

Social networking in the job search process of Vietnamese graduate students

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Abstract:

Social networking is one of the factors affecting the process of participating in the labor market students in the research area in particular. The article shows which social networks graduates in recent years use in their job search process along with offering details concerning the types of social networking they use.

Keywords: *Employment, social networking, graduate students, job search*

1. Introduction

In Vietnam, young people in general and students in particular continue to be concerned about the difficulty of finding work. The first quarter of 2024 saw a rise in job shortages compared to the same period the previous year and from the preceding quarter. Since Vietnam observes the Tet holiday in January and February every year, a lot of businesses, manufacturing facilities, and other establishments tend to hire more temporary workers or staff members in order to meet demand before the end of the year. Nonetheless, the quantity of work and the number of working hours typically decline after the holidays. As a result, the unemployment rate this quarter is frequently greater than it was last quarter. This has happened frequently in the past as a common phenomenon before the outbreak of Covid-19. According to the Ministry of Labour Law of Vietnam, there were around 933,0 thousand unemployed persons of working age in the first quarter of 2024 – an increase of 26400 from the previous quarter and a 47.2 thousand increase from the same period the year before. In the first quarter of 2024, the unemployment rate for young people (15–24 years old) was 7.99%, which represented an increase of 0.37 percentage points from the previous quarter and 0.38 percentage points from the same time the previous year. (Report of the General Statistics Office and the Ministry of Planning and Investment on the labor and employment situation in the first quarter of 2024)

As on the findings of some universities' 2021 graduate employment survey, almost 80% of graduates have already found employment.

While the graduation rate at the University of Tay Nguyen is 85.9%, the employment rate of graduates at University of Architecture Ho Chi Minh City is up to 94.96% (although this percentage is based on the fact that only 30% of students responded to the survey of all graduates); at National Economics University, the employment rate is 89%.

81.74% of students are employed, per the findings of the 2022 employment survey conducted among University of Economics and Law, Vietnam National University, Ho Chi Minh City graduates. Depending on the type of school, between 80 and 90 percent of graduates find employment within three months to a year of graduation. The findings indicated that the following industries had high graduate employment rates (over 90%): marketing (95%), e-commerce (95.45%), management information systems (96.55%), accounting (97.01%). A survey of university graduates showed that the percentage of graduates with employment accounted for 88.3% of all students interviewed.

Thus, typically, about 20% of recent graduates are unemployed and actively seeking employment. This figure is relatively high when compared to the total unemployment rate for young adults aged 20 to 24 in the country in 2023, which is 7.63%. The unemployment rate is one of the metrics that reflect the country's socioeconomic position and serves as the foundation for developing economic policies and providing social security. A shortage of employment, or the inability to find work after graduation, has had an economic and social impact that leads to a waste of highly qualified employees.

In addition to the factors that have been proved to influence the problem of finding work, such as freshly graduates failing to meet employer standards or receiving unpractical knowledge in schools, social networking is another element influencing students' job search process. So, with this paper, the author intends to provide a general overview of the social networks that students are now using to find work after graduation.

2. Literature Review

According to [7] many research have contributed to the evidence that employment comes to individuals as well as through official recruitment channels (advertising, recruitment, and direct candidacy) and that social networking is frequently utilized. According to studies conducted in the United Kingdom in the 1970s and 1980s, 30.0% to 40.0% of respondents acquired jobs through friends and relatives. A 1982 poll in Japan of workers over the age of 15 revealed 34.7%, while in Wantanabe in 1985, the number of people who acquired jobs through partnerships was more than 70%. Boxman, DeGraaf, and Flap's studies also revealed that 61.0% of respondents acquired their jobs through personal relationships.

After more than twenty years of [6] typical work on the use of relationships in job search, continued to affirm the important role of social relationships on the labour market that even as society evolves, adults spend the majority of their time on social networks, which include relatives, friends, and colleagues. All of these networks will remain connected as long as people work.

In the 2008s, [5] investigated social networking by analyzing social networks, theories, concepts, and research methods. In this paper, the author primarily covers the theoretical and methodological components of social network analysis by posing questions that distinguish network analysis from analyses found in sociology and anthropology.

Another point to consider is that social networks are sometimes referred to as social capital. According to [9] Social capital is defined as a set of real or potential resources derived directly or indirectly from familiar networks, the volume of capital of an individual determined by how wide or narrow the link he can actually mobilize, and the amount of capital (economic, cultural, symbolic) of each individual with whom he is associated.

According to [3] social capital consisted of the following social life characteristics: social networks, norms, and trust in society, which allow individuals to collaborate effectively to achieve common goals. In a research of [17], claimed that social capital relates to the characteristics of structuring social life such as social networks, norms, interrelationships, and trust, and that it promotes coordination and collaboration for mutual benefit.

[13] argued that social capital is resources attached to social networks and used for specific purposes, arguing that the resources in the network belong to the individual, and that when the individual participates in the networks as a member, he "moves" his resources into a common resource, allowing other members to use them for their own purposes.

According to [16] provided an extensive analysis of the origins and definitions of social capital before concluding that social capital is the ability to benefit from friendship in social networks and systems.

The idea of social networking is a branch of social science that has been applied to a wide range of human organizations, from small groups to entire countries. The phrase "network" refers to a collection of things, important locations, and a map that depicts the relationships between them. In the context of social networking, objects involve individuals or groups of people. For example, a network can comprise a person and their relationships with all of their friends and relatives. That relationship may be one-way or two-way.

A network can be defined simply as a set of objects (in mathematics: intersection) and a diagram or description of their relationship. The simplest social relationship network is made up of two objects, A and B, and a connected relationship between them; when there are multiple relationships, the social network is known as a multi-component relationship. One of the reasons why social networking theory is being investigated is that understanding the relationship between one individual and another allows us to estimate that individual's social capital. The social network, on the other hand, is a social structure composed of individuals (or organizations) linked by interdependence via links such as friendship, kinship, shared interests, money transaction, sex, belief, knowledge, and prestige.

In a research of [9], social networking can be classified into three levels (micro, intermediate, and macro), and individual social networking can vary. This is determined by how much social capital and human capital the individual possesses; for example, the social network of the chairman of the board of directors of an economic corporation will differ from the social relationship network of a professor of sociology; similarly, rural people's social networks will differ from those of urban people, and so on.

3. Methodology

The article offered in-depth interviews to 27 graduates in the subject of study. The interviews were set for 2022. The sampling framework includes a wide range of criteria for courses of study at the school, and at the time of the interview, alumni were employed. Additionally, the article employed document analysis. The resources used include research on student job search, studies on the impact of families on students, reports on the findings of graduate employment surveys, and data from the Department of Employment Statistics.

4. Results and Discussion

Applying social networking theory to a student's job search reveals that the social network of students is defined as student relationships. Thus, students in the field of study have a network of relationships that includes relationships with families, relationships with friends, interactions with teachers, and social networks that they form on their own through extracurricular activities.

Of the 27 students of the nine departments who graduated from the interview, at the time they were interviewed, they used certain networks of relationships in their job search.

Table 1: Social networks that 2022 graduates used to get employment.

Faculty	Networking with family, relatives	Networking with friends	Networking with teacher, educational institutions	Networking through attending social organizations
Occupational Health and Safety	3	1	1	0
Social Work	2	3	2	1
Accounting	2	1	2	1
Labour Relations	2	2	2	1
Law	1	1	1	1
Business Administration	3	2	2	2
Human Resource	2	2	1	0
Finance-Banking	3	2	1	0
Sociology	2	2	3	1
Total	20	16	15	7

4.1. Networking with family, relatives

Since the 1990s, some scientists have pointed to a link between family background and career development as well as individual career choices. Because individuals are more likely to seek help in career decisions from family members. [3] was one of the first to assert that career decision making and selection need to be understood within a systemic perspective.

Bratcher theorized that the family establishes certain patterns and principles that attempt to keep a sense of homeostasis within the family and thus these rules and patterns influence behavior, including career decision-making behaviour.

According to [8], the basic, most important elements that make up the social network that is discussed in this section are “families with ceramic parents, brothers and sisters in the flesh; family acquaintances.”. In their work and employment research in Vietnam, [10] identified “family strategies” in investing in education, training, and finding employment for their children, as well as the benefits and limitations of finding a job based on family and friend relationships: “Family and friends remain the primary base for finding work for all types of job seekers.”. The author discovered that using family and family social networks for job search is becoming increasingly frequent.

Among 27 people interviewed, 20 of them used this social network to find work and succeed. And according to the survey, this is also the most effective type of social relationship in job search at this point,.

“I just told you about how I graduated but couldn't find a job for so long, and my grades were just average. I felt both bored and ashamed in front of my parents. Luckily, they didn't say anything, just told me to take my time to find something. But at that time, no company would hire me. Eventually, seeing me so down and spending all day moping at home without talking to anyone, my parents finally suggested going to my uncle's company.” (Excerpt from Response #11)

“In my final year, I didn't know where to intern. I contacted a few places but they wouldn't take me. In the end, my sister suggested interning at her securities company. I hesitated because it wasn't my field, and I wasn't sure if I'd be accepted. But to my surprise, I interned there until graduation and then got offered a contract. Now I work as a salesperson, still not in my field, but having a job is what matters. My colleagues are fun to work with too.” (Excerpt from Response #24)

4.2. Networking with friends

Friends are a social domain that refers to relationships between people with similar mental, emotional, viewpoint, or life situations. Friends are people who care, help, empathize, who can trust to share their joys and sorrows, who always stands by, encourages and reminds, helps in times of difficulty...(But these people are not people who have had sexual intercourse.)

According to [14], having an additional employed friend boosts the probability of getting a job by 3.7 percent. This finding is robust to specifications that address friends' work status, which could be influenced by correlation with unobserved characteristics and feedback effects. When considering labor market outcomes, the author discovered evidence of greater salaries and employment stability for individuals with more employed friends, which is consistent with networks operating as an information transmission mechanism.

In 2015, [15] once again proved in their research that one additional employed friend increases the job finding probability by 3.1 percentage points, which corresponds to an increase in the job find rate by as much as 15 percent. Their research also found that network quality increases job match quality for high-qualified workers whose networks are characterized by higher degree of homophily; these are networks formed among nonfamilial contacts.

In particular, an additional employed (non-relative) friend among highskilled workers leads to a wage premium (a statistically significant 6.1 percent wage increase for each employed friend).

Friendship can be developed through communication and social interaction. This interaction can occur in many different situations and at different times in life. The personality's network of friendship can be neighbors, classmates at different levels, and friends of your friends. All these relationships are synthesized into a vast network of social relationships that are interconnected. In many different interpretations, but the core of the social network revolves around the complexity of social relationships that humans build, maintain and develop in their real lives as members of society.

"After graduation, I tried several jobs right away. But some places had low salaries, and others had unpleasant colleagues. People at work spent the whole day gossiping about each other. I'm the new kid, so I was also isolated, which made work boring. One evening, I called my best friend in tears because of the pressure, and she asked if I had considered applying to her company since they were hiring. I thought having friends or acquaintances at work would make it better, so I applied. Surprisingly, getting in wasn't bad at all" (Excerpt from response #18).

"My current job came about from working while I was still in school. Back then, I couldn't find an internship before graduation. I posted my frustration on Facebook, and many people tried to comfort me. Then a classmate commented suggesting I intern at his family's company, and he introduced me." (Excerpt from response #19).

"My friend works at a company specializing in job advertising, so they know tricks for job hunting and sorting job list. They showed me how to find suitable jobs and even how to craft a CV. I used to think a colorful, artistic CV would leave an impression. But after submitting applications endlessly without any responses, I learned that nowadays, companies use software to scan CVs, so all my fancy decorations got filtered out. It can be turned out that a simple and specific CV is better." (Excerpt from response #23).

In fact, out of 27 interviewed graduates, 16 successfully obtained their current jobs through social networks. This aligns with what the theory of social network ties among friends has described.

4.3. Networking with teacher, educational institutions

During their training process at university, students not only interact and build relationships with peers but also engage with the lecturers who teach them. This relationship is even more noticeable with professors in their field of study. Aside from teaching in the classroom, educators in the research sector have another "job," which is to help students find work after graduation. Professors advise and recommend potential professions to students based on the information they have access to (which may be from their own acquaintances, collaborators, or institutions with whom they have worked). Professors, on the other hand, are more likely to have access to or be aware of job prospects in their field of expertise than graduates' family members, relatives, or acquaintances due to their professional network connections. Furthermore, with more knowledge about appropriate career prospects, students have more options, resulting in a more balanced job that takes into account a variety of aspects.

"When I was in my final year, looking for an internship, one of the professors in my department recommended me to a wastewater treatment plant. Initially, I thought it would just be a quick visit to the plant, but it turned out I had to work with the staff there. At the end of the internship, I was offered a contract, and I've been working at the plant ever since" (Excerpt from response #22).

In addition to job referrals through relationships with professors, students also have the opportunity to access job opportunities through career workshops or counseling programs organized by the university. In recent years, career orientation workshops and job counseling sessions for students, student forums on employment, have been organized and collaborated with labor newspapers to organize job fairs for students. Through these programs, students have the opportunity to explore career paths and gain initial access to jobs they desire or find suitable. This sets the stage for them to seek employment after receiving their degree. In today's era, where employment is a top concern for students after graduation, universities' assistance in connecting graduates with job opportunities is becoming increasingly attractive to prospective students.

Through survey results, it was found that 15 graduates successfully found employment through the support of their professors' and university's networks. This type of social network is something that may be interested in studying further to help graduates have more job opportunities after leaving school.

4.4. Networking through attending social organizations

For today's generation of students, they are becoming increasingly creative and dynamic. This dynamism is reflected in their willingness to engage in various activities during their free time, in addition to their mandatory class schedules. Some students decide to take on part-time jobs, while others join extra classes to enhance their knowledge. Some students use their spare time to participate in organizations (clubs, teams...) or clubs to socialize with like-minded individuals or to cultivate skills that are lacking...

Numerous clubs and teams have been established over the years to cater to the interests and needs of students. Prominent clubs at the university include the Volunteer Club, Blood Donation Club, Future Managers Club (FMC), Entrepreneurship Team, English Club, and more. By participating in these clubs, students in the research area have expanded their social networks, thus gaining more information and opportunities to engage in the job market. For example, the Future Managers Club (FMC) organizes many activities that provide students with the opportunity to work with businesses.

These extracurricular activities not only enrich students' university experiences but also contribute to their personal and professional development, providing them with valuable skills and networking opportunities that can enhance their future career prospects.

In addition, with their own dynamism, some students have also participated in organizations, clubs, or groups outside of the university. This demonstrates their ability to access information quickly and their adaptability in today's era.

However, perhaps due to the nature of these social relationships being newly formed and the limited frequency of interactions, only 7 students were able to find jobs based on these social networks.

"My university always organizes job counseling activities every year. But I felt they were lack of information I want to know. So, I decided to participate in the city's job fair. It was crowded, but there were many options for me. My first job after graduation was from that fair. When I went there, the seniors even advised me on how to dress differently for interviews and to tidy up my hair. I've quit now because the salary at the new company is higher. But looking back, if I hadn't attended that program, I might not have had the opportunity to apply for a better job like this" (Excerpt from Response #23).

"I have never participated in recruitment events, but my older sister used to. She gathered a lot of information from various companies. She spread them out on the floor and spent several days selecting. Finally, she chose 2 companies to interview with. She was hired by one of them. It was because the person who interviewed her that day was the same person she remembered from the recruitment event" (Excerpt from Response #14).

5. Conclusion

Students who graduated in the field of study used a number of social networking sites in their job hunt, the majority of which relied on their family and relative networks. The second most common activity is networking with friends. The next is to leverage the social network through their teachers, followed by social organizations (clubs, teams, etc.) that they have joined. It is possible to learn about the components and potential of each sort of networking. The teachers' network, in particular, is one that may be fully utilized to provide students with greater employment opportunities.

Through the above-mentioned content and analysis, the author has some suggestions for current students to be able to use social networking in their job search more favourably: Proactively participate in job orientations and career counseling events held by universities. When problems arise, seek advice of the faculty's teachers. Actively communicate with family members about your interests, employment preferences, and expectations. Join social and academic groups, teams, and participate in extracurricular activities both within and outside of school. Regularly developing skills such as communication, teamwork, and situation management, as well as obtaining specialized knowledge.

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