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Research on the Impact of Higher Education Background on Young People's Traditional Cultural Identity and Inheritance Intention: An Empirical Analysis Based on CSS2023 Data

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ABSTRACT

Based on the 2023 CSS (China Social Survey) data, this study takes 6,518 young people aged 18-40 as the research object, adopting multiple statistical methods to empirically test the impact of higher education background on young people's traditional cultural identity and inheritance intention, with age as a control variable. The results show that: higher education background accounts for 23.6%, and its positive prediction on traditional cultural identity (M=10.77, SD=2.132) is not significant after controlling for age (B=0.079, p=0.259); it has a significantly positive prediction on cultural inheritance intention (90.3% of young people have no participation experience) (B=0.456, p<0.001), and the probability of improving inheritance intention among the higher education group is 1.578 times that of the non-higher education group; traditional cultural identity is significantly positively correlated with inheritance intention (r=0.124, p<0.01); age has a significantly negative prediction on traditional cultural identity (B=-0.013, p<0.001) but no significant impact on inheritance intention (p=0.316). This study provides empirical reference for the practice of cultural education for young people.

KEYWORDS

Higher education background; Young people; Traditional cultural identity; Cultural inheritance intention

1 Introduction

Cultural confidence is the spiritual support for national rejuvenation, and excellent traditional Chinese culture, as the core foundation of cultural confidence, is an important cultural gene for young people to shoulder the mission of the times and realize self-value [1]. As the core force for inheriting and innovating excellent traditional Chinese culture, young people's level of cultural identity and intention to inherit are directly related to the effectiveness of building a cultural power [2]. Under the current background of globalization, multiple cultures blend and collide, and some young people have cognitive biases and a sense of alienation towards culture, showing insufficient enthusiasm for participating in inheritance [1-2]. Higher education, as a core position for cultural inheritance and innovation, undertakes the important mission of cultivating young people's cultural confidence and guiding them to participate in cultural inheritance [3,5]. Existing studies have inconsistent conclusions on the correlation between the two and lack large-sample empirical tests [4,6]. Based on this, relying on the large-sample data of CSS2023, this study focuses on young people aged 18-40, systematically tests the impact of higher education background on young people's traditional cultural identity and inheritance intention, clarifies the regulatory role of age, and provides solid data support and practical guidance for the practice of cultural education for young people.

2 Research Hypotheses and Analytical Design

2.1 Research Hypotheses

Combined with the logic of existing research and practical observations, the following three research hypotheses are proposed:

H1: Higher education background has a significantly positive predictive effect on young people's traditional cultural identity, that is, young people with higher education background have a significantly higher level of traditional cultural identity than those without.

H2: Higher education background has a significantly positive predictive effect on young people's cultural inheritance intention, that is, young people with higher education background have significantly stronger cultural inheritance intention than those without.

H3: Age has a significantly predictive effect on young people's traditional cultural identity and cultural inheritance intention, that is, there are significant differences in the level of traditional cultural identity and cultural inheritance intention among young people of different ages.

2.2 Sample Selection and Analytical Methods

The data of this study is derived from the social and cultural module of CSS2023, which covers multiple provinces across the country and has good representativeness. The study focuses on young people aged 18-40, and after excluding

invalid samples with out-of-range ages and missing core variables, a total of 6,518 valid samples are obtained, with a sufficient sample size to meet the needs of empirical analysis. Taking higher education background as the core independent variable, traditional cultural identity and cultural inheritance intention as the core dependent variables, and age as the control variable, SPSS 26.0 statistical software is used for analysis: descriptive statistics are used to present sample characteristics and the distribution of core variables; correlation analysis is used to test the correlation between variables and multicollinearity; multiple linear regression is used to test the impact of higher education background on traditional cultural identity; ordinal logistic regression is used to test the impact of higher education background on cultural inheritance intention, so as to ensure the scientificity and reliability of research conclusions.

2.3 Variable Definition and Measurement

Table 1 Operationalization and Coding Instructions of Variables

Variable Name	Category/Scoring Method	Coding Instructions
Higher education background (independent variable)	Dichotomous variable	Non-higher education (0): high school and below; Higher education (1): college and above, re-coded according to the original educational background coding of CSS.
Traditional cultural identity (dependent variable 1)	Continuous variable (scale total score)	Composed of 3 relevant items, using a 5-point Likert scale: "Not sure" is assigned -1, and the rest are assigned 1-4 from "Strongly disagree" to "Strongly agree". The total score ranges from -3 to 12, with higher scores indicating stronger identity (Cronbach's α=0.684).
Cultural inheritance intention (dependent variable 2)	Ordinal variable	Composed of 2 inheritance behavior items, each item is assigned 0 (not participated) or 1 (participated). The total score ranges from 0 to 2, with higher scores indicating stronger inheritance intention.
Age (control variable)	Continuous variable	The actual age of the respondents (18-40 years old), directly using the original data values.

3 Empirical Analysis Results

3.1 Descriptive Statistics

Table 2 Descriptive Statistics of Core Variables

Variable Name	Category/Scoring Method	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)
Higher education background	Non-higher education (0)	4,965	76.4	-	-
	Higher education (1)	1,553	23.6	-	-
Traditional cultural identity total score	Continuous variable	-	-	10.77	2.132
Cultural inheritance intention	0 item (0)	5,888	90.3	-	-
	1 item (1)	470	7.2	-	-
	2 items (2)	151	2.3	-	-
Age	Continuous variable	-	-	32.40	5.87

Data source: CSS2023, compiled by the authors; the valid sample size for cultural inheritance intention is 6,509.

The sample structure is consistent with the overall educational distribution characteristics of young people in China: 76.4% of young people have non-higher education background, and 23.6% have higher education background. The mean value of traditional cultural identity is 10.77, which is at a relatively high level, indicating that most young people recognize the value of traditional culture; the cultural inheritance intention is relatively low, with 90.3% of young people not participating in inheritance activities, and the participation in inheritance practice needs to be improved; the mean age is 32.40 years old, covering the main age groups of young people, which can reflect the differences among different age groups.

Group comparison shows that the mean value of traditional cultural identity in the higher education group (10.99) is

Table 3 Comparison of Core Dependent Variables Among Young People with Different Higher Education Backgrounds

Variable Name	Non-higher education group (n=4,965)	Higher education group (n=1,553)
Traditional cultural identity total score	M=10.71, SD=2.282	M=10.99, SD=1.541
Cultural inheritance intention (participated in ⩾1 item)	8.6%	12.4%

Data source: CSS2023, compiled by the authors.

slightly higher than that in the non-higher education group (10.71), and the participation rate in inheritance activities (12.4%) is higher than that in the non-higher education group (8.6%), which initially suggests that higher education may have a promoting effect on both.

3.2 Correlation Analysis

Table 4 Correlation Analysis Results

Variable	Higher education background	Traditional cultural identity	Cultural inheritance intention	Age
Higher education background	1	0.057**	0.051**	0.123**
Traditional cultural identity	0.057**	1	0.124**	0.089**
Cultural inheritance intention	0.051**	0.123**	1	0.012
Age	0.123**	0.089**	0.012	1

*p<0.05, **p<0.01 (two-tailed test); Data source: CSS2023, compiled by the authors.

There is no serious multicollinearity among variables (all correlation coefficients <0.8), so regression analysis can be carried out. Higher education background is significantly positively correlated with traditional cultural identity and inheritance intention; traditional cultural identity is significantly positively correlated with inheritance intention, indicating that the higher the cultural cognition, the stronger the inheritance intention; age is significantly positively correlated with higher education background and traditional cultural identity, but has no significant correlation with inheritance intention, which provides a basis for including it as a control variable.

3.3 Regression Analysis Results

3.3.1 The Impact of Higher Education Background on Traditional Cultural Identity (Multiple Linear Regression)

Table 5 Multiple Linear Regression Analysis Results

Model	Independent Variable	B	β	p	Adjusted R^2
Model 1 (without controlling age)	(Constant)	10.712	-	0.000**	0.003
	Higher education background	0.287	0.057	0.000**	
Model 2 (controlling age)	Higher education background	0.079	0.016	0.259	0.009
	Age	-0.013	-0.088	0.000**	

*p<0.05, **p<0.01; Data source: CSS2023, compiled by the authors.

Model 1 shows that without controlling age, higher education background has a significantly positive predictive effect on traditional cultural identity (B=0.287, p<0.001), initially verifying the establishment of H1; Model 2 shows that after controlling age, the predictive effect of higher education background is no longer significant (B=0.079, p=0.259), and H1 is not ultimately verified. Age has a significantly negative predictive effect on traditional cultural identity (B=-0.013, p< 0.001), and H3 is partially established, indicating that the older the age, the lower the level of cultural identity.

3.3.2 The Impact of Higher Education Background on Cultural Inheritance Intention (Ordinal Logistic Regression)

Table 6 Ordinal Logistic Regression Analysis Results

Variable	B	Wald	p	Exp(B)
Threshold 1 (0→1)	0.872	96.845	0.000**	2.391
Threshold 2 (1→2)	2.763	362.412	0.000**	15.832
Higher education background	0.456	18.400	0.000**	1.578
Age	0.003	1.005	0.316	1.003

*p<0.05, **p<0.01; The model fits well; Data source: CSS2023, compiled by the authors.

Table 6 presents the results of ordinal Logistic regression analysis with higher education background as the core independent variable, cultural inheritance willingness as the dependent variable, and age as the control variable, aiming to further examine the net effect of higher education background on young people's cultural inheritance willingness. The overall model fits well, and both threshold 1 and threshold 2 are significant at the level of p<0.001，indicating that the model has reasonable grade division and stable overall estimation effect, which can effectively reflect the impact of independent variables on the improvement of dependent variable grades and provide key empirical evidence for testing research hypotheses H2 and H3.

From the regression results of the core independent variable, higher education background has a significant positive predictive effect on young people's cultural inheritance willingness (B=0.456, Wald=18.400, p<0.001). The positive regression coefficient is highly significant statistically, showing that after controlling the interference of age, having higher education background can still significantly improve young people's willingness and behavioral tendency to

participate in traditional cultural inheritance. The odds ratio Exp(B)=1.578 means that under the same age condition, the probability of young people with higher education participating in cultural inheritance activities is 1.578 times that of young people without higher education. It fully demonstrates that higher education plays an independent and stable role in stimulating young people's cultural inheritance willingness and promoting inheritance practice participation, which strongly supports that research hypothesis H2 is valid.

From the regression results of the control variable age, the predictive effect of age on cultural inheritance willingness is not significant (B=0.003, Wald=1.005, p=0.316), with Exp(B)=1.003, indicating that age differences have no significant impact on young people's cultural inheritance willingness, and young people's enthusiasm for participating in cultural inheritance does not change significantly with age. Combined with the significant negative predictive effect of age on traditional cultural identity in Table 5, it can be found that age only affects young people's cultural cognition level, but has no obvious effect on behavioral participation. This conclusion not only partly supports research hypothesis H3, but also reveals that there are different influence mechanisms between cultural identity and cultural inheritance willingness, providing important empirical enlightenment for in-depth understanding of the influencing factors of young people's cultural inheritance behavior.

4 Results Analysis and Discussion

Based on the large-sample data of 6,518 young people, this study empirically tests the impact of higher education background on young people's traditional cultural identity and inheritance intention, and draws core conclusions combined with the regulatory role of age: the impact of higher education on young people's traditional cultural identity is interfered by age, and there is no independent positive effect after controlling for age, which is consistent with the conclusions of some studies [2,5]; age differences and the formalization of traditional cultural education in some universities weaken this impact [3,6]; higher education can significantly improve young people's cultural inheritance intention, and the probability of improving inheritance intention among the higher education group is 1.578 times that of the non-higher education group, which benefits from the cultural practice platforms provided by universities and the cultivation of young people's cultural responsibility awareness [2,5]; age has a significantly negative impact on traditional cultural identity but no significant impact on inheritance intention, indicating that inheritance intention is affected by multiple factors. This study makes up for the gap of insufficient large-sample tests in existing research [2,6], and provides enlightenment for the practice of traditional cultural education for young people. Universities should strengthen practical education, reduce formalized education, and formulate differentiated strategies to improve the effectiveness of education [4-5]. At the same time, this study has limitations: only age is used as a control variable, and cross-sectional data is adopted. In the future, the scope of control variables can be expanded and longitudinal research can be carried out to verify the conclusions.

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