

Factors Influencing Occupational Choices Among Suburban Young People in Cu Chi District, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam Today

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Abstract

Choosing a career that aligns with individual abilities, interests, and the needs of a developing society is crucial, especially for young people. Cu Chi District, part of Ho Chi Minh City, despite being a suburban district, has experienced significant growth in recent years. The establishment of numerous industrial parks attracting international investment, coupled with the robust development of business, trade, services, banking, and the transition to high-tech agriculture, has created a diverse and dynamic economic environment. In this context, young people in Cu Chi face the challenge of selecting a career that matches their personal abilities and regional economic development. Various factors, including internal factors such as personal preferences and abilities, and external factors such as the social environment and labor market trends influence this decision. This article utilizes both quantitative and qualitative data to analyze the key factors influencing the career choices of young people in Cu Chi. The study's results clarify the primary factors that have significantly impacted the career decisions of young people in this region in recent years.

Keywords: *Young People, Career Choice, Impact Factors, Family, Media.*

INTRODUCTION

In modern society, work occupies one-third of a person's life. Almost everyone, upon reaching adulthood, must work daily until retirement. Early career orientation and choice have become common concerns for young people and their families as they prepare for the future. Having a stable job that aligns with one's abilities and interests not only provides job security and professional attachment but also contributes effectively to the societal labor force.

To achieve this, choosing the right career is a crucial step that helps young people orient and prepare well for their future jobs. This is particularly true for young people in the suburban areas of Cu Chi District, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. Cu Chi District, comprising one town and 20 communes, has developed economic activities in agriculture, industry, and tourism. The Northwest Cu Chi Industrial Park attracts numerous domestic and foreign investment enterprises, with a land lease rate of 98%, equivalent to 137 hectares. The district's strategic location, connected by the Trans-Asia Road to Cambodia through the Moc Bai economic border gate in Tay Ninh Province, facilitates strong trade development.

Currently, Cu Chi District is developing several new urban areas, such as Thien Phu Garden, Ben Thanh - Northwest, and Bella Vista City, creating numerous career opportunities for local youth. However, to choose a career that matches personal aspirations and strengths, it is essential to consider various influencing factors. This article aims to explore the key factors affecting young people's career choices in the context of the rapid socio-economic development in Cu Chi District, Ho Chi Minh City, today.

LITERATURE REVIEWS

Previous studies have identified numerous factors influencing an individual's career choice. According to Lent, Brown, and Hackett (1994), career orientation is the process of adjusting between external requirements, self-image, self-efficacy, and outcome expectations. Gottfredson's research (1981, 2002) developed a process model of factors influencing career choice, starting with self-perception and job image. Self-perception includes gender orientation, social class, aptitudes, interests, and personal values. Job image depends on gender orientation, prestige level, and career field. In alignment with self-perception and job image, career interests are formed and adjusted according to access to professions, depending on available opportunities and personal or structural

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barriers. This adjustment process leads to viable career options. The final stage of Gottfredson's model is career aspiration, which results from a combination of acceptable choices and external stimuli. Gottfredson also emphasized that factors such as parental occupation, mass media, and personal preferences interrelate in influencing the career selection process.

Ozen's (2011) research identifies two main groups of factors: social and psychological. The social factors include social relationships, parents, family, history, and environmental characteristics, while the psychological factors encompass intuition, perception, beliefs, ideas, personality, and personal assessments of the future business environment. Ferry's (2000) research in Pennsylvania shows that the influence of family, society, personal economic status, and job perception are the main factors affecting career choice. Wang and Ma (2001) identify intrinsic and extrinsic factors influencing career decision-making and outcomes, including personal status, job satisfaction, career goals, career guidance, employment policies, and regional differences.

An overview by Carpenter and Foster (1977) and Beyon (1998) shows that career choice depends on three types of factors: external, internal, and interpersonal. External factors, which are not inherent in the profession's duties or roles, include labor market conditions, employer reputation, wages, income, job security, job availability, remuneration, and professional prestige (Gokuladas, 2010). Internal factors focus on job content and opportunities for advanced training and professional development, including authority, job-related powers, working conditions, professional opportunities, advancement, creativity, and professional challenges (Aycan, 2003). Interpersonal factors include the influence of parents, family, relatives, friends, teachers, and early occupational exposure (Willis, 2009).

My field survey in Cu Chi District, Ho Chi Minh City, also reveals numerous factors affecting young people's career choices. Because, this area is undergoing modernization, developing according to the trend of a modern urban area as part of the city's long-term development strategy.

RESEARCH METHODS

This article utilizes data synthesized from both qualitative and quantitative sources, collected through surveys and in-depth interviews conducted in Cu Chi District, Ho Chi Minh City, in 2023. The combination of these methods aims to analyze the factors influencing the career choices of young people in this area. Qualitative data is used to illustrate and reinforce the quantitative findings.

Quantitative data was collected from 500 survey respondents aged 16 to 30 through a convenience sampling method. Survey participants were also interviewed in-depth to clarify the information they provided. The survey data was analyzed using SPSS 20 software, while the in-depth interview data was selectively recorded and annotated to enrich the content of the article.

From these data sources, the article identifies various factors affecting the career choices of young people in the current developmental context of Cu Chi District, Ho Chi Minh City.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The research results indicate that when deciding on a career, individuals often consult various sources of information and base their decisions on two main groups of factors: internal and external factors.

Internal Factors

Internal factors are built upon the fundamental reasons each individual relies on to make career decisions, such as personal interests and considerations of job suitability with personal aspirations. These aspirations may include affirming one's value and capabilities, respecting family opinions, seeking high income, or maintaining a family occupational tradition. Survey results show that several internal factors influence career choice, with the most prominent being personal interests, job requirements that match personal characteristics, the desire to express personal value, and the potential for easy income generation.

The survey in Cu Chi District reveals that most young people focus on 15 major career groups: tourism, education, law, medicine, pharmacy, business, finance and banking, management, arts, information technology, design, engineering, translation and interpretation, social work, and public administration. The three most

selected career groups are tourism, education, and law-security. The tourism sector accounts for 35.3% of respondents, including jobs such as tour guides, hotel and restaurant management, travel management, service staff, chefs, and flight attendants. The education sector accounts for 28%, double the number of those choosing law and security (14.3%). The law and security sector includes professions such as lawyers, public security officers, and police officers.

The majority of respondents choosing the tourism sector as a future career is due to its significant role in the socio-economic development of Vietnam in general, and Ho Chi Minh City in particular. The Vietnamese government is committed to promoting investment in tourism and travel in the coming years. Annually, the tourism sector contributes over 6% to Vietnam's GDP, making it one of the most crucial drivers of economic development. The domestic tourism market remains the main driving force of Vietnam's tourism industry. As of November 2022, domestic tourism activities recorded an impressive growth with 96.3 million domestic tourists, surpassing the total of 85 million domestic tourists for the entire year of 2019. Post-COVID-19, the government has issued policies to facilitate international tourists visiting Vietnam, such as restoring visa exemption and entry-exit policies as before the pandemic, and no longer requiring vaccination certificates for COVID-19. Currently, Vietnam has approximately 132 branded hotels and resorts in operation by various corporations. Over the next three years, the market is expected to see an additional 80 hotels and resorts go into operation. This presents an opportunity for the youth in Cu Chi district to choose this industry for their future careers (Phuong Loan, 2023). "I chose the tourism industry for my future career because I really enjoy being a tour guide. Moreover, the tourism industry in Vietnam is developing very strongly and the chances of me getting a job are very high. Currently, I am learning English and Chinese to better guide international tourists in the future," (cited Ms. H.T.H, 22 years old, from Cu Chi).

Besides tourism, the education sector is also a popular choice among respondents. This is because the education sector equips individuals with foundational knowledge in educational psychology and management, helping to develop and enhance skills in planning, designing, implementing, and evaluating educational activities, counseling, and school management. It prepares them to work in schools, educational institutions, non-governmental organizations, and social organizations related to education. This sector is essential for the country's development as it disseminates knowledge, culture, ethics, and language. Currently, the education sector also offers numerous job opportunities. Therefore, young people in Cu Chi are very interested in this sector as they prepare for their future careers (Viet Ha, 2023). "I enjoy being a teacher because it benefits society. Therefore, I need to study pedagogy, and after graduation, I will teach my students to become useful citizens for the country," (said Mr. T.N.N, 23 years old, from Cu Chi).

My research also indicates that gender influences career choices among the youth in Cu Chi District. Specifically, females tend to choose careers in tourism and education more than males; conversely, males prefer careers as police officers, soldiers, or lawyers. "As females, we often prefer lighter, less stressful jobs, so I think being a teacher is the most suitable, and I chose to study education to become a teacher in the future," (said Ms. H.T.Y., 19 years old, from Cu Chi). "I've liked being a police officer since I was a kid. When I was little, I used to watch detective movies and saw the police officers as very skilled and heroic, so I liked it. Later, when I take the university entrance exam, I will apply to the University of Security to become a police officer. Moreover, being a male, I think being a police officer is more suitable," (said Mr. N.H., 17 years old, from Cu Chi).

In summary, the career choice trends of young people in Cu Chi are influenced by four fundamental reasons: personal interests, job characteristics matching personal traits, the desire to affirm personal value, and the potential for easy income generation.

External Factors

External factors significantly influence the final career decision. Survey results reveal two main groups of external factors: social networks and media activities. Social networks are considered from three aspects: family, friends, and the local community.

Family: According to statistical results, the family factor (such as parents, grandparents, and siblings) influences the career choices of young people in Cu Chi, but this influence accounts for only about 4%. Among

these, mothers have the most significant impact on career choice. However, 96% of respondents stated that they make their own career decisions. The results also show no gender differences in the career decision-making process ($p = 0.31 > 0.05$). Similarly, there are no differences based on district, age, or educational level of respondents when they decide on a career (see Figure 1).

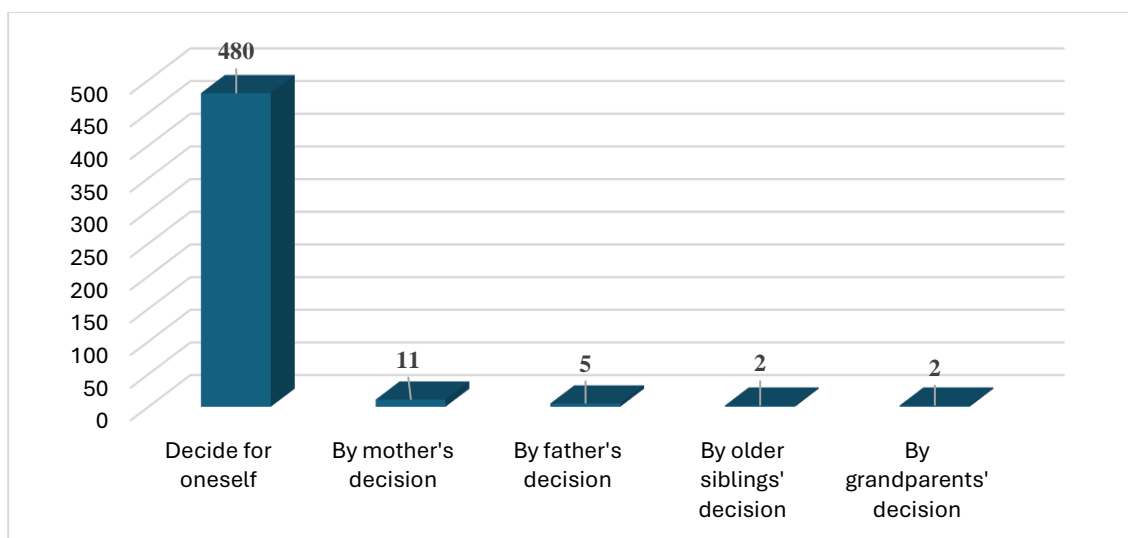


Figure 1: Who decides the career choice (Unit: Person)

"I decide on my career choice, but I also consult with my parents, especially my mother, because I often talk to her. My father works all day and has little time to talk with me. My mother often advises me to choose this job or that job, but I discuss it with her, and in the end, I follow my own decision, and she respects that decision," (said Ms. T.T.H, 24 years old, from Cu Chi). "My father also advises me to choose a career that runs in the family, as our family works in education, but I prefer economics. So, I chose to study economics at university so that after graduation, I can work at a company in the industrial park here in Cu Chi," (said Mr. D.D.T, 23 years old, from Cu Chi).

Although the level of family involvement and the sources of information provided by the family are not high, the family's standard of living does impact career choices, with a mean score of 3.48. Other factors such as the family's traditional occupation, career transition experiences within the family, and experiences from relatives have less influence, with impact scores ranging from 2.15 to 2.53, indicating a "fairly insignificant" effect.

Friends: According to the study results, 12.6% of respondents consider the opinions of friends when deciding on a career. The influence of this information source on their decision is minimal, with an average impact score of 2.31. "My friends and I often discuss career choices for the future. We talk about this to choose the right university and major. We only discuss it and do not interfere with each other's career choices," (said Mr. N.H.D, 18 years old, from Cu Chi).

Local Community: No respondents indicated that their career choices were made to preserve traditional local occupations. Therefore, the influence of traditional occupations is quite low. However, community trends have a slight impact on their career choices, with 99 respondents indicating that they choose their careers based on the trends in their local community. "In this area, all my friends work as laborers in the industrial zone, so I also applied for a job there. If I stayed home and worked in agriculture, people would say that I am not striving for a better future. Therefore, I chose to work as a laborer to be like everyone else," (said Ms. N.T.B.Đ, 21 years old, from Cu Chi).

Media Activities: Media activities are assessed from two perspectives: interpersonal communication and mass media. Survey results show that young people use a variety of media channels to consider and make their career decisions. Over 70% of respondents consider mass media as the primary source of career information. This also reflects the previously mentioned factor of self-determined career choices. "I read the news a lot and

often see articles about the development of tourism in Ho Chi Minh City and the great job opportunities in the tourism industry. So, I decided to pursue a career in tourism and study it at university to work in this field after graduation," (said Ms. N.T.T.H, 22 years old, from Cu Chi). "In this area, the public radio broadcasts all day, including job recruitment content. I listen regularly and also plan my future job based on the recruitment announcements from companies on the radio," (said Mr. T.N.D, 20 years old, from Cu Chi).

Additionally, two other major sources for career decision-making are advice from high school teachers and guidance from university admissions counselors, with respective percentages of 37.8% and 35.6%. "Our teachers frequently advise us on career choices. When we were in 12th grade, each time we met with them, they would ask about our plans and suggest which fields to pursue for stable employment after graduation," (said Mr. T.T.D, 21 years old, from Cu Chi). Family information accounts for approximately 25% of the total responses (see Figure 2).

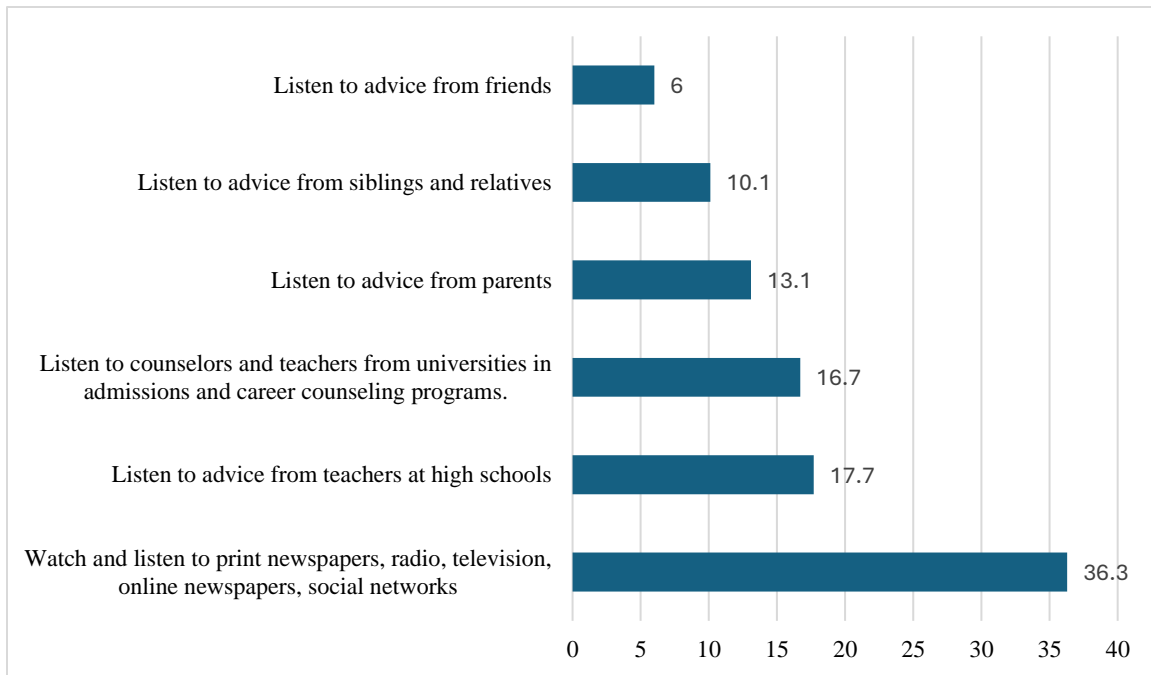


Figure 2: Sources of Information for Career Choice (Unit: %)

Regarding the age group of respondents and their use of information sources for career decision-making, the results show significant differences. 56% of respondents aged 16 to 18 tend to independently consult information through media sources, while references from friends in this age group account for only 7.8%. Similar results are observed in other age groups. For parental advice, respondents aged 24 and older consult their parents three times more than those aged 19 to 24 (6.0% versus 2.6%).

Thus, media, including print newspapers, online newspapers, radio, television, and social media, play a crucial role in influencing career decisions of respondents in Cu Chi. Among these, the influence of social media (such as Facebook, Twitter, Zalo, Instagram) and online newspapers is rated as moderate, with average scores of 3.35 and 3.1, respectively. "We also frequently check Facebook for job recruitment information. This helps us in shaping our career choices for the future, as it provides insight into the current demand in the job market and helps us align our career plans accordingly," (said Ms. N.T.H, 21 years old, from Cu Chi). In contrast, radio has a significantly lower influence, with an average score of only 2.05. Although media influences career choices, the impact of each media type is not pronounced; most respondents rate the influence as average. The study indicates no significant variation between districts in the responses. Specifically, respondents tend to independently consult information from mass media, with a total of 87 opinions. Meanwhile, the total number of respondents using advice from high school teachers and university admissions counseling programs is 79 opinions. This result aligns with findings from Ozen (2011) and Ferry (2000) and supports Gottfredson's (1981;

2002) studies on key factors influencing career choice. According to Gottfredson's model, self-perception and job image impact career choice, including both direct and indirect effects of parental occupation, mass media, and personal preferences.

This study analyzes factors influencing career choice from two main perspectives: "internal factors" (personal interests, abilities, and desires) and "external factors," which are divided into two subgroups: Social Networks (family, friends, community) and Media Activities (interpersonal communication and mass media).

In conclusion, the career decision-making of youth in Cu Chi is influenced both directly and indirectly by a combination of internal and external factors. The trend of choosing careers that align with personal interests and characteristics is also confirmed in several other international studies (Alexander et al., 2010; Edward and Quinter, 2012; Fatima Abrahams et al., 2015; Shertzer and Stone, 2003).

CONCLUSION

With the strong economic and social development in recent years, Cu Chi District in Ho Chi Minh City has become a vibrant center for various labor and production activities, showcasing a wide diversity of career types. Survey results indicate that youth in this area tend to choose from 15 different career fields, including: tourism, education, law, medicine, commerce, finance, management, arts, information technology, design, engineering, translation, social work, and public administration.

Notably, the three most popular fields are: (1) Tourism, with jobs such as tour guides, chefs, hotel and restaurant managers, and travel administration; (2) Education, including roles such as teachers, lecturers, and trainers; and (3) Security and law, encompassing jobs such as police officers, security personnel, and lawyers. These professions are primarily chosen for their alignment with personal interests, characteristics, self-assertion, and high earning potential.

In addition to internal factors, career choice is also significantly influenced by external factors, particularly (1) social networks and (2) media. Among these, family has a stronger impact compared to friends and the surrounding community. Regarding media, online news is considered to have a greater impact on career choice compared to other forms of media.

These findings are consistent with previous studies by Ozen (2011) and Ferry (2000), which highlight the influence of social relationships on career decisions. The results also align with the findings of Gottfredson (1981; 2002), which identify key factors affecting career choice, including parental influence, personal interests, and mass media. This study clarifies both internal and external factors, demonstrating that the tendency to choose a career aligned with personal interests and characteristics is also noted in other international studies.

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Conflict of Interest and Data Availability Statement

The authors state no conflict of interest and there is no data associated with this article.

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