

LO LẮNG CỦA SINH VIÊN VỀ CƠ HỘI VIỆC LÀM SAU KHI TỐT NGHIỆP
TRONG BỐI CẢNH KHỦNG HOẢNG COVID-19: NGHIÊN CỨU ĐIỂN
HÌNH VỀ SINH VIÊN QUẢN TRỊ KINH DOANH TẠI HÀ NỘI

Hoàng Văn Hảo

Tóm tắt

Trong bối cảnh dịch COVID-19 đang bùng phát lần thứ tư tại Việt Nam, sinh viên đang có những lo lắng về cơ hội công việc trong tương lai của họ. Bài viết này đánh giá về mức độ lo lắng của sinh viên năm cuối ngành Quản trị Kinh doanh chuẩn bị tốt nghiệp năm 2021. Dữ liệu thu được từ 412 sinh viên ở Hà Nội được xử lý bằng phần mềm SPSS (phiên bản 25). Thống kê mô tả và một số kiểm định đã được thực hiện trong nghiên cứu này. Kết quả nghiên cứu cho thấy 63,6% số sinh viên được hỏi lo lắng với công việc trong tương lai trong bối cảnh hiện nay. Nghiên cứu cũng chỉ ra rằng có sự khác biệt về mức độ lo lắng của sinh viên theo các đặc điểm cá nhân của họ bao gồm giới tính, nơi sống, việc đã từng đi làm thêm hay không và loại bằng tốt nghiệp mà sinh viên sẽ nhận được.

Keywords: Lo lắng, cơ hội công việc, sinh viên quản trị kinh doanh, COVID-19.

**STUDENTS' ANXIETY ABOUT JOB OPPORTUNITIES AFTER
GRADUATION IN THE CONTEXT OF COVID-19 CRISIS: A CASE
STUDY ON STUDENTS OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION IN HANOI**

Abstract

In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, which is spreading for the fourth time in Vietnam, students are concerned about their future job opportunities. This paper evaluates the level of anxiety among the final year students of business administration who are going to graduate in 2021. The data were collected from 412 students in Hanoi, then processed using the SPSS software version 25. Descriptive statistical analysis and tests were used in this study. The findings show that 63.6% of the surveyed students are worried about their job prospects in the current context. This paper also points out differences in the level of anxiety among the students according to their personal features, including gender, living places, with or without part-time job experience, and types of bachelor degrees.

Keywords: Anxiety, job opportunities, business administration students, COVID-19.

JEL classification: C, M, O15, E24

1. Introduction

Nowadays, to have a job as expected and suitable for their branches, students are required to make a lot of effort when they are studying at university. Finding out a stable job soon after graduation is the expectation of almost every student, especially in today's competitive labour market. The rate of students having jobs one year after graduation accounts for 70% of the total (Training Support and Human Resource Development Centre, 2020). Among bachelor training programs, the programs belonging to the business and administration always catch a lot of students' attention. This is the general trend of many countries in the world, and Vietnam is not the exception. Students have more interests when choosing and pursuing the business administration branch with its specific feature to provide a broad range of knowledge, which is suitable for many positions in the future. Especially, the Vietnamese government has recently targeted at a nation of start-ups with the tendency to support entrepreneurs to develop more significantly. This is a condition for students graduating from

business administration branch to have more job opportunities and graduates can also get jobs in accordance with their majors.

The COVID-19 pandemic has occurred globally for one year and a half, which has caused much greater pressure on nations in all fields. Vietnamese university education system is being primarily affected in conducting activities in the social context that each area or region is likely to implement social spacing. Functional agencies and tertiary institutes face difficulties in predicting and implementing training activities adaptive to a labour market which is likely to change considerably within the upcoming period of time. The current fourth spreading of COVID-19 pandemic in Vietnam (since the beginning of May, 2021) has affected domestic economic affairs, especially in such fields as tourism, transportation, and retail trading. State agencies are attempting to propose solutions so that factories and entrepreneurs belonging to large supply chains in areas with complex movements of the pandemic (including Bac Ninh and Bac Giang

province) can continue operating and avoid the breakage of supply chains if measures of preventing and fighting against the pandemic are committedly taken throughout the whole production procedure at the ultimate level. The recovery capacity of the economy will affect the labour market in general and Vietnamese human resources in specific. Due to the negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, the labour market so far has had many fluctuations, the number of employees tends to decrease, and the rate of redundancy is rising. The percentage of unemployment among adolescents in the fourth quarter of the year 2020 is 7.05% (Ministry of Labour, War Invalids and Social affairs, 2020). The rate of unemployment among the labour force in urban areas has become the highest in the past 10 years, and the income of employees has also dropped.

Although students of business administration have such personalities as being passionate about doing business, active and well-adjusted, they still have psychological problems when agencies and entrepreneurs are also confused in adapting themselves to the movements. With the particular that the rate of entrepreneurs performing in the commercial field in Vietnam is very high, the graduates from this branch will be limited in job opportunities and have to accept jobs with conditions and environments lower than usual when there is no pandemic. Therefore, graduates are likely to be anxious about their opportunities to have a job that follow their bachelor major and the salary they could get when they are offered a job, in a devastating circumstance that a lot of factories have been shut down due to the pandemic and most companies are cutting down on their staff to reduce the financial burden. This paper will survey and measure the level of worries among business administration students who are going to graduate in terms of their job opportunities in the current crisis of COVID-19. Whether their personal features can affect their level of anxiety or not will be investigated and analysed. We will examine different levels of this anxiety in accordance with the diversity of job experience, study performance of the students and their genders. On top of that, the variation in living places and the distinction between public and private universities are considered to have influences on the way that most students feel when it comes to these major psychological disorders.

2. Literature review

According to the American Psychological Association, anxiety is defined as “an emotion

characterized by feelings of tension, worried thoughts and physical changes like increased blood pressure.”, and it “is a normal human reaction to stressful situations”. Normally, it’s a feeling of fear or apprehension about what’s to come. However, if these feelings remain in your mind for too long, it can result in depression and have a long-lasting effect on your psychological health. Lazarus et al (1984) defined stress as “a particular relationship between the person and the environment that the person considers to be taxing or exceeding his or her resources and putting his or her well-being at risk.” These authors further assumed that stress is best viewed as an interpretative paradigm between the stressors and the individual’s psychological reactions. Anxiety, being a subcategory of psychological impacts, has attracted less attention, although it is as widespread and conceivably as crippling as depression (Weiller, E., 1998). Anxiety can be fueled by uncertainty and by fears of risk of harm to self or others. Anxiety is still undiagnosed and under-treated in the global context (Kroenke, K. et al, 2007). In addition to intense feelings of fear or panic (Brawman-Mintzer et al, 2004), patients of anxiety may also experience other physiological symptoms, such as feeling weak, fainting, pain or nausea, shivers, rapid breathing, etc. (Testa et al, 2013).

With the remarkable movements of the economy and society, there have been specific difficulties among the young labour force in terms of their occupations and income. According to Bueno-Notivol in 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic increases prevalence of depression and anxiety symptoms. Also, university students are vulnerable subjects and at a risk of mental health problems (Wang et al., 2020). Students graduating in this COVID crisis have to face up considerable pressure related to work and life. Students may feel uncertain about their completion of degrees and career path (Sundarasan et al., 2020).

The outbreak of coronavirus disease 2019, which started in China in December 2019, is a catastrophic calamity that has spread across the entire world at the speed of light. Public health measures have been implemented in almost every country to prevent the disease’s transmission. It is critical to recognize stress symptoms resulting from the lockdowns and the disease itself. During outbreaks of transmittable diseases, damaging psychological implications have been documented (Rith-Najarian, L. R. et al, 2019). It is apparent that the unswerving psychological and

social impacts of the pandemic are inescapable, and it is critical to implement measures in building resilience and coping with such damaging consequences of a pandemic. It is an urgent call for studies investigating the impact of COVID-19 on students' anxiety health and the need for immediate interventions.

3. Data and Methodology

3.1. Participants

A cross-sectional survey design was used to assess concerns about the job opportunities of the target population of university students during COVID-19 pandemic. The survey has been implemented on the final year students of business administration who are going to graduate in the year 2021. They are studying at some universities in Hanoi city. This survey has only been conducted on the full-time students of some state and private universities. The participants are those who are willing to participate in the research study and fulfill the questionnaire online. The authors have collected data via sending questionnaires to students in May, 2021. The samples in this research have been collected in a convenient method. The authors have contacted

and sent the link to some lecturers and students of Business Administration at some universities. They continued sending this link to other students in their class.

Table 1 shows information about the collected surveyed samples. Out of 412 respondents, females account for 58.0%, and the rest is males. Regarding the expected types of degrees that the students will gain in 2021, only 22 students get pass degree (occupying 5.3%), the credit degree accounts for the most with 336 students (81.6%), 44 students are likely to earn distinction degrees (accounting for 10.7%) and 10 students predict to get high distinction degrees (taking up 2.4%). The number of students from state universities is 299, which accounts for 72.6%, the rest is the ones from private universities. The number of students who are living with their families in Hanoi is 250, accounting for 60.7%, while the percentage of students coming from other cities and provinces only occupies 39.3%. The number of students that used to do a part-time job is 160; accounting for 38.8%, the number of students never working part-time is 252, equivalent to 61.2%.

Table 1: Demographic data of surveyed sample

Variable/Catelogies	Number of respondents	% in the sample
Gender		
Males	173	42.0
Females	239	58.0
Expected types of graduation		
Pass	22	5.3
Credit	336	81.6
Distinction	44	10.7
High distinction	10	2.4
Current universities		
State	299	72.6
Private	113	27.4
Living place of family		
Hanoi	250	60.7
Other cities/provinces	162	39.3
Part-time job		
Ever	160	38.8
Never	252	61.2
Total	412	100

Source: Own elaboration

3.2. Survey questionnaire and data analysis method

Besides the questions on anthropology, the main content of this survey focuses on anxiety about job opportunities after graduation among students which is answerable using a five-point Likert scale: (1) = Completely not worried, (2) =

Not worried, (3) = Normal, (4) = Worried, (5) = Completely worried. In addition, the participants are expected to give their answers on their desired salaries and the ideal positions that they would like to get. The primary data was also gathered via the interview method. The authors have also conducted intensive interviews among the group

of students that are going to graduate from the business administration program at three tertiary institutes including Trade Union University, University of Economics and Business - Vietnam National University and Phuong Dong University.

After collecting the primary data by surveying, 412 responded questionnaires after filtered were imported to be analysed via the SPSS statistical software (version 25). Implementing the descriptive statistics via the SPSS software has helped the authors to gain basic information about the students' level of anxiety about their future jobs in the current context. We carried out a descriptive analysis to illustrate the demographic and other selected characteristics of the respondents (Table 1) and the level of anxiety about job opportunities after graduation among business administration students. To evaluate the differences in the students' level of worries according to their personal features, testing the average hypothesis of two integers (T-test) and analysing one-way variance (One-way ANOVA) are applied.

Table 2: Anxiety about job opportunities after graduation among business administration students

Level of Anxiety	Frequency	Percent (%)
Completely not worried	28	6.8
Not worried	15	3.6
Normal	107	26.0
Worried	169	41.0
Completely worried	93	22.6

Source: Own elaboration

In the context that the pandemic is occurring with complicated movements along with the economic crisis, the final year students of business administration also have their own judgements on their future job prospects. 86.9% of the questioned students agree to do unexpected jobs as before. Also, 89.1% of the respondents agree to do jobs

little relevant or not relevant to their majors. This is the highest percentage showing the opinions of students of this branch about their adaptation to the social context. 78.4% of the surveyed students agree to receive a lower salary (according to the average standard among newly graduates) than that of the period prior to the pandemic.

Table 3: Anxiety of business administration students about job opportunities after graduation

Students' Anxiety	Agreement/ Disagreement	Frequency	Percent
Unexpected positions as before	Agreement	358	86.9
	Disagreement	54	13.1
Graduates' salaries lower than before	Agreement	323	78.4
	Disagreement	89	21.6
Jobs little relevant or not relevant to majors	Agreement	367	89.1
	Disagreement	45	10.9

Source: Own elaboration

4.2. The effects of personal characteristics on business administration students' level of anxiety

To find out whether there are any differences of students' worries according to their gender or

not, the authors have tested the average hypothesis of two integers (T-test) and analysed the one-way variance (One-way ANOVA). The findings will be presented in table 4 as follows.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Level of anxiety about job opportunities after graduation among business administration students

When analysing the level of worries about job opportunities among business administration students from the surveyed data, the authors have conducted the descriptive statistics (findings in table 2). 63.6% of the questioned students are worried about their job opportunities after graduation (including levels of being worried and very worried). Meanwhile, 26% of the respondents stated that they felt normal, and the remaining 10.4% were not worried about their future job opportunities. An interesting finding from the survey is that the percentage of students going to work for entrepreneurs accounted for 91.7% of the total. As presented above, students of this branch tend to be passionate about doing business, identifying their working environments clearly. However, only 8.3% of the surveyed students intend to work for state agencies or other types of agencies.

Table 4: The average value of levels of worries according to personal features

The average value and tested results			
Features	Mean score	T/F Value	Sig.
Gender		-6.927	0.000
Male	3.41		
Female	3.89		
Predicted grade		10.655	0.000
Pass	4.45		
Credit	3.73		
Distinction	3.30		
High distinction	2.50		
Types of universities		3.736	0.303
State	3.71		
Private	3.64		
Living place		-1.944	0.043
Hanoi	3.61		
Others	3.81		
Part-time job		-1.583	0.017
Ever	3.55		
Never	3.78		

Source: Own elaboration

From T-test accredited results, with the reliability of 95%, we can see that there are statistical differences when evaluating students' levels of worries about job opportunities according to their gender, living place, the experience of working part-time, and predicted types of degrees they can gain.

Female students and the ones who used to work part-time express their more optimistic attitude towards their future jobs. female students tend to stabilize their jobs and lives sooner than male ones in this study. Therefore, these are the groups of students expressing a high level of anxiety about future job opportunities. Analogous findings were also observed indicating significantly higher scores anxiety levels of females compared to males during this pandemic. It seems that gender differences in anxiety precede the pandemic, but the pandemic may deepen this discrepancy (Debowska et al., 2020).

The worries of students that are going to graduate in the economic-social context of many unexpected movements are understandable. In terms of studying results, the better their study results are, the more confident they feel about job prospects after graduation. Besides, part-time jobs have provided students with fundamental skills and experience in working environments. This can help them become more confident in their lives, especially when looking for a future job after graduation. Besides trying to gain good studying results at university, working part-time

during university time to get more experiences and personal skills is really essential. This also helps students of business administration have more job opportunities after graduation. Confidence in the job application and official participation in the labour force, especially in entrepreneurial environments, is very crucial.

The tested findings have also shown that the students living in Hanoi have a lower level of worries about job opportunities than those living in other areas in the crisis of COVID-19. Hanoi is a city with a concentration of many entrepreneurs with lots of job opportunities for students in specific and employees in general. Job opportunities here are still greater than those in surrounding provinces and cities. Students who are staying with their families in Hanoi have living experience, family or personal relationships, which can create job opportunities for them. Because of such reasons, these students often chose to work part-time. As a result, students staying with their families in Hanoi feel less worried about their future job prospects.

Interestingly, there is no statistical difference between students studying at state universities and those at private ones. As a matter of fact, the quality of graduates from Business Administration in specific and other business fields in general from private universities has been improved. They are also confident in participating in the labour market, looking for job opportunities. The research findings have erased the initial doubts that students of private

universities are likely to have more worries than those of state universities.

5. Recommendations

The findings from surveying business administration students have pointed out problems of students' worries about job opportunities. Over half of the questioned students express their anxiety when Vietnam has to fight against the fourth spreading of COVID-19. The study showed that over 70% of the students suffered from mild to severe depression and anxiety in the context that COVID-19 spreads rapidly, educational institutions have been temporarily closed in an effort to curb the spread of infections (Jeenat Mehareen et al, 2021). The COVID-19 epidemic in Vietnam has been still happening with complex patterns when the number of infected cases estimated until 26/11/2021 is about 1,200,000 people and many areas have been implementing social distancing. Its effects on the whole economy have been quite severe. This has also affected the labour market, in which the employees will have to face up with many unexpected risks. This is likely to last for a long time in the post period of COVID. University students are particularly vulnerable as their stressors have shifted from examination pressure, fear of missing out on social life to worries about health and their future as job prospects (Elmer T. et al., 2020). Business administration students also express their acceptance of disadvantages when participating in the labour market in the period that entrepreneurs are experiencing quite many difficulties. They can agree to do jobs not as expected, even do jobs little relevant or not relevant to their own majors. To ensure their lives, they also agree to do jobs with a lower salary than that they can get if the epidemic did not occur. If newly graduates are offered jobs of their interests or jobs with many experiences, then they can accept lower salaries in the context of high competitiveness about job opportunities. A noticeable feature of students of business administration is that most of them still determine to work for entrepreneurs that are considered to have active working environments with more successful promotion opportunities than other types of organizations.

Universities with the programs of business administration also need to take more effective and flexible measures in the context of fighting against the crisis of the COVID-19 pandemic. It is suggested that the mental health of university

students should be monitored during epidemics (Cao W. et al, 2020). Made decisions will support business administration students in specific and students at their universities in general. The university activities also need to take more notice of female students. Universities should continue interacting with employers of different types of entrepreneurs and business-production fields. Furthermore, universities also need to be active and often cooperate with the human resources department at entrepreneurs to evaluate the demands and activities of developing the human resources at entrepreneurs, from that they can conduct suitable training activities. As analysed before, students of this branch are equipped with a broad range of knowledge so they can continue equipping themselves with other intensive knowledge to meet the demands of the labour. Universities should also pay more attention to developing background skills such as students' digital skills, basic skills, and social communication skills. These skills can support economies to recover more quickly after the crisis via transforming the jobs of students after graduation. Flexibility in assessing students and licensing is necessary for the current situation of an epidemic with complex movements. Universities should avoid interruptions in training and assessing activities. Licensing should also be well-planned to ensure the progress in order to reduce the concerned psychology of students when they are going to complete their studying program at university. At a higher level, universities should research changes in the labour market related to positions after graduation of business administration students so that predictions about the effects of the crisis can be made soon. Finally, university education needs closely connect to the labour market and the social-economic development of each region in specific and of the whole nation in general.

For students, they need to understand that it is completely normal to have this nervous feeling towards an important event like graduations and their lives after this turning point, as everyone else is also worried about their job opportunities when they finally get their bachelor degrees. Thinking positively and being confident about your capacity are extremely crucial to make you feel better when you have to deal with the anxiety about not getting a job after graduation. Being fully equipped for the job you desire and knowing what you lack are the most effective ways to get over this. Students should make a list about their

ideal job and the goals they aim at, both long-term and short-term ones, because these will define their career and help them concentrate on the path of success. Acknowledging your strengths and weaknesses, which means that what you are good at and things you can't perform well at this moment, is a must to find the right ways to improve themselves as well as help them apply for a suitable position that goes along with their abilities. Getting as much job experience as you can by taking part-time jobs or signing up for an internship is essential as it will benefit the freshly-graduated students in coping with the pressure when participating in the labour force, besides, filling this experience in your resume will make a good impression on the recruiters. In compliance with the experience, students having good grades at university will greatly show the employers their dedications to the major they follow. Last but not least, it is a well-known fact that a large number of the graduates will have a job which is not relevant to their major, so students must learn to accept this and remind themselves that anything could be changed and not having an ideal job is not as bad as most people think, because any positions can give you certain skills, especially social skills, that your future work needs. Students from other provinces and cities need to broaden their living experience, build up job relations in Hanoi to have more opportunities and choices in job decisions after graduation.

6. Conclusions

This study has explored the level of anxiety among the final-year students of business administration at some universities in Hanoi and they are going to graduate during the COVID-19 pandemic. 63,3% the students surveyed are worried about their future jobs prospects in the context of social distancing implemented in Hanoi as well as many other areas in Vietnam. A certain proportion of the students has consented to do unexpected jobs, even they can accept to do the jobs that are of little or no relevance to their majors or work with lower salaries than those of the students who graduated in the normal social-economic context as before. The study also found the differences in the level of business administration students' anxiety according to their personal features including gender, living place, part-time working experience and their predicted grades. Male students, students who used to work part-time, students with better studying results and those living with their families in Hanoi have expressed a lower level of anxiety about their future job prospects. The better the students' studying results are, the more confident they feel about their job opportunities after university graduation. The findings of this study have emphasized the necessity of universities' intervention in order to reduce the anxiety, support the students of business administration positively. Students also need to be more active in adjusting to changes in order to reduce the level of worries about job prospects in the crisis context of COVID-19 pandemic.

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Thông tin tác giả:

Hoàng Văn Hào

- Đơn vị công tác: Khoa Quản trị Kinh doanh – Trường Đại học Công Đoàn
- Địa chỉ email: haohv@dhcd.edu.vn

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