



The reason why the unemployment rate of college graduates is increasing: Case study in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

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Abstract

Higher education plays an important role in the training of future community members based on the needs of society. After college, graduates expect to find a higher-value job than high school graduates, and persistent unemployment has a negative effect on the happiness of individuals. The fear of unemployment affects how students plan their careers because college students sometimes consider studying beyond their senior year, and they tend to choose majors in the natural sciences, rather than humanities literature or other social sciences. The survey was conducted from October 1, 2021, to October 30, 2021, through direct delivery of paper questionnaires or via email and Facebook to respondents. There were 329 satisfactory questionnaires used for analysis. There are 7 reasons leading to the situation that fresh graduates are easily unemployed, in order and importance as follows: (1) Quality of graduates (QG), (2) Professional qualifications (PQ), (3) Unsuitable work (UW), (4) Lack career orientation, (LCO) (5) Job skills (JS), (6) Market conditions (MC), and (7) Untransparent recruitment (UR).

Keywords: easy unemployment, fresh graduates, social needs, Vietnam

Introduction

The mismatch between graduate aspirations, job requirements and available opportunities has caused unemployment and underemployment among new graduates. An increase in domestic and international new graduates competing in the market group, educational institutions not keeping their curricula relevant to the industry, pressure from universities to pursue one. Something that doesn't really matter, the belief that an academic degree is the only path to success and security has made the unemployment rate among fresh graduates even more acute. Simon Si. (2017) ^[5] mentioned that ten major weaknesses of graduates are in the aspects of management, problem-solving, communication, leadership, creativity, critical thinking, initiative, self-confidence and other interaction skills. These aspects lead to difficulties for graduates in finding jobs that match their qualifications. While Nazron *et al* (2017) ^[20] cited eleven causes of graduate unemployment as the relationship between the capital-intensive economy, the rapid growth of the graduate labor force, lack of relationship between educational institutions and industry, lack of training to prepare for work, rapid population growth and rapid decline in mortality, educational development, economic recession, quality education, competencies of graduates, skills and personalities of graduates.

Rahmah *et al.* (2011) ^[24] mentioned that one of the causes contributing to the unemployment problem of graduates is the quality of graduates. There are employers in the industry who have commented negatively on graduates and believe that graduates do not have the right skills and qualifications to meet the needs of the industry. Besides, graduates are still weak in recruitment skills and do not show good working efficiency. More than three-quarters of employers prefer to hire employees with experience (National Association of

Colleges and Employers, 2009), and graduates' work history is considered an important aspect of most on graduate résumés (GCA, 2009a), making job search difficult for students without experience. Graduates, once employed, are sometimes dissatisfied with themselves and may perceive the job as below their skill level (Noor Azina Ismail, 2011) ^[21]. Currently, good academic performance is no longer a guarantee for graduates to get a job (Noor Azina, 2011). It is a benefit for graduates, but it is not a guarantee of employment, and it does not indicate that graduates are capable of performing the duties set forth by the employer. Unemployment has been a longstanding problem for the country. This is especially true for graduates, so the right steps need to be taken to continue to have an impact on human capital and labor productivity in the country. Therefore, this study has important implications as a further investigation into the causes affecting unemployment among young graduates.

Theoretical basis

Unemployment and job opportunities for fresh graduates

Unemployment is defined as people who are out of work but are currently looking for and willing to work. According to the Bureau of Statistics (2019), this includes people who have gone through a job interview but are still waiting to be accepted by the company. However, cost-cutting measures in refusing to replace laid-off employees cause longer unemployment among recent graduates (Ong, 2018).

Graduation quality plays a factor in this regard. Professional and technical knowledge acquired through university courses distinguishes the characteristics of graduates from those without a high level of education (Bowden, 2000). Globally, economic, technological, and social trends are changing business and a quality graduate is required for an

employee to continue one's job. A survey by the Malaysian Ministry of Higher Education of local fresh graduates found that unemployed public university graduates had poor attitudes, a lack of English proficiency, and poor communication skills (Balakrishnan, 2017). There are also cases where graduates do not apply the quality learned from organizations to the workplace (Hanapi & Nordin, 2014) [12], graduates have to improve their attitude and character because there is a lot of work to do no experience is required (Balakrishnan, 2017).

A study conducted by Wan Zulkifli *et al.*, (2010) shows that employers are very strict in selecting candidates and give preference to experienced and skilled graduates who are well-equipped work skills than those with only good grades. Research conducted by Nazron, Lim, and Nga (2017) [20] reports that industrial training programs help graduates gain practical experience and more job-ready technical skills, who are performing well in the training process sometimes even have the opportunity to be absorbed by the organization poor English proficiency can lead to smaller job opportunities as most Malaysian employers use the English-language job interview method to assess their language skills (Pandey & Pandey, 2014).

The impact of unemployment on socio-economic development

The increase in unemployment means that the social labor force that cannot be mobilized into production and business activity increases; is the waste of social labor - the basic factor for socio-economic development. The increase in unemployment means that the social labor force that cannot be mobilized into production and business activity increases; is the waste of social labor - the basic factor for socio-economic development. Solving unemployment is not "one-sided, one-way", not only by one policy or one measure, but it must be a system of synchronous policies, which must always be given importance throughout the process of economic development socio-economic. Because unemployment always exists in the market economy and increases (decreases) according to the development cycle of the market economy.

Comprehensive model

Although many factors explain graduate unemployment, the four concepts discussed above involve multidimensional aspects of the problem (Figure 2.1). These factors are representative of the components that describe graduate unemployment at the individual level because they reflect the interaction of diverse entities, including institutions, external environment, and attitudes individual's level through psychological and physical aspects. These changing externs sometimes influence future planning or the influence of graduates who go into different fields.

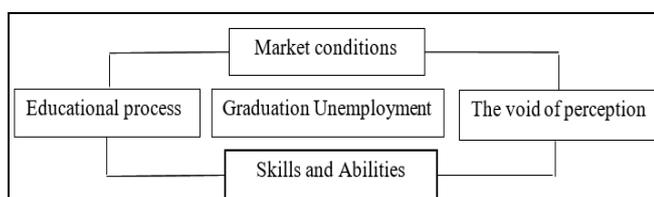


Fig 1: Factors surrounding graduate unemployment (Source: Young Sik Hwang 2017)

Reasons why fresh graduates are easily unemployed

Professional qualifications

Some notable Vietnamese employers have a negative perception of graduates and have stated that graduates lack the appropriate skills and qualifications required by the industry. Furthermore, graduates do not show good job performance and they are poor in recruiting skills. A survey led by the World Bank and the Talent Foundation found that 90% of organizations agree that university graduates should have received more industry training by the time they graduate they research and 81% of others surveyed rated the major shortcoming among graduates as communication skills. The main reason for unemployment is the mismatch of skills among fresh graduates and demanding employers. Soft skills are an important factor in attracting entry-level graduates, and students from Vietnamese universities seem to be lacking in those areas. Even at the early stages of recruitment, companies and educational institutions are not always suitable for graduates with entry prospects. Careers service centers are underutilized and hardly acknowledge the claims of companies.

Lack career orientation

Lack career orientation is also a big problem that students face. In Vietnam, some of you do not have a clear direction about your future, some of you will choose a career according to the arrangement of your parents. Besides, some other students chose the Hot industry, according to the trend of the crowd, but did not really like it and did not match their abilities. This has led to the fact that a part of students is lazy to study or study for good, which affects the quality of human resources, making the output still limited. Therefore, this is also the cause of unemployment as much as it is today.

Job skill

Vietnamese students are often judged by employers, especially foreign enterprises, to be good in theory but weak in soft skills. In the process of studying at school, most students take advantage of learning foreign languages and informatics to get a certificate as a basis for applying for a job after graduation. However, many employers require students to have practical experience such as English communication, negotiation, problem-solving, teamwork, etc., rather than the certificate from that certificate. There are cases where many students, after being admitted to the company for a trial period for about 1-2 months, cannot absorb and work effectively due to the lack of this soft skill. This is a weakness that students need to overcome to increase their chances of finding a job after graduation

Quality of graduates

Graduate quality is the quality or skill that graduates need to acquire and need to be developed by graduates while they are studying at higher education institutions. Qualities acquired by graduates prepare them for their future commitments (Bowden *et al.* 2000) [7]. As for the quality of graduates, the focus is shifted to two skill categories, technical skills, and employability. Technical skills are an important aspect that should be mastered by graduates, as it is at the core of helping graduates get jobs. While employability skills refer to personal qualities and insight, which a graduate should have. This enhances the marketability of the graduate and helps the graduate become

a competent and competitive worker. The findings show that the majority of respondents agree that the lack of technical skills and poor employment skills among graduates is one of the factors leading to the unemployment problem.

Unsuitable work

Previous economic studies have placed more emphasis on formal unemployment, stemming from a frequent mismatch between current jobs and workers based on job mobility and wage negotiations (Herz & Van Rens, 2011) ^[13] Markets requires a different workforce size to meet societal needs and internal requirements. Graduates of different majors want to get a job at the same time, the job search can have different results depending on the needs of the market. Graduates with a completed education in the Sciences, Literature and Social Sciences departments tend to show higher levels of unemployment.

Securing a job depends not only on their academic performance but also on their personal background. There is also a certain role that race, sex, and socioeconomic status play in recruiting a candidate (Morley, 2001). Graduates from lower-income families also show higher unemployment rates (by household income bracket). This statement is true on all levels.

According to a survey conducted by the job company Jobstreet.com, it is said that, from the perception of employers, fresh graduates are an unrealistic requirement for an income of over 5,000,000 VND for a job their first job. On the other hand, the normal salary offered to new graduates is around 5,000,000 VND - 7,000,000 VND, depending on their education level.

Market conditions

Graduates are influenced by changes in external markets, as well as by their own personal characteristics. Uncertainty contributes to the likelihood of job openings, and job search costs act as an additional variable in the process. Market conditions play another role in influencing job opportunities.

Graduates are very sensitive to fluctuations in estimated returns after graduation and market flexibility influences the predicted outcomes as an important factor. The risk of an economic slowdown and policy changes also increases the level of uncertainty. Search costs include various indirect interactions related to the job placement, as well as direct costs such as application fees.

With fluctuating economic conditions in the country, the labor force faces a transition between employment, unemployment, and non-participation (Krof *et al.*, 2016) ^[18]. The volatility of economic structure and context can be one of the reasons for the increase in the unemployment rate.

Untransparent recruitment

The implicit rule in applying for a job, thanks to relationships and money like in Vietnam today is not a small cause of unemployment. There are friends who, right from the time they were in school, were asked by their parents for a stable job without worrying much about applying for a job. Even if this friend does not have the ability to work well, he can still find a job thanks to the acquaintance of his family. Meanwhile, those with normal family backgrounds, without financial resources and wide relationships will have to work harder and be more competitive in the job search process. This non-transparent recruitment process has been

accepted by society for a long time because no one can deny the power of money and wide relationships.

Reasons why college graduates are easily unemployed

There are many factors that contribute to unemployment among recent graduates in Vietnam. Hanapi and Nordin (2013) stated that the lack of excellence is one of the factors leading to the unemployment problem of Vietnamese graduates. The Graduate Tracking Study is maintained by the Department of Education. It tracks the position of students of higher education institutions six months after graduation to determine if they are working or continuing their studies or still looking for work.

In addition, Hanapi and Nordin (2013) reported that in 2002 the Central Bank of Vietnam conducted a study and concluded that international graduates have higher employability than Vietnamese graduates on skills, including but not limited to technical skills, problem-solving skills, communication skills, especially in English. Previous research has found that recent graduates lack work skills, have a poor understanding of the English language and communication skills, and also have too many job options and at the same time, they are demanding a higher salary is the main cause of unemployment among recent graduates (Zahiid, 2015).

In order not to fall into unemployment, right from university and college, students should study hard, participate in collective activity programs to practice necessary skills. Not only that, to prepare for the future, you should also participate in professional training classes to improve your knowledge and skills in the field you study. For example, if you study economic science, you can find professional economic courses such as Business Administration, Hotel Management, Human Resource Management or Import-Export.

Research model and hypothesis

Research models

Many researchers such as Juliana Mohd *et al* (2020) ^[15], Hossain *et al* (2018) ^[14], Simon Si (2017) ^[25], Vu Dinh Khoa (2019) Nguyen Thi Thu Hien *et al* (2019), Huynh Truong Huy *et al.* The study (2019)... proved that the causes affecting students who are easy to be unemployed... are not stable, it can change according to the context, and different labor markets are different.

New graduates are easily unemployed due to many reasons:

- Graduation quality, work skills, English proficiency, unrealistic salaries, and job mismatch (Juliana Mohd *et al.*, 2020) ^[15].
- Having poor attitudes, lack of English proficiency, and poor communication skills (Rahmah *et al.*, 2011) ^[24].
- Opportunities, living environment, and affection Nguyen Thu Hien *et al* (2019)
- Lack of experience, poor foreign language skills, not recommended by relatives (Huynh Truong Huy *et al.*, 2019).
- Aspects of management, problem-solving, communication, leadership, creativity,
- critical thinking, initiative, confidence, and interaction skills (Simon Si., 2017) ^[25]
- Lack of working skills, poor understanding of English language and communication skills and lack of job orientation, and demanding a high salary (Zahiid, 2015)

However, because there are not many authors doing research on this issue in the country, the author applies the inheritance of foreign studies, synthesizes a scale of causes affecting new graduates who are easy to be unemployed, determines to identify the most conclusive causes (Table 2.1) of many domestic and foreign authors. From that, the author proposes a proposed research model (Figure 2.1) suitable to the situation and students in Ho Chi Minh City.

Including

The independent variables in the model include 7 variables: (1) Professional qualifications (PQ), (2) Lack career orientation, (LCO) (3) Job skills (JS), (4) Quality of graduates (QG), (5) Market conditions (MC), (6) Unsuitable work (UW) and (7) Untransparent recruitment (UR).

The dependent variable in the model is the cause of the unemployment rate of graduates (CUG).

Table 1: Summary of studies

N ^o	Content relates	Titles of the study	Research author
1	Professional qualifications	Career awareness of tourism students at colleges and universities in Can Tho city	Nguyen Hung Vuong <i>et al</i> (2018); Winkelmann, (2009)
2	Lack career orientation	Causes of graduate unemployment: A case study in Klang valley, Malaysia	Hossain <i>et al.</i> , (2018); Noor Azina, (2011)
3	Job skill	What are the causes of graduate unemployment? Focus on Personal Concerns and Perceptions	Youngsik Hwang (2017)
4	Quality of graduates	The dilemma of graduate unemployment in the face of poverty, scarcity, and a fragile economy: Are there lessons for college	Marcellus Forh Mbah (2014); Nguyen Hung Vuong <i>et al.</i> , (2018)
5	Unsuitable work	Unemployment among graduates is there a mismatch?	Juliana Mohd <i>et al.</i> , (2020;
6	Market conditions	Research on the role of cooperation between universities and enterprises on the employability of students after graduation	Vu Dinh Khoa and Nguyen Thi Mai Anh (2019)
7	Untransparent recruitment	Factors affecting the intention of returning home to work of final year students at Hanoi University of Industry	Nguyen Thi Thu Hien <i>et al</i> (2019); Nguyen Hong Quy (2018)

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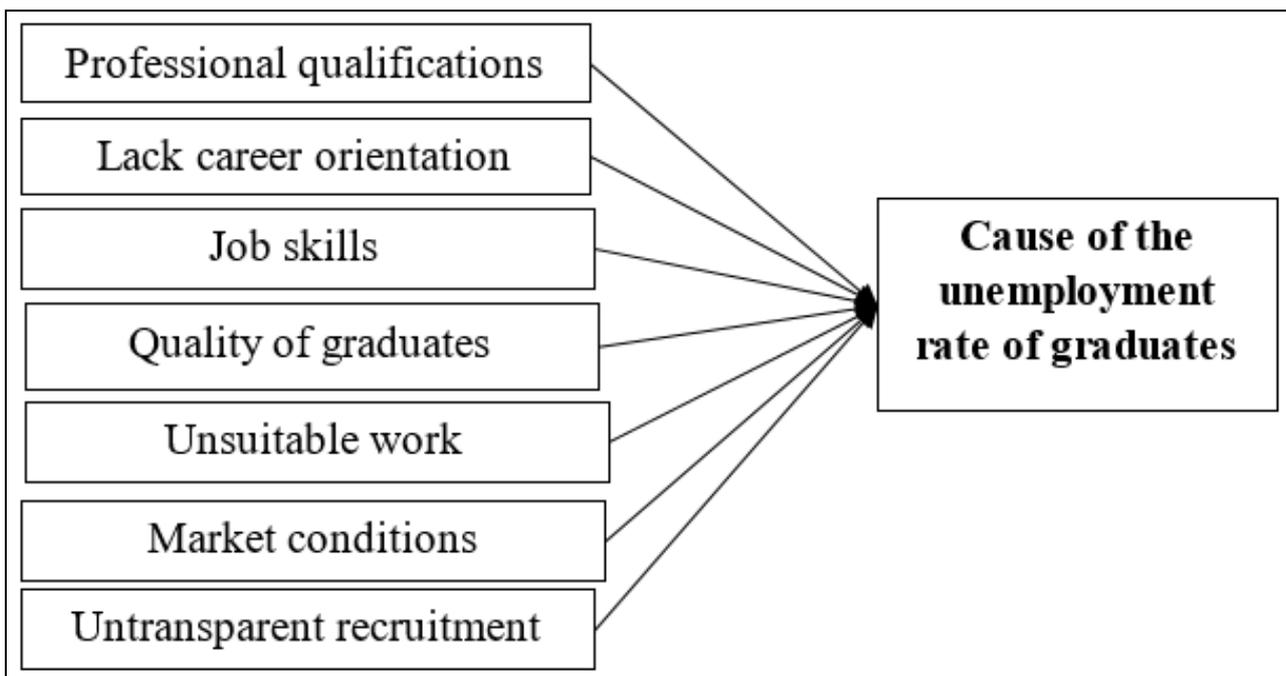


Fig 2: Proposed model study

Research hypothesis

- H1: Professional qualifications have a positive impact on the cause of the unemployment rate of graduates.
- H2: Lack career orientation has a positive impact on the cause of the unemployment rate of graduates.
- H3: Job skills have a positive effect on the cause of the unemployment rate of graduates.
- H4: Quality of graduates has a positive influence on the cause of the unemployment rate of graduates.
- H5: Market conditions have a positive impact on the cause of the unemployment rate of graduates.
- H6: Untransparent recruitment has a positive effect on the cause of the unemployment rate of graduates.
- H7: Unsuitable work has a positive impact on the cause of

the unemployment rate of graduates.

Therefore, we have a total of 7 research hypotheses in the model of the cause of the unemployment rate of graduates.

Research Methods

The methods used in this study are as follows:

- **Survey method of questionnaire and data analysis**

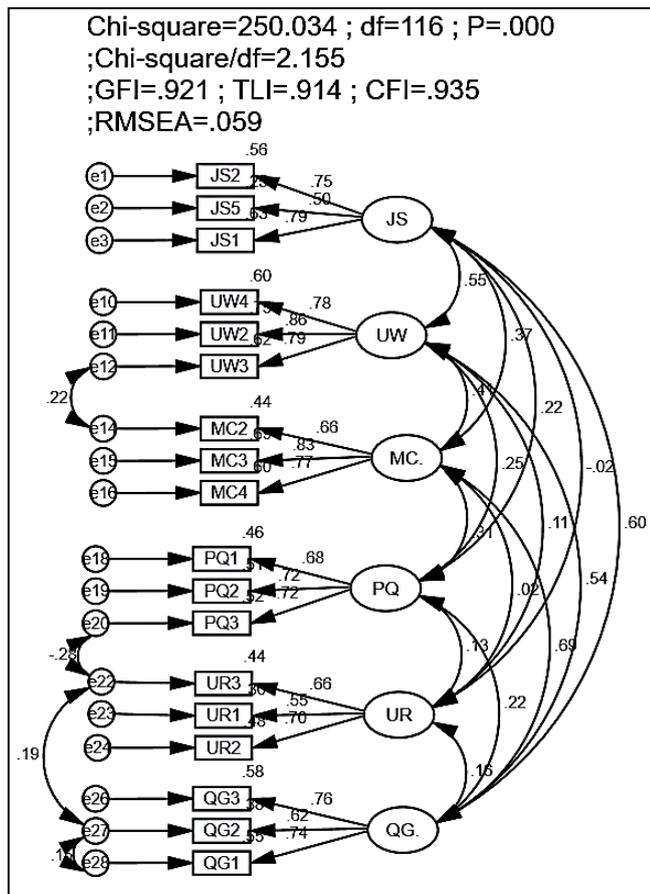
The survey method with 75 questionnaires were used to collect information related to demographic characteristics, learning behavior, perception of career after graduation. Having the desire to find a job right away, the desire to have a job right away to stabilize life and help family and parents. Accordingly, 375 fresh graduates in Ho Chi Minh City were interviewed from August 15, 2021, to September 4, 2021.

After collecting the questionnaires and re-examining, we decided to remove 46 questionnaires with a lot of information that was missing information or were answered mainly at one rating level. As a result, 329 satisfactory questionnaires were used for the research

The preliminary assessment is performed using a scale with Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient and exploratory factor analysis method, presenting indicators to check the appropriateness of the research model such as F-value, R2, correlation coefficient, variance inflation factor (VIF), and hypothesis testing. Then, we tested the fit of the model, built multiple regression equations, and tested the hypotheses. Finally, we tested the reliability of the scale using Cronbach's Alpha, EFA, CFA, linear regression analysis, and SEM.

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA)

Regarding the overall relevance, factor analysis confirmed that this model has a chi-squared statistical value of 250.034 with 116 degrees of freedom (p = 0.000). The relative chi-squared for degrees of freedom CMIN/def is 2.155 (<3). Other indicators are: GFI = 0.921 (> 0.9), TLI = 0.914 (> 0.9), CFI = 0.935 (> 0.9) and RMSEA = 0.059 (< 0.08). Therefore, this model is suitable for market data. This also allows us to say that there is a disorientation of the observed variables. Convergence values, standard weights of all scales are > 0.5 and statistically significant at p < 0.5. Therefore, the scales achieve convergent values.



(Source: Authors' own calculations)

Fig 3: CFA analysis results

Structural Equation Model Results

The research model includes 8 concepts, after CFA and SEM testing, there are 5 satisfactory concepts, including 5

independent concepts: (1) Professional qualifications, (2) Lack career orientation, (3) Job skills, (4) Quality of graduates, (5) Market conditions, (6) Unsuitable work, and (7) Untransparent recruitment. The cause of the unemployment rate of graduates is a dependent concept.

The results show that this model has a chi-squared value of 222.623 with 117 degrees of freedom (p = 0.000). The relative squared value of degrees of freedom CMIN/def is 1.903 (<2). Other indicators include: GTI = 0.929 (> 0.9), TLI = 0.932 (> 0.9), CFI = 0.948 (> 0.9), and RMSEA = 0.052 (< 0.08). Therefore, this model achieves compatibility with the collected information. Factors include (1) Professional qualifications, (ES = 0.190, P = 0.000); (2) Job skills, (ES = 0.380, P = 0.000); (3) Market conditions, (ES = 0.167, P = 0.000); (4) Unsuitable work, (ES = 0.247, P = 0.000); and (5) Untransparent recruitment, (ES = 0.150, P = 0.000).

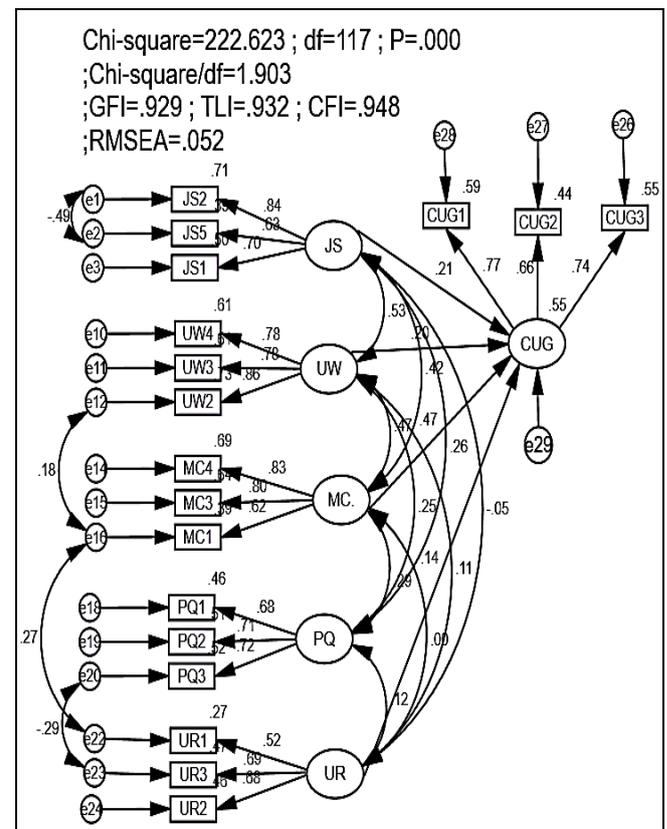


Fig 4: The model structure after final calibration in SEM

The bootstrap method is usually used to test the model estimates, with the pattern repeatedly being N =1000. The estimation results for 1000 samples averaged together with the deviations are presented in Tab. 4. CR has a very small absolute value, thus, it can be stated that the deviation is very low, while also being not statistically significant at the 95% confidence level. Thus, we can conclude that the model estimates can be trusted. and the actual results of the research area, as a basis for the author to make proposals, recommendations, and conclusions that are scientifically grounded.

Conclusion

Education is always a central issue of social life because it determines the future of each person and of the whole society. The current painful situation of education is the cause of the stagnation of Vietnam's development. Talking

about the ineffectiveness of today's education, especially higher education, it is often blamed on lack of learning facilities, commercialization of education, the teaching style of teachers, biased learning theory more than practice, but forget the attitude of students in their learning. According to a survey by The Tuoi Tre newspaper, only 30% of the students surveyed have a positive attitude in learning, while 60% choose coping methods. It is a sad fact that after many years of hard work in high school to win a chair in the university lecture hall, many students were in a hurry to become complacent, considering the university as just a place to relax, practice meeting, playing and competing with friends instead of appreciating their achievements, they will constantly learn and improve their professional qualifications.

Why is that? One of the reasons is that our students' ability to access information is still poor. When they were still in high school, especially high school, students had to carry the psychological burden from their families and relatives to go to university. But it's themselves that is not aware of going to the University to do. And does the major I choose to match my goals, interests, personality, and abilities? Therefore, when you step foot in college, it means that you have fulfilled your obligations to your parents and relatives, not going to college to fulfill your dreams and appreciate your achievements achieved in high school that try to study. Therefore, in order to help students firmly step after graduation and have the opportunity to quickly get a job, first of all, it is necessary to pay more attention to the quality of university and college education, first of all, to the quality of the input. Higher education should focus on the competencies and skills that students acquire after four years of study. There should be a connection between human resource training and the needs of society. It is necessary to clearly define what businesses and employers need to achieve training goals. The training of universities and colleges needs to be practical, avoiding the situation that after graduation, students still only have a certain amount of theoretical knowledge but do not know how to apply it? In order to do that, in our opinion, students should have more direct contact with the practical work of businesses and organizations. There must be a link between the school and the business, the school should rely on the future recruitment needs of the business to set enrollment targets.

Management implications

For students

In order not to fall into unemployment, right from university and college, students should study hard, participate in collective activity programs to practice necessary skills. Not only that, to prepare for the future, you should also participate in professional training classes to improve your knowledge and skills in the field you study.

Should be aware that learning is for oneself; Professional knowledge and professional skills are valuable baggage in life. To get those things, there is no other way than to study seriously, be passionate about reading, go on a field trip by yourself, actively explore future work, apply for a collaborator at a travel agency, create relationships to learn from those who already have jobs, actively learning more foreign languages.

For lecturers

Teaching correctly and with a sufficient amount of knowledge and skills according to the objectives set out in the module. Teaching content should be more related to reality, in order to create vitality, attract attention and create interest in learning for students. Better yet, lecturers should reduce theoretical teaching and increase practical teaching for students. The more relevant the content and teaching skills are to the students' future jobs, the better.

Constantly learning to improve professional qualifications; research and experience to gain knowledge and practical skills related to the subject in charge. Actively attend short-term training courses on soft skills and scientific research to improve knowledge and skills for teaching.

For faculties and schools

Strengthening linkages of vocational education with the labor market and decent work. Improve quality in an open direction, ensuring the scale, structure and investment and training levels (multi-disciplinary, specialized specialization, standardization, modernization, quality stratification invest in a number of high-quality, national and faculties, key industries, and professions that have been planned at various levels (international, the ASEAN region and nationally). Grasp the actual employment situation of students, refer to the training programs of other schools to adjust the training program when there is a policy to adjust the training program of the University so that the graduates have the opportunity job opportunities and have knowledge and skills suitable to the general training situation of the whole country. Continue to associate with companies, businesses, have professions related to the fields of the faculty are teaching, organize knowledge exchange sessions on job requirements, selection criteria, human resource needs, professional skills,... So that students have the opportunity to understand more about the reality of work, the conditions to be prepared, the market demand and form realistic skills and operations for the students.

▪ *Limitations of the study and future research directions*

The limitation of the study is that it only implements a few geography schools in Ho Chi Minh City. Therefore, it is not possible to fully assess the feelings of all students in the whole city. HCM. The ability to generalize will be higher when doing many professions of students at universities in Ho Chi Minh City. HCM.

Random sampling methods can also limit diversity in the subjects being surveyed. This may affect the completeness of the information collected.

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