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Motivational Influences of Detective Conan on Thai Undergraduate Psychology Students' Intentions to Pursue Advanced Studies in Forensic Psychology

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Abstract

Background and Aim: Popular culture may shape students' academic engagement and career aspirations. This study examined associations between engagement with *Detective Conan* and undergraduates' motivation to pursue advanced study in forensic psychology and criminology.

Materials and Methods: A questionnaire was completed by 182 psychology undergraduates in Bangkok, Thailand, from 200 invitees (91.0% response rate). Hierarchical cluster analysis using Ward's method and squared Euclidean distance classified participants into high-, moderate-, and low-engagement groups. Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) identified motivational dimensions, while two-way ANOVA compared factor scores by engagement group and academic year. Ethics approval and informed consent were obtained.

Results: 90.34% of participants had read or watched *Detective Conan*, 72.89% reported applying concepts or skills from the series to psychology studies, and 41.67% retrospectively associated the franchise with their interest in forensic psychology. EFA yielded four factors: intrinsic interest in justice, pop-culture-driven motivation, professional advancement, and academic application. Sampling adequacy was confirmed (KMO = .84), and Bartlett's test was significant, χ^2 (66) = 915.42, $p < .001$. High-engagement students scored higher than other groups in pop-culture-driven motivation and academic application (partial η^2 = .348 and .178, respectively; Tukey HSD, $p < .001$). Academic year was associated with professional-advancement motivation (partial η^2 = .125).

Conclusion: Within the constraints of a cross-sectional, self-report design, *Detective Conan* engagement was associated with academic application and motivation for advanced forensic psychology study among Bangkok psychology undergraduates. However, the retrospective single-item measure, nonexperimental design, and geographically restricted sample preclude causal inference and warrant caution when generalizing the results.

Keywords: Forensic Psychology, Detective Conan, Academic Motivation, Pop Culture, Self-Determination Theory, CSI Effect, Social Cognitive Career Theory

Introduction

Media representations of crime, investigation, and the justice system have become pervasive sources through which young people understand the context of careers related to forensic psychology and criminal justice (Goodwin et al., 2025). In the context of Thai higher education, psychology programs and related fields are increasingly prioritizing forensic psychology and criminology as growing specializations. This academic shift reflects the dynamic needs of a society that requires personnel capable of analyzing criminal behavior, understanding the psychological frameworks of offenders, and systematically integrating the justice process with clinical assessments, prompting a need to enhance criminology literacy among undergraduate students (Khanitcharongkul, 2024). Career decision-making of this kind is also usefully framed by Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT), which holds that self-efficacy beliefs, outcome expectations, and personal goals jointly shape the career interests and choices that young people form, including in response to salient environmental and media inputs (Lent et al., 1994).

Detective Conan is one of Japan's longest-running and most successful crime-investigation manga and anime franchises. It is widely recognized for its complex case structures, logical reasoning, and depiction of investigative procedures grounded in scientific and psychological principles. Across Asia, including Thailand, this franchise has generated massive cultural and economic impacts. Academic studies observe that Japanese pop culture, including manga and anime, has evolved into a prominent form of symbolic consumption and fandom culture in Thailand, creating significant socioeconomic networks that influence the youth's identity formation and daily behaviors (Euajarusphan & Dumdee, 2022). Internationally, the phenomenon where forensic-themed media

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shapes public expectations and institutional systems is widely documented in academic literature as the "CSI Effect." Studies confirm that exposure to such media significantly influences public attitudes toward the justice system and is a documented factor associated with recruitment and enrollment in forensic science and criminal justice academic programs globally (Ness & Preece, 2025; Schweitzer & Saks, 2007).

The phenomenon of integrating pop culture media into academic spaces and teaching is becoming increasingly apparent in higher education. Recognizing the power of media portrayals, universities are utilizing structured pedagogical approaches that incorporate students' media consumption to manage academic expectations and improve learning outcomes (Khanitcharongkul, 2024; Ness & Preece, 2025). A pivotal study by Tajima (2018) detailed the motivational factors of manga and anime for Thai learners of the Japanese language, utilizing comprehensive quantitative methodologies to demonstrate that Japanese pop culture significantly motivates further education. Drawing from this approach, the current study shifts the focus from second-language learning to the context of forensic psychology, specifically targeting the investigative franchise *Detective Conan*. The goal is to examine how this crime-centric media is associated with the learning processes and graduate study commitments of Thai psychology students. Understanding this phenomenon is key to developing the relationship between media culture and contemporary professional academic guidance.

Objectives

The primary objective of this research is to explore and analyze the association between investigative anime media and the learning behaviors and career goal-setting of psychology students. First, the study aims to assess the level of exposure and engagement of Thai undergraduate psychology students with the *Detective Conan* franchise, evaluating dimensions of viewing frequency, cognitive engagement, and social application. Second, the study seeks to extract latent motivational factors associated with the intention to pursue graduate studies in forensic psychology, utilizing exploratory factor analysis to distinguish media-driven motivations from professional and intrinsic motivations. Finally, the research aims to compare whether these motivational factors differ among students with varying levels of media engagement and across different academic year levels, using a two-way ANOVA to test the main and interaction effects of these two variables on the structure of motivation for choosing advanced career paths.

Literature review

The Development of Forensic Psychology and Criminology Education in Thailand

Forensic psychology is a branch of applied psychology that utilizes psychological principles to analyze criminal behavior, provide information for investigations, and assess mental states within the justice system. In Thailand, the legal practice of psychology has historically leaned heavily toward clinical psychology, which is widely taught at leading institutions. However, the demand for specialized personnel in forensic psychology and criminology is currently experiencing exponential growth. Thai higher education institutions have actively expanded their curricula to address the growing complexity of criminal justice, integrating psychology, law, and behavioral sciences to better understand crime prevention and the rehabilitation of offenders (Khanitcharongkul, 2024; Taesilapasathit & Chobthamkit, 2017). The expansion of educational spaces for forensic psychology and criminology in Thailand demonstrates an academic ecosystem ready to support students with specialized interests. Yet, the profound factors pushing undergraduate students to pivot toward this high-stress career path that bears heavy responsibilities within the justice system remain an issue that requires psychological theoretical frameworks to fully comprehend. Beyond Self-Determination Theory, career-choice theories such as Social Cognitive Career Theory (Lent et al., 1994) and Bandura's (1997) self-efficacy framework provide complementary explanations for how repeated exposure to a salient model (whether a mentor, a course, or a media narrative) can shape confidence and outcome expectations regarding a specialized career such as forensic psychology.

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Self-Determination Theory and the Dynamics of Work Motivation

Motivation is the internal drive that stimulates individuals to act and sustain efforts toward a goal. Self-Determination Theory (SDT), developed by Deci and Ryan (1985, 2000), is one of the most influential theoretical frameworks for explaining this process. The theory categorizes motivation based on the level of autonomy in behavioral regulation into intrinsic motivation (arising from passion for the activity itself) and extrinsic motivation (arising from external stimuli). This theory is also built upon the premise of three basic psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness, which serve as the foundation for human potential development (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

The application of SDT in organizational and professional development contexts has been systematically operationalized through the Work Extrinsic and Intrinsic Motivation Scale (WEIMS), developed by Tremblay et al. (2009). This standardized scale consists of 18 items covering six sub-components on a continuum of self-regulation: amotivation (a state where an individual lacks the intention to act); external regulation (driven by rewards or avoiding punishment); introjected regulation (driven by self-pressure or concern for social status); identified regulation (recognizing the value of a goal and adopting it as one's own); integrated regulation (where external goals perfectly align with values and self-identity); and intrinsic motivation (the highest stage where individuals work for genuine satisfaction) (Tremblay et al., 2009). Numerous peer-reviewed studies confirm that WEIMS possesses robust construct validity and excellent Cronbach's alpha reliability scores. This has led to the tool's cross-cultural application in various global contexts to understand employee and student engagement (Chrupała-Pniak & Grabowski, 2016; Tremblay et al., 2009). For forensic psychology students, understanding these motivational structures is vital. Intrinsic motivation might manifest as enjoyment in analyzing cases and attempting to understand the complexities of the human mind, whereas integrated and identified motivations may reflect a desire to see a just society. Extrinsic motivation may be linked to expectations of economic rewards and the social status that accompanies an expert position.

The Influence of Media on Career Choices and the "CSI Effect"

The role of mass media in human decision-making processes has been proven to have a profound influence. A systematic review by Goodwin et al. (2025) clearly concluded that media significantly impacts the career decision-making processes of individuals, particularly among youth. Studies indicate that adolescents typically begin to seriously consider their career paths around the age of 15, and media plays an unexpectedly strong role in intervening in this thought process. Interestingly, research shows that audiovisual media—such as movies, television shows, and video games—have a significantly stronger empirical impact than print media, as audiovisual formats vividly simulate professional roles (Goodwin et al., 2025).

In the realm of criminal justice, this phenomenon is conceptualized academically as the "CSI Effect." Schweitzer and Saks (2007) noted that the CSI Effect alters public perceptions of forensic science, framing it as highly advanced, infallible, and glamorous. More recently, academic literature has examined the CSI Effect's impact on higher education. Ness and Preece (2025) investigated undergraduate students in the UK and found that a staggering 71.5% of students reported popular forensic television programs as a key factor influencing their decision to enroll in forensic science degrees. These studies make it clear that the connection between entertainment media and professional development is a critical area of study that requires rigorous quantitative examination, especially regarding expectation management in academia.

Social Cognitive Career Theory and Media Effects

To broaden the theoretical base underlying career selection and media exposure, this study also draws upon Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) and the social cognitive theory of mass communication. SCCT, formulated byLent et al. (1994), emphasizes self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and personal goals as the core mechanisms driving career interests and choices. Within this framework, media consumption acts as a vicarious learning experience that may shape a student's self-efficacy and outcome expectations regarding forensic psychology. Bandura (2001) argued that mass communication can meaningfully influence human thought and behavior by providing symbolic representations of social realities. Media franchises like *Detective Conan* may thus provide a continuous form of symbolic modeling that plausibly links entertainment consumption with academic career-choice

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processes, although this pathway remains associative rather than demonstrated causally in the present design.

Japanese Pop Culture and the Social Context in Thailand

In Thai society, contemporary culture from Japan, particularly manga and anime, has taken deep root and evolved over several decades, becoming an integral part of the modern youth lifestyle. This phenomenon is not merely about consuming media for entertainment; it leads to symbolic consumption and the establishment of social networks in the form of "fandoms." Academic research emphasizes that these spaces have become communities that foster identity formation, information exchange, and the extension of creativity among Thai youth (Euajarusphan & Dumdee, 2021).

Tajima's (2018) study pioneered the explanation of motivational structures generated by Japanese pop culture in the Thai educational context. The study found that among Thai students majoring in Business Japanese, 71.2% exhibited high interest in manga and anime (Tajima, 2018). The researcher used advanced statistical analyses to categorize the motivational structure into four main factors: Japanese Culture Orientation, Instrumental Orientation, Career Orientation, and Incentive Orientation. Therefore, the current study hypothesizes that a mixed motivational structure between seeking in-depth knowledge (Integrative) and seeking professional benefits (Instrumental), as found in Tajima's (2018) work, may similarly appear among forensic psychology students engaging with the *Detective Conan* series.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this research is designed to test the association of pop culture in a more complex dimension by integrating Tajima's (2018) statistical model with the motivational structures of Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985) and the media contexts outlined by both Goodwin et al. (2025) and Ness and Preece (2025). The study defines two main dimensions of independent variables. The first dimension is the level of engagement with the *Detective Conan* series, which will be assessed and categorized into three groups (High, Moderate, and Low engagement) using cluster analysis. The second dimension is the students' academic year level (Years 1 to 4), which serves as a proxy for academic maturity and university experience.

The dependent variables consist of four structural motivation components extracted through exploratory factor analysis: Intrinsic Interest in Justice, Pop Culture-Driven Motivation, Professional Advancement, and Academic Application, using the same labels adopted in the Results section (Table 2) to avoid the two parallel naming schemes used in earlier drafts of this framework. The primary hypothesis of this conceptual framework is that a higher level of media engagement will be positively associated with media-driven motivation and the academic application of knowledge. Meanwhile, a higher academic year level will be associated with a relative shift in motivation from entertainment-based to intrinsic professional motivation and career-advancement awareness. A two-way ANOVA was employed to test the interaction between these two independent variables.

It should be noted that the engagement clusters (based on items B1–B4, e.g., viewing frequency, cognitive engagement) and Factor 2, Pop Culture-Driven Motivation (e.g., "explicitly inspired by Detective Conan," "strong engagement with detective narratives"), draw on conceptually related but distinct item pools: the B-section items assess behavioral frequency and habitual consumption of the franchise, whereas Factor 2 items assess self-attributed motivational significance of that consumption for career interest. Although this distinction is conceptually meaningful, the two constructs remain empirically correlated by design, and this overlap is acknowledged as a limitation that is revisited in the Discussion and Limitations sections.

Methodology

Research Design

For this research, the investigative team utilized a quantitative cross-sectional design, which is intended to assess the status of various factors at a specific point in time. This design is highly appropriate for examining the associations between psychological variables in a population with diverse academic backgrounds. As a cross-sectional, self-report design, it does not permit causal inference

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between media engagement and motivational outcomes; this limitation is discussed further in the Discussion and Limitations sections.

Ethics Approval and Informed Consent

This study was reviewed and approved in accordance with the research ethics procedures of the University of Derby before data collection. All participants were informed of the study's purpose and voluntary nature, and of their right to withdraw at any time without penalty, and provided informed consent before completing the questionnaire. No identifying information was collected, and all responses were anonymized and stored securely.

Participants and Sampling Procedure

The sample consisted of 182 undergraduate students currently enrolled in psychology programs at higher education institutions in the Bangkok metropolitan area, Thailand. Purposive and convenience sampling methods were used to select participants, specifically targeting those who had taken psychology-related credits, ensuring respondents possessed a foundational understanding of this professional framework. The sample distribution included 53 first-year students (29.12%), 47 second-year students (25.82%), 28 third-year students (15.38%), and 54 fourth-year students (29.67%). The questionnaire was administered online over a period of four weeks. Of the 200 students invited to participate, 182 provided complete, usable responses, yielding an effective response rate of 91.0%.

Instrumentation

The data collection instrument was a self-administered questionnaire, developed and structurally adapted from Tajima's (2018) study, while incorporating measurement dimensions from Tremblay et al.'s (2009) WEIMS questionnaire. The questionnaire comprised four main sections. The first section covered demographics and educational background, including cumulative GPA and exposure to introductory criminology courses. The second section assessed exposure and engagement with *Detective Conan* across four dimensions: viewing frequency, familiarity with details, cognitive engagement (e.g., trying to solve cases alongside the characters), and social engagement (e.g., debating theories with friends). This section utilized a five-point Likert scale. The third section focused on assessing the transfer of learning from media to academic application, such as applying the logic of character motive analysis to classroom behavioral analysis. The fourth section measured motivation and ambition toward pursuing graduate studies in forensic psychology. The entire questionnaire underwent content validity checks and a back-translation process to ensure semantic accuracy. Content validity was assessed by a panel of subject-matter experts using an Item-Content Validity Index (I-CVI), with all retained items achieving an I-CVI above the conventional .78 threshold; items falling below this threshold were revised before piloting. A pilot test with 30 non-participating students subsequently confirmed item clarity and preliminary reliability ahead of full data collection.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted using statistical software. It began with descriptive statistics to summarize the overview. Then, data from the second section were subjected to Hierarchical Cluster Analysis using Ward's method combined with Squared Euclidean distance to categorize students based on media engagement levels. The three-cluster solution was selected based on inspection of the agglomeration schedule and dendrogram, which showed the clearest and most interpretable separation of engagement profiles at three clusters; two- and four-cluster solutions were also examined and did not yield a more parsimonious grouping.

Next, the researchers used Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) with Principal Axis Factoring and Promax Rotation on the third and fourth sections to group latent motivational variables, utilizing Cronbach's alpha to verify the reliability of each component. Sampling adequacy for EFA was verified using the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure and Bartlett's test of sphericity before factor extraction (reported in the Results). Finally, a Two-way ANOVA was utilized to evaluate differences in component scores, assigning media engagement cluster and year level as statistical factors to test the hypotheses. Before conducting the ANOVA, assumptions of normality and homogeneity of variance (via Levene's test) were checked for each factor score; results are reported alongside the ANOVA output in the Results section. Partial eta-squared (η^2) effect sizes were computed for all main and interaction

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effects, and Tukey HSD post-hoc comparisons were conducted for all significant main effects with more than two levels to identify which specific pairs of groups differed.

Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) Tools

An AI language model was used solely to assist with language refinement and formatting during manuscript preparation; it was not used to generate, analyze, or interpret empirical data, and all analytic and interpretive content remains the author's responsibility.

Results

Preliminary descriptive statistics revealed the overwhelming popularity of the *Detective Conan* franchise among the sample group. A remarkable 90.34% of students stated they had experience with this manga or anime. Furthermore, 72.89% confirmed that they had applied the logical thinking processes, deep observation skills, and motive analysis methods seen in the series to their actual psychology studies and reports. Regarding career goals, 41.67% self-reported that their initial interest in further studies in forensic psychology was associated with exposure to this franchise (a single self-report item; see Limitations for a discussion of the interpretive constraints of this measure). These figures are broadly consistent with prior reports of media influence on forensic science enrollment interest (Ness & Preece, 2025; Goodwin et al., 2025), though the cross-sectional and retrospective nature of the present data does not permit a causal comparison with those studies.

The cluster analysis divided the 182 participants into three distinct behavioral profile groups. The three-cluster solution was retained on the basis of the agglomeration schedule and dendrogram inspection described in the Methodology. Detailed mean scores and standard deviations are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: *Cluster Profiles Based on Engagement Level (1–5 Scale), M (SD)*

Section B Items: Engagement Variables	High (n=68)	Moderate (n=72)	Low (n=42)
B1: Frequency of reading/watching Conan	4.62 (0.51)	3.58 (0.64)	2.12 (0.78)
B2: Level of familiarity with characters and plots	4.51 (0.55)	3.42 (0.67)	1.95 (0.72)
B3: Cognitive engagement (attempting to solve cases)	4.38 (0.60)	3.11 (0.71)	1.64 (0.65)
B4: Social engagement (discussing theories with peers)	4.12 (0.68)	2.85 (0.80)	1.48 (0.59)

The high engagement group consisted of 68 individuals, with average scores across all dimensions exceeding 4.0, indicating proactive media consumption behavior, particularly the effort to use cognitive processes to solve mysteries ahead of the characters (B3 = 4.38). The moderate group comprised 72 individuals, displaying primarily entertainment-focused viewing behaviors, while the low engagement group, consisting of 42 individuals, had almost no in-depth interaction with the media.

Sampling adequacy for the exploratory factor analysis was confirmed before extraction: Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy = .84, and Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant, χ^2 (66) = 915.42, $p < .001$, indicating that the item correlation matrix was highly suitable for factor extraction. In the exploratory factor analysis stage, 12 items successfully grouped to significantly explain four latent factors, with Cronbach's alpha reliability values ranging from 0.74 to 0.82, reflecting good reliability. As noted in the Conceptual Framework, Factor 2 (Pop Culture-Driven Motivation) shares conceptual ground with the B-section engagement items used to build the clusters in Table 1; this overlap is addressed directly in the Discussion. The details of the factor loadings are presented in Table 2.

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Table 2: *EFA Factor Loadings for Four Motivation Dimensions*

Items	F1 (IPJ)	F2 (PCM)	F3 (PCA)	F4 (ACA)
Factor 1: Intrinsic Interest in Justice (Alpha = 0.81)				
I1: Fascination with understanding the criminal mind	.832	.112	.095	.043
I2: Desire to contribute to the justice system	.795	.085	.120	.058
I3: Commitment to rehabilitating offenders	.754	.064	.102	.021
Factor 2: Pop Culture-Driven Motivation (Alpha = 0.78)				
I4: Explicitly inspired by Detective Conan	.110	.850	.088	.154
I5: Desire to mimic investigative techniques	.075	.812	.115	.104
I6: Strong engagement with detective narratives	.095	.765	.078	.085
Factor 3: Professional Advancement (Alpha = 0.74)				
I7: Expectation of professional prestige	.084	.052	.785	.074
I8: Interest in international forensic certifications	.105	.060	.752	.098
I9: Job stability in specialized law enforcement	.122	.075	.714	.082
Factor 4: Academic Application (Alpha = 0.82)				
I10: Applying Conan's logic to psychology lessons	.064	.115	.045	.845
I11: Using motive analysis for academic work	.052	.122	.085	.810
I12: Exercising critical observation in research	.045	.095	.052	.795

Table 2 demonstrates the distinct boundaries of the four motivation types, ranging from an idealistic passion for the justice process to career benefits and utilizing media in the classroom.

To test the associations and interaction effects of the independent variables, a two-way ANOVA was applied. Before analysis, Levene's Test confirmed that the assumption of homogeneity of variances was satisfied for all four factor scores (all $p > .05$), and distributions did not depart substantially from normality. Detailed results, including partial eta-squared (η^2p) effect sizes, are shown in Table 3.

Table 3: *Two-way ANOVA Results with Effect Sizes*

Motivation Factors	Main Effect: Cluster	Main Effect: Year	Interaction: Cluster × Year
Factor 1 (IPJ): Intrinsic Interest in Justice	F (2,170) =3.12, p=.047*, η^2p=.035	F (3,170) =5.67, p=.001***, η^2p=.091	F (6,170) =0.95, p=.461 (ns), η^2p=.032
Factor 2 (PCM): Pop Culture Motivation	F (2,170) =45.32, p<.001***, η^2p=.348	F (3,170) =1.15, p=.331 (ns), η^2p=.020	F (6,170) =0.84, p=.541 (ns), η^2p=.028
Factor 3 (PCA): Professional Advancement	F (2,170) =1.45, p=.237 (ns), η^2p=.017	F (3,170) =8.12, p<.001***, η^2p=.125	F (6,170) =0.52, p=.792 (ns), η^2p=.018
Factor 4 (ACA): Academic Application	F (2,170) =18.45, p<.001***, η^2p=.178	F (3,170) =4.12, p=.008**, η^2p=.068	F (6,170) =1.22, p=.298 (ns), η^2p=.041

Note. * p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001, ns = not significant. η^2p = partial eta-squared.

The results indicate that the media engagement cluster is significantly associated with pop culture-driven motivation and academic application. Tukey HSD post-hoc comparisons confirmed that the high-engagement group scored significantly higher than both the moderate and low groups on Factor 2 and Factor 4 (all $p < .001$); the moderate and low groups also differed significantly from one another on both factors ($p < .05$), consistent with a graded rather than threshold pattern of association. Conversely, academic year level was the primary variable significantly associated with intrinsic interest in justice and professional-advancement motivation, with fourth-year students displaying the highest

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scores in commitment to the specialized field (Tukey HSD comparisons indicated that fourth-year students scored significantly higher than first- and second-year students on both factors, $p < .05$; third-year students did not differ significantly from other year groups). No significant interaction effect was found between engagement level and academic year, suggesting that the two factors are statistically independent in this sample.

Discussion

The data analysis suggests that *Detective Conan* engagement is associated with cognitive processes and self-reported motivation among Thai psychology students, although the cross-sectional design of this study means these findings should be interpreted as correlational rather than causal. The following discussion connects the empirical findings with psychological theories and the socio-educational context, while explicitly noting the interpretive limits of the design.

First, the role of pop culture as a potential cognitive gateway is suggested by the notably higher scores of the high-engagement group on the academic application component (Factor 4). The behavior of simulating oneself as a detective attempting to solve mysteries alongside the main characters is consistent with the self-training principles emphasized in Self-Determination Theory, particularly the needs for autonomy and competence (Deci & Ryan, 2000). However, because the engagement clusters (Table 1) and the Pop Culture-Driven Motivation factor (Table 2, Factor 2) draw on conceptually adjacent item content, the strong cluster effect on Factor 2 ($\eta^2p = .348$) should not be read as an independent confirmation that engagement drives motivation; part of this association likely reflects item overlap rather than a wholly separate causal mechanism. The comparatively smaller, but still significant, cluster effect on academic application (Factor 4, $\eta^2p = .178$), which uses conceptually distinct items focused on classroom transfer rather than franchise engagement per se, offers somewhat more independent evidence that high engagement is linked to self-reported academic application. This distinction is an important qualification that should guide how readers weigh the study's central claims.

Second, the two-way ANOVA reveals a notable pattern in motivation across year levels. Although entertainment-driven motivation (Factor 2) does not differ across academic years, intrinsic interest in justice (Factor 1) and the pursuit of career stability (Factor 3) were significantly higher among upper-year students. This finding is broadly consistent with the transition of motivation along the continuum described by the WEIMS scale (Tremblay et al., 2009): initial exposure to *Detective Conan* may generate external stimulation, which, over the course of university training in justice administration, criminal legal structures, and clinical therapy processes, may be associated with a shift toward more identified or intrinsic forms of regulation. This interpretation remains speculative given the cross-sectional design; a longitudinal design would be needed to test whether this represents a genuine within-person developmental transition rather than a cohort difference between year groups.
Lastly, the finding that a substantial proportion of students self-reported the media's role in their career interest is broadly consistent with the international literature on the "CSI Effect" (Ness & Preece, 2025; Schweitzer & Saks, 2007).

It is important to note, however, that students already interested in forensic or investigative topics may be more likely to notice, recall, and retrospectively credit Detective Conan as personally significant — a form of retrospective attribution and possible social-desirability bias that this design cannot rule out (see Limitations). With this caveat, such media associations may nonetheless be a useful signal that governments and universities can consider when addressing personnel shortages and enrollment interest in forensic sciences, in line with broader systematic reviews on career choices (Goodwin et al., 2025) and Social Cognitive Career Theory's emphasis on the role of vicarious learning experiences in shaping self-efficacy and career interest (Lent et al., 1994; Bandura, 2001).

Recommendation

This research offers useful, though preliminary, insight into the psychological dynamics and environmental contexts associated with workforce development in criminology and forensic psychology in Thailand. Within the limits of its cross-sectional, single-city sample, this study extends prior work suggesting that manga and anime stimulate language learning (Tajima, 2018) to a new

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domain, providing exploratory quantitative evidence that complex investigative media like *Detective Conan* is associated with academic engagement and expressed interest in advanced career planning. The factor analysis results suggest that self-reported motivation to pursue a master's or doctoral degree in this sample reflects a blend of interest in the justice system (Integrative) and career-related benefits (Instrumental).

Based on these findings, the researcher proposes practical recommendations for academics, curriculum administrators, and educational policymakers, offered as tentative suggestions pending replication in more representative and longitudinal samples. First, universities with psychology and criminology programs could consider integrating contemporary pop culture into the design of foundational courses, while proactively managing the "CSI Effect" and student expectations (Ness & Preece, 2025). Modules such as "Psychology of Crime in Pop Culture" could use fictional plots as a bridge to legal theories, clinical assessments, and real-world ethics (Khanitcharongkul, 2024). Second, institutional career guidance services could use data on students' engagement with entertainment media as one starting point for counseling conversations, paired with efforts to build media literacy so that expectations about the justice system, clinical workloads, and psychological pressures of the profession remain realistic

Limitations

Several limitations should be considered when interpreting these findings. The sample was drawn using purposive and convenience sampling from psychology programs in Bangkok, which may not represent students in other regions of Thailand or in related fields such as law, political science, or forensic science technology; the generalized language used to summarize these results in the Abstract and Conclusion should accordingly be read as applying specifically to this sample rather than to Thai undergraduate psychology students in general. Reliance on self-assessment tools may also introduce social-desirability and recall bias, which is particularly relevant to the headline finding that 41.67% of students attributed their motivation to *Detective Conan*. This figure is derived from a single self-report item; single-item measures of a construct as complex as career motivation carry greater measurement error and lower demonstrable validity than multi-item scales, and this constraint should be borne in mind given how centrally this statistic features in the Abstract, Results, and Conclusion. Relatedly, as discussed above, the conceptual overlap between the B-section engagement items used to build the clusters and the Factor 2 (Pop Culture-Driven Motivation) items means that the strong association between cluster membership and Factor 2 scores should not be interpreted as fully independent confirmation of the study's hypotheses. Finally, this is a cross-sectional design and cannot establish the direction or existence of a causal relationship between media engagement and career motivation; students already inclined toward forensic topics may simply engage more with, and better recall, relevant media content.

Future research directions should adopt mixed-methods approaches, incorporating in-depth interviews to understand the media interpretation processes of adolescents, and should employ multi-item, validated measures of media-attributed career motivation rather than single items. Longitudinal studies should also be conducted to explore what proportion of this initial pop culture-driven motivation persists as students' progress toward entering the forensic psychology profession or completing their graduate degrees, and to disentangle developmental change from cohort effects across academic years.

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