

Career Awareness and Career Preparations of Psychology Students in the South of Vietnam



Tuan Pham Van

Faculty of Humanities & Social Sciences, Van Lang University, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam.

ABSTRACT: Career awareness and career preparation have a close relationship with each other and have a great influence on motivation, learning outcomes and job opportunities of students after graduation. Therefore, these are important issues that need to be studied and clarified. This study focuses on analyzing the career awareness and career preparation of 431 psychology students at a number of universities in the South of Vietnam. The study used the survey method by questionnaire, the scales in the questionnaire were designed by the research team. Student's career perception is considered in terms of: perception of job position, workplace, career values and career standards. Research results showed that the career awareness of psychology students is still limited, and their preparation for a career is incomplete. There is a strong positive correlation between career awareness and career preparation of psychology students. Research results indicate that educational institutions and lecturers need to pay more attention to raising career awareness for psychology students, thereby promoting students' career preparation.

KEYWORDS: Career awareness, Career preparation, Students, Psychology, Vietnam.

1. INTRODUCTION

Higher education is vocational education, the main purpose is to train workers with high qualifications, knowledge, skills and good professional attitudes for the development of science and society. In general, education at university has many differences from education in high school in terms of purpose, content, method, form, etc.

To study effectively at university, each student needs to have the right motivation and study methods, besides being fully aware of the field of study and well prepared for his future career.

Many researchers as well as practice have shown that students who have a correct and complete awareness of the field of study and have good preparation for their future career right in the process of studying at university, after graduation often have more advantages such as confidence in job search, high job opportunities and easy career success (Brewer, 2009; Thuy, 2017).

Occupational awareness and career preparation is an issue that has been concerned and considered by many researchers from different perspectives (Ferrara et al., 1985; Cherry & Gear, 1987; Supper, 1994; Jonathan, 1998; Yu et al., 2010; Hyland, 2019).

Most researchers consider students' professional awareness in each specific field: Duc (2014) studied students' perception of teaching profession; Giang (2019), Huy (2019) analyzes the professional perception of students in the tourism industry,

In addition, a number of authors delve into students' perceptions of career skills Oanh et al. (2017), Duong (2021),

Some other authors have studied occupational perception in relation to students' career decisions (Hilton, 1962; Fouad et al., 2006; Jackson & Wilton, 2016).

As can be seen, there have been quite a few studies in the world and in Vietnam discussing students' professional awareness in different aspects. However, studies on career awareness and career preparation of psychology students are relatively few.

Identifying the current state of career awareness and career preparation for students majoring in Psychology is essential, as well as providing useful information for training institutions and lecturers, so that measures can be taken. Appropriate education to improve the training effectiveness of psychology students.

Research objective and hypothesis

On the basis of inheriting the research results of the authors in Vietnam and around the world, this study was conducted to describe the career awareness of psychology students in 4 aspects: job position, professional values, workplace, professional standards. Besides, it also examines students' career preparation, as well as shows the relationship between career awareness and students' career preparation.

This study focuses on proving the following hypotheses:

H1. In general, the career awareness of psychology students is still limited.

H2. The career preparation of psychology students is not really good/adequate.

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H3. There is a positive correlation between career awareness and career preparation of psychology students.

2. METHODOLOGY AND TOOLS

Participants

The study was conducted on a sample of 431 students who were randomly selected among students studying psychology at universities in the South, Vietnam.

Measurent

Career awareness of psychology students is measured through 4 scales: perception of job position, perception of career value, perception of working place, perception of professional standards. Students' career preparation is measured on a scale. These scales are designed by the research team on the basis of studying relevant theories. All 5 scales are designed according to a 5-level Likert scale.

Data analysis

The survey results were processed using the statistical software SPSS 20.0.

The mean (M) and standard deviation (SD) were calculated for each scale. The higher mean, the better career awareness; the better career preparation.

Comparative analysis was used to assess the difference in students' level of career awareness by gender, school year.

Correlation analysis was used to examine the correlation between occupational perception and student career preparation.

3. RESULTS

Description of the survey sample

Table 1. Distribution of survey sample by sex and school year

		Number	%
Gender	Male	116	26.9
	Female	315	73.1
School years	First-year	113	26.2
	Second-year	139	32.3
	Third-year	111	25.8
	Fourth-year	68	15.8

The study sample included 431 psychology students. Including 116 male students and 315 female students. By academic year, there are 113 first-year students, 139 second-year students, 111 third-year students and 68 fourth-year students.

The results of testing the reliability of the scale

Table 2. Results of reliability analysis of variables by Cronbach'Alpha

No.	Variables	Observed variables	Cronbach' Alpha
1	Job positions	9	.865
2	Career values	3	.827
3	Working places	6	.870
4	Career standards	6	.947
5	Career preparations	5	.856

The results of Cronbach's Alpha coefficient analysis showed that 04 scales of career awareness and 01 scale of student's career preparation have Cronbach'Alpha coefficient > 0.6 . This shows that the scales built are statistically significant and reach the required confidence coefficient.

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Student's career awareness survey results

Table 3. Perception of career-related aspects

No.	Aspects	Mean	SD
1	Job positions	3.85	.69
2	Career values	4.28	.70
3	Working places	4.00	.68
4	Career standards	4.58	.65
Total:		4.18	.55

* **Note:** The higher mean, the more awareness.

The survey results in Table 3 showed that the career awareness of students majoring in Psychology is generally quite high ($M = 4.18/5.0$, $SD = .55$). Of the four dimensions surveyed, perception of professional standards has the highest score ($M = 4.58$). In Vietnam, there are currently no regulations on professional standards for psychologists, psychology profession activities in Vietnam today are based on reference to world professional standards, especially the American Psychological Association. Students' fairly full awareness of professional standards is a good sign, which will have a positive impact on students' ethics and professional practice after graduation.

Students' perception of career value is also quite high (with $M = 4.28$). Most students are aware that the activities of psychologists help develop human potentials and values, bring health and happiness to people, contribute to building a just, civilized and progressive society. The mission of Psychologists is to bring health and happiness to people. The right perception of career values will have the effect of creating learning motivation and forming the right professional attitude for students.

Career position and working places are perceived at a lower level (with $M = 3.85$ and 4.0). Practice shows that after graduation, psychology students can work in many different positions such as: psychological counselors, psychotherapists, psychologists, researchers, and working in many different environments such as hospitals, schools, social centers, businesses, etc. Survey data shows that most students are aware of this problem. However, there are still many students who are not fully aware.

From the data obtained in Table 3, it can be concluded that although the majority of students have a correct perception of professional standards, professional values, professional positions and working environment, there is still a small part of students are not aware of these issues. This result indicates that more attention should be paid to raising career awareness for psychology students in Vietnam, especially awareness of career position and working environment.

Table 4. Career awareness by gender

No.	Gender	N	Mean	SD	Independent - Samples T Test
1	Male	116	4.07	.64	Sig. = .053>.05
2	Female	315	4.22	.51	

The analysis results in Table 4 showed that there is no statistically significant difference in career awareness between male and female students (T Test, Sig. = $0.053 > 0.05$).

Table 5. Career awareness by school year

No.	School years	N	Mean	SD	ANOVA Test
1	First-year students	113	4.18	.57	Sig. = .956>.05
2	Second-year students	139	4.19	.57	
3	Third-year students	111	4.15	.44	
4	Fourth-year students	68	4.17	.63	

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The analytical data in Table 5 showed that there is no statistically significant difference in career awareness among first-year, second-year, third-year and fourth-year students (Anova Test, Sig. =) .956>.05). According to common sense, 3rd and 4th year students have better career awareness than 1st and 2nd year students because they have had more learning and experience. However, at present, most training institutions are interested in organizing career guidance activities for students right from the moment they enter, so the first and second year students have a fairly complete awareness of profession is also understandable.

Survey results on student's career preparation

Table 6. Preparation for future career

No.	Items	Mean	SD
1	Study and practice professional knowledge, skills and attitudes through classroom hours	4.17	.79
2	Study and practice professional knowledge, skills and attitudes through self-study hours at home	4.00	.85
3	Take more classes/courses on professional skills at training centers, at your school	3.48	1.13
4	Learn about the profession from teachers, from the media, ...	3.97	.92
5	Actively approach the real-life professional environment to experience	3.78	1.08
Total:		3.88	.76

* **Note:** The higher the mean, the more complete the career preparation.

Career preparation is extremely important, helping students meet career requirements and adapt well to careers after graduation. The survey data in Table 6 showed that the preparation of psychology students for their future career is quite good (Mean = 3.88/5.0), which means that it is not really enough. Most students are more interested in "Study, practice professional knowledge, skills and professional attitudes through classroom lessons" (Mean = 4.17), while "Study and practice professional knowledge, skills, and professional attitudes through self-studying at home", "Actively approach the real-life professional environment to experience", "Take more classes/courses in training centers" received less attention and less implementation (Mean = 3.48-4.00).

Table 7. Career preparation by gender

No.	Gender	N	Mean	SD	Independent - Samples T Test
1	Male	116	3.85	.85	Sig. = .029<.05
2	Female	315	3.89	.74	

The analysis results in Table 7 showed that there is a statistically significant difference in career preparation between male and female students (T Test, Sig. = 0.029<0.05). Female students were better prepared than male students, but the difference was not significant (Mean = 3.89 vs. 3.85). This difference in our opinion is due to the influence of personality, female students are often said to be more hardworking and caring than male students.

Table 8. Career preparation by school years

No.	School years	N	Mean	SD	ANOVA Test
1	First-year students	113	3.89	.74	Sig. = .751>.05
2	Second-year students	139	3.84	.74	
3	Third-year students	111	3.87	.81	
4	Fourth-year students	68	3.96	.78	

From the analysis results in Table 8, it can be seen that there is no significant difference in career preparation between students in different years of study. However, when observing the average score in each academic year, we see that 4th year students have higher career preparation than students in the remaining years.

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Correlation analysis between students' awareness and career preparation

Table 9. Correlation analysis results

	Career awareness	Career preparation
Career awareness	1	0.76*
Career preparation	0.76*	1

* Note: with $p < 0.05$

The results of the correlation analysis in Table 9 showed that the students' career awareness and career preparation have a strong positive correlation with each other. This means that when students' career awareness changes, it will lead to changes in career preparation in the direction of increasing or decreasing.

4. CONCLUSIONS

From the survey results on career awareness and career preparation of psychology students presented above, it can be concluded that our research hypotheses are correct.

H1. In general, the career awareness of psychology students is still limited.	Accepted
H2. The career preparation of psychology students is not really good/adequate.	Accepted
H3. There is a positive correlation between career awareness and career preparation of psychology students.	Accepted

The results of this study indicate that educational institutions and lecturers need to pay more attention to raising career awareness for psychology students, thereby promoting students' career preparation.

In order to raise career awareness and further promote career preparation of psychology students, we believe that educational institutions and lecturers need to synchronously implement solutions such as: organize career counseling programs at schools for students; organize professional experience activities for students; organize exchange programs between students and alumni, employers; ...

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