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The impact of perceived education quality on tourism and hospitality students' career choice: The mediating effects of academic self-efficacy

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ABSTRACT

Despite the importance of understanding tourism and hospitality (T&H) students' career choices for both high education institutions and industry practitioners, scarce empirical research exists which limits drawing reliable conclusions on the antecedents of T&H students' post graduate behavioral intentions. Drawing on data collected from 267 undergraduate T&H students in Turkey, the results show that perceived education quality is positively associated with T&H students' intention to join the industry but not to pursue a postgraduate degree. The findings also confirm the mediating role of academic self-efficacy on the relationship between perceived education quality and T&H students' intention to pursue postgraduate degree.

1. Introduction

There is a wide agreement that tourism and hospitality is a labor-intensive industry and thus successful tourism service delivery is largely dependent on quality human resources (Kusluvan & Kusluvan, 2000; Unguren & Huseyinli, 2020). However, working in the industry may not be appealing to all tourism and hospitality (T&H) students (Walsh et al., 2015) and thus other paths including pursuing higher education may be considered. Regardless of students' career choices, the role of education quality in determining post-graduate outcomes is acknowledged across a wide range of disciplines (McGuinness, 2003; Agarwala, 2008). In the realm of tourism and hospitality, education quality is also argued to play a crucial role in shaping students' behaviors and plans (Lee et al., 2016). Understanding what determines career choices of T&H students can be of a significant importance as students may be reluctant to consider careers within the industry due to their inherent difficulties including long working hours and fluctuating schedules (Jiang & Tribe, 2009; Walsh et al., 2015). Previous research focusing on T&H students addresses various topics including students' career intentions and attitudes, perceptions of education quality, career planning behavior, self-efficacy, and academic performance (Unguren & Huseyinli, 2020; Lee et al., 2019; Jiang & Tribe, 2009; Choi & Kim, 2013; Chen et al., 2021). While these studies provide valuable insights into T&H students' experiences, preferences, and expectations, education quality in T&H and its outcomes remain largely under-studied (Xu et al., 2018). Specifically, a comprehensive modeling of relationships between perceived education quality, academic self-efficacy, and post-graduate choices is lacking.

Against these knowledge gaps, the present study aims to empirically assess a framework linking perceived education quality, academic self-efficacy, intention to join the industry, and intention to pursue a post-graduate degree in tourism. The proposed

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conceptual model (Fig. 1) suggests that perceived education quality has a direct effect on academic self-efficacy, intention to join the industry, and intention to pursue a post-graduate degree. In addition, academic self-efficacy is proposed to have a direct effect on the intention to join the industry, and intention to pursue a post-graduate degree. Moreover, the study proposes academic self-efficacy as a mediator between perceived education quality and intention to join the industry on the one hand, and perceived education quality and intention to pursue a post-graduate degree, on the other hand. By modeling these relationships, the study aims to provide higher education institutions with empirical insights into the determinants that influence tourism and hospitality students' career choice.

The study contributes in two key directions. First, by examining the intersection between perceived quality education and T&H students' career choice, the current investigation extends existing theoretical assessments into the outcomes of education quality (Lee et al., 2016, 2019). Second, using academic self-efficacy as a mediator variable, the study examines the underlying mechanism between perceived education quality and students' career choices. The paper proceeds as follows: The next section focuses on the theoretical background of the study by reviewing existing literature on perceived education quality, academic self-efficacy, and career choice. Following this section, the methodological procedures adopted are discussed. Finally, the findings of the study are presented, followed by a discussion and conclusion.

2. Literature review

2.1. Perceived quality in higher education

The concept of service quality has been extensively investigated in different fields (Habibi & Rasoolimanesh, 2020; Malik et al., 2020; Tahanisaz, 2020) and higher education is no exception (Elassy, 2015). Different conceptualizations on quality in higher education have emerged (Mizikaci, 2006; Wittke & Kvernbekk, 2011) with no consensus on the definition of quality in higher education (Green, 1994). It is widely accepted, however, that higher education has a positive effect on students' perceptions (Annamdevula & Bellamkonda, 2016). Education quality is perceived as a competitive factor for higher education institutions in order to provide excellence (Yeo, 2008). Therefore, higher education institutions should not only provide qualified graduates, but also have the knowledge of how their students perceive the education quality (Calvo-Porral et al., 2013). This is particularly relevant to the tourism and hospitality industry whose success is largely dependent on qualified staff. As stated by Lee et al. (2016), education quality in the field of tourism is an important factor that affects hospitality students' decisions to choose T&H programs. In this respect, it is pivotal to understand perceived education quality to understand students' future behavior and to improve the quality of education (Nadiri et al., 2009).

A coherent body of research exists on education quality. Specifically, students' perception of learning and academic facilities appear to be important factors in determining the quality of education (e.g. Annamdevula & Bellamkonda, 2016; Ma et al., 2016). Lee et al. (2016) identified five education quality dimensions for hospitality education, namely; student support, industry networking, innovative curriculum, learning environment and faculty and program credentials. Likewise, Brookes (2003) found that hospitality students' perception of education quality of teaching and learning, library resources and sports and leisure facilities were positive. However, education quality in higher education in general, and T&H in particular has yet to be understood (Narang, 2012).

2.2. Academic self-efficacy

Social cognitive theory serves to explain behaviour and it refers to the social systems and self-regulation factors that regulate human behavior (Bandura, 1977; Honicke & Broadbent, 2016; Schunk & Pajares, 2002). Self-regulation is the way an individual manages and guides his or her actions and is highly affected by individual's confidence (Bandura, 1982; Elias & MacDonald, 2007; Markus & Wurf, 1987). This confidence is the generic term used to describe self-efficacy. Self-efficacy can be defined as "beliefs in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments" (Bandura, 1997, p. 3), and it is a key factor

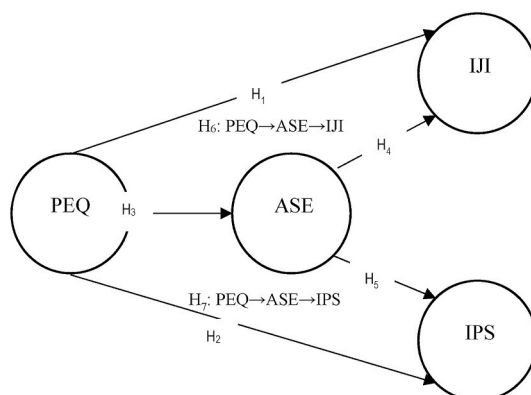


Fig. 1. Conceptual model.

for students' motivation and learning. Academic self-efficacy can be referred to as students' thoughts about their skills to reach educational aims (Elias & MacDonald, 2007; Zysberg & Schwabsky, 2021). In previous studies on higher education, different variables were found to be related to academic self-efficacy. Zajacova et al. (2005) demonstrated that self-efficacy is a predictor of stress and academic success. O'Sullivan (2011) stated that self-efficacy has a positive relationship with life satisfaction. Ferla et al. (2009) noted that academic self-efficacy is influenced by academic self-concept. Galla et al. (2014) found that the students with high academic self-efficacy have better academic performance than the students with low academic self-efficacy. In T&H context, academic self-efficacy was found to be an underlying mechanism explaining the relationship between academic achievement and career preparation behaviour of domestic and international students (Choi & Kim, 2013). Yet, modeling academic self-efficacy of T&H students with other variables related to their career choice remains a clear omission in the existing literature.

2.3. Career choice

The T&H industry is a labor-intensive industry; therefore, a well-educated and qualified work-force is vital for the T&H industry. Employment of qualified workforce in the T&H industry will help to increase service quality and to use qualified workforce effectively (Kusluvan & Kusluvan, 2000; Griffin, 2020). Thus, higher education is one of the important factors for developing human resources and managing prudential goals for students in a quality manner (Dlačić et al., 2014). Although the number of T&H educational institutions and number of graduates have increased, several studies showed that there is still need to recruit well-educated and qualified employees in T&H industry (Kusluvan & Kusluvan, 2000; Unguren & Huseyinli, 2020). However, a large and growing body of literature has shown that students do not desire to work in T&H industry due to the characteristics of tourism such as long working hours and seasonal work (Kelley-Patterson & George, 2001; Jiang & Tribe, 2009; Walsh et al., 2015; Schneider and Treisch, 2019). Not only the nature of the T&H industry affects the students' future tendencies but also individual factors, internship, expectations, effectiveness, job adaptation, job interests, work experience, salary, opportunity for advancement and education they receive can affect students' career choices (Kusluvan & Kusluvan, 2000; Lu & Adler, 2009; Chuang & Dellmann-Jenkins, 2010; Robinson et al., 2016; Petry et al., 2021). Although studies have recognised the students' intentions to join T&H industry, research has yet to systematically investigate the students' decisions regarding to join postgraduate study (Jepsen & Neumann, 2010).

2.4. Hypothesis development

In recent years, there has been an increasing amount of literature on education quality in higher education institutions. Existing studies focused on developing scales, measuring perceived education quality of students (Calvo-Porrall et al., 2013; Latif et al., 2019). However, to date, little research has been carried out to investigate the prevalence of the relationship between perceived education quality, academic self-efficacy and behavioral intention of T&H students. This omission is surprising considering that T&H education plays an important role in the retention of qualified graduates for the industry. Hence, understanding different variables affecting behavioral intentions of students has vital importance for educators to improve education quality in the tourism field (Lam & Xiao, 2000; Chuang & Dellmann-Jenkins, 2010; Walsh et al., 2015). Initial findings indicate that service quality is associated with the behavioural intention in management, marketing and tourism literature (Boulding et al., 1993; Zeithaml et al., 1996; Baker & Crompton, 2000; Habibi & Rasoolimanesh, 2020). Apart from the perceived education quality, there is a large body of literature showing that different factors such as demographic variables, institutional types, academic achievement, awareness, knowledge and motivation can impact students' intention to pursue postgraduate study (Jepsen ve Neumann, 2010; Jepsen & Varhegyi, 2011; İlter, 2020). In the context of T&H higher education, the relationships between students, perceived educational quality, intention to join industry and intentions to join postgraduate study remain scant. Mahfud et al. (2019) found that teaching quality significantly influences career choice of culinary and hospitality students. Jiang and Tribe (2009) noted that educational factors are influencing the career choices of T&H students. Also, extensive research has shown that there is a significant relationship between students' perceived education quality and satisfaction and satisfaction has a relationship between career choice of students (Ali et al., 2016; Hwang & Choi, 2019; Sultan & Wong, 2013; Walsh et al., 2015). Sultan and Wong (2013) stated that perceived service quality has an indirect impact on behavioral intention through the students' satisfaction and student trust. Ali et al. (2016) noted that higher education service quality had a significant influence on student satisfaction which affects student loyalty. Therefore, we assume that perceived education quality can be associated with students' career choices. Thus, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1. Perceived education quality enhances students' intention to join T&H industry.

H2. Perceived education quality enhances students' intention to pursue postgraduate study.

There is a significant empirical evidence showing that academic self-efficacy is directly associated with academic performance (Bui et al., 2017; Van Dinther et al., 2011; Galla et al., 2014; Honicke and Broadbent, 2016). Research also shows that academic performance can be influenced by education quality. For instance, Alt (2015) noted that different learning environments (as a predictor of education quality) can have a significant impact on academic self-efficacy. As stated by Cheng (2020), self-efficacy is a vital function for creating a positive learning environment. Thus, we assume that perceived education quality can have a positive impact on academic self-efficacy. Based on the discussions, the following hypotheses are formulated:

H3. Perceived education quality enhances students' academic self-efficacy.

Academic self-efficacy is closely associated with students' behavior. Social cognitive theory suggests that academic self-efficacy is vital for students to reach their goals (Bandura, 1977; Elias & MacDonald, 2007). A considerable amount of literature has been

published on students' academic self-efficacy and primarily research has focused on the link between self-efficacy and career choices, psychological constructs, academic performance, motivation and achievement (Pajares, 1996; Artino, 2012; Dogan, 2015; Ferla et al., 2009; Galla et al., 2014; Honicke & Broadbent, 2016; Huang, 2016; Yusoff, 2012). However, despite the growing academic literature on academic self-efficacy in T&H research (Choi & Kim, 2013; Bui et al., 2017), nuanced understanding of the relationships between academic self-efficacy and career choices of T&H students is still lacking. Yet, self-efficacy may be an important predictor of students' career choices (Chuang et al., 2007). In addition, academic self-efficacy can potentially help students manage their learning to graduate and get a job (Alt, 2015). Furthermore, Lee et al. (2019) noted that self-efficacy can be a significant antecedent of career choices. Also, Varhegyi and Jepsen (2009) stated that self-efficacy has a significant impact on postgraduate study intention. Therefore, we argue that academic self-efficacy may be associated with the career choices of higher education students. Hence, we proposed following hypotheses:

H4. Academic self-efficacy enhances students' intention to join T&H industry.

H5. Academic self-efficacy enhances students' intention to pursue postgraduate study in T&H.

Understanding the direct effects of perceived education quality on T&H students' behavioral intentions may provide limited insights into these relationships hence neglecting the potential role of underlying mechanisms. In the current investigation, we introduce self-efficacy as a possible mediator variable explaining the underlying mechanism of the perceived education quality-behavioral intentions relationship. As mentioned by Alt (2015), education quality has a positive impact on academic self-efficacy and academic self-efficacy is an important predictor of the career decision making process of the students (Chuang et al., 2007; Lee et al., 2019; Varhegyi & Jepsen, 2009). Tsai et al. (2017) predicted that self-efficacy would mediate the internship efficacy on career preparation behaviour. While self-efficacy has been widely employed as a mediating variable in different educational context (Choi & Kim, 2013; Liu et al., 2020; Zhou et al., 2020), no study has examined the mediating effect of academic self-efficacy on the relationship between perceived education quality, intention to join industry and intention to pursue postgraduate degree. As shown in Fig. 1, self-efficacy is proposed as a mediator between the perceived education quality and both intentions to join industry and to pursue postgraduate study. According to above discussion, we developed following hypotheses.

H6. Academic self-efficacy mediates the relationship between perceived education quality and the intention to join industry.

H7. Academic self-efficacy mediates the relationship between perceived education quality and the intention to pursue postgraduate study.

3. Research methodology

3.1. Measures

To collect the data for the present study, a self-administered questionnaire was developed. The data collection instrument consisted of two sections; the first section aimed to collect demographic data about T&H students (e.g., gender, age). The second section aimed to measure the constructs employed in the study. Perceived education quality was measured using 15 items adopted from Annamdevula and Bellamkonda (2016). Academic self-efficacy was operationalized using 10 items adopted from O'Sullivan (2011). Intention to join industry was measured using two items adopted from Walsh et al. (2015) while the intention to pursue postgraduate study was measured using three items adopted from Jepsen and Neumann (2010). All the above-mentioned constructs were measured on a 5-point Likert-type scale, with the end poles labelled as 'strongly disagree' and 'strongly agree'. Slight modifications were made to fit the context of higher T&H education.

3.2. Sampling and data collection

The population of this study consists of undergraduate T&H students in Turkey. While there are around 4.5 million students enrolled to different undergraduate programs across the country (YOK, 2021), the exact number of T&H students is unknown. However, based on the number of universities in Turkey, we estimate that there are at least 100 thousands students enrolled in different T&H programs. A convenience sampling method was used for the lack of financial resources. An online-based self-administered survey was used to collect data. The survey link was sent via email to undergraduate students enrolled to different T&H programs of six major universities in Turkey. First-year students were deliberately excluded as the beginning of their academic career coincided with the outbreak of Covid-19 and thus they had no traditional in-class education experience. Ethical approval was obtained from Istanbul Ayyansaray University Review Board (2021/01).

The questionnaire was originally developed in English and then translated into Turkish by a bilingual of English and Turkish. To ensure the accuracy of the translated version, a panel of three researchers with considerable relevant background were asked to review both the English and Turkish versions and provide feedback. Based on the feedback received, the Turkish translation was improved. To further enhance the clarity of the instrument and to ensure face validity, the questionnaire was pilot-tested on 34 T&H students. Following this final stage, no significant changes were made. The data were collected between December 2020 and January 2021. Following data collection cutting date, 267 valid questionnaires were collected. Table 1 presented the demographics profile of the T&H students. From the 267 respondents, 154 were female (57.7%) and 113 were male (42.3%). Most of the respondents were majoring at the Tourism Management department (41.2%) and were in their second year (53.6%).

Table 1
Demographic profile of sample.

Demographic Profile		N	%
<i>Gender</i>	Female	154	57.7
	Male	113	42.3
<i>Age</i>	18–20	114	42.7
	21–23	125	46.8
	24 and more	28	10.5
<i>High school background</i>	Tourism	74	27.7
	Non tourism	193	72.3
<i>Department</i>	Tourism Management	110	41.2
	Gastronomy and Culinary Arts	77	28.8
	Tourist Guidance	80	30
<i>Year of school</i>	Sophomore	143	53.6
	Junior	39	14.6
	Senior	85	31.8

3.3. Data analysis

Structural equation modelling was used to test the hypotheses. Partial Least Squares (PLS) method was used for the estimation of the model and structural model. Because PLS method is consistent to determine the structural equation modelling and it was suitable for small sample size (Hair et al., 2017). PLS algorithm procedures were performed to determine the significance levels of factor loadings, path coefficients and bootstrapping technique was performed to identify the significance of hypotheses. In addition, blindfolding was used to determine the Q^2 values (Ali et al., 2018).

4. Results

4.1. Measurement model

In order to evaluate the measurement model, outer loadings, average variance extracted (AVE) and composite reliability were examined. Convergent validity was tested through factor loadings, AVE and CR (Hair et al., 2017). During the confirmatory factor analysis, four items from perceived education quality and two items from academic self-efficacy were dropped. Table 2 shows that all factor loadings are above 0.603 and thus within the recommended values (Hair et al., 2017). As stated by Fornell and Larcker (1981), the AVE should be higher than 0.5. AVE values in our study are within the recommended values. Also, the lowest CR value is 0.896 thus that all CR values are within the recommended values (Hair et al., 2017). Table 2 shows the descriptive statistics for the items and constructs. All the mean scores of the perceived education quality (mean = 3.592), academic self-efficacy (mean = 3.827), intention to

Table 2
Measurement model.

Scale Item	Mean Score	Factor Loadings	Cronbach's Alpha	AVE	CR
Perceived Education Quality	3.592		0.903	0.509	0.919
PEQ1: Academic staff is responsive and accessible	3.925	0.748			
PEQ2: Course content develops students' knowledge	3.820	0.728			
PEQ3: Academic staff follow good teaching practices	3.666	0.835			
PEQ4: academic staff follow curriculum strictly	4.022	0.713			
PEQ5: Continuously evaluate the student's performance	3.558	0.786			
PEQ6: Department has sufficient academic staff	3.456	0.690			
PEQ7: academic staff treat all students in equal manner	3.591	0.719			
PEQ8: Collects feedback to provide better services	3.734	0.666			
PEQ9: Classrooms equipped with teaching aids	3.250	0.719			
PEQ11: Library has adequate academic resources	3.239	0.603			
PEQ13: Campus environment is convenient to study well	3.254	0.606			
Academic Self-Efficacy	3.827		0.866	0.520	0.896
ASE2: Get myself to study when there are other interesting things to do	3.737	0.734			
ASE3: Always concentrate on school subjects during class	3.801	0.816			
ASE4: Take good notes during class instruction	3.775	0.640			
ASE6: Plan my schoolwork for the day	3.655	0.708			
ASE7: Organize my schoolwork	3.767	0.782			
ASE8: Remember well information presented in class and textbooks	3.749	0.608			
ASE9: Arrange a place to study without distractions	4.074	0.695			
ASE10: Get myself to do schoolwork	4.056	0.763			
Intention to Join Industry	3.670		0.874	0.886	0.939
IJI1: I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career in the hospitality industry	3.722	0.959			
IJI2: I will certainly join the industry upon graduation	3.618	0.923			
Intention to Pursue Postgraduate Study	3.364		0.934	0.883	0.958
IPS1: I intent enrolling into a hospitality and tourism postgraduate program	3.427	0.944			
IPS2: I intent pursuing a Master's degree in hospitality and tourism	3.449	0.963			
IPS3: I intent pursuing a Ph.D. degree in hospitality and tourism	3.217	0.911			

Table 3
Discriminant validity.

	PEQ	ASE	IPS	IJI
Perceived Education Quality (PEQ)				
Academic Self-Efficacy (ASE)	0,418			
Intention to pursue Postgraduate Study (IPS)	0,191	0467		
Intention to Join Industry (IJI)	0,278	0401	0,302	

join industry (mean = 3.670) and intention to pursue postgraduate study (mean = 3.364) were above 3 on the 5-point Likert scales.

Discriminant validity can be assessed using Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) (Ali et al., 2018). As stated by Gold et al. (2001), HTMT values should be below 0.9. As shown in Table 3. All HTMT values are below the threshold indicating that discriminant validity is established.

4.2. Structural model

To test the significance of path coefficients and assess the hypothesized relationship, bootstrapping method was conducted with 5000 iterations. As shown in Table 4, four of the five hypotheses were supported. A significant relationship between perceived education quality and intention to join T&H industry was found ($\beta = 0.153, p < 0.05$). Perceived education quality was also found to be a significant predictor of academic self-efficacy ($\beta = 0.398, p < 0.01$). Academic self-efficacy significantly influenced intention to join the T&H industry ($\beta = 0.296, p < 0.01$) and intention to pursue postgraduate study ($\beta = 0.421, p < 0.01$). In addition, in this study all f^2 size effects were either small ($0.02 < f^2 < 0.15$) or medium size ($0.15 < f^2 < 0.35$).

Criterion for predictive relevance was tested with predictive sample reuse technique (Chin et al., 2008). As seen in Fig. 2, Q^2 for academic self-efficacy is 0.072, intention to join industry is 0.116 and intention to pursue postgraduate study is 0.155. Therefore, Q^2 academic self-efficacy, intention to join industry and intention to pursue postgraduate study were within the recommended values (Hair et al., 2017). Perceived education quality explained 14.8% of academic self-efficacy ($R^2 = 0.148$). Perceived education quality and academic self-efficacy predicted 13.8% of students' intention to join industry ($R^2 = 0.138$) and 17.5% of intention to pursue postgraduate study ($R^2 = 0.175$).

Table 4
Hypothesis testing.

Hypotheses	β	t- Statistics	Decision	f^2
H ₁ : Perceived Education Quality → Intention to Join Industry	0.153	2.164*	Supported	0.022
H ₂ : Perceived Education Quality → Intention to pursue Postgraduate Study	0.024	0.319	Not Supported	0.001
H ₃ : Perceived Education Quality → Academic Self-Efficacy	0.398	5.455**	Supported	0.178
H ₄ : Academic Self-Efficacy → Intention to Join Industry	0.296	4.118**	Supported	0.087
H ₅ : Academic Self-Efficacy → Intention to Pursue Postgraduate Study	0.421	6.861**	Supported	0.180

Notes. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$.

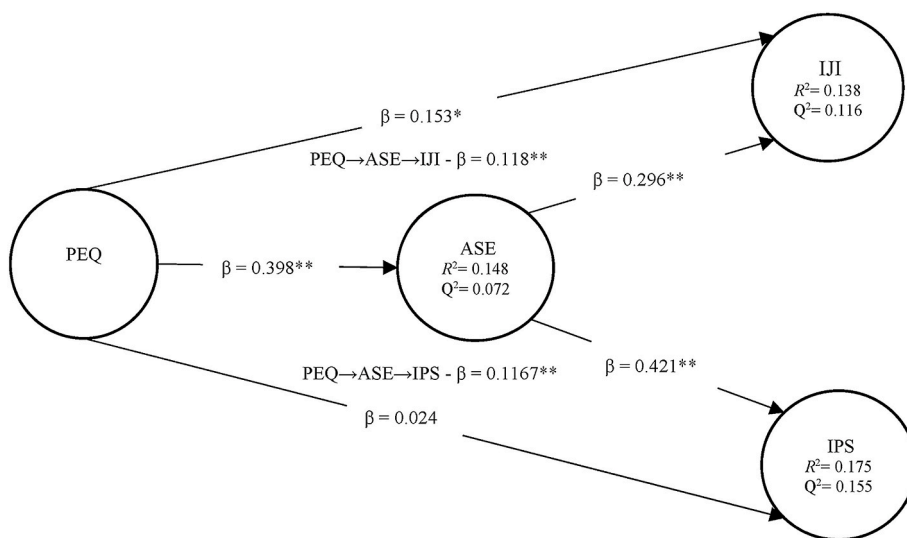


Fig. 2. Structural model.
Notes. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$.

Table 5
Mediating effects of academic self-efficacy.

Hypotheses	β	Standard Deviation	t- Statistics	Decision
Perceived Education Quality \rightarrow Academic Self-Efficacy \rightarrow Intention to Join Industry	0,118	0037	3110**	Supported
Perceived Education Quality \rightarrow Academic Self-Efficacy \rightarrow Intention to pursue Postgraduate Study	0,167	0038	4243**	Supported

Notes. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$.

4.3. Mediating effects

Table 5 shows the mediating effects of the academic self-efficacy of the relationship between perceived education quality and career intentions of T&H students. As stated by Preacher and Hayes (2004), mediating effects can be supported if confidence interval does not include value of zero and bootstrapped indirect effects are significant (Zhao et al., 2010). Our results indicate that academic self-efficacy fully mediated the relationship between perceived education quality and intention to pursue postgraduate study ($\beta = 0.167$ $p < 0.01$, BCa CI: [0.094–0.239]). Besides, academic self-efficacy partially mediated the relationship between perceived education quality and intention to join industry ($\beta = 0.118$ $p < 0.01$, BCa CI: [0.051–0.196]).

5. Discussion

The present study was intended to examine the relationships between perceived education quality, academic self-efficacy, intention to join industry, and intention to pursue postgraduate study. Several studies have highlighted the importance of perceived education quality (Calvo-Porrall et al., 2013; Latif et al., 2019), academic self-efficacy (Elias & MacDonald, 2007; Alt, 2015) and career choices of T&H students (Kusluvan & Kusluvan, 2000; Jepsen & Neumann, 2010). This study shows that students' perceived education quality has a significant impact on intention to join industry. This finding broadly supports the work of other studies in this area linking perceived education quality with intention to join industry (Jiang & Tribe, 2009; Mahfud et al., 2019). It has become evident that when tourism students perceive higher education quality, they are more likely to develop favorable attitudes towards joining the industry after graduation. Contrary to previous studies affirming a significant positive relationship between perceived education quality and intention to pursue postgraduate study (e.g. Jepsen & Neumann, 2010), the current study fails to confirm this relationship. A possible explanation for this might be that intention to pursue postgraduate study for T&H students can be influenced by different factors beyond perceived education quality such as satisfaction, trust, expectations, or individual factors (Kusluvan, 2000; Lu & Adler, 2009; Chuang & Dellmann-Jenkins, 2010; Robinson et al., 2016). Comparison of the findings with those of other studies confirms that perceived education quality has significant impact on academic self-efficacy (Alt, 2015; Cheng, 2020). In addition, as evidenced from the research (e.g. Chuang et al., 2007; Lee et al., 2019) that shows a significant relationship between academic self-efficacy and intention to join industry. Moreover, this study lends support to findings reported in previous studies (e.g. Varhegyi & Jepsen, 2009) indicating of a positive effect of academic self-efficacy on the intention to pursue postgraduate study.

One highlight of the current study is that academic self-efficacy fully mediates the relationship between perceived education quality and intention to pursue postgraduate study. In addition, academic self-efficacy partially mediated the relationship between perceived education quality and intention to join industry. Therefore, academic self-efficacy is not only a key factor for students' motivation and learning but it also assists higher education students in their decision-making process regarding their career choices (Bandura, 1997; Alt, 2015; Lee et al., 2019).

6. Implications and conclusion

The present study proposed and empirically tested a theoretical model suggesting relationships between perceived education quality, academic self-efficacy, intention to join the industry, and intention to pursue a post-graduate degree in tourism. Using data from undergraduate T&H students in six major universities in Turkey, the study largely confirmed the proposed model showing that perceived education quality was positively associated with T&H students' intention to join the industry but not to pursue a post-graduate degree in the field. As expected, it was found that academic self-efficacy was positively associated with T&H students' intention to join the industry and to pursue a postgraduate degree. An important highlight of this study is that academic self-efficacy appears to serve as an underlying mechanism explaining the positive of perceived education quality and T&H students' intention to pursue a postgraduate degree. The study makes several theoretical contributions and proposes some practical implications.

The study's contributions to existing conceptualizations are two-folds. First, despite abundant research on the outcomes of quality of education (McGuinness, 2003; Agarwala, 2008; Dicker et al., 2019; Lee et al., 2016), little has been done so far to understand how perceived quality of education can influence T&H students' career choices. Therefore, our findings extend existing theoretical assessments into the outcomes of education quality (Lee et al., 2016, 2019). Specifically, our study advocates that perceived education quality is positively associated with T&H students' intention to join the industry but not to pursue a postgraduate degree in the field. Second, the current study examines the intersection between perceived education quality and students' career choices through academic self-efficacy. To the authors' best knowledge, no study has examined the mediating effect of academic self-efficacy. Thus the present study adds to the existing body of knowledge by better understanding the complex relationship between quality of education and post-graduate intentions. In this vein, an interesting highlight of this study is that academic self-efficacy fully mediates the relationship between perceived education quality and T&H students' intention to pursue a postgraduate degree.

The present study revealed that the higher students perceive the quality of education, the more they are inclined to join the industry and the more they perceive themselves as being academically self-efficient. This finding highlights the importance of enhancing the quality of education since it can potentially result in positive outcomes. Therefore, not only should higher education institutions view the quality of education as a way to achieve academic success of their students but also as a way to shape students' post-graduate career decisions. Emphasis may be placed on recruiting qualified academic staff, designing efficient academic content, and providing adequate facilities. By doing so, quality of education can be enhanced while also fostering favorable intentions to join the industry.

Interestingly however, our findings fail to support our prediction of a positive relationship between quality of education and students' intention to pursue a post-graduate studies. This opens the door for more research into the antecedents of education quality and the extent to which it shapes students' post-graduate behaviors. Specifically, are T&H students who are not satisfied in their current programs more willing to pursue a post-graduate degree to offset this omission? In the same line, do T&H students who receive a high quality education gain a sense of self-fulfillment in their academic life and thus are less likely to consider pursuing a post-graduate studies? Having said that, our results also show that perceived education quality has an indirect effect on the intention to pursue a post-graduate degree within effect being transmitted through academic self-efficacy. An obvious implication is that higher education institutions should not only focus on education quality but also need to monitor their students' academic self-efficacy. This is particularly relevant to institutions offering post-graduate degrees in the field of T&H. There may also be an opportunity for the industry to collaborate with higher education institutions since the outcomes of the latter influences the quality of the workforce that joins the industry.

Despite providing significant findings that can advance our understanding of the antecedents of T&H students' postgraduate behavioral intentions, the study is not free of potential limitations. First, the cross-sectional research design limits generalizability and thus further research using longitudinal and other research designs would potentially yield more reliable and generalizable findings. Second, although the initial idea of this research came before the outbreak of the pandemic, the data were collected while several restrictions and measurements were in place including distant teaching. We doubt that the uncertainty brought by the pandemic might have influenced how students' view their postgraduate plans. Hence, validating the proposed model after the pandemic may be necessary (Demirdelen Alrawadieh, 2021; Zhong et al., 2021). Moreover, this study has only considered perceived education quality, academic self-efficacy, intention to join industry, and intention to pursue postgraduate study in T&H. Future research should consider different constructs including academic achievement, academic awareness or knowledge that might have an impact on career choice of T&H students. Future research may also look into the outcomes of education quality and academic self-efficacy that go beyond career choices of T&H students. This may involve immediate outcomes such as relationships with academic staff and student community, and quality of university life.

CRedit authorship contribution statement

Onur Cuneyt Kahraman: Conceptualization, Methodology, Formal analysis, Data curation, Methodology, Writing – original draft, Writing- Reviewing and Editing. **Derya Demirdelen Alrawadieh:** Conceptualization, Data curation, Writing – original draft, Writing- Reviewing and Editing.

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