

Reconsideration of initial study choice. A structural equation modeling approach.

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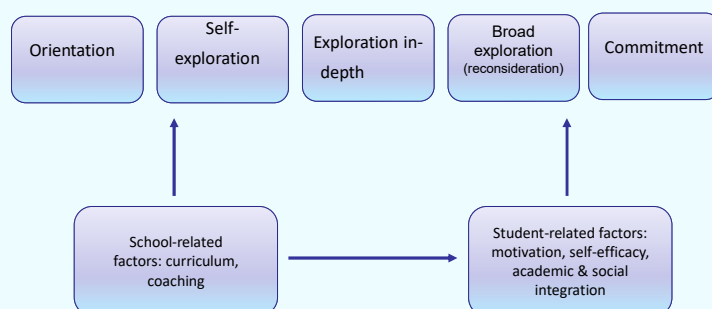
Introduction

- ❖ Student dropouts in higher education are a major problem in Europe
- ❖ In the Netherlands, an erroneous study choice is the main reason why students drop out in the first year of higher education.
- ❖ A deeper understanding is needed of how choices about a study programme develop after entering higher education.
- ❖ To address this, it is crucial to view study choice not as a one-off event, but as part of a broader process of identity formation that occurs within a wider context of transition from secondary to higher education.

Theoretical background

- ❖ Study decisions as part of identity formation: a lifelong process of finding out who you are and who you want to become
- ❖ Research into study choice before enrollment distinguishes between five decisional tasks
- ❖ Research shows that students continuously negotiate their initial choice through engagement with their new learning environment as part of the transition to higher education
- ❖ This can be considered a reconsideration of the initial choice
- ❖ Whereas educational choices before enrollment have been studied extensively, reconsideration of educational choices within the first year remain a relatively understudied area
- ❖ Our study fills this gap by combining theories of study choice as part of identity formation, with theories on the transition from high school to higher education.

Theoretical model



Research question

How do students explore the first year before they arrive at the decision to continue the programme or not and how are school-related and student-related factors associated with this process?

Methods and materials

- ❖ Participants: 303 first-year students from 5 bachelor programmes: Health Care | Economics | Tourism | Engineering | International Studies
- ❖ Measures: 10 reliable and valid instruments combined; Cronbach's $\alpha > 0.66 < 0.81$
- ❖ Data-analysis using R, model testing with Lavaan package
- ❖ Missing data estimated using FIML
- ❖ SEM: structural equation modeling

What is Structural Equation Modeling?

- ❖ Combines confirmatory factor analysis with path analysis
- ❖ Measurement model: CFA. Per factor: did I measure what I wanted to measure? Do my items load on my latent factors?
- ❖ Structural model: how are relations among latent factors? Do effects significantly differ from 0?
- ❖ Correction for measurement error, results are less biased

References

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