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# Intrinsic Factors Influencing Career Choice of Music Graduates in Fujian, China

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**Abstract:** Career choice has received significant attention in recent years, with research indicating a strong correlation between individual intrinsic motivations and career decisions. This study investigated the intrinsic factors influencing music graduates' decisions to pursue a professional career in music in Fujian, China, using the Exploratory Design research method. This research design involved two phases. In phase one, the influencing factors were explored through interviews seeking to obtain qualitative information ($N$ = 18). In phase two, the codes derived from the qualitative study were utilized to build a Likert scale for the quantitative questionnaire ($N$ = 221). The qualitative results revealed that music graduates' professional career choices were intrinsically influenced by their commitment to the music profession, sense of self-worth derived from successful performing and teaching experiences, self-purpose in sharing and teaching music, interest in music playing and music teaching, confidence in music-playing skills, and working relationship between teacher and student. These variables were confirmed by the quantitative study to have an impact on career choice. Commitment to the music profession was the most influential variable, followed by a sense of self-worth. Confidence in music-playing skills was the least influential variable. These findings deepen our understanding of the variables impacting music majors' job choices. Understanding these determinants can help educational institutions, policymakers, and career counselors better understand music majors' particular needs and concerns, leading to more supportive career pathways for aspiring musicians in the region.

**Keywords:** career choice; music graduates; intrinsic; influencing factors; motivation

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## 1. Introduction

A career is a long-term pursuit to develop one's self-concept [1]. The process of choosing a career is an important task that has the potential to greatly impact an individual's life and future opportunities. Choosing a career is an issue related to personal fulfillment [2,3], a sense of purpose [4], and financial stability [5]. A wise career choice fits one's personal interests, values, and abilities [6], enabling an individual to achieve professional growth and advancement with the right career choice [1]. People's career choices are frequently influenced by a wide range of complex circumstances, some of which are deeply rooted in the individuals themselves.

In the domain of music, which is recognized for its artistic expression [7] and cultural significance [8], the intrinsic motivations that drive individuals to pursue careers in the field play a critical role [9,10]. Music may serve as a vehicle for people to create new identities and modify old ones as it is a basic means of communication like spoken language [11]. Different people will place varying degrees of importance on the realm of music in their self-identities [11]. This variance most likely depends on the degree of professional training or specialized interest in music [11]. To illustrate, professional musicians probably have such a deep involvement in music that they view most parts of their lives as connected to

music [11]. Previous studies have confirmed that the primary determinants that impact the job choices of undergraduate music students are individual factors [12].

Intrinsic motivation refers to factors within individuals that correspond to the growth requirements and influencing actions needed to attain job satisfaction [13]. This type of motivation refers to responsibility, advancement, recognition, and the work itself. Greater intrinsic motivation will enhance one's satisfaction with work [14]. According to Deci and Ryan [15], intrinsic motivation is one of the key factors that shapes people's identity and behavior. Intrinsic motivation draws people to engage in activities that they find interesting, enjoyable, and fulfilling [16]. Individuals who have intrinsic motivation and goals have more positive relationships with learning and performance because the goals provide basic needs to be satisfied [16].

Based on a review of numerous career studies, a number of variables have been repeatedly identified as intrinsic factors. For example, interest was shown to have an effect on career intentions [17–19]. Additionally, skills and competences cultivated through education may determine one's personal interests and values in their job [20], and people prefer to work in fields relevant to their skills [17]. Recognition and the level of employees' feelings being appreciated also influenced employee motivation [21,22]. Lastly, autonomy in one's career (referring to the desire to be self-directed and control one's own projects) and individual performance and attitude in work may be significantly influenced by a sense of autonomy [22].

Advocacy efforts have achieved a great deal in music career studies among high school students [23–25] and music students in colleges [12,26–28]. However, some career studies showed that there are differences between the career expectations and realities of professional practice [29]. Students will experience anticipation, adjustment, and achievement when facing the difficulties and challenges of transitioning from college to the job market [30]. It is necessary to engage in career studies among music graduates who have gained a deeper understanding of the professional realities and resources from a more experienced perspective.

Career studies among music graduates mostly focus on becoming music teachers in primary, elementary [31–33], or high schools [34,35]. Such education would be beneficial for learning music teachers' career identities and encourage more students to engage in music education. However, the employment situation cannot be ignored, as relevant positions are in short supply, and many music graduates choose portfolio careers to develop their music profession and maintain the identity of being a musician [36]. A musician is someone who works within the music profession [37]. In the music industry, music career opportunities include professional performers, music creators, music publishers, participation in several professional musical organizations, the recording industry, the music business, and other music career choices like teaching and musicology [38]. Unilaterally discussing career choices based around a certain music job may ignore the portion of the population with portfolio careers.

Most existing career studies among music professionals have explored the cultural context in the United States [26,32,33,35,39]. Existing music career studies in the context of China are limited to the areas of Beijing [40–42], Henan Province [43], Inner Mongolian [44], Yuncheng City of Shanxi Province [45], and Hubei Province [46]. There are almost no data on music career choices in Fujian Province. Due to cultural differences, career choices among music professionals vary between different countries and areas [31].

Fujian, located on China's southeastern coast [47], has a rich cultural heritage interwoven with centuries of musical tradition [48]. This region has produced a large number of music graduates who have devoted years of their lives to developing their musical talents and abilities. Yet, what distinguishes these graduates is not only their musical talent but also their intrinsic motivation for their art, the intrinsic motivation that frequently propels them toward careers in music despite external pressures and societal expectations to the contrary. This work aims to answer the following research question: What are the intrinsic

factors among music graduates in Fujian, China, that influence their choice of music as a professional career?

## 2. Methods

This study uses the Exploratory Design, which is one of the mixed methods [49]. The Exploratory Design in this work involved two phases that combined the qualitative results of the interviews with the quantitative results of the questionnaire [50]. In phase one, specific items like quotes, codes, and motifs were explored qualitatively in the organizational assimilation dimensions; in phase two, the items derived from the qualitative study were utilized to build a Likert scale for quantitative data collection and analysis (see Figure 1). Pilot studies were previously conducted to test the proposed study design and process and determine the feasibility of the study [51]. The pilot study results presented encouraging outcomes.

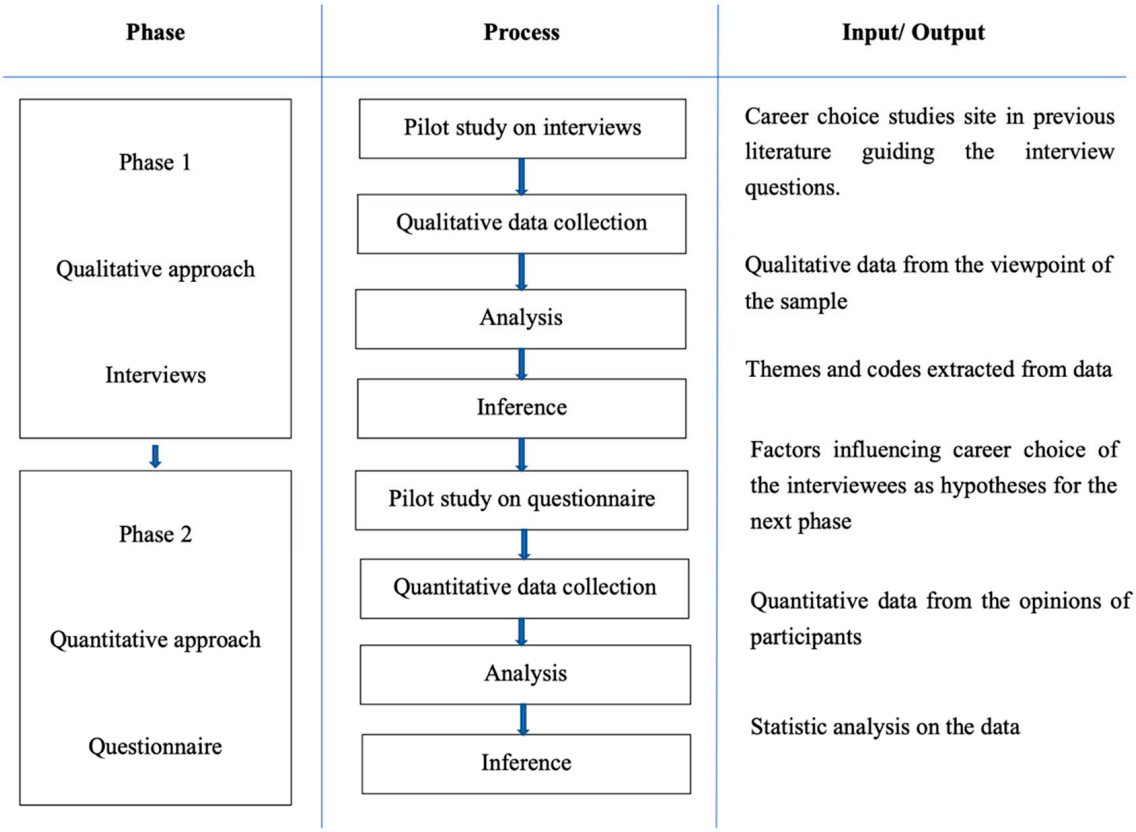


**Figure 1.** Flow chart of the research design.

Research using an Exploratory Design can prove highly advantageous in the process of delineating a complex or ambiguous issue that has not been previously investigated [52]. This technique is a methodological strategy with flexibility that aims to address study areas that have not been comprehensively examined prior to the current study [53]. By employing this mixed method, the present study aims to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the topic.

### *2.1. Participants and Sampling*

In the qualitative study, snowball sampling was used to select participants from one person to the next person, who was then referenced by the previous person [54]. The participants totaled 18 individuals ($N$ = 18), including (a) music graduates, (b) graduates from the Music College of Fujian Normal University, and (c) workers in Fujian province.

Participants joined online voice interviews in February 2022. The 18 participants were further designated P1–P18.

In the quantitative study, the author used convenience sampling to invite more than 200 music graduates from Fujian to complete a web-based questionnaire using the online questionnaire survey platform Wen Juan Xing (https://www.wjx.cn/vm/hwU7mdN.aspx, accessed on 28 December 2022) in December 2022. The participants shared the following features: (a) music graduates, (b) graduates from the Music College of Fujian Normal University, and (c) workers in Fujian province. Despite the fact that this was not a random sample, the strong response rate of 221 valid data points suggests a representative sample.

### 2.2. Measures

Thematic analysis is a flexible method used in qualitative data to identify themes or patterns [55,56]. Thematic analysis was first used in the qualitative research. The data were summarized, organized, and interpreted based on each theme or pattern [55,56]. The analysis followed the six steps for thematic analysis raised by Maguire and Delahunt [56].

Firstly, the notes of early impressions were useful while reading. Secondly, the data was organized into small chunks in a systematic way. After studying and discussing, primary codes were coded in each transcript of chunks. The comparison of codes was performed by discussing and modifying codes again. Initially, the process of generating codes in this step was usually conducted by hand using pens and highlighters. Thirdly, the themes which describe something interesting or specific about data were taken in the related codes examined. Fourthly, the themes identified in step three were reviewed, modified, and developed in this step. Fifthly, the ideas about each theme's purpose or relatives among each theme were clearly identified. Lastly, the report was written up [56].

Based on the thematic analysis of the qualitative interview data, the codes generated from the transcript were organized into six themes (see Table 1). These themes and codes were further used to generate the questionnaire for the next stage of the study.

**Table 1.** Themes and codes generated from the transcript for intrinsic factors influencing career choice among music graduates in Fujian, China.

| Themes | Codes Generated from the Transcript |
|---|---|
| Interest | I enjoy playing music |
| | I enjoy teaching music |
| Confidence in music-playing skill | I am confident in my music-playing skills. |
| Commitment to music profession | I am certain I want to pursue a career in the music industry |
| | I am certain I want to pursue a career in music teaching |
| Sense of purpose | I want to bring happiness to more people through music |
| | I want to interact with others who love music |
| | I want to support music learners |
| | I want to teach children music and shape their future |
| Feeling of self-worth | I feel self-worth when winning applause after performing |
| | I feel self-worth when seeing students make progress in music learning |
| Working relationship between teacher and student | The working relationship between teacher and student attracted me to become a music teacher |

In the quantitative study, the intensity of variables influencing music graduates' career choices was analyzed. Scores of 1 to 5 were assigned to the responses from "no influence" to "full influence". After collecting the data, the computer software IBM SPSS Statistics (version 27.0.0.0) was used to analyze the data's reliability, validity, and frequency. Each respondent's attitudinal score was calculated by adding the numerical values, and the

score of each item was compared between all respondents. In this way, higher scores were assigned to higher intensity values [57].

Reliability. The reliability, based on the inter-item consistency of the test, showed a strong correlation between test items with a higher Cronbach alpha value, whereas a weaker correlation was indicated by a lower Cronbach alpha value [58]. The internal consistency of this scale was excellent, with Cronbach's alpha = 0.935 for the 12 intrinsic items influencing career choice (see Appendix A).

Validity. Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was used to determine the number of factors, whether the factors were related or unrelated [59], and the indicator system's construct validity [60]. The principal component method was suggested to be used with EFA in the case of multidimensionality [61]. Variables were available for loading on all factors [59]; even a smaller sample with stronger data can be used to conduct an accurate analysis in EFA [62]. The analysis results from EFA achieved the expected results and suggested two-dimensional domains, which were further categorized into Pursuit of music (6 items) and Pursuit of music teaching (6 items), as shown in Table 2.

**Table 2.** EFA for intrinsic items influencing career choice from a personal music perspective.

| Factor | Items | Communalities Extraction | Rotated Component Matrix | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Component 1 | Component 2 |
| Pursuit of music | 1. I enjoy playing/singing music | 0.798 | | 0.886 |
| | 2. I am confident in my music-playing skills | 0.761 | | 0.856 |
| | 3. I want to bring happiness to more people through music | 0.900 | | 0.932 |
| | 4. I want to interact with others who love music | 0.873 | | 0.926 |
| | 5. I feel self-worth when winning applause after performing | 0.895 | | 0.937 |
| | 6. I am certain I want to pursue a career in the music industry | 0.760 | | 0.836 |
| Pursuit of music teaching | 1. I enjoy teaching music | 0.924 | 0.947 | |
| | 2. I want to support music learners | 0.873 | 0.912 | |
| | 3. I feel self-worth when seeing my students make progress in music learning | 0.911 | 0.938 | |
| | 4. I want to teach children music and shape their future | 0.939 | 0.955 | |
| | 5. The pure relationship between teachers and students attracted me to become a music teacher | 0.921 | 0.949 | |
| | 6. I am certain I want to pursue a career in music teaching | 0.886 | 0.930 | |
| KMO | | | 0.904 | |
| Bartlett's Test of Sphericity | Approx. Chi-Square | | 3819.260 | |
| | df | | 66 | |
| | Sig. | | 0.000 | |

Following the factor extraction, the communalities represent the shared variation in the data structure [63]. The communality value corresponding to Item 1 of Component 1 (Factor 1) is 0.798. This means 79.8% of the variance associated with this item is common. Similarly, 0.798, 0.761, 0.900, 0.873, 0.895, and 0.760 are the common variances associated with Item 1 to Item 6, respectively, in the Factor Pursuit of music.

The Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) value expresses the percentage of variance in a set of variables that may be common variance [63]. The higher the KMO value indicates the greater suitability of the data for factor analysis [63]. Table 2 illustrates that the value of KMO statistics is equal to 0.904 > 0.6, which indicates that sampling is adequate and the factor analysis is appropriate for the data.

Significant correlations between at least some of the variables in the correlation matrix are demonstrated by Bartlett's test of sphericity, which is very significant at $p < 0.001$ [63]. A factor analysis for the data set would be worthwhile, as shown by the significant value $p < 0.05$ [63]. Chi-square analysis is a valuable tool for examining variations in category variables, and it runs to determine the degree of relationship or independence between two variables [64]. In this study, the test value of Approx. Chi-Square is 3819.260, and the associated degree of significance is less than 0.0001, indicating that the data was worthwhile.

## 3. Results

### 3.1. Demographic Study

In the qualitative study, 18 music graduates were interviewed and were numbered and designated P1–P18, respectively. Around 44.4% were male, and the rest were female; around 38.9% held Master's degrees, and 61.1% held Bachelor's degrees as their highest music degree. About 28% of interviewees were majors in Music Performing, and the rest were majors in Music Education. Most participants (over 77.7%) engaged in part-time work for their careers. More information about the participants is presented in Appendix B.

Of the 221 respondents in the quantitative study, 25.3% were males, and 74.4% were females. The participants represented a range of age groups: 63.6% were 23–30 years old, 25.3% were 31–35 years old, 7.7% were 36–40 years old, 2.3% were 41–45 years old, and 1.4% were 46 years old and above. The participants also had different durations of work experience, with 1.4% having no work experience, 20.8% working for 1–3 years, 34.4% working for 4–6 years, 27.1% working for 7–9 years, and 16.3% working for 10 years or more. Different core work industries were also observed among respondents: 46.6% worked in Music Education, 10.9% worked as Music Performers, 3.6% worked as Commercial Music Performers, 5.4% worked in Professional Musical Organizations, 6.3% worked in Music Business, 2.3% worked as Music Creators, 2.3% worked in the Recording Industry, 2.7% worked in the Music Publishing Area, 2.3% worked in Self-published Music, 11.8% worked in Non-music Industries, and 5.9% worked as Full-time Music Students (data was tabled in the Appendix C).

### 3.2. Descriptive Analysis

Table 3 presents the quantitative research based on a descriptive analysis of intrinsic items influencing career choice among music graduates in Fujian, China, in descending order. The items are a combination of the factors in pursuit of music and pursuit of music teaching from the qualitative data analysis. The Mean in Table 3 was computed by adding up the total value of all the data points and dividing it by the total number of data items.

**Table 3.** Descriptive analysis of intrinsic factors in descending order.

| Items | Mean | Mode | SD | Variance |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| I am certain I want to pursue a career in the music industry | 4.12 | 4 | 0.657 | 0.432 |
| I feel self-worth when winning applause after performing | 4.07 | 4 | 0.599 | 0.358 |
| I want to bring happiness to more people through music | 4.01 | 4 | 0.640 | 0.409 |
| I want to interact with others who love music | 4.00 | 4 | 0.640 | 0.409 |

**Table 3.** *Cont.*

| Items | Mean | Mode | SD | Variance |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| I enjoy playing music | 3.99 | 4 | 0.610 | 0.373 |
| I feel self-worth when seeing students make progress in music learning | 3.98 | 4 | 0.621 | 0.386 |
| I am certain I want to pursue a career in music teaching | 3.95 | 4 | 0.689 | 0.475 |
| I enjoy teaching music | 3.93 | 4 | 0.614 | 0.377 |
| I want to support music learners | 3.92 | 4 | 0.605 | 0.366 |
| I want to teach children music and shape their future | 3.91 | 4 | 0.654 | 0.428 |
| The working relationship between teachers and students attracted me to become a music teacher | 3.90 | 4 | 0.669 | 0.448 |
| I am confident in my music-playing skills | 3.85 | 4 | 0.661 | 0.437 |

### *3.3. Pursuit of Music*

Based on the data analysis, the intrinsic motivation Pursuit of Music consisted of interest ("I enjoy playing/singing music"), confidence ("I am confident in my music-playing skill"), sense of purpose ("I want to bring happiness to more people through music" and "I want to interact with others who love music"), feeling of self-worth ("I feel self-worth when winning applause after performing"), and commitment to the music profession ("I am certain I want to pursue a career in the music industry" (see Tables 1 and 2).

Interest. This factor indicated that enjoyment in playing music could bring some music graduates feelings of happiness and joy and intrinsically drive some music graduates to become full-time music players (for example, participants P7 and P9). Most of the music graduates (around 80%) believed that "I enjoy playing music" [M = 3.99, SD = 0.610] significantly influenced their career choices.

Confidence in music playing. Based on the analysis of the interview data, participants who chose a career influenced by their professional performing skills belonged to two different groups. One group of music graduates expressed their confidence in their playing skills (in the cases of P1 and P7). Notably, nearly all participants who chose a full-time job in the music profession (P1, P3, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10, P11, and P13) showed confidence in their music skills. Another group (for example, P2 and P15) admitted that their lack of playing skills influenced their music career considerations. In the quantitative study, 70.6% of music graduates strongly agreed that confidence in their musical abilities critically influenced their career choices ("I am confident in my music-playing skills") [M = 3.85, SD = 0.661].

Commitment to the music profession. A group of music graduates (for example, P1, P3, P6, P7, and P10) held a professional view toward occupying a job in the music sector. Most of the respondents worked as full-time music teachers, music players, or other professional music workers. This result indicates that a commitment to the music profession guided music graduates to have clear goals regarding their career choices. According to the quantitative statistics, around 84.6% of music graduates held the view "I am certain I want to pursue a career in the music industry" [M = 4.12, SD = 0.657], which significantly influenced their career choice. This was the most influential intrinsic item influencing career choice.

Sense of purpose. Some music graduates' career choices in music were motivated by a sense of purpose that they could bring happiness to more people through music (P16 and P18). These respondents believed that the happiness created by music should be introduced to more people. This result demonstrates that music graduates transferred their passion for music and the desire to make more people happy through music, which inspired and was realized in their career decisions. The issue of "I want to bring happiness to more people through music" [M = 4.01, SD = 0.640] significantly affected around 80.1% of music graduates' career choices and ranked third among all intrinsic items influencing career choice.

The data from P7 and P14 show that the goal of interacting with others who love music influenced their career choices. P7's goals to exchange musical experiences, share

musical knowledge, and support each other were considered important issues in a working environment. Interacting with other music lovers or musicians was thought by P14 to present opportunities for learning and growth in the industry. Regardless of the reason why some music graduates sought to connect with people who love music, a working environment that allows them to interact with music was always considered when choosing a career. The statistical analysis revealed a significant impact of "I want to interact with others who love music" [M = 4.00, SD = 0.640] among nearly eighty percent (79.7%) of music graduates' career choices.

Feeling of self-worth. Some music graduates (P7, P13) noted that their sense of self-worth was aroused when receiving applause after a successful performance, which further influenced their career intentions. The quantitative analysis revealed that the second most impactful item, "I feel self-worth when winning applause after performing" [M = 4.07, SD = 0.599], significantly influenced the professional choices of 85.5% of music graduates.

### *3.4. Pursuit of Music Teaching*

The intrinsic motivation Pursuit of Music Teaching consists of interest ("I enjoy teaching music"), sense of purpose ("I want to support music learners" and "I want to teach children music and shape their future"), feelings of self-worth ("I feel self-worth when seeing my students make progress in music learning"), working relationships ("The pure relationship between teachers and students attracted me to become a music teacher"), and commitment to the music profession ("I am certain I want to pursue a career in music teaching") (see Tables 1 and 2).

Interest. Music teachers P1, P6, and P11 all agreed that enjoyment of music and passion for teaching led them to become music teachers. This result illustrates that the positive emotions elicited by music education facilitated music graduates' desire to engage in music activities during their education, which, in turn, influenced their job aspirations. Accordingly, 77.4% of music graduates reported that the statement "I enjoy teaching music" [M = 3.93, SD = 0.614] significantly influenced their job decision. This notable result indicates that most music graduates actively engaged in music teaching activities.

Commitment to the music profession. In the qualitative data, P3 and P10 provide specific examples of how a sense of belonging in music education was so important that it influenced them to change their careers to music teaching. In a survey on a larger sample of music graduates, 74.6% of music graduates agreed that the statement "I am certain I want to pursue a career in music teaching" [M = 3.95, SD = 0.689] significantly influenced their career choices.

Sense of purpose. Some music graduates (for example, P1 and P10) reported their visions of investing in future musicians to make contributions to their music education careers and demonstrated a desire to give back, such that positive music learning experiences and practice styles might be used to assist others who are just beginning to study music. Elaborated by the quantitative data, the item "I want to support music learners" [M = 3.92, SD = 0.605] significantly influenced 77.4% of music graduates' career choices.

Music teachers P1 and P6 held strong self-purpose in supporting children's music learning. A sense of personal joy in music teaching and a satisfying experience that contributes to children's growth and shapes children's futures influenced music graduates' decision to become music teachers. The quantitative data supported this result and shared nearly the same values and results with the item "I want to support music learners". The issue "I want to teach children music and shape their future" [M = 3.91, SD = 0.654] significantly influenced over seventy percent (73.8%) of music graduates' career choices.

Feelings of self-worth. Some music graduates (P1, P6, and P11) chose to become music teachers to feel self-worth through their music teaching. This result derived from the positive experiences in music teaching (including students' growth, students' desire to learn from their teachers, and being a model to students), which contributed to a career choice in music education. Music graduates' feelings of self-worth came from being models to students and seeing their students' growth in music learning, which further influenced

their career choices. Providing quantitative support, the item "I feel self-worth when seeing students make progress in music learning" [M = 3.98, SD = 0.621] significantly influenced nearly eighty percent of (79.6%) music graduates' career choices.

Working relationship between teachers and students. This study found that some music graduates chose to become school music teachers because they love the working relationship between teachers and students. Quantitative statistics statistically significantly showed that this item [M = 3.90, SD = 0.669] had a meaningful effect on the career decisions among 71.9% of music graduates. P1 expressed that the working relationship between teacher and student was a form of mentorship and that music teachers serve as mentors, helping students not only improve their musical abilities but also to grow as individuals and develop life skills such as discipline, hard work, and perseverance. Based on P10's elaboration, teachers frequently receive positive feedback from their pupils, which can be emotionally fulfilling and boost their self-esteem. Such interpersonal relationships in work positively influenced music graduates' career choices to become school music teachers.

## 4. Discussion and Conclusions

This research presents personal stories from music graduates and provides a broader perspective on those who choose music careers and how their intrinsic motivations impact their career decisions.

The most important result was that music graduates' motivation to pursue music careers was mostly influenced by their commitment to the music profession. A strong commitment to the music profession was confirmed by the music graduates' career choices, as only 11.8% of participants worked in non-music industries. This study agrees with earlier observations showing that the majority of university music students were willing to pursue careers in music and were eager to connect their present studies to their future employment [12]. However, this finding conflicts with Mohd Sheriff and Chang's [12] studies, which suggested that the desire to pursue a music career ranked second in importance after interest in the individual influencing factors [12].

Interest in music, measured in terms of "I enjoy playing music" and "I enjoy teaching music", was highlighted by music graduates as influences on their career choices, which supports evidence from previous observations [28,34,35,39,65,66]. However, unlike some previous studies that emphasized the dominance of subject-matter interest in impacting career choice [67,68], this paper found a sense of self-worth to more significantly motivate music graduates to pursue professional music careers. To illustrate, the sense of self-worth derived from previous successful music experiences like performing and teaching increased the intention among music graduates to pursue professional music work. This study showed an increased influence of musical experiences on career choice [12] and corroborated earlier findings that ensemble [35] and music teaching experiences [69] significantly influenced students' career choices.

Meanwhile, a sense of self-purpose was proposed in this study to significantly influence music graduates' choices to pursue music careers. Self-purpose guided music graduates to realize their value by choosing a working environment that allows them to interact with music, to share their personal joy in music and music teaching, or to achieve satisfying experiences that contribute to children's growth and shape children's futures. This result confirmed the previous findings of a correlation between personal values and the work environment and that job satisfaction is strongest when these values and the work environment are congruent and consistent [70].

Tomšik [71] examined the types of motivation that influence students to choose teaching as a career and found that the surveyed students who favored working with children and youth would certainly pursue a teaching career. The music graduates investigated in this study provided the same results and suggested that the mentor relationships between students and older-generation teachers could potentially help novice teachers develop an interest in teaching. This result confirmed the influence of teachers on students' career choices and development [72].

Based on a previous investigation, music graduates' confidence to occupy careers in the music industry was defined by their level of musical skills and confidence in their performing skills. This result indicates the self-efficacy of music graduates [73], i.e., their own beliefs in their ability to behave in the ways required of them as a music professional. According to Bandura [73], self-efficacy refers to a person's confidence in their ability to execute the actions necessary to create particular performance outcomes. Self-efficacy is the belief that one can exert control over his or her own motivations, conduct, and social environment. The finding supports the personal identities in music that children's self-assessments of their musical ability influence whether they will further pursue music-related activities, which in turn offer the chance for any potential growth and development [11].

Psychologically, confidence in music-playing skills impacts music graduates' willingness to connect with music careers or other industries. This factor has a fundamental and crucial effect on music graduates' pursuit of professional jobs in the music industry. This finding is in agreement with the results obtained by Thornton and Bergee [65], Jones and Parkes [74], and Rickels et al. [75], who showed that confidence in music skills could be a determining factor for career choice in the music industry. Another important finding is that the level of their music skills and self-confidence in their playing skills determine how successful music graduates will be in the music industry. These findings suggest that both professional music-playing skills and the confidence in those skills determine music graduates' willingness to connect to music-based jobs or other industries.

Overall, the two factors Pursuit of Music and Pursuit of Music Teaching draw music graduates to engage in music activities where they feel enjoyable, appealing, and fulfilling. The findings support the notion of self-determination theory by Ryan and Deci [15] that human behavior would be determined by the intrinsic motivation, whereas integrated regulation is based on believing that the activity is personally meaningful in terms of one's own values and goals. The alignment between intrinsic motivation and professional choice, which leads to job satisfaction and fulfillment, may potentially increase the rates of retention observed within the music profession. This research could help inform the design of music education programs in Fujian, China, to better match students' intrinsic motivations and music career goals, such as cultivating music students' self-worth and purpose in the music profession. Furthermore, higher education institutions in Fujian, China, shall aim to provide courses and programs that suit the needs of music students' future careers. This measure may produce graduates who are better prepared for professional careers in the music industry. The findings of this study could be utilized by policymakers to formulate policies that facilitate the development and long-term viability of the music industry in Fujian, China. This process may entail the allocation of resources towards the provision of music education, the facilitation of professional development opportunities, and the implementation of initiatives aimed at fostering the growth and development of young talents.

## 5. Limitations and Recommendations

The study had a limited sample size, which could impact the generalizability of the findings to the broader population of music graduates in Fujian, China. Moreover, the preferences and factors influencing career choices may vary between individuals. Future research should aim to acquire a more diverse and representative sample of music graduates in Fujian, China. This research could involve collaborating with multiple institutions and using various recruitment methods to ensure a broader range of perspectives.

The present study focused on music graduates in Fujian, China. The findings may not be applicable to music graduates in other regions or countries, as cultural and regional factors can significantly influence career choices. Comparative studies that involve music graduates from different regions or countries should also be conducted. Such studies would help identify whether the intrinsic factors identified in Fujian, China, are unique to that region or more universally applicable.

Since career goals vary in different career stages [1], the intrinsic needs informing career choice could also be different. A future study could investigate music graduates' career choices in other life stages or develop a longitudinal research design to address the career development issues among music graduates.

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**Data Availability Statement:** The data are not publicly available due to the confidentiality agreements with the participants.

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## Appendix A

**Table A1.** Reliability of intrinsic items influencing career choice from a personal music perspective.

| No. | Items | Corrected Item—Total Correlation |
|---|---|---|
| 1. | I enjoy playing music | 0.639 |
| 2. | I am confident in my music-playing skills | 0.652 |
| 3. | I want to bring happiness to more people through music | 0.721 |
| 4. | I want to interact with others who love music | 0.669 |
| 5 | I feel self-worth when winning applause after performing | 0.689 |
| 6. | I am sure I want to pursue a career in music | 0.703 |
| 7. | I enjoy teaching music | 0.756 |
| 8. | I feel self-worth when seeing my students make progress in music learning | 0.758 |
| 9. | I want to support music learners. | 0.756 |
| 10. | I want to teach children music and shape their future. | 0.760 |
| 11. | The pure relationship between teachers and students attracted me to become a music teacher | 0.735 |
| 12. | I am sure I want to pursue a career in music teaching | 0.719 |
| Cronbach α | 0.935 | |

## Appendix B

**Table A2.** The demographic study of the 18 interviewees in the qualitative study.

| No. | G | A | D | Major | WA | Previous Work | Full-Time Occupation | Part-Time Work |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| P1 | M | 33 | Ma | ME (Violin) | 7 | NA | Music teacher in a higher educational institution | Private violin teacher |
| P2 | F | 29 | Ba | ME (Piano) | 5.5 | Music store owner | Staff in a law firm | Online shop owner |
| P3 | F | 29 | Ma | ME (Chinese flute) | 3.5 | Staff in a public cultural organization | Private music teacher | Commercial performer |

**Table A2.** *Cont.*

| No. | G | A | D | Major | WA | Previous Work | Full-Time Occupation | Part-Time Work |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| P4 | M | 28 | Ba | MP (Percussion) | 5 | Various businesses in non-music industries | Music store owner | Private music teacher; commercial performer |
| P5 | F | 29 | Ba | MP (Oboe) | 3.5 | Staff in a music training center | Music store manager | NA |
| P6 | F | 31 | Ma | ME (Violin) | 3.5 | NA | Music teacher in a primary school | Private violin teacher |
| P7 | M | 27 | Ba | ME (Violin) | 3 | NA | Violin player in an orchestra | Private violin teacher; commercial performer |
| P8 | M | 35 | Ma | ME (Piano) | 8 | NA | Music store owner | Private piano teacher; Accompaniment piano player |
| P9 | F | 31 | Ma | ME (*Pipa*) | 5 | NA | *Pipa* player in an orchestra | Private *Pipa* teacher |
| P10 | F | 34 | Ma | ME (Piano) | 6 | Staff in a government department | Music teacher in a higher educational institution | Private piano teacher |
| P11 | F | 29 | Ba | ME (Piano) | 6 | NA | Piano teacher in several music training centers | Private piano teacher |
| P12 | M | 30 | Ba | MP (Cello) | 7 | Firefighter in the army | Clerical worker in the army | NA |
| P13 | F | 29 | Ba | MP (*Guzheng*) | 5 | NA | *Guzheng* player in a local cultural center | Commercial performer; private *Guzheng* teacher |
| P14 | M | 30 | Ba | ME (Vocal) | 6 | Staff in a study abroad agency | Music event planner in a media company | NA |
| P15 | F | 29 | Ba | ME (Vocal) | 5 | NA | Worker in a cultural marketing company | NA |
| P16 | M | 28 | Ba | MP (Bass) | 4 | NA | Music self-production | Music production |
| P17 | M | 29 | Ma | ME (Piano) | 3.5 | Worked in a cultural media company | Music production in a game software company | Composer |
| P18 | F | 31 | Ba | ME (Piano) | 7 | Music store owner | Music recording studio owner | Music production |

Note: G = Gender (M = Male, F = Female); A = Age; D = Highest Music Degree (Ma = Master, Ba = Bachelor); in the primary study (ME = Music Education; MP = Music Performing); WA = Working Age. NA indicates no related work experience.

## Appendix C

**Table A3.** The demographic study of the 221 respondents in the quantitative study.

| Demographic Variable | Description | Frequency | Percent% |
|---|---|---|---|
| Gender | Male | 56 | 25.3 |
| | Female | 165 | 74.7 |
| Age | 23–30 | 140 | 63.6 |
| | 31–35 | 56 | 25.3 |
| | 36–40 | 17 | 7.7 |
| | 40–45 | 5 | 2.3 |
| | 46 and above | 3 | 1.4 |

**Table A3.** *Cont.*

| Demographic Variable | Description | Frequency | Percent% |
|---|---|---|---|
| Working age | No working experience | 3 | 1.4 |
| | 1–3 years | 46 | 20.8 |
| | 4–6 years | 76 | 34.4 |
| | 7–9 years | 60 | 27.1 |
| | 10 years and above | 36 | 16.3 |
| Working industry | Music Education | 103 | 46.6 |
| | Music Performers | 24 | 10.9 |
| | Commercial Music Performers | 8 | 3.6 |
| | Professional Musical Organizations | 12 | 5.4 |
| | Music Business | 14 | 6.3 |
| | Music Creators | 5 | 2.3 |
| | Recording Industry | 5 | 2.3 |
| | Music Publishing Area | 6 | 2.7 |
| | Self-published Music | 5 | 2.3 |
| | Non-music Industries | 26 | 11.8 |
| | Full-time Music Students | 13 | 5.9 |

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