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Factors influencing post-graduation employment opportunities: A case study at a university in the Mekong Delta

Tran Trung Chuyen*, Nguyen Thi Thu Tam, Nguyen Tri Khiem
Faculty of Business Administration – Marketing, Nam Can Tho University, Vietnam
*Corresponding Author: ttchuyen@nctu.edu.vn

ABSTRACT

Employment remains one of the most urgent socio-economic issues, particularly in the context of ongoing economic fluctuations. Employment rates are also among the key targets of national macroeconomic development goals. This study aims to identify the factors influencing job adaptability in order to enhance students' post-graduation employment opportunities. A mixed-methods approach was employed, incorporating expert consultation, analysis of industry reports, and a review of both domestic and international literature. In addition, a survey was conducted with 270 graduates from nine faculties at Nam Can Tho University (NCTU) who are currently working in the Mekong Delta region. The findings indicate that several factors significantly influence job adaptability and employment outcomes, including professional knowledge, soft skills, basic skills, academic performance, social networks, and work readiness. The results also reveal no significant gender differences in employment opportunities. However, variations are observed based on graduates' hometowns, graduation cohorts, and academic rankings. Overall, this study contributes empirical evidence on key employability factors and provides practical insights for higher education institutions and policymakers to improve training quality and graduate employability.

Keywords: employment, employment opportunities, skills, job adaptability, students

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INTRODUCTION

The employment outcomes of graduates have become a critical concern for both society and educational institutions. An increasing number of graduates face unemployment or are employed in positions that are unrelated to their fields of study, particularly amid ongoing global economic fluctuations. According to the International Labour Organization (ILO, 2024), the global unemployment rate decreased from 5.27% in 2022 to 5.1% in 2023. Despite this decline, the improvement remains relatively modest, indicating that unemployment continues to be a persistent global challenge. In Vietnam, data from the General Statistics Office (GSO, 2024) show that approximately 1.07 million people of working age were unemployed in 2023, representing a decrease of 14.6 thousand individuals compared to the previous year. The unemployment rate among the working-age population also declined slightly to 2.28%, down by 0.06 percentage points from 2022. However, although the number of employed workers has increased, the overall quality of employment has shown limited improvement. This is reflected in the continued high proportion of informal workers engaged in unstable and precarious jobs, highlighting persistent structural challenges within the labor market.

Many studies have been conducted to identify the factors influencing the employment opportunities of students after graduation (Hang & Huan, 2020; Kwon, 2019; Vung & Anh, 2024; Vien, 2023). However, most of these studies focus only on specific aspects such as soft skills or professional competence, while overlooking factors related to students' capability environments,

social relationships, and especially their job adaptability. Despite growing attention to graduate employability, empirical evidence focusing on universities in the Mekong Delta remains limited. Most existing studies concentrate on major urban centers, leaving regional higher education institutions underrepresented in the literature. These gaps need to be addressed through comprehensive, general research that focuses more on personal, social, and labor market factors. In other wordsm the gaps highlight the need for context-specific research that examines the factors affecting employment opportunities among graduates in this region. This would provide a more holistic view of the key elements that students need to prepare for after graduation.

Therefore, this study aims to identify key determinants influencing job adaptability and post-graduation employment outcomes of graduates at Nam Can Tho University, thereby providing evidence-based insights to support curriculum development, training improvement, and policy formulation.

The research was conducted with the objective of identifying the key factors influencing job adaptability, thereby improving the employment opportunities for students after graduation. Factors affecting employment opportunities, such as soft skills, professional qualifications, and social relationships, have been identified. The study employs both qualitative and quantitative methods. The research surveyed graduates from various programs at NCTU who are currently working in organizations in the Mekong Delta region.

The subsequent sections of this manuscript are structured as outlined: Section 2 includes the contents related to the theoretical foundation and research model. Section 3 elucidates the research methodology employed in this study. Section 4 articulates the empirical findings derived from the research. Section 5 includes the conclusions of the study and proposes managerial implications for the relevant stakeholders.

Hosain & Liu (2020) suggest that employment opportunities refer to the availability of positions within organizations that candidates can apply for, especially those seeking to improve their employment situation. In the context of passive job seekers, it includes the potential for individuals already employed to explore better roles that align with their skills and career aspirations. Moore & Khan (2020) define employment opportunities as available positions within organizations that individuals can apply for, typically characterized by specific requirements and responsibilities. Employment opportunities refer to the availability of effective work that allows individuals to earn a fair income, achieve job security, and experience personal growth within a framework of freedom, fairness, and safety (Andrea Zammitti et al., 2021).

Additionally, Danielle Li, et al. (2020) argue that employment opportunities can be viewed through the lens of recruitment practices, where companies must balance selecting candidates with proven profiles (exploitation) and including underrepresented groups to explore potential talent (exploration). This approach indicates that employment opportunities are not just about filling positions but also about promoting diversity and understanding candidate quality over time. In his study, Sung-Ho, Hu (2020) emphasizes that employment opportunities are perceived differently by businesses and job seekers, especially in the context of the recruitment process. Businesses prioritize organizational culture and job analysis, while job seekers focus on job analysis and interviews. Meanwhile, Mahjoub & Kruyen (2021) assert that employment opportunities include the potential for individuals to secure jobs through recruitment advertisements that effectively communicate the features and requirements of available positions.

Hypothesis and research model define as 1) Professional knowledge; 2) Soft skills; 3) Basic skills; 4) Social relationships; 5) Academic performance; 6) Work ability; 7) Job adaptability. First is the professional knowledge of students, especially in vocational education, refers to the specific understanding and skills necessary to perform effectively in professional practice. This includes cognitive processes related to contextualizing knowledge during professional execution, allowing students to apply theoretical concepts in real-world environments (Heusdens et al., 2019; Kizi., 2022). According to Mishra & Bahuguna (2023), students' professional knowledge encompasses the accumulation of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and understanding obtained through both formal education and informal experiences. The professional qualifications of students include a combination of knowledge, skills, and personal qualities necessary for effective performance in their future careers (Makarova et al., 2022; Melnikova., 2022). Therefore,

professional knowledge serves as a foundation for students to seek employment after graduation. Numerous empirical studies have shown that professional knowledge significantly influences students' job adaptability after graduation (Hang, & Huan., 2020; Kwon., 2019; Thang., 2023; Lam., 2021). Consequently, the study proposes the following hypothesis. Hypothesis H1: The factors related to professional knowledge have an impact on the job adaptability of graduates from NCTU.

Students' soft skills encompass a range of interpersonal and intrapersonal abilities necessary for effective communication and collaboration in a professional environment (Sergii et al., 2020; Gejdoš et al., 2021). Thomas & Martin (2019) assert that students' soft skills include interpersonal attributes that facilitate effective communication, collaboration, problem-solving, and leadership in various contexts. Soft skills for students include a variety of interpersonal and intrapersonal abilities essential for effective communication, collaboration, and self-management in a professional setting (Carlyon & Opperman., 2020). Kumar & Sharma (2019) argue that soft skills refer to personal and social skills that are non-technical, enabling individuals to effectively manage their emotions and interact harmoniously with others in the workplace. Soft skills play a crucial role in students' job adaptability after graduation (Hang & Huan., 2020; Kwon., 2019; Vung & Anh., 2024; Vien., 2023). Hypothesis H2: The factors related to soft skills have an impact on the job adaptability of graduates from NCTU.

Basic skills refer to a set of abilities related to students' competencies, including language proficiency, office computer skills, planning, time management, and more (Vien., 2023). Employers can assess candidates' job acceptance abilities and their suitability for positions through these foundational skills. These skills are developed by students during their education and through participation in academic programs organized by educational institutions. Therefore, to meet job requirements after graduation, basic skills must be appropriately equipped. Several empirical studies indicate a relationship between basic skills and students' job adaptability after graduation (Vien., 2023; Kwon., 2019; Thang., 2023; Lam., 2021). Hypothesis H3: Factors related to basic skills have an impact on the job adaptability of graduates from NCTU.

Liebst, L. S., et al. (2019) assert that social relationships refer to the connections and interactions between individuals shaped by shared experiences, common interests, and emotional ties. Luo, M., et al. (2021) evaluate social relationships as the connections and interactions that individuals have with others, including the quality and structure of these relationships. Social relationships encompass the connections and interactions between individuals within a community, involving various aspects such as social support, neighborhood satisfaction, social cohesion, and neighborhood participation (LeBrón, A. M., et al., 2019). When graduates have social relationships (with family, friends, relatives, etc.), they are more likely to meet job requirements, thereby increasing their job adaptability after graduation (Vung & Anh., 2024; Ha et al., 2022; Vien., 2023). Hypothesis H4: Factors related to social relationships impact the job adaptability of graduates from NCTU.

Academic performance is reflected in the graduation classification on the diploma, the overall cumulative GPA, and the overall training score. Additionally, hiring units also consider the reputation of the institution that issues the diploma to graduates. Employers are increasingly seeking excellent academic achievements in the context of fierce job competition (George et al., 2021). Costa & Fleith (2019) assert that academic performance significantly impacts students' job opportunities, as higher academic performance often correlates with better job prospects and career advancement. Studies such as Nguyen et al. (2020); Ha et al. (2022); and Vien (2023) have identified that academic performance affects the job adaptability of graduates. Hypothesis H5: Factors related to academic performance impact the job adaptability of graduates from NCTU.

Work ability is reflected through various factors such as adaptability to the work environment, the ability to handle pressure, self-learning and self-discipline, listening and correcting personal weaknesses, and creativity in job tasks. Therefore, the corporate environment requires employees to integrate multiple skills to enhance their competitiveness and success in the workplace. Numerous studies recognize that employees who can effectively handle situations, listen, and adapt to their work conditions significantly increase their chances of employment (Kwon., 2019; Thang., 2023; Nguyen et al., 2020; Ha et al., 2022; Vien., 2023). Hypothesis H6:

Factors related to work ability impact the job adaptability of graduates from Nam Can Tho University.

Employers require candidates to possess qualities such as promptly meeting their needs, not needing retraining, quickly adapting to a new work environment, and completing assigned tasks. Therefore, to enhance their chances of employment after graduation, individuals must actively cultivate their professional knowledge, soft skills, language proficiency, computer skills, and problem-solving abilities. Job adaptability will directly impact students' employment opportunities. Many studies affirm this, including works by Diep (2019), Lam (2021), and Kwon (2019). Hypothesis H7: Job adaptability affects the employment opportunities of graduates.

METHOD

The present study adopts a mixed-methods research design that integrates both qualitative and quantitative approaches to provide a comprehensive examination of factors influencing graduate job adaptability and employment outcomes. The qualitative component involves the systematic review and synthesis of relevant theoretical frameworks, industry reports, and previous empirical studies from both domestic and international sources. This process supports the development of conceptual model and measurement instruments. The quantitative component is subsequently employed to empirically test the proposed research model and examine the relationships among the identified variables.

The study population consists of graduates from various academic disciplines at Nam Can Tho University who are currently employed in organizations across provinces in the Mekong Delta region. To ensure representativeness and reduce sampling bias, a stratified random sampling technique is applied. Graduates are grouped according to academic programs, and samples are selected proportionally based on the number of alumni in each major. The random sampling process is conducted using the randomization function in Microsoft Excel, which enables the objective selection of participants within each stratum.

The proposed research model includes six independent variables and one mediating variable, represented by a total of 39 observed indicators. Following methodological recommendations for structural equation modeling, a minimum sample size of five to seven observations per indicator is required to ensure statistical reliability and model stability. Accordingly, the study collects data from 270 respondents, which satisfies the recommended threshold and enhances the robustness of subsequent statistical analyses.

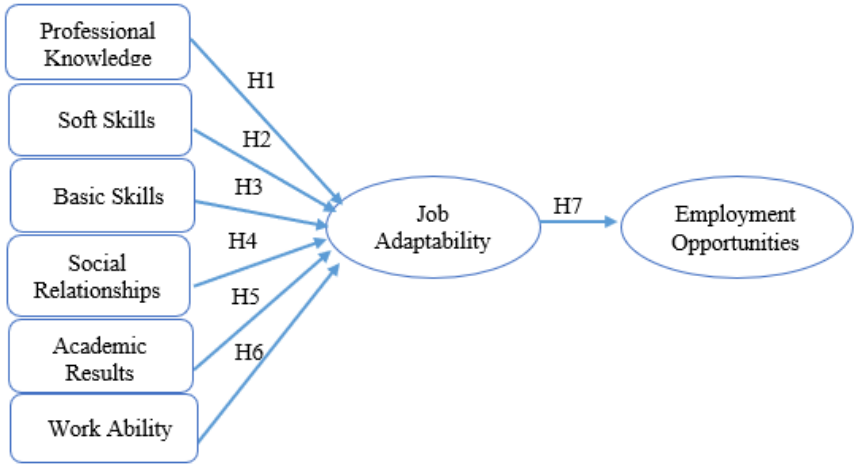

Figure 1. Proposed Research Model

Data collection is conducted using a structured questionnaire designed based on validated measurement scales and adapted to the research context. The survey instrument is distributed electronically to respondents through multiple platforms, including Google Forms, email, and social media applications such as Zalo and Facebook, to maximize response rates and accessibility. In addition, brief online follow-up interviews are conducted with selected

participants to clarify responses and enhance data accuracy. Prior to the main survey, the questionnaire is reviewed for clarity and content validity to ensure that the items accurately capture the constructs under investigation.

Following data collection, statistical analyses are performed using SPSS and AMOS software. First, Cronbach's alpha is applied to assess the internal consistency reliability of the measurement scales. Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) is then conducted to examine construct validity and to eliminate indicators that do not meet factor loading and reliability criteria. Based on the EFA results, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) is performed using AMOS to evaluate the measurement model and assess overall model fit. Several goodness-of-fit indices are employed, including Chi-square (CMIN), Chi-square divided by degrees of freedom (CMIN/df), Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Tucker–Lewis Index (TLI), and Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA). Finally, structural equation modeling (SEM) is utilized to test the hypothesized relationships among variables and determine the overall fit and explanatory power of the proposed research model (Figure 1).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

Overview of Nam Can Tho University

Nam Can Tho University (NCTU), established in 2013, has undergone more than a decade of development and currently offers a wide range of academic programs across multiple disciplines, including Economics and Management, Engineering and Technology, Health Sciences, Social Sciences and Humanities, Tourism, Hospitality, Environmental Engineering, and Mechanical Engineering. The university provides various modes of education, including full-time, part-time, online learning, as well as postgraduate programs at the master's and doctoral levels. As of 2024, NCTU employs over 1,000 academic and administrative staff and operates through 10 functional departments, 18 faculties, three specialized departments, two research institutes, a central library, and a scientific journal focusing on economics development. The institution currently serves more than 25,000 students enrolled in over 40 academic majors (NCTU, 2024).

In addition to its domestic programs, NCTU has established international academic collaborations with several overseas institutions, including the Malaysian University of Science and Technology (MUST), the University of Waikato (New Zealand), VMED Education Organization (India), and Champasak University (Laos). Through these partnerships, the university offers joint and international programs in fields such as Business Administration, Medicine, Semiconductor Technology, and Automotive Engineering. To date, NCTU has awarded academic degrees and diplomas to more than 12,000 graduates, contributing to the regional workforce and local economic development (NCTU, 2024).

With respect to graduate employment outcomes, institutional tracer study data indicate that more than 95% of NCTU graduates secured employment within a defined period after graduation (PLO, 2023). This employment rate reflects the university's alignment with labor market demands and its role in supplying skilled human resources to the Mekong Delta region. Furthermore, according to the Vietnam University Ranking (VNUR) 2024, which evaluated 237 higher education institutions nationwide using multiple data sources and international ranking benchmarks such as QS, THE, and ARWU, NCTU improved its national position by 37 ranks within one year, reaching the top 61 universities in Vietnam. This advancement suggests continuous institutional development and increasing recognition within the national higher education landscape.

Results of data analysis

As presented in Table 1, female respondents constitute a larger proportion of the survey sample than male respondents, with 148 females and 122 males, representing 54.8% and 45.2% of the sample, respectively. This gender distribution indicates a relatively balanced representation of participants, with a slight predominance of female graduates. With regard to graduation

cohorts, the largest group of respondents comes from Course 03, accounting for 126 graduates (46.7%). This is followed by Course 05 with 58 respondents (21.5%), Course 02 with 47 respondents (17.4%), and Course 01 with 32 respondents (11.9%). Course 04 represents the smallest proportion of the sample, with only seven graduates (2.6%). These distributions reflect the varying cohort sizes and participation rates among graduates surveyed in this study

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of the survey samples

Indicator	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1. Gender		
Male	122	45.2
Female	148	54.8
2. Course		
Course 1	32	11.9
Course 2	47	17.4
Course 3	126	46.7
Course 4	7	2.6
Course 5	58	21.5

As shown in Table 2, graduates from the Faculty of Economics constitute the largest proportion of respondents, with 82 individuals representing 30.4% of the total sample. This high representation reflects the relatively large student population in economics-related programs and their strong participation in the labor market. The Faculty of Architecture, Construction, and Environment follows with 46 respondents (17.0%), indicating substantial graduate engagement in technical and infrastructure-related fields. Graduates from the Faculty of Pharmacy account for 41 respondents (15.4%), suggesting stable employment demand in health-related professions within the region. The Faculty of Law contributes 28 respondents (10.4%), while the Faculty of Engineering and Technology represents 22 respondents (8.1%), demonstrating moderate participation from these professional disciplines. Graduates from the Faculty of Tourism and Hotel Restaurant Management comprise 17 respondents (6.3%), which may reflect the sector's fluctuating employment conditions following recent economic disruptions. Meanwhile, the Department of Mechanical Engineering accounts for 13 respondents (4.8%), followed by the Faculty of Information Technology with 12 respondents (4.4%). The Faculty of Medicine records the smallest proportion, with nine respondents (3.3%), which may be attributed to cohort size differences and the extended training period typically required in medical education. Overall, the distribution of respondents across faculties indicates a diverse academic background among participants, allowing the study to capture variations in employment outcomes across multiple disciplines. This diversity enhances the representativeness of the sample and supports the robustness of subsequent analyses examining factors influencing graduate employability and job adaptability.

Table 2. Statistical table of alumni by faculty

Faculty	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Faculty of architecture, construction, and environment	46	17.0
Faculty of tourism and hotel restaurant management	17	6.3
Faculty of information technology	12	4.4
Department of Mechanical Engineering	13	4.8
Faculty of economics	82	30.4
Faculty of Engineering and technology	22	8.1
Faculty of law	28	10.4
Faculty of medicine	9	3.3
Faculty of pharmacy	41	15.2
Total	270	100.0

The analysis results (Table 3) show that the classification of with 15 individuals (5.6%), and average with 1 individual (the lowest proportion at 0.4%).

Table 3. Statistics on academic performance classification

Classification	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Average - Good	15	5.6
Good	103	38.1
Excellent	124	45.9
Outstanding	27	10.0

Results of the research model testing

Results of Cronbach's Alpha testing

To assess the internal consistency reliability of the measurement scales, Cronbach's alpha coefficients were calculated for all constructs. Following the criteria proposed by Hair et al. (2017), a Cronbach's alpha value greater than 0.60 is considered acceptable for exploratory research, while corrected item–total correlation coefficients should exceed 0.30. Items that fail to meet these thresholds are considered unreliable and are subsequently removed from further analysis.

Table 4. Summary table of scale reliability assessment results

No.	Factors	Notation	Initial number of variables	Remaining number of variables	Cronbach's Alpha	Variable
1.	Professional knowledge	KTCM	7	5	0.927	Independent
2.	Soft skills	KNM	8	3	0.902	Independent
3.	Basic skills	KNCB	5	3	0.842	Independent
4.	Social relationships	QHXH	6	4	0.917	Independent
5.	Academic performance	KQHT	4	4	0.888	Independent
6.	Workability	KNLV	5	4	0.930	Independent
7.	Job adaptability	NCVL	4	4	0.917	Mediating
8.	Employment opportunities for students after graduation	CHVL	6	4	0.894	Dependent
Total			45	31		

The results presented in Table 4 indicate that 14 observed variables were excluded from the measurement model due to inadequate reliability performance shown by Cronbach's Alpha coefficient which is less than 0.6. These variables include KNM2, KNM5, KNM6, KNM7, KNM8, KTCM5, KTCM6, KNCB3, KNCB5, KNLV3, CHVL5, CHVL6, QHXH5, and QHXH6. The remaining scales demonstrate satisfactory reliability levels. Furthermore, the analysis shows that the lowest Cronbach's alpha coefficient among the retained constructs is 0.842, which exceeds the recommended threshold of 0.70 for established measurement reliability. In addition, all corrected item–total correlation coefficients are greater than 0.50, indicating strong internal consistency among the observed variables within each construct. These results confirm that the measurement scales exhibit high reliability and are appropriate for subsequent exploratory factor analysis (EFA).

The results of exploration factor analysis (EFA)

KMO test

Based on the empirical results presented in Table 5, the suitability of the dataset for exploratory factor analysis was evaluated using the Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) measure and Bartlett's test of sphericity. The KMO coefficient obtained is 0.898, which exceeds the minimum acceptable threshold of 0.50, indicating a high level of sampling adequacy and confirming that the data are appropriate for factor analysis.

In addition, Bartlett's test of sphericity yields a significant value of 0.000 ($p < 0.05$), demonstrating that the correlation matrix is not an identity matrix and that statistically significant correlations exist among the observed variables. This result further supports the appropriateness of conducting factor analysis in this study. Taken together, the KMO and Bartlett's test results provide strong empirical evidence that the dataset meets the necessary assumptions for factor extraction

Table 5. KMO and Bartlett's test

KMO (Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy)		0.898
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	4933
	df	253
	Sig.	0.000

Further diagnostic tests were conducted to evaluate the adequacy of the factor structure. The first is Bartlett's test of sphericity. It produced a significant value of 0.000 ($p < 0.05$), indicating that the correlations among the observed variables are statistically significant at the 95% confidence level. This result confirms that the correlation matrix is suitable for factor extraction and supports the validity of the exploratory factor analysis.

The second is Eigenvalues Test. The eigenvalue analysis was subsequently applied to determine the number of factors retained in the research model. In accordance with standard criteria, only factors with eigenvalues greater than 1 were retained. The cumulative variance explained by the extracted factors reached 72.85%, which exceeds the recommended minimum threshold of 50%. This finding demonstrates that the retained factors account for a substantial proportion of the total variance in the dataset and reflects strong explanatory capacity of the measurement model. Overall, these results indicate that the EFA criteria are satisfactorily met and provide a solid foundation for proceeding to confirmatory factor analysis (CFA).

Table 6. Factor loadings of observed variables after standardization

Observed variable			Estimate	S.E	C.R	P
KTCM3	←	KTCM	1.000			
KTCM4	←	KTCM	0.938	0.042	22.087	***
KTCM7	←	KTCM	0.926	0.043	21.301	***
KTCM2	←	KTCM	0.889	0.047	18.840	***
KTCM1	←	KTCM	0.859	0.054	15.917	***
KNLV5	←	KNLV	1.000			
KNLV1	←	KNLV	0.920	0.042	21.945	***
KNLV4	←	KNLV	0.972	0.040	24.391	***
KNLV2	←	KNLV	0.865	0.045	19.132	***
QHXH2	←	QHXH	1.000			
QHXH3	←	QHXH	1.089	0.062	17.571	***
QHXH4	←	QHXH	1.161	0.073	15.836	***
QHXH1	←	QHXH	1.098	0.059	18.671	***
KQHT1	←	KQHT	1.000			
KQHT3	←	KQHT	1.236	0.091	13.577	***
KQHT2	←	KQHT	1.067	0.085	12.480	***
KQHT4	←	KQHT	1.139	0.088	12.969	***
KNM1	←	KNM	1.000			
KNM4	←	KNM	0.989	0.052	18.844	***
KNM3	←	KNM	0.898	0.053	17.030	***
KNCB1	←	KNCB	1.000			
KNCB2	←	KNCB	1.166	0.088	13.265	***
KNCB4	←	KNCB	0.951	0.080	11.850	***

The next one is Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA). The results of the confirmatory factor analysis, as presented in Table 6, further validate the measurement model. All factor loadings are statistically significant, with p-values reported as *** ($p < 0.001$), which are below the 0.05 significance threshold. This indicates that the observed variables significantly represent their corresponding latent constructs at a confidence level exceeding 95%. These findings confirm the adequacy of the factor structure and support the construct validity of the measurement model. In addition, the results presented in Table 6 indicate that all standardized factor loadings in the CFA model are equal to or greater than 0.50, thereby meeting the recommended threshold for acceptable convergent validity (Hair et al., 2009). Indicators with factor loadings below this criterion were excluded during the earlier stages of the analysis. Furthermore, the unstandardized factor loading results also confirm that all retained indicators exhibit loading values greater than 0.50. Consequently, all remaining observed variables satisfy the measurement requirements and are retained in the final research model.

Results of the CFA model analysis after standardization

The standardized CFA results presented in Figure 2 indicate that the measurement model demonstrates a satisfactory fit with the observed data. Specifically, the chi-square to degrees of freedom ratio (CMIN/df) is 1.994, which is below the recommended threshold of 2.0. The Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) value is 0.061, meeting the acceptable criterion of less than 0.08. In addition, the Comparative Fit Index (CFI) and Tucker–Lewis Index (TLI) reach values of 0.956 and 0.948, respectively, both of which exceed the recommended minimum value of 0.90. Although the chi-square test yields a statistically significant p-value (p=0.000), which is commonly observed in studies with relatively large sample sizes, the combined evidence from absolute and incremental fit indices indicates that the overall measurement mode fits the empirical data well. These results confirm that the measurement scales exhibit satiffactory construct validity and realibility, thereby providing a robust foundation for subsequent structural equation modeling (SEM) analysis.

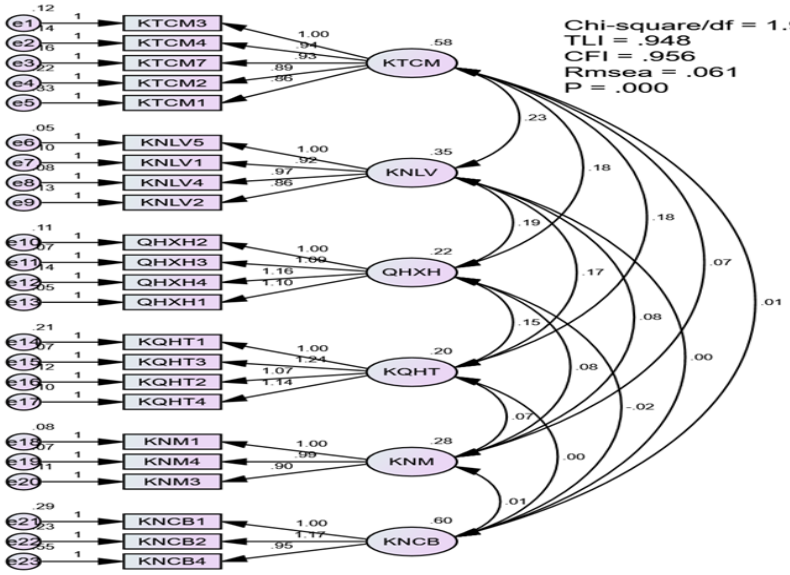

Figure 2. CFA model after standardization

Results of the structural equation modeling (sem) analysis

The results of the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) analysis in Figure 3 provide us with evaluation criteria such as Chi-Square, TLI, CFI, and RMSEA. The testing results show: $1 < \text{Chi-square/df} = 2.480 < 3$, with a significant level $P = 0.000 < 0.05$; thus, it meets the requirements (Hair et al., 2009). Other indices, such as $TLI = 0.901 > 0.90$ and $CFI = 0.913 > 0.90$, indicate that the model fits well and meets the criteria. The evaluation criterion $RMSEA = 0.074 < 0.08$ also meets the requirements (Hair et al., 2009).

Additionally, the study also conducted analysis of other indicators such as: Covariance Analysis: The covariance between the factors is correlated at a significance level of $P < 0.05$. However, only the correlation between the factors of Basic Skills (KNCB) and Work Ability (KNLV), Professional Knowledge (KTCM), Academic Performance (KQHT), Soft Skills (KNM), and Social Relations (QHXH) show that the covariance between these two factors is not significant, as $P > 0.05$. Correlation Coefficient Analysis: The results indicate that the strongest correlation in covariance between the two factors QHXH and KQHT is 0.698, while the lowest correlation is between the factors KNCB and KNLV. Coefficient of Determination (R^2): The analysis results show that the model explains 71.1% of the employers' job responsiveness and accounts for 40.6% of students' job opportunities.

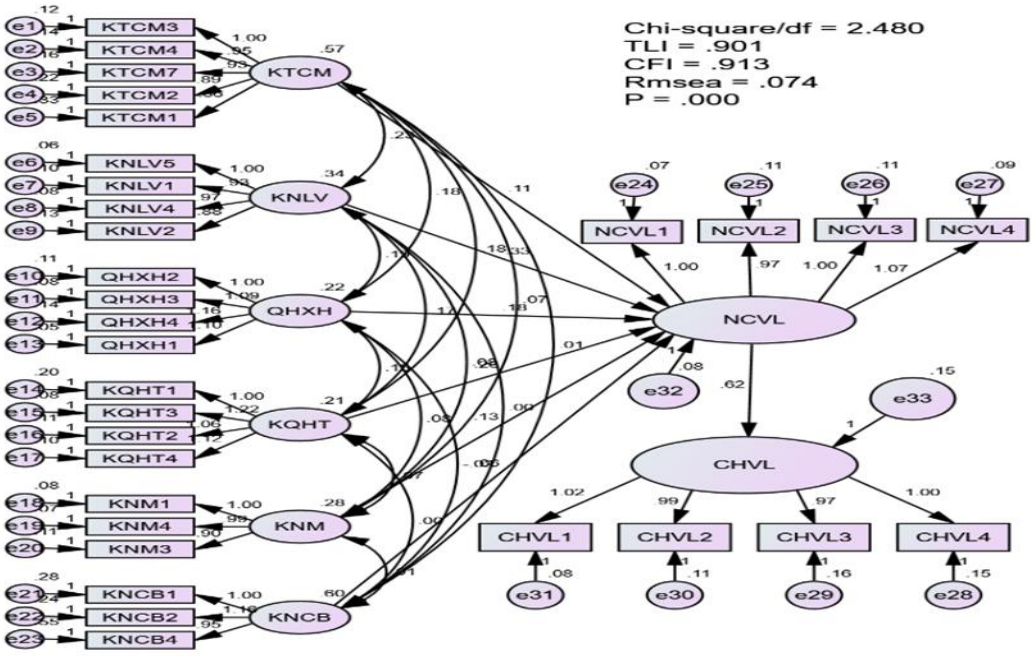

Figure 3. SEM Structural Equation Model

The testing of research hypotheses yielded the following results:
Hypothesis H1: There is a positive relationship between professional knowledge and the job readiness of graduates from NCTU.
Hypothesis H2: There is a positive relationship between soft skills and the job readiness of graduates from NCTU.
Hypothesis H3: There is a positive relationship between basic skills and the job readiness of graduates from NCTU.
Hypothesis H4: There is a positive relationship between social relations and the job readiness of graduates from NCTU.
Hypothesis H5: There is a positive relationship between academic performance and the job readiness of graduates from NCTU.
Hypothesis H6: There is a positive relationship between work ability and the job readiness of graduates from NCTU.
Hypothesis H7: There is a positive relationship between job readiness and job opportunities for graduates after graduation.

Testing the difference in job opportunities between genders: The T-test indicates a difference in job opportunities for graduates. The F-test (Levene's test) shows (Sig.) = 0.051 > 0.05, indicating that the variance between genders is equal. Therefore, reseaerchers select the (Sig.) value from the second row of the variance assumption, which equals 0.827 > 0.05. As a

result, at a 95% confidence level, there is no statistically significant difference in the level of job opportunities for graduates of different genders.

Difference in job opportunities by hometown: From the analysis results, researchers observe that the Sig. value from Levene's test = 0.061 > 0.05, indicating that the variance among the groups is not different. Researchers then need to consider the results in the ANOVA table. The ANOVA analysis shows Sig. = 0.027 < 0.05, indicating a statistically significant difference in job opportunities for graduates at a 95% confidence level. Specifically, students in Can Tho City have higher job opportunities compared to those in other provinces (MEAN = 3.3718) because Can Tho City is a key economic region in the Mekong Delta, leading to concentrated investment and development by businesses in Can Tho. This creates many opportunities for students to secure employment after graduation.

Difference in job opportunities by course: Sig. Levene = 0.000 < 0.05 indicates that the variance among the different groups is unequal. Researchers then need to examine the results from the Welch test. The Welch test results show Sig. = 0.000 < 0.05, leading to the conclusion that there is a statistically significant difference in job opportunities for graduates among different courses. Specifically, students from Course 03 have higher job opportunities than students from other courses (MEAN = 3.27) because the school is continuously developing, frequently organizing job fairs, and collaborating with companies that have hiring needs to create job opportunities for graduates.

Difference in job opportunities based on academic performance: The Sig. value from Levene's test = 0.307 > 0.05 indicates that the variance among the groups is not different. Researchers need to further examine the ANOVA results. The ANOVA analysis shows that F has Sig. = 0.014 < 0.05, allowing us to conclude that there is a statistically significant difference in job opportunities for graduates based on their academic performance. Notably, students with excellent academic performance have higher job opportunities compared to other classifications (MEAN = 3.1861) because based on this academic performance, employers can objectively assess whether a candidate's professional knowledge is suitable for the applied position.

Discussion

The results of this study indicate that all examined variables, namely professional knowledge, soft skills, basic skills, social relationships, academic performance, and work ability, have a positive effect on job adaptability. Furthermore, job adaptability is proven to have a significant influence on graduates' employment opportunities after graduation. These findings confirm that employability is not determined by a single factor but rather results from the interaction of multiple dimensions of individual competence.

First, professional knowledge is shown to be a fundamental foundation in enhancing job adaptability. This finding is consistent with the studies of Heusdens et al. (2019) and Mishra and Bahuguna (2023), which emphasize that strong conceptual understanding enables graduates to apply theoretical knowledge in real workplace contexts. This implies that a curriculum aligned with industry needs remains a crucial factor in improving graduates' work readiness.

Furthermore, soft skills have a significant influence on job adaptability. This finding reinforces the studies of Kwon (2019) and Vung and Anh (2024), which state that communication skills, teamwork, and self-management are important determinants in the transition process from education to the workplace. In an increasingly competitive labor market, interpersonal abilities often become the distinguishing factor among candidates with similar academic backgrounds.

Basic skills such as language proficiency, office technology competence, and time management represent the third significant factor. This indicates that employability is not only related to field-specific competencies but also to general competencies that support daily work effectiveness. This finding is consistent with Vien (2023), who emphasizes that basic skills constitute a minimum requirement in the recruitment process.

The fourth factor is social relationships. Social relationships make a tangible contribution to job adaptability. This result strengthens the perspective that social capital plays a role in accessing job information and recruitment opportunities. In a regional context such as the Mekong

Delta, personal networks and community proximity can serve as important mechanisms for expanding employment access.

Academic performance is also found to have a significant influence. Although much of the literature suggests that GPA is not the sole indicator of competence, the findings of this study indicate that academic achievement remains an important signal for employers. This result supports signalling theory in recruitment, where academic performance is used as an initial indicator of candidate quality.

The sixth factor is work ability. This factor is shown to have the strongest influence on job adaptability. This suggests that the ability to handle pressure, engage in self-directed learning, and adapt to the work environment has strategic value in enhancing graduates' competitiveness. With an R^2 value of 71.1% for the job adaptability variable, the research model demonstrates strong explanatory power in accounting for variations in graduates' work readiness.

In addition, the results of the difference tests indicate that there is no significant difference in employment opportunities based on gender. This finding suggests that employment opportunities in the research area are relatively equal for male and female graduates. However, significant differences are found based on hometown, graduation cohort, and academic classification. Graduates originating from Can Tho City have higher employment opportunities, which can be explained by the concentration of economic activities in that area. Differences among cohorts indicate that institutional dynamics, such as strengthened industry collaboration and the organization of job fairs, may influence graduates' employment opportunities.

This study overall reinforces the concept related to job adaptability. That is, job adaptability plays a role as a mediating variable that bridges individual competencies and employment opportunities. With an R^2 value of 40.6% for the employment opportunity variable, this model shows that although job adaptability plays an important role, there are still other external factors that have not been examined. These factors include macroeconomic conditions, industry characteristics, and employment policies. The practical implication of these findings is the need for a more integrative curriculum approach. Higher education institutions are not sufficient if they only improve academic achievement. But they must also systematically develop soft skills, basic skills, and build an industry partnership ecosystem that can expand students' social networks. This approach will strengthen graduates' work readiness in a comprehensive manner.

CONCLUSION

The study has presented important issues regarding the factors influencing job readiness, thereby enhancing job opportunities for graduates. The results of this research underscore the significance of professional knowledge, soft skills, basic skills, social relations, work ability, academic performance, and job readiness in relation to employment opportunities. Specifically, graduates who effectively combine these factors tend to have better chances of finding suitable jobs in their fields after graduation. The results also highlight the importance of social relationships in influencing students' job opportunities. This indicates that building relationships and integrating them into the training process is essential.

Additionally, the study reveals that while improving students' academic performance is necessary, attention must also be given to training basic skills and soft skills for students. This will help learners better prepare for labor market demands and ensure that they can adapt to rapid changes in the employment environment.

Although this research has provided certain results and contributions to help NCTU understand the factors affecting graduates' job opportunities, it still has some limitations, such as: being conducted solely among graduates from specific faculties; the sample size being limited; and the study proposing only six factors based on previous work, leaving out many other influencing factors not addressed in this research.

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