

# Factors Affecting Job Searching Ability of Fresh University Graduates in the Mekong Delta, Vietnam

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## ABSTRACT

The objective of this study is to identify factors that affect the job-seeking ability of fresh university graduates in the Mekong Delta, Vietnam. Research data were collected from 402 university graduates in the 2018-2019 school year in Can Tho University, Tay Do University, Cuu Long University, and Tra Vinh University. Logistic regression method was applied in the research. The result has shown that the factors that correlate positively to the job-seeking ability of university graduates are social relationships, graduation rankings, and part-time job experiences, while the acceptable salary is negatively correlated with the job-seeking ability. In particular, the factor of social relationships has the strongest impact on the job searching ability of university graduates.

**Keywords:** university student, job searching, successful, Mekong Delta.

## 1. PROBLEM STATEMENT

According to the Ministry of Education and Training of Vietnam, from 2017 to 2018, the unemployment rate of university-educated workers in Vietnam is about 4%. This is not a high proportion in the total of 5 million employees who have university degrees. The main reasons are working in the wrong career field or not accepting to move to the areas with labor shortage. This is a common problem for many countries in the world. In the period of economic integration and the industrial revolution 4.0, this has led to a more rigorous labor market for university students. Therefore, university graduates are facing more and more difficulties in the

labor market. This makes many students have to work in the wrong career field or be temporarily unemployed.

Recently, universities in the Mekong Delta region have played an important role in improving the intellectual standard and human resources. The whole region currently has 17 universities, of which there are six non-public universities. In 2000, there was only Can Tho University in the whole region. Now there are ten over 13 provinces and cities have universities. Can Tho City has four universities, and Vinh Long Province has three universities. According to experts, although universities in the Mekong Delta have improved training programs and teaching methods, the training quality still cannot keep up with the requirements of the labor market. This leads to students' limited adaptability to working requirements. Getting a job after graduation is still a big challenge for students. Therefore, the study "Factors affecting job searching ability of fresh university graduates in the Mekong Delta" is necessary. From research results, some recommendations were proposed to help university students improve their ability to find jobs after graduation.

## 2. RESEARCH MODEL

Based on the literature review related to the job-seeking ability of university graduates, the research model "Factors affecting job searching ability of university graduates" is proposed as follows:

$$\text{Job searching ability} = \beta_0 + \beta_1\text{Gender} + \beta_2\text{Social relationships} + \beta_3\text{Family income} + \beta_4\text{Education rankings} + \beta_5\text{Job application places} + \beta_6\text{Experiences} + \beta_7\text{Acceptable salary}$$

In which: Job searching ability is a dependent variable used to measure the ability to get a good job in the first month after graduation. In this study, the term "unemployment" is used according to the concept of the USB bureau of Labor Statistics and the Australian Bureau of Statistics. Unemployment are people who

do not have a job, have actively looked for work in the past four weeks, and are currently available for work is considered unemployed in the month. The "job searching ability" variable receives value 1 if within one month, after starting to search for the job information and complete the application form, the student is accepted by the employer and sign the employment contract; receive value 0 on the contrary situation. The independent variables in the model are explained in Table 1.

**Table 1: Interpretation of observed variables in the research model**

Variable	Interpretation	Reference sources	Expectation
Gender	University graduates' gender, 1 if male and 0 if female	Davide Contu (2013); Kong Jun (2012)	-
Social relationships	One if friends or relatives introduce the student to the employer by their networking, 0 if vice versa.	Montgomery (1991); Etienne Campens et al (2012)	+
Education ranking	Students' education ranking, including Average, Fairly Good, Good, Excellent, and Excellent with the value from 1 to 5.	Fang and Lee (2005); Albrecht et al (1994); Rosson et al (1973)	+
Job application place	One if students apply for jobs in cities or the center of provinces and 0 if vice versa.	Msigwa and Kipesha (2013); Davide Contu (2013)	-
Experience	Get the value corresponding to the number of months students have part-time jobs related to their major during the study period.	Caroleo và Pastore (2007); Godfrey (2003)	+
Accepted salary	Get the value corresponding to the lowest wage that students can accept to work (million VND/month).	Bratberg and Nilsen(1998); Eckstein and Wolpin (1987)	-
Family income	Get the value corresponding to the total income of the student's family at the research time (million VND/month).	Bradley and Nguyen (2004); Eckstein and Wolpin (1987)	-

Source: Author's proposal, 2019

### 3. RESEARCH METHOD

#### 3.1 Analytical method

Descriptive statistics with the criteria such as average, min, max, standard deviation were used to analyze the job searching status of university graduates. Binary logistic regression method was used to determine the factors affecting the job hunting ability of university graduates.

#### 3.2 Research data

According to Green (1991), Tabachnick and Fidell (1996), the minimum sample size the regression analysis was calculated by the formula  $50 + 8m$  (m was the number of independent variables). The research model was established with seven

independent variables; this meant that the minimum sample size was 106. The quota sampling method was used to collect data from September 2019 to October 2019. The total number of observations achieved was 402, of which 152 were graduates from Can Tho University, 85 from Cuu Long University, 79 from Tay Do University and 86 from Tra Vinh University. The most important feature of the survey subjects was university students graduating in the 2018-2019 school year. During the survey, demographic criteria were taken into consideration to ensure the representativeness of the research data.

**Table 2: Structure of the survey sample**

Major	Number of Observation	Proportion (%)
Natural Science, Technology and Environment	94	23.38
Agriculture, Fisheries, and Biotechnology	95	23.63
Social Science, Humanities and Education	99	24.63
Political Science, Economics and Law	114	28.36
Total	402	100.00

Source: Survey data, 2019

## 4. RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1 Job searching status of university graduates

*Job information approach:* most university graduates found job recruitment information via the internet (98.26%). This was the primary source of information because students could easily access the internet. Students could seek recruitment information at recruitment websites or the organization's home page. Also, students searched for information from relatives (74.63%). This helped students enlist their relatives' networking to get the job. Searching for job

information from friends was also chosen by many students (71.14%). Besides, students also sought information from career centers (27.86%) and other information channels (12.44%).

*The number of job applications:* According to the research result, each graduate submitting about four applications was accepted for a job. The minimum number of job application was one the highest was 9. This number reflected the students' job searching process as well as the difficulties they were facing in the context of economic integration.

Table 3: Employment and interview situation

Criteria	Min	Max	Mean	Standard deviation
Number of job applications till getting the job (applications)	1.0	9.0	3.76	1.74
Number of interviews (times)	1.0	6.0	3.82	1.94
Acceptable salary (million VND/month)	3.5	10.0	4.68	1.85
Probation (times)	0	3.0	1.50	1.22

Source: Survey data, 2019

*The number of interviews:* After students apply for a job, the employer reviewed, filtered out unsatisfactory applications and selected candidates who meet the recruitment demands for the meeting. Candidates had to attend from 1 to 3 rounds depending on the requirements of the employer. Each graduate was invited to the interview four times on average, at least one time and at most six times.

*Acceptable salary:* The average salary of fresh university graduates was 4.68 million VND/month. The highest required salary was 10 million VND/month, and the lowest was 3.5 million VND/month. The analytical results have shown that the acceptable salary of university graduates was consistent with the average wage of the skilled labor force market. This has pointed out that students had a good awareness of the labor market.

*Probation:* Before signing the official employment contract, the candidate had to take an internship. The probationary period may last from 1 to 3 months, depending on the job requirements. On average, each graduate had 1.5 probationary times, the

highest was three times. Some students didn't have probationary time.

### 4.2 Factors affecting job searching ability of university graduates

Based on the results of binary logistic regression analysis, the coefficients was ensured as follows, (1) Hypothesis testing of general conformity was significant (Sig. = 0.00 < 5%). The forecast level of the model was 78.2%. In addition, the Corr value was < 0.8, so there was no multicollinearity in the research model.

Table 4: Factors affecting job searching ability of university graduates

Factors	Coefficient (B)	Significance level (Sig.)
Constant	-2.940	0.030
Gender <sup>ns</sup>	0.091	0.416
Social relationships <sup>***</sup>	1.664	0.000
Graduation rankings <sup>**</sup>	0.154	0.016
Job application places <sup>ns</sup>	-0.175	0.617
Part-time job experiences <sup>**</sup>	0.092	0.026
Acceptable salary <sup>*</sup>	-0.311	0.051
Family income <sup>ns</sup>	0.048	0.282
Sig.F	0.000	
Accurate forecast level	78.2%	

Source: Survey data, 2019

Note: \*: significance level at 10%; \*\*: significance level at 5%; \*\*\*: significance level at 1%; <sup>ns</sup>: no significance level.

Based on the analytical results in Table 4, there were four statistically

significant variables in the total of 7 independent variables included in the model. This means these four variables affected graduates' ability to apply for jobs. They are social relationships (1% significance level), graduation rankings (5% significance level), part-time job experiences (5% significance level), and acceptable salary (10% significance level). In particular, the acceptable salary variable was negatively correlated with the graduates' ability to apply for a job. The impact level of the above variables was explained as follows:

*Social relationships:* this is defined as using familiar links to get the job. This variable was statistically significant at 1% and was positively correlated with university graduates' ability to apply for jobs successfully. If the student had a familiar relationship with the employer, the ability to get the job was higher than those with no relationship. Sometimes, the recruitment channel was accompanied by the "sweetener" which was the motivation for employers. From the positive view, employers have a throughout understand about the student's ability through the relationship, thereby evaluating the resumes more actively. This finding was similar to the research of Montgomery (1991), Etienne Campens et al. (2012).

*Graduation rankings:* This variable was statistically significant at 5% and positively correlated with university graduates' ability to seek jobs. It could be understood as the higher the education ranking was, the greater the likelihood of job hunting was. Many employers consider learning outcome as a basis for measuring candidates' capacity. Sometimes, employers filter applicants' resumes right from the preliminary round by their learning outcome. This result was similar to the research results of Fang and Lee (2005); Albrecht et al. (1994); Rosson et al. (1973).

*Part-time job experiences:* This variable is statistically significant at 5% and positively correlated with the ability to find jobs of university graduates. Graduates with more

part-time job experiences made it easier to get a job in the first month after graduation than those who lack working experiences. This could be explained as students with skills had good adaptability, and more importantly, employers could save time and cost for training. Therefore, they often select students with more work experiences. This result was similar to the research of Caroleo and Pastore (2007), Godfrey (2003).

*Acceptable salary:* This variable was statistically significant at the level of 10% and inversely correlated with the dependent variable. The higher the required salary was, the lower the ability to get a job was. This was because the fresh graduates had fewer skills and working experiences, so asking for a high salary caused the hesitation for employers, especially in the organization's hard periods. In another viewpoint, high-paying jobs attracted more students to apply for and increased the competitiveness among candidates; thereby it would be more challenging to get the job. This result was consistent with the study of Bratberg and Nilsen (1998), Eckstein and Wolpin (1987).

## 5. CONCLUSION

In general, the research results have identified factors affecting the job searching ability of university graduates in the Mekong Delta. According to research results, factors that correlated positively with university graduates' ability to apply for a job were social relationships, education rankings, part-time job experiences. However, acceptable salary had a negative correlation with students' ability to apply for jobs. Some recommendations were proposed for university students as follows:

Firstly, it is necessary to accumulate working experiences during the learning process through part-time jobs or training activities. Besides, students should participate in social activities to get practical skills. This helps students improve working and real-life experiences as well as meet the demands of employers.



Secondly, it is necessary to consider the proposed salary to employers carefully. The proposed salary should be based on the personal capacity, business capacity and actual conditions of the labor market. If the proposed salary is suitable, the ability to get the job will increase.

Last but not least, learning and making the most of soft skills help students to better meet the requirements of employers in the context of economic integration. In addition, careful consideration of working conditions requirements before applying for a job can help avoid "job hopping" due to the wrong dominant or inappropriate personality.

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