

THE FACTORS INFLUENCING ACCOUNTING STUDENTS' CAREER INTENTION TO BECOME AN ACCOUNTING PROFESSIONAL IN BRAZIL

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to examine the influential factors of perceptions towards the accounting professions and cognitive style that affect career aspiration to become accountants. The sample of this study was collected by a questionnaire distributed to students who were studying undergraduate and graduate degrees at two large Brazilian universities. Our total sample consists of 158 students, which 67 aspire to become an accounting professional in the future (Accounting students) and 91 students who do not (Non-Accounting students). The primary aim of this research project is to investigate whether various influential factors are statistically associated with a student's intention to become an accounting profession. A logistic regression was applied to address this relationship. This analysis technique allows us to predict a discrete outcome for students' intention to become a profession from a set of independent variables. The findings implied that there is the "best and brightest issue" in the accounting education in Brazil, which refers the situation where there is a difficulty to attract the number of bright students towards accounting discipline. The result of this research particularly demonstrated that the accounting students were predominantly consisted of persons with less creativity over the Gough's (1979) 30-item Creative Personality Scale (CPS).

Keywords: Perceptions. Cognitive type. Career intention. Accounting professionals. Accounting education.

1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is to examine the influential factors of perceptions towards the accounting professions and cognitive style that affect career aspiration to become accountants among accounting students at a Brazilian university. The primary reason to address this research theme is to investigate the seminal factors affecting recent intake of future accountants in the world, taking Brazil as a case of analyses. The previous accounting literature in this research area reports that there has been a considerable decline in the number of students studying accounting major in various part of the world over the last decades (e.g. Albrecht and Sack, 2000 in the USA, Marchall, 2003 in UK; Jackling, 2002 in Australia, Wells and Fieger, 2005 in New Zealand; Sugahara and Boland, 2006 in Japan). Such an unpopularity of accounting profession among brightest tertiary school students is commonly referred to as the “best and brightest issue” (e.g. Byrne and Willis, 2005).

In general, business education for undergraduates has been considered too often narrow, fails to challenge students to question assumptions, think creatively, or to understand the place of business in larger institutional contexts (Colby et al, 2011; Datar et al, 2010; Karakas, 2011; Pfeffer and Fong, 2002; Nesteruk, 2012; Zald, 1996). These authors articulate challenges in business education and the nature of liberal arts, providing compelling examples of effective pedagogies and curricular designs that promote this essential learning for business students, along with campus cultures that support it. They also provide insights about educating for innovation and entrepreneurial thinking and for competence in navigating a global business environment. A proposal to change this established practice, in accounting education, by integrating the liberal arts into the university accounting curriculum has also created a grand impact in academia, policy-makers and practice, particularly after the publication of an special issue of *the Accounting Education: an international journal*, entitled: “*Liberalising The Accounting Curriculum*”. Allan Sangster and Richard Wilson upcoming book¹ also compiles a variety of perspectives of accounting educators, accounting education policy-makers, and accounting practitioners from across the world on the challenging topic of liberalizing the accounting curriculum within university education. Accounting to the authors is a relatively new subject within universities and has been absorbed into a high level of education without any real attempt to do so within the traditional ethos of a liberal arts education.

The US Department of the Treasury’s Advisory Committee on the Auditing Profession (ACAP) recommended the American Accounting Association (AAA) and American Institute of Certified Public Accountants (AICPA) to study the possible future structure of higher education for the accounting profession. In that direction the Commission on Accounting Higher Education: Pathways to a Profession has been created. With a mission to consider accounting education and the accounting profession in the broadest sense, the Commission’s recommendations are expansive in scope²; they demonstrate the need to address difficult and persistent issues and impediments so that the discipline and profession of accounting can better meet the challenges and opportunities of the future.

The immense power of the business sector, and its significance for nationals and global wellbeing, makes quality education for these students critical not only for them but also for the public good. The recommendations of this perspective towards liberalizing business and accounting education point the way to help students move beyond narrow technical expertise to creativity, professional judgment, and enhanced social contribution and personal fulfillment in their work and their lives.

¹ Sangster, Alan; Wilson, R. M.S. (2013) *Liberalising the Accounting Curriculum in University Education* To Be Published January 14th 2013 by Routledge – 192 pages

² *The Pathways Commission Report: Changing a National Strategy for the next generation of accountants*

Our paper focuses on part of these professional challenges/opportunities of the future, studying factors that might influence accounting students' career intention to become an accounting professional. Prior studies have also articulated that the "best and brightest issue" was firstly caused by the negative stereotype towards accounting professional among tertiary school students, however very limited studies have been developed as empirical studies and using samples outside of Northern Hemisphere countries. Focusing on Brazil's position in the international debate this paper contributes to enlarge the research cycle on the issue.

Stereotypes allow people to simplify and understand a large number of social data, permitting inferences about others and going beyond available information, and they are natural simplification of our perception. However they can result in inconsistent and mistaken assessments and expectations (Robbins, 2005). At the level of the person, stereotypes are all about the beliefs you hold and stereotype threat disrupts performance more severely if a person strongly identifies with the negatively stereotyped group, thus allowing the threat to activate stored information about group membership (Kosslyn & Rosenberg, 2006). Smith and Briggs (1999, p. 28) for instance warned that the negative stereotype of accountants may fail attracting the brightest students to major in the accounting field. Along with the similar line, Friedman and Lyne (2001) also expressed that for young people, the reputation of the accountant as dull and boring professional is just about the most serious disincentive, particularly for the best and brightest student.

Schlee et al. (2007) examined the self-perception for the business students studying at the undergraduate level in the USA and found the significant differences in their self-efficacy of the creativity between students who majored in management & marketing and those who majored in accounting. According to Schlee et al. (2007), accounting students are not seen as creative and risk-takers, but, on the other hand, they are seen as the most organized students. The authors also found, in a negative sense, that accounting and finance students scored lowest on social characteristics: people-oriented, flexibility, good communication and team player. In Brazil, however, it is argued in the accounting literature that students who major in business subjects tend to have positive views towards accounting and accounting professionals from some characteristics point of views. Here accounting professionals are defined as formal registered members in professional accountant body (CRC-CFC system in Brazil), where students of accounting those who are studying bachelors or graduate programs in accounting. For example, Azevedo et al. (2008) replicated Schlee et al. (2007)'s study with the data collected from 143 undergraduate students who were learning at the University of Sao Paulo, but did not find significant difference in their self-efficacy of creativity and communication between accounting and non-accounting students. The finding of this Brazilian study demonstrated the contradicted outcome against the predominant literature about accounting students' perception. This unique finding of Brazilian study may be explained by the possible differences in the intrinsic factors attributing to cultural and societal aspects. To address the difference in the above Brazilian context, this study aims to examine the role of perceptions towards the accounting professions and cognitive style that affect career aspiration to become accountants among the accounting students at Brazilian tertiary schools. The next section introduces the brief overview of accounting education system in Brazil, which is the foundation of the research context. Following this section, the previous studies will be reviewed to summarize important view points for this research purpose. Then, the research methodology used in the current study is described together with the hypotheses developed. The result of this empirical study are analyzed and interpreted. At last, the paper concludes with a general discussion of the findings, implications and limitations.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The previous studies have investigated various factors affecting students' career choice of professional accounting. In this research line, many earlier studies have attempted to compare the

differences in seminal career drivers between students who want to become accountants (accounting students) and those who does not (non-accounting students) (e.g. Paolillo and Estes, 1982; Felton et al., 1994; Hermanson et al., 1995). The findings of these studies confirmed that the differences between accounting and non-accounting students were predominantly attributed to their intrinsic personal and psychological differences. Accordingly, the present study particularly determined to address the two specific factors: Perceptions of the accounting profession and Cognitive style.

2.1 Perceptions of the accounting profession

People choose to pursue a certain job or a professional partially as a result of their perception of the professional stereotype. Aranya, Meir & Bar-Ilan (1978) indicated that individual acquires information about various professions before the choice of an occupation, and creates a stereotype according to his preferences and tries to imagine just how well he would fit into this stereotype. Among prior studies, some earlier research have found that the seminal drivers stimulating students' aspiration towards accounting professionals have been their perceptions of its profession (e.g. Aranya et al., 1978; DeCoster and Rhode, 1971; Saemann and Crooker, 1999). That phenomena is far from being recent, since Prof. Henry Rand Hatfield in 1924 addressed the American Accounting Association more than 85 years ago: *"I am sure that all of us who teach accounting in the university suffer from the implied contempt of our colleagues, who look upon accounting as an intruder, a Saul among the prophets, a pariah whose very presence detracts somewhat from the sanctity of the academic halls"*.

A later study of Saemann and Crooker (1999) for instance highlights that the accountants' stereotype as a boring bean counter discourages creative individuals' aspiration of being accountants before they can realize the existence of other elements and features that may attract them to the accounting profession. Using Gough's 30-item Creative Personality Scale (Gough, 1979), the authors of this prior study concluded that the perception of accounting in terms of accuracy and repetition discourages creative students to seek for the chance to work as an accountant. Similarly, Albrecht and Sack (2000) surveyed 783 data from both professionals and academics in the USA, and they found that only 12.3% of all respondents intended to major in accounting again if they could get back to be a student. In conclusion, the authors alerted a public spat and wrong impression where people tend to perceive creativity as negligible for the accounting career and they also concluded that students who expect an interesting and rewarding career were seeking to work in the area other than accounting. Other research of Friedman and Lyne (2001) and Dminik and Felton (2006) also point out the negative stereotypes towards accounting professions and this view tends to act as repressors for the development of creativity skills by the accountants. Friedman and Lyne (2001) developed a general model of stereotype based on the analyses of newspapers and magazines published between January 1970 and June 1995. Their purpose was to explore the different nuances of the bean counter stereotype for the accountants. Dminik and Felton (2006) examine the accountant's image in popular cinema, covering the stereotypes in movies distributed in North America in the twentieth century. Their research coded 168 characters on 41 characteristics using several empirical analysis techniques. Among their various interpretations, their primary finding was that overall accounting characters in the movies were still presented as minor or just named characters with low significance roles for most cases. According to Dminik and Felton (2006), it was reported that much time was needed for the general public to recognize clearly the distinction between bookkeepers and professional accountants since professional accountants have been featured only recently in the movies. As the results, these two studies warn the bad influence of negative stereotype towards accounting professionals upon the choice of career in accounting.

As for the psychological difference among tertiary students, Schlee et al. (2007) similarly examined the self-perception for the business students studying at the undergraduate level in the USA and found the significant differences in their self-efficacy of the creativity between accounting

and non-accounting students. Their study indicated in the conclusion that non-accounting students believed themselves to have higher creativity than accounting students did, and also that non-accounting students consider accounting students less creative, as an external perception. In contrast to the negative view of accounting profession in some literature, other studies emphasized the different stereotypes of accounting professionals in the actual business society. For example, based on the qualitative interviews with Chief Financial Officers (CFO), Myers (2002) states that CPAs who want to become CFOs need to have various generic skills other than just technical expertise. Also, Hooper et al. (2009) conducted semi-interview survey, based on social identity theory, to collect sixteen recipients of accounting information produced by public practice, corporate and not-for-profit sectors in New Zealand. This prior study found that perceptions of accountants have been found as a repetitive, statutory or contractual compliance-based and scorekeeping activity.

Given the various image of accountants raised by above prior studies, it is argued in Brazil that students who major in business related subjects tend to have positive views towards accounting and accounting professionals. Azevedo et al. (2008) replicated Schlee et al. (2007)'s study with students from University of Sao Paulo, but did not find significant difference in their self-efficacy of creativity and communication between accounting and non-accounting students. The finding of this Brazilian study demonstrated the contradicted outcome against the predominant literature about accounting students' perception. This unique finding of the Brazilian study evokes us to investigate the role of perception of accountants for career decision among accounting students studying in Brazil. At the same time, accounting practitioners are still obliged to defend themselves against the perception that their work is irrelevant, thus having to provide additional evidence of competence and integrity (Hunt et al., 2004; Carnegie and Napier, 2010, Azevedo and Cornacchione, 2012). Success in the accounting profession, according to Belski et al. (2004), largely depends on how the profession is seen by the public, and the image of the accounting profession has been damaged in the recent past by the widely publicized accounting frauds, scandals and failures involving accounting firms and accountants. There are several recent cases in the Brazilian context that have come to public notice regarding frauds and corruption, a fact that can lower public perception of the importance of professional and personal ethics.

Leeds (2007) describes that despite the large evolution toward Brazilian democratization in the past two decades, the criminal justice system and legal enforcement of laws has advanced very little. At the same time, the author points out that public safety continue to be one of citizens' major concerns in all social strata. Leeds (2007) also indicates that nongovernmental organizations and investors recognize the risk of weakened democratic institutions and threat the economic prosperity due to the low levels safety and fairness in application of laws. The model developed by Hofstede (1997) to describe cultures provides elements to understand the Brazilian case. According to this model, Brazilian culture supposed to be characterized by high distance from power compared to the world standard, a more collective society in relation to the Latin American average and slightly lower values of assertiveness and compliance with standards in relation to the world, albeit slightly higher than the Latin American average. All these are characteristic of the masculinity index presented by the author. Still, Brazil has a long-term view higher than the world average, but with greater conservatism and resistance to situations of uncertainty. One would expect, considering this scenario, that opportunistic accounting choices could be perceived by the population as activities that would directly affect accounting practice reputation and ethics.

Azevedo (2010) noticed in a metonymic process that people tend to understand the accounting profession, just in its tax dimension or still associated mistakenly as an exact science rather than an applied social one. Therefore, a larger space for opportunistic would be opened in a country with a lower level of legal enforcement (in which managers can choose different accounting methods to enhance their utility function and well-being, deliberately increasing a firm's value or reducing its tax burden, at the expense of other parties (Watts and Zimmerman, 1990). Azevedo and

Cornacchione (2012) analyzed that the specific literature on stereotyping and perception of accounting professionals regarding ethics is highly dichotomous, where recent studies tend to be more negative supporting Carnegie and Napier (2010)'s model. On the other hand, and more surprisingly, in opposition to what the literature review and cultural characteristic attributed to Brazil (low level of legal enforcement, high level of frauds and slow justice system), accounting professionals are perceived positively by the public regarding professional ethics according to the evidence gathered and the analysis of the confidence interval outcomes.

2.2 Cognitive Style

Students' cognitive style is also considered as the important driver affecting one's career choice. Research has identified particular cognitive styles affecting the decision-making of students who aspire to become an accounting profession. Such research was considered necessary due to the rapid development and ever-changing nature of our economy, which has placed great pressure on the accounting sector to recruit students who possess different cognitive styles. For example, using the psychological instrument referred to as the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), some studies discovered that accounting students have very introverted cognitive styles (e.g. Oswick and Barber, 1998), while other studies have found that these students have cognitive styles with a strong bias towards sensing, thinking and judging (Lawrence and Taylor, 2000; Ramsay et al., 2000). Despite the demand by the accounting profession for a variety of diversified cognitive styles to suit the changing work environment, most prior studies revealed that a strong and unique cognitive bias existed among accounting students. Further, Desai and Taylor (1998) also examined how the degree of individualism affected learning styles between Australian and Asian students. The findings from both studies revealed significant differences in learning style preferences between Australian and other students. Similarly, Hutchinson and Gul (1997) investigated the relationship between cognitive styles of extroversion/introversion and the cultural dimension of individualism/collectivism for students studying at universities in Hong Kong. This study discovered that the effect of cultural differences depended on the degree of extroversion/introversion of these students. Such prior studies indicate that a student's cognitive style will be influenced by differences in nationality, which may eventually drive a student's interest in and their career choice of accounting profession.

In the Brazilian context, Molinari and Riccio (2004) conducted a survey with 334 accounting and non-accounting students at University of Sao Paulo. Using MBTI instrument, this study investigated the dominant psychological profile of business students in accordance with their subjects of majors at the tertiary school. The results exhibited accounting subject failed in attracting students with intuition, feeling, and perception. This study also ascertained the perception basically prevailed among respondents as the skewed image that accounting education simply dominates bookkeeping techniques and memorization, rather than developing more comprehensive generic skills. Further Machado and Casa Nova (2008) conducted a study to verify whether the level of knowledge obtained by undergraduates in accounting supports the minimum competencies demanded by large companies in São Paulo city. The authors administered a questionnaire-based survey to 120 students and 31 managers, which aimed to identify the skill profile needed for accounting professional formed by universities and those demanded by companies. The finding implied that tertiary course in Brazil failed to meet the demand of industry in terms of creative skills including developing business scenarios and strategies.

Other Brazilian study of En (2005) successfully demonstrated that Brazilian accounting students have the unique attitude for learning accounting. In this study, the author administered a survey based on Vroom Expectancy Theory for 152 accounting students to ask why taking higher grades are important. Vroom has propagated Expectancy Theory based on employee expectancy. The author believes that employee is motivated to exert high level of efforts when he believes that

efforts will lead to good performance and therefore organizational rewards that will satisfy achievement of personal goals. The focus of the theory has three elements: (a) Efforts - Performance relationship. It is related to the probability perceived by individual that exerting a given amount of efforts will lead to performance (Expectancy); (b) Performance - Reward Relationship. The degree to which the individual believes that performing a particular level will lead to attainment of desired outcome (Instrumentality), and (c) Reward-personal goal relationship. And the degree to which an organizational reward will satisfy its attractiveness and individual needs (Valence). En (2005) study is relevant to give some context to this current paper.

The result reported by En (2005) is that dominant students (55.9%) seek higher marks in the classroom simply because of their personal satisfaction. Other higher responses also indicated that accounting students in Brazil were highly motivated either by a superior perspective and performance on their jobs or future jobs (14.5%), or to improve their academic historical average (13.2%). This finding implies that accounting students in Brazil choose their career as accounting professional based on their personal satisfaction with relative to jobs conditions. Azevedo (2010) conducted the adapted photo-survey with 1,034 randomly selected respondents on streets. This aimed to tests the hypothesis that accounting professionals are negatively stereotyped in terms of the characteristics of creativity, dedication studies, teamwork, communication, leadership, risk taking and ethics. The analysis result rejected this hypothesis that the external perception that non-accountants view towards accountants is more negative than the internal perception that accountants view towards accountants themselves. Given above previous studies, however the findings of these studies have not provided sufficient evidence to address the association between cognitive style and intention of career choice for accounting profession among tertiary accounting students in Brazil.

3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Data Collection

The sample of this study was collected by a questionnaire distributed to students who were studying undergraduate and graduate degrees at two large Brazilian universities. The first one is the largest institution of higher education and research in Brazil and in Latin America, becoming the natural place which most of the Brazilians masters and doctors who work in higher education and research institutes were graduated. It is a public university and free with open access for students selected by exam (elaborated by their own foundation), many of whom, after trained, start playing strategic roles and leadership in different areas of public and private sectors. In contrast, the second university is a private university, offering low cost programs at night courses, including accounting, to low income students with 5 different campuses in Sao Paulo city. The students who joined in this research project were all majoring in accounting related subjects such as financial accounting, management accounting, auditing and so forth. The questionnaire was administered in the classroom during the final weeks of the semester dated on 7th November. 2009.

Of the 194 sampled students, effective responses were 158 (effective response rate: 81.44%) The reason for deleting 36 students from the study sample was primary due to incomplete questionnaires. The descriptive information of the sample was shown in Table. Our total sample consists of 67 students who aspire to become a accounting professions in the future (Accounting students) and 91 students who do not (Non-Accounting students). The data collection was anonymous. The respondents were given class time for 20 minutes to complete their questionnaire and these were collected immediately upon completion. This study applied the t-test for Age and the χ^2 tests for Gender, Job Experience, Academic year and Academic status. The results of these analysis revealed significant difference in Academic status ($\chi^2 = 10.045$ p <.01). No significant difference was found in the attributes of Age, Gender and Job Experiences. The significant result in

Academic status left open the question of homogeneity among the students groups between accounting students and non-accounting students, which must be taken into account when drawing interpretations in the research design process.

Table 1: Sample Demographics

Students attributes (Number)		Non-Accounting Students (91)	Accounting Students (67)	Total (158)	T-test or χ^2 -test (Sig.)
Age	Means	26.48	27.68	26.98	-1.101 (.273)
	Max.	45	48	48	
	Min.	18	18	18	
	N/A	0	2	2	
Gender	Male	54 (59.3%)	29 (43.2%)	83 (52.5%)	3.591 (.073)
	Female	36 (39.6%)	36 (53.7%)	72 (45.5%)	
	N/A	1 (1.0%)	2 (2.9%)	3(1.9%)	
Job Experience	Without Exp	14 (15.4%)	6 (9.0%)	20 (12.7%)	1.443(.333)
	With Exp	77 (84.6%)	61 (91.0%)	138 (87.3%)	
Academic Status	Undergraduate	66 (72.5%)	62 (92.5%)	128 (81.0%)	10.045 (.002)
	Graduate	25 (27.5%)	5 (7.5%)	30 (19.0%)	

N/A: non response or not available data

3.2 Research Design

As defined before, the objective of this research project is to investigate whether various influential factors are statistically associated with a student's intention to become an accounting profession. A logistic regression was applied to address this relationship. This analysis technique allows us to predict a discrete outcome for students' intention to become a profession from a set of independent variables. The logistic regression in this study used student's intention to become an accounting profession as the dummy variable, which was coded zero for YES and one for NO. The current study applied this coded dummy as being the dependent variable in the logistic regression model.

To complete the research design, this study firstly applied the preliminary principal component analysis to analyze a set of principal components from various perceptions of the accounting profession. In relation to the perceived views towards accounting profession, students were asked to complete a 36 five-point scale of opposing adjectives on the basis of their perceptions of the accounting profession (Table 2). This instrument was originally invented by Saemann and Crooker (1999) to assess respondents' view towards the accounting profession. This specific instrument is referred to as the PAPI, which has been widely applied by several prior studies in this area (e.g. Worthington and Higgs, 2003; 2004; Byrne and Willis, 2005).

Table 2: The Measurement of Students' Perception

Creative Solution/ Cut & Dry Repetition/ Variety*	Extrovert/ Introvert Conceptual/ Analytical*	Practical/ Theoretical*
New Ideas/ Established Rules	Innovation/ Compliance	Tedious/ Absorbing Fascinating/ Monotonous*
Boring/ Interesting Challenging/ Easy*	Intuition/ Facts Ambiguity/ Certainty	Abstract/ Concrete Effectiveness/ Efficiency
Dull/ Exciting Flexible/ Structured	Planned/ Spontaneous* Changing/ Fixed	Imagination/ Logic Thorough/ Superficial*
Solitary/ Interaction With Others*	Methodical/ Novelty*	Unpredictable/ Routine
Conformity/ Originality*	Record Keeping/ Decision Making*	Details/ Overview*
Dynamic/ Stable Adaptable/ Inflexible	Benefits Society/ Profit-Driven Prestigious/ Ordinary*	Accurate/ Imprecise* Mathematical/ Verbal*
Standard Operating Procedures/ New Solutions*	People-Oriented/ Number Crunching	Alternative Views/ Uniform Standards

* These pairs were reverse coded.

This research also addressed the role of student's cognitive style to determine the impact of their intention to become the accounting profession. For this purpose, Gough's (1979) 30-item Creative Personality Scale (CPS) was used in the questionnaire. Among various methods of measurement for one's cognitive style, the study focused on student's creativity as a form of students' cognitive type over other popular measure such as the MBTI. This instrument was selected just because of its conciseness, which allows authors to investigate as few as 30 items questions. Students were asked to choose from a list of 30 adjectives items, which they believed best described themselves (see Table 3).

The items chosen were given a +1 score, while those which students did not choose were given a -1 score. Total scores ranged from -12 to +18. The higher the score the more creative students were deemed to be. The weighted composite technique was used to confirm the reliability of the CPS index. This method has also been used in many prior studies. The score computed for the Cronbach alpha indicating internal reliability in this current study was 0.577, which is quite appropriate compared with 0.60 for Saemann and Crooker (1999) and 0.7 for Worthington and Higgs (2003).

Table 3: Gough's 30-item Creative Personality Scale

clever	capable	cautious
commonplace	confident	conservative
conventional	dissatisfied	egotistical
honest	humorous	individualistic
informal	insightful	intelligent
inventive	mannerly	narrow interests
original	pompous	reflective
resourceful	self-confident	sexy
sincere	snobbish	submissive
suspicious	unconventional	wide interests

4 PRIMARY STATISTICAL ANALYSES

This research firstly applied the principal component analysis method to analyse the compound factors of students' view towards accounting profession. These analyses were undertaken using the Promax rotation technique to assist with the interpretation of potential influential factors. The Kaiser Meyer Olkin (KMO) adequacy value was then used to determine whether a correlation matrix existed or not between compounded factors. This score was calculated at .813, which indicates appropriate correlation matrix for factors analysis. Table 4 displays details of the extracted components, eigenvalues and percentage of variance for influential perceived items were displayed in the table. Initially, 36 original variables were measured on a semantic differential scale with one indicating agreement with the left hand word and five indicating agreement with the right hand word. Several pairs of words were reverse coded in the instrument so that they were converted before this principal component analysis was undertaken. Among data obtained from the principal component analysis, the latent constructs with a greater than 0.400 score were selected along with each dimension. Applying Cattell's scree test (Cattell, 1966), three factor scores were derived from the 36 items as replacements for the original variables. This test was selected because Kaiser's criterion often identifies too many factors. Cattell scree test suggests that the cut-off point for selecting latest factors should be at the point of inflexion in a graph of each eigenvalues against the factor with which it is associated, and determine that point when the slope of the line changes dramatically (Cattell, 1966). Finally, all compounded factors were comprehensively interpreted in order to provide appropriate labels. The resulting factor scores for students' perception of the accounting profession produced 42.100% of cumulative percentages of variance.

The largest component factor was Decisiveness (DEC). All attributes classified in this factor were related to the image as to whether intrinsic characteristics of accounting professions are flexible with their own decision or subject to the rules. For our study, the following four attributes of adaptable/inflexible; decision making/record keeping; changing/fixed; alternative views/uniform standards were included in this factor. The second largest factor was interpreted as Uniqueness (UIQ). This factor consisted of the following six attributes such as new solutions/standard operation procedures; flexible/ structured; new ideas/ established rules; innovation/compliance; originality/conformity; novelty/methodical. This research decided to label this factor as UIQ because these pairs of adjectives represent the likelihood of new creation or repetitive action. The third factor was formed from the six attributes of ambiguity/certainty; effectiveness/efficiency; abstract/concrete; intuition/fact; unpredictable/routine; imprecise/accurate. This component factor was aggregated as Uncertainty (UNC) because these adjectives stand for the degree to which ones perceive accounting profession as a job with uncertainty conditions. The internal reliabilities of the responses measured by the Cronbach alphas were from 0.731 to 0.800 for perceived factors of accounting profession. In principle, it is deemed that a score greater than 0.7 of Cronbach alpha can be sufficiently accepted. Thus, alpha scores for perceptions of the accounting profession were all higher than 0.7. These figures compared favorably with previous studies that have accepted a range from 0.64 to 0.89 (Saemann & Crooker's, 1999) and from 0.41 to 0.89 (Worthington & Higgs, 2003) where the same survey instrument was employed.

Table 4: Principle component analysis for perception of the Accounting Profession

	Component Factors		
	1	2	3
	Decisiveness (DEC)	Uniqueness (UIQ)	Uncertainty (UNC)
1 ← pair of adjective words → 5			
Decision Making / Record Keeping	.865		
Adaptable / Inflexible	.770		

Alternative Views / Uniform Standards	.625		
Changing / Fixed	.596		
New Solutions / Standard Operation Procedures		.711	
Flexible / Structured		.706	
New Ideas / Established Rules		.670	
Innovation / Compliance		.641	
Originality / Conformity		.603	
Novelty / Methodical		.405	
Ambiguity / Certainty			.796
Effectiveness / Efficiency			.706
Abstract / Concrete			.661
Intuition / Facts			.569
Unpredictable / Routine			.537
Imprecise / Accurate			.414
Cronbach alpha	.731	.800	.754
Eigenvalues	8.986	4.029	2.141
Variance (%)	24.960	11.192	5.948

Extract method: Principle component analysis

Rotation method: Promax technique with Kaiser Normalization

Factor loading > .400 reported

5 HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

The study applied the logistic regression analysis to examine the association of students' intention to become an accounting profession (AAP) as the dependent variable (one for students who aspire to become an accounting profession; zero for students who aspire other career options) with students' creativity (CPS) and their perceptions of the accounting profession (Decisiveness (DEC); Uniqueness (UIQ); Uncertainty (UNC)) as being the independent variables. Given these variables, the following hypotheses of this study represent in null:

H^0-1 : Students' aspiration to become an accounting profession has no relation to their inherent creativities.

H^0-2 : Students' aspiration to become an accounting profession has no relation to their perceptions of accounting profession.

In addition, several demographic attributes of the samples were incorporated in the analysis model to control their impacts. These factors are academic status (either undergraduate students or graduate students: STA), age (AGE), job experience (EXP) and gender (GEN). To address above two hypotheses, the logistic regression model was developed as follows:

$$\text{Log (AAP)} = \alpha_0 + \alpha_1\text{CPS} + \alpha_2\text{DEC} + \alpha_3\text{UIQ} + \alpha_4\text{UNC} + \alpha_5\text{STA} + \alpha_6\text{AGE} + \alpha_7\text{EXP} + \alpha_8\text{GEN} + \varepsilon$$

Where:

AAP = 0 for students' intention to become an accounting profession; 1 for students' intention to follow a job other than as an accounting profession.

CPS = Index scores to measure students' creative personality by Gough's 30-item, which ranged from -12 to +18

- DEC = Mean scores for 4 adjective components originally anchored from 1 to 5.
 UIQ = Mean scores for 6 adjective components originally anchored from 1 to 5.
 UNC = Mean scores for 6 adjective components originally anchored from 1 to 5.
 STA = 0 for students studying at the undergraduate level; 1 for students studying at the postgraduate level
 AGE = Students' actual age
 EXP = 0 for students with no work experience; 1 for students who have work experience
 GEN = 0 for male students; 1 for female students

6 RESULTS

Table 5 reports the result of the logistic regression for students' career intention towards an accounting profession (AAP) with the eight various attributes. Firstly, the score of Chi-square for Hosmer and Lemeshow goodness of fit test was 68.709 with eight degree of freedom at the non-significant of p-value ($p = .567$). According to this result, the null hypothesis that logistic regression model is fit with the data set from our analysis model can not be rejected. Secondly, the score of Omnibus test of model coefficient shows 60.549 for Chi-square score with eight degree of freedom at the .01 level of p-value ($p < .01$). This result indicates that the null hypothesis that the logistic regression model is useless to predict the association can be rejected, of which outcome supports the reliability of this logistic regression model with statistical evidence. Although the score of -2 log likelihood was 150.277, which is relatively higher, Cox & Snell R-square and Nagelkerke R-square are acceptable. The Wald statistics indicate the usefulness of prediction for the associations between AAP and each independent variable. According to the result, CSP (Wald = 8.321, $p < .01$), UIQ (Wald=9.549, $p < .01$) and UNG (Wald=15.299, $p < .01$) had significant associations with AAP at the 0.01 level. It was also found that STA had a significant result at the 0.05 level (Wald=3.167, $p < .05$). Moreover, the score of Exp (b) means the odds ratio of the independent variables. The more likely the score of b close to one, the less likely independent variable has association with AAP. Thus, it was found that UNC ($b = 5.004$) had strong and positive association with AAP, while CPS ($b = .786$) had negative relationship with AAP. In comparison with these variables, the scores for STA ($b = 2.076$) and UIQ ($b = .324$) were relatively closer to one, which indicates the odds ratio of these factors were smaller. Accordingly it was interpreted that STA and UIQ had the significant but weak associations with AAP. In contrast, no significant results were found for the rest of variables such as DEC, AGE, EXP and GEN.

Table 5: Logistic Regression Result

Variables	Coefficient (B)	Std. Error	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp (b)
CPS	-.240	.083	8.321	1	.004***	.786
DEC	-.585	.329	3.167	1	.075	.557
UIQ	-1.126	.364	9.549	1	.002***	.324
UNC	1.610	.412	15.299	1	.000***	5.004
STA	.730	.350	4.345	1	.037**	2.076
AGE	.050	.033	2.322	1	.128	1.051
EXP	-.698	.728	.917	1	.338	.498
GEN	.470	.421	1.249	1	.264	1.600
Constant	-5.390	2.107	6.545	1	.011	.005
-2 log likelihood	150.277					
Cox and Snell R ²	.323					
Nagelkerke R ²	.435					
Hosmer and Lemeshow test	Chi-square	df = 8				
	68.709	(sig = .567)				

Omnibus test of Model Coefficient	Chi-square 60.549	df = 8 (sig = .000)
% of correctly classification	81.1 % for 0 69.2 % for 1	Overall 76.1%
Sample Size	158	

*** Significant at the 0.01 level; ** significant at the 0.05 level

7 INTERPRETATION

The analysis result of this study reported that students' creative personality measured by Gough's 30-item has significantly negative relationship with their career intention of accounting professional. This finding is interpreted that the more likely students have strong creativity the less likely they are willing to become the accounting professionals. With similar to many previous studies (Hopper et al., 2009; Dminik and Felton, 2006; Saemann and Crooker, 1999), the analysis outcome of the present study consistently indicated that Brazilian accounting students' creativity was negatively correlated with their intention to become an accounting profession at the tertiary school. This finding confirmed the result of seminal Brazilian study of Molinari and Riccio (2004) that exhibited accounting subject failed in attracting students with sensitivity of intuition, feeling and perception. The present study additionally showed the empirical evidence that student's psychological type of attitude highly affected their future career intention to become the accounting profession. That result is also in line with findings from Machado and Casa Nova (2008), which implied that the companies perceive accounting students especially as lacking of capabilities to creativity in terms of developing scenarios and strategies

With regard to creativity for the accounting professionals, our literature review demonstrated that the future accountants should possess creative thinking skills and competencies (e.g. Myers, 2002; Smith and Briggs, 1999). However, the present study inversely assured an unfavorable result where the profile of Brazilian students' creativity indicated the candidates of future accountants were dominated by less creative students. This analysis outcome alerts that the situation in the Brazilian accounting education are facing the serious problem not to be able to attract more suitable students for the future accountants, although the current shift towards the global economy needs professional candidates with various cognitive styles including creativity. Accordingly, this interpretation also revealed that "the best and brightest issue" exists in the tertiary accounting education in Brazil.

The present study also found that students' career intention of accounting professional had significant associations with professional perceptions of uniqueness (UIQ) and uncertainty (UNC). The significant relationships of the students' career intention of accountants were negative for UIQ and positive for UNC, respectively. The attribute of Decisiveness (DEC) did not have the significant relationship with students' career intention of accounting professional.

For the result of UIQ, the finding indicated that the more likely students perceive accounting profession as the career with uniqueness including flexible, new idea, innovation, novelty and originality the more likely they are willing to become the accounting professional. In other words, quite a lot of students who perceived the accounting professions as the career with unique orientation would like to aspire to become accounting professionals. Rather, students who viewed accountants as the professionals with compliance, conformity and rule orientation were reluctant to pursue this career choice. Inconsistent findings were reported by the previous studies, where the typical stereotype of accounting professionals were definitive (Byrne and Willis, 2005) and structured (Saemann and Crooker, 1999). In Brazil, however, a prior study of Azevedo et al. (2008) find no significant difference in their self-efficacy of creativity between accounting and non-accounting students. Thus, the result of the current study showed the similar evidence to prove the impact of unique stereotype for accountants when the students choose their career. This correlation commonly

observed in Brazil is quite distinctive among Brazilian students and different from what has been observed in the other parts of the world by the previous studies.

In terms of UNC, the analysis result implies that students who view the accountant as the professional with the aspects such as certainty, efficacy, concrete, accurate and routine were willing to aspire to become accounting professional. In contrast, those who believe the accounting profession as the career with ambiguity, abstract, intuition and unpredictable orientation were reluctant to become this professional. In other words, this result indicates that Brazilian students think that they want to become the accountants because they believe the career of accounting is a monotonous profession. From the literature review, several prior studies in overseas similarly support this skewed way of perception for accounting students. The typical stereotypes of accounting professions were found to be a systematic way of working (Parker, 2000), accuracy and repetition (Saemann and Crooker, 1999), tedious job (DeCoster and Rhode, 1971). These findings are consistent with the present study in the sense that students' unfavorable stereotype, which does not match with the shift in the current trend of the economic society, was facilitated as the deciduous driver of their career intention with relation to the accounting.

8 CONCLUDING REMARKS

The present study aimed to examine the influential factors of perceptions towards the accounting professions and the cognitive style that affect career aspiration to become accountants among the accounting students at Brazilian tertiary schools. Our findings implied firstly that there is the "*best and brightest issue*" in the accounting education in Brazil. This issue refers the situation where there is a difficulty to attract the number of bright students towards accounting discipline. The result of this research particularly demonstrated that the accounting students, who suppose to be future accountants, were predominantly consisted of persons with less creativity. The result of this study was interpreted that students who view the accountant as the professional with higher certainty characteristics were willing to become this professional. This correlation between students' perception and their career aspiration may be causing the best and brightest issue in Brazil, where creative students relatively did not want to pursue a career in accounting. Possible solution can be provided if the accounting education in Brazil changes the way of teaching their business students at the tertiary schools. In this regards, Myers (2002) and Hooper et al. (2009) suggested in their research that recent economic societies demand universities to produce students as the professional candidate with the specific qualities that is completely contrast with the perception that students normally perceive towards accountant. More specifically, Machado and Casa Nova (2008) reported that companies perceive accounting students as lacking of creativity in terms of developing scenarios and strategies. Moreover, Molinari and Riccio (2004) intended that the skewed image of accounting education is rooted from bookkeeping techniques and memorization among students at the tertiary school.

To compensate this lacking of capabilities, students could learn effectively with more business simulations, games and business cases. The use of business games could create a more diverse and creative teaching into regular accounting classes. As an example, the use of strategy business games often require accounting students to thinking integrated to all sectors of the company, such as marketing and production. As is commonly observed in Brazil, few accounting programs include marketing and production engineering courses, which will be required for accounting professionals. The case method is also a very useful educational method. It is also part of the job of the instructor to change the routes of the debate, pointing out several other perspectives to address the case problem. The field also faces a metonymical effect about what accountants do and what accounting really is. In Brazil, with a strong cultural basis from code law, the government

influence on business practices and high taxes, there is a metonymical effect that change accounting from science to technical skills.

Further, this research also revealed that students who perceived the accountant as the professional with uniqueness characteristics including flexibility, originality, new ideas and innovation were willing to become an accountant. This finding is very distinctive point of this Brazilian study. With regard to this finding, one authors' teaching experience in Brazilian tertiary school points out that students in Brazil don't perceive accounting as boring or monotonous, after entering in their program. The reason for that is because the graduation from accounting discipline normally gives more job availability than students who graduate from other disciplines. Eventually, accounting holds the wider range of work field including financial accounting, cost accounting, management accounting, risk management, taxes accounting, auditing, and so on. And student can also choose to become variety of work style as CPA, consultant, professor and so on. These positive aspects affect students' perceptions toward the uniqueness of accounting, and drive their aspiration to become accountants.

Despite the above findings, this study does have several limitations. One seminal limitation in this present research was that the sample of our empirical study was collected from a few universities in Brazil, and may not be able to represent whole picture of what is happening in this country. It is also fundamental to understand that a country with continental size and heterogeneous culture, as the case in Brazil, implies necessarily that a studied conducted in one region has limited generalization to other regions in the country. In that sense, we encourage researchers to build on top of our study other comparisons and broader geographical coverage. There is a significant room to extend this limitation by collecting additional data from business students studying at the other part of Brazil. Using undergraduate and graduate with a larger sample could also reveal other differences on analysis and conclusion. Apart of this limitation, this study successfully contributes to the literature on the role of students' perception and cognitive type by providing the first empirical evidence from Brazil and framed into an exploratory objective contributes to the literature. Also important to consider, as suggested by Simons, Lowe and Stout (2003) that several factors have been proposed, as influencing students choice of accounting and career perception in terms of remuneration: (a) earnings (long-term and initial earnings), (b) career opportunities (employment availability, job market, broad business exposure, job satisfaction, self-employment opportunities and flexibility of career options), (c) career characteristics (structured career path, social status attainment, requirements, work variety, advancement opportunities), (d) major characteristics (years of education required, interest in the field and subject, courses and programs difficulty). In that sense, there is a limitation for addressing well-paid jobs or with high status, but that requires low creativity, once other economic variables could play influence in terms of incentives. The opposite also might be true, a low paid job, and with low status, but with a positive image towards the public, considering other economic incentives.

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