choice

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Abstract:

This study analyzes the impact of ACGN culture on the employment and career development of college students through questionnaires and in-depth interviews. Regression analysis and coding of in-depth interviews are employed to explore the factors influencing college students' willingness to pursue careers in ACGN-related industries.

Keywords: ACGN culture, college students, employment, social media

1. Introduction

In today's pluralistic society, ACGN culture—a unique subcultural phenomenon—has permeated and influenced the spiritual world of young people at an unprecedented pace. With its creative content, distinctive character designs, and emotional resonance, this culture not only shapes the aesthetic preferences of the younger generation but also subtly guides their career aspirations and value orientations. This research aims to investigate how ACGN culture affects the employment intentions of young people, providing empirical evidence to understand emerging trends in contemporary career planning and offering new perspectives for promoting youth employment and guiding career strategies.

1.1 Literature Review

The ACGN (Animation, Comic, Game, and novel) culture, originating from the ACGN (Animation, Comic, Game, and Novel) subcultural community, has become a global phenomenon since the 1980s, epitomized by the widespread popularity of Japanese anime. Particularly prevalent among Chinese adoles-

cents, this culture has rapidly expanded alongside the internet, attracting a massive audience that includes both core ACGN enthusiasts and casual consumers. Generation Z (post-90s and post-00s cohorts), as the primary demographic, engages in virtual practices to freely express themselves within digital spaces, embracing the independence and liberation offered by ACGN culture. However, the intricate ideological underpinnings of ACGN culture exert profound influences on adolescents' behavioral patterns and moral values. Some scholars argue that ACGN culture may significantly impact young people's psychological states, worldviews, and lifestyles [1-2]. Nevertheless, with Japan's continuous cultural exports, ACGN has been normalized as a mainstream entertainment form among Chinese youth. Its stylistic elements are extensively utilized in commercial campaigns and promotional activities across industries, while its derivative markets underscore substantial commercial potential.

In recent years, amid China's robust economic growth, the Japanese-originated ACGN culture has undergone localization, manifesting a phenomenon

of “repositioning the periphery as the new center.” This reflects adolescents’ innovative reinterpretation and return to mainstream values. Traditional Chinese animated works often adhered to grand narratives infused with nationalist imaginaries, serving as vehicles for patriotic discourse. Through localization, ACGN subcultural communities have been co-opted by mainstream discourse as a political mobilization tool, simultaneously reconstructing possibilities for nationalist political engagement [3]. This evolution has facilitated the rise of domestic animation, with representative works such as *That Year Those Rabbits* and *Scissor Seven* achieving remarkable success by integrating mature ACGN aesthetics with indigenous ideological frameworks. Notably, the 13th Changzhou International ACGN Art Festival, initiated by 36 institutions worldwide, established the Global ACGN Industry Alliance to foster cross-border collaboration in the ACGN and pan-entertainment sectors. Such developments highlight the rapid growth and far-reaching influence of ACGN industries in animation, gaming, film, and related fields.

However, given ACGN culture’s characteristics of broad dissemination and low consumption thresholds, concerns persist that it may exert ideological influences on young demographics, including university students. Japanese anime, in particular, often incorporates cultural norms and behavioral paradigms that risk exposing Chinese audiences to subtle cultural “infiltration” [5]. Studies suggest that prolonged immersion in ACGN culture may lead to diminished autonomy, fragmented linguistic expression, hedonistic tendencies, and weakened motivation among university students [6]. Despite these critiques, promoting domestically produced ACGN content with localized consciousness remains advantageous for the cultural and entertainment industries. As high-quality domestic ACGN products dominate the market, they hold potential to positively shape the ideological outlook of university students.

2. Research Methodology

This study employs a mixed-methods approach combining questionnaire surveys and in-depth interviews to analyze the influence of ACGN (Animation, Comic, Game, and Novel) culture on employment intentions and career orientations among university students.

2.1 Questionnaire Survey

The questionnaire was distributed through both online and offline channels. Online data collection was conducted via electronic questionnaires disseminated on the

social platform QQ, spanning from June 2024 to January 2025. Offline surveys were administered during the Hangzhou ACGN Fan Convention from September 15 to 17, 2024, where physical questionnaires were distributed and collected. The self-designed questionnaire comprised 12 items, including 8 multiple-choice questions and 4 open-ended questions. Key content covered respondents’ demographic information, duration of engagement with ACGN culture, perceptions of ACGN-related careers, and willingness to pursue employment in ACGN-related fields.

Collected questionnaires underwent rigorous screening to exclude low-quality responses based on the following criteria: 1) responses completed in less than 20 seconds; 2) highly homogeneous answer patterns across all items; 3) open-ended answers irrelevant to the research topic. Valid data were analyzed using SPSS 24.0 software, encompassing reliability and validity tests of the questionnaire, as well as regression analysis to assess ACGN culture’s impact on employment preferences.

2.2 In-Depth Interviews

Four interviewees from diverse ACGN fields were randomly selected from the survey respondents for semi-structured interviews. The interviews explored their perspectives on ACGN subcultures and their career planning strategies. Interview sessions were audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim, and coded using NVivo 15 software. A thematic analysis framework was constructed to systematically evaluate how ACGN culture shapes participants’ employment aspirations and decision-making processes.

3. Results

3.1 Demographic Characteristics of the Survey Sample

A total of 217 questionnaires were collected through online and offline channels. After excluding 8 invalid responses due to quality issues, 209 valid questionnaires were retained for analysis. Among the 209 participants, 51 (24.4%) identified as male and 158 (75.6%) as female (Figure 1). The average response time was 129.93 ± 95.94 seconds. Regarding engagement with ACGN culture, the duration of exposure was stratified as follows: 61 participants (29.2%) reported 0–2 years of involvement, 80 (38.3%) reported 2–5 years, 51 (24.4%) reported 5–10 years, and 17 (8.1%) reported over 10 years of engagement (Figure 2).

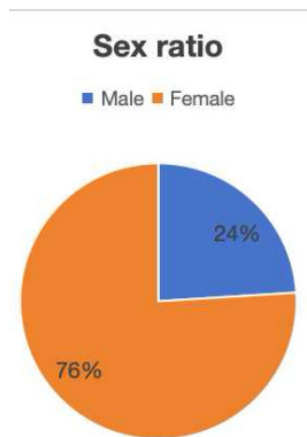


Figure 1 Gender Distribution of Surveyed University Students.

Duration of ACGN cultural Engagement

■ 0~2 y ■ 2~5 y ■ 5~10 y ■ over 10 y

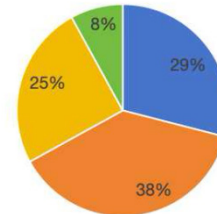


Figure 2 Duration of ACGN Culture Exposure Among Surveyed University Students.

3.2 Reliability and Validity Analysis

The validity of the scale was assessed using Bartlett's test of sphericity and the maximum variance method. Results indicated a Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) value of 0.736 ($P=0.00$), with factor loading coefficients for individual items ranging from 0.505 to 0.915 (all exceeding 0.50), confirming strong internal consistency. For reliability analysis, the questionnaire achieved a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.713. Furthermore, the Cronbach's Alpha values for individual items after deletion fell between 0.639 and 0.766, demonstrating high internal consistency and suitability for subsequent analysis (see Figure 1).

Table 1 Reliability and Validity Analysis of the Questionnaire

Items	Item ID	N	Factor Loading	Cronbach's α if Item Deleted
Duration of Exposure to ACG Culture				
0~2 years	Q1	61	0.513	0.735
2~5 years		80		
5~10 years		51		
Over 10 years		17		
Preferred ACG Content Categories				
Animation	Q2	140	0.688	0.712
Comic	Q3	118	0.549	0.709
Novel	Q4	118	0.669	0.731
Game	Q5	97	0.596	0.687
Other	Q6	11	0.530	0.702
Do you anticipate pursuing employment in ACG-related fields in the future?				
Yes	Q7	85	0.915	0.714
No		124		

Reasons for Considering Employment in ACGN-Related Fields				
Personal interest/passion	Q8	64	0.768	0.751
Promising career prospects and financial rewards in the ACGN industry	Q9	36	0.657	0.707
Family support	Q10	22	0.505	0.639
Existing skills/advantages in ACGN-related fields	Q11	21	0.581	0.713
Lack of family support (perceived as an unconventional career path)	Q12	6	0.569	0.743
Other	Q13	0	0.886	0.761
Reasons for Declining Employment in ACGN-Related Fields				
Lack of professional experience and expertise in ACGN-related fields	Q14	67	0.856	0.766
Viewing ACGN solely as a personal hobby/leisure activity	Q15	72	0.595	0.678
Perceived superior career prospects in current academic discipline compared to ACGN-related fields	Q16	34	0.545	0.703
Other	Q17	11	0.550	0.693
Would you consider engaging in part-time ACG-related work (e.g., live streaming, social media content creation, merchandise store roles) during your leisure time?				
Yes	Q18	71	0.810	0.723
No		138		

3.3 Regression Analysis

9A binary logistic regression analysis was conducted to examine the influence of questionnaire dimensions on the willingness to pursue ACGN-related careers. Independent variables included “duration of ACGN exposure,” “scope of interests,” “reasons for considering ACGN-related employment,” and “reasons for declining ACGN-related employment.” The dependent variable was “willingness to engage in ACGN-related work,” with “Yes” or “selected”

responses coded as “1” and “No” or “unselected” responses coded as “0.” Results revealed that “duration of ACGN exposure,” “interest in animation and gaming,” “reasons for considering ACGN-related employment,” and specific reasons for declining (e.g., “lack of professional expertise,” “viewing ACGN as a hobby,” or “perceived superior career prospects in their academic discipline”) were statistically significant predictors of career intentions in ACGN-related fields (see Table 2).

Table 2 Results of Binary Logistic Regression Analysis

Variables	B	S.E.	Wald	P	OR
Constant	-1.265	0.191	43.675	0.000*	0.282
Q1	-0.138	0.202	105.286	0.035*	2.911
Q2	2.281	0.217	24.515	0.001*	0.831
Q3	0.645	0.163	84.691	0.218	2.186
Q4	-0.764	0.095	9.513	0.199	2.077
Q5	0.178	0.167	38.288	0.006*	3.017
Q6	0.343	0.11	18.289	0.751	3.666

Q8	1.281	0.167	66.911	0.000*	-0.938
Q9	0.117	0.022	3.58	0.000*	0.793
Q10	0.947	0.026	71.901	0.000*	2.752
Q11	0.664	0.173	23.756	0.000*	1.985
Q12	-1.955	0.126	6.908	0.007*	3.468
Q13	0.768	0.21	65.807	0.000*	-1.060
Q14	0.395	0.159	13.119	0.000*	2.745
Q15	-0.979	0.095	65.807	0.000*	0.568
Q16	-0.117	0.133	7.579	0.068	2.752
Q17	2.234	0.025	22.972	0.000*	1.617

* $P < 0.05$, demonstrated statistical significance.

3.4 Coding Results

This study analyzed five interviews from diverse ACGN domains using NVivo 15 software, resulting in a hierar-

chical coding framework comprising 3 first-level codes (nodes), 10 second-level codes, and 3 third-level codes. A hierarchical tree diagram was constructed to illustrate the relationships among these codes, with detailed categorizations provided in Table 3.

Table 3 Interview Coding Information

Primary Node	Secondary Node	Tertiary Node	Sources	Reference Count	Reference Details
Employment Perspectives	Daily Life	Leisure Activities	2	3	ACGN serves as an effective means for daily relaxation and mental rejuvenation
	Worldview Formation		1	1	ACGN culture exerts a discernible influence on worldview development
Preference for Part-Time Work	ACGN Industry Saturation		2	2	The ACGN industry demonstrates market saturation with intensified competition
	Lack of Family Support		1	1	Families often perceive ACGN careers as non-legitimate professions
	Personal Interest Fulfillment		3	3	Passion for ACGN outweighs its consideration as a primary livelihood
	Perceived Talent Deficiency		1	1	Self-perceived inadequacy in pursuing full-time ACGN careers

Full-Time ACGN Careers	Familial Approval		2	2	Family acceptance of ACGN-related career pursuits
	Emerging Career Pathways		2	2	ACGN creates novel employment avenues for younger generations
	Academic Specialization Alignment		2	2	University majors in art/design fields provide relevant qualifications
	Employment Expansion	Youth Appeal	2	2	ACGN culture's popularity among youth drives industrial prosperity and diverse career opportunities
		Cultural Creative Products	2	2	ACGN-inspired cultural products demonstrate substantial profitability and cross-industry catalytic effects

4. Conclusions

The vigorous development of ACGN culture in China presents both substantial benefits and potential drawbacks. Its positive impacts manifest through boosting prosperity in cultural entertainment industries, providing rich spiritual nourishment for youth, and generating economic benefits that enhance employment opportunities across related sectors, thereby contributing to economic growth in multiple domains. For university students – the primary consumer demographic of ACGN culture – the relationship between cultural engagement intensity and subsequent career preferences warrants systematic investigation. This study conducts preliminary exploration of this societal phenomenon through comprehensive questionnaire surveys and analytical synthesis.

Employing binary regression analysis, we examined how temporal investment in ACGN, domain preferences, and personal competencies influence career inclination towards ACGN-related industries among university students. Key findings reveal:

1. Positive correlation between ACGN engagement duration and career preference orientation;
2. Students prioritizing anime/game interests demonstrate stronger occupational inclination compared to other ACGN domains;
3. Career alignment with ACGN fields, intense cultural interest, familial support, and optimistic industry outlook collectively enhance employment motivation;
4. Students emphasizing professional specialization advantages, perceiving ACGN as recreational pursuits, or prioritizing disciplinary career prospects tend towards

conventional industries.

As illustrated in Figure 3, primary deterrents against ACGN careers include predominant perception of ACGN as personal hobbies (58.3%) and concerns over industrial competition intensity (21.4%). Conversely, confidence in ACGN's economic value constitutes the foremost motivator (63.2%) among career aspirants. Extensive scholarship confirms ACGN's profound influence on youth consumption patterns and lifestyle philosophies. Chaudhary et al.[7]'s NVivo-assisted analysis of 25 ACGN enthusiasts revealed anime's capacity to forge emotional bonds that significantly shape purchasing decisions and personal ideologies.

This study demonstrates that university students predominantly approach ACGN as recreational pursuits, prioritizing professional alignment, personal competencies, and economic returns over mere interest when making career decisions. The convergence between disciplinary specialization and ACGN's economic potential emerges as the principal career attractor. Thus, ACGN's impact on youth employment intentions constitutes a multidimensional phenomenon, with its enduring appeal to graduates being inextricably linked to industrial economic prospects.

Study Limitations:

1. Questionnaire scope constraints: The self-designed instrument focused primarily on career willingness determinants, potentially overlooking covariates like personal economic status and geographic factors.
2. Limited sample diversity: Despite collecting 209 valid questionnaires, the restricted interview sample (N=4) may introduce contingency and partiality in qualitative analysis.

sis.

Recommendations for Future Research:

- Develop multidimensional assessment frameworks incorporating macroeconomic indicators and regional development data
- Implement longitudinal tracking of ACGN professionals' career trajectories
- Conduct comparative studies across generational cohorts and cultural contexts

This investigation establishes foundational insights into ACGN's sociocultural-economic dynamics, advocating for more nuanced interdisciplinary approaches to decode this evolving cultural-employment paradigm.

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