

REPORT ON

INNER AND OUTER PERCEPTION ON ETHNIC MINORITY STUDENTS EMPLOYABILITY

Empowerment of ethnic Minority Students In Vietnam

project



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Empowerment of ethnic Minority Students In Vietnam

INNER AND OUTER PERCEPTION ON ETHNIC MINORITY STUDENTS EMPLOYABILITY

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PROJECT PARTNERSHIP

PARTNER NAME	COUNTRY	PARTNER'S MAIN ROLE
Consorzio Interuniversitario AlmaLaurea (AL)	Italy	Project coordinator WP2 leader - Ethnic minority graduates trac WP6 leader - Management
Hanoi University (HANU)	Vietnam	National coordinator WP5 leader – Sustainability
Tay Nguyen University (TNU)	Vietnam	Organizer of local WP4 meeting number 3: Seminar, conference and focus group
Thai Nguyen University (ThaiNU)	Vietnam	WP4 leader - Dissemination
Nha Trang University (NTA)	Vietnam	Organizer of local WP4 meeting number 8: Seminar, conference and focus group
Agriculture and Forestry Research & Development Center for Mountains Region (ADC)	Vietnam	Will contribute with past experience on ethnic minority women and experience on focus group with vietnamese stakeholders
Management Board of Hanoi Industrial Zones and Processing & Export Areas (HIZA-CES)	Vietnam	Organizer of WP4 and WP5 meetings numbers 7 and 9: Seminar, conference and focus group and final conference
Polytechnic of Porto (IPP)	Portugal	WP1 leader: Inner and outer perception on ethnic minority students
University of Insubria (UNINS)	Italy	WP3 leader - Transferability of EU best practices on ethnic minorities' inclusion and employability

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FOREWORD

The present report has been developed in the framework of **Work Package 1 - Inner and outer perception on ethnic minority students**. The document is composed of four sections: introduction, the study 1 that is dedicated to capture ethnic minority students' inner perception, the study 2 focused on ethnic minority students' outer perception provided by employers, and conclusions.

The introduction provides some general information on the Vietnamese context, followed by the conceptual background and theoretical premises assumed in the research that was conducted.

Study 1 aims at providing the perception of the students belonging to ethnic minority groups enrolled in the four Vietnamese universities partners of the EMSIV Project. In addition to these 4 Vietnamese partner universities of the EMSIV Project, 2 other universities joined the initiative and expressed their willingness to involve their students in the survey (Quang Ninh University of Industry and Halong University). This section presents the goals and hypotheses derived from the literature review, the procedures used for data collection, the students' survey questions, participants and results.

Study 2 explored the point of view of Vietnamese employers in terms of skill needs gap related to ethnic minority graduates. This section presents the study goals, the procedures used for data collection, the employers' survey questions, participants and results.

Finally, the conclusions summarize the main findings of the two studies.

INTRODUCTION

VIETNAMESE CONTEXT

Statistical Year book of Vietnam (2023) highlights:

- The average population in Viet Nam in 2023 reached 100.3 million persons;
- The urban and the rural population were 38.2 million persons (38.1%) and 62.1 million persons (61.9%);
- The male and female population were 50.0 million persons and 50.3 million; persons, respectively, with the corresponding share of 49.9% and 50.1%;
- The national average life expectancy at birth was 74.5 years (72.1 years for males and 77.2 years for females);
- The labor force aged 15 and over in 2023 reached 52.4 million persons;
- The proportion of male employees in the labor force reached 53.2%;
- The labor force nationwide still mainly concentrated in the rural areas (62.6%);
- In terms of economic sectors, in 2023 the workforce was distributed as follows: Agriculture, forestry and fishery (26.9%), Industry and construction sector (33.5%) and Services (39.6%);
- The unemployment rate 2023 was 2.28%, urban and rural areas reached 2.75% and 1.99%, respectively;
- The underemployment rate of the labor force was 2.01%, in the urban areas was 1.59%, and in the rural areas was 2.27%;
- The average monthly income per capita in 2023 was estimated to reach 4.96 million VND; for the group of 20% of the highest income households was 10.86 million VND, 7.5 times higher than the group of 20% of the lowest-income households (1.45 million VND);
- In 2023 the economy achieved a growth rate of 5.05%;
- The structure of used land (as of 31st December 2022) was Forestry land (46,7%), Agricultural production land (35,2%), Specially used land (6%) and, Homestead Land (2,3%).

According to the report by UN Women (2021), based on the latest data from the General Statistics Office (GSO), ethnic minority and mountainous areas account for nearly three-quarters of Vietnam's total land area and are home to 14.12 million people, representing 14.7% of the country's population.

Despite the Vietnamese government's efforts to support the development of ethnic minority and mountainous areas, these regions remain the most disadvantaged in the country. The rate of poverty among ethnic minorities is significantly higher than the national average. Various policies have been implemented to promote development in these areas, however many challenges persist within the policy implementation process (UN Women, 2021).

Key Data from the UN Women (2021) Report:

- **Population Distribution:** Among the 53 minority ethnic groups, only six have populations exceeding one million: Tay (1.85 million), Thai (1.82 million), Muong (1.45 million), Mong (1.39 million), Khmer (1.32 million), and Nung (1.08 million). Conversely, five ethnic groups have populations of fewer than 1,000: Si La (909), Pu Peo (903), Ro Mam (639), Brau (525), and O Du (428);
- **Population Growth:** From 2009 to 2019, the population of the 53 ethnic minorities increased by nearly 1.9 million, with an average annual growth rate of +1.42%, higher than the rates for the Kinh ethnicity (+1.09%) and the national average (+1.14%);
- **Labor Force:** In 2019, the workforce among these ethnic groups was over 8 million, with women representing 47.9% of this total. The proportion of female workers was slightly lower in urban areas (46.8%) compared to rural areas (48.1%). The Northern Midlands and Mountains region had the highest proportion of female workers (49.1%), while the Mekong River Delta had the lowest (42.6%);
- **Literacy and Language Use:** Most ethnic minority communities commonly use their native languages. The literacy rate, defined as the ability to read and understand a simple sentence in any language, was 84.7% overall (87.5% for males and 75.9% for females). This represents a 5.1 percentage point increase since 2015. However, the literacy rate for women was consistently lower than that for men across all regions, ethnic groups, and age groups.

On July 1, 2024, the General Statistics Office (GSO) and the Committee for Ethnic Minority Affairs (CEMA), a ministerial-level government agency, launched a new survey to collect updated information on the socio-economic conditions of the 53 ethnic minorities nationwide. The results of this survey will be crucial for formulating socio-economic development policies for ethnic minorities and mountainous areas for the period 2026-2030.

CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND

Self-efficacy beliefs refer to a person's beliefs concerning their ability to successfully perform a given task or behaviour (Bandura, 1996). Self-efficacy can influence the quality of an individual's performance as well as the decision to approach or avoid a behaviour or situation. Also, in the presence of aversive barriers or experiences, greater self-efficacy increases the likelihood that an individual will persist until they succeed (Bandura, 1986, 2023). However, the concept of self-efficacy must have a behavioural referent to be meaningful as self-efficacy is not a global personality trait but a differentiated set of beliefs linked to distinct domains of human functioning (Bandura, 1986, 2023).

Transition-to-work process embraces the journey that begins when entering higher education and extends beyond graduation, until the graduate has adapted to the working role (Grosemans et al., 2018; Vieira et al., 2007; Vieira & Theotonio, 2018). The Social Cognitive Career Theory considers transition-to-work as an extended process in time that goes throughout academic years and beyond (Lent et al., 1996). Previous research suggest that transition-to-work self-efficacy might constitute a protective factor when facing transition-to-work challenges and may represent an important career psychological resource to successfully cope with job-search and adaptation to work, after graduation (e.g. Moynihan et al., 2003; Vieira & Theotonio, 2018). Nonetheless, it is important to acknowledge that restricted or stereotypic socialization experiences are implicated in lower career-related self-efficacy usually encountered among women, members of racial-ethnic minority groups and socioeconomically disadvantaged individuals (Betz, 2007).

Ethnic diversity is a global reality, with most nations hosting recognizable minority groups, and Vietnam is no exception with 54 ethnic groups (Baulch et al., 2007). According to the

Special Rapporteur on minority issues of The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (UN Human Rights), an ethnic, religious or linguistic minority is any group of persons which constitutes less than half of the population in the entire territory of a State whose members share common characteristics of culture, religion or language, or a combination of any of these. A person can freely belong to an ethnic, religious or linguistic minority without any requirement of citizenship, residence, official recognition or any other status.

The term "minority" primarily refers to the demographic aspect, indicating a group smaller in size within a specific social, societal, or political context. When qualified as "ethnic," the term highlights the group's distinct origin or descent from a different "people" (Knoll, 2001). Discussions on cultural plurality and personal and collective identities within democratic states engage with broader questions about universalism, equality, national identity, and citizenship as they relate to the enjoyment of rights (Helly, 2002).

Members of minority groups often develop both individual and collective strategies to navigate extrinsic barriers. These responses vary based on how they perceive the barriers, the resources available to them, their assessment of the likelihood of improving their conditions, and the rhetorical and strategic tools they can leverage (Fibbi, Midtbøen & Simon, 2021). Belonging to a specific group, namely an ethnic group, influences how individuals interpret and attribute the behaviour of others (Carter & Murphy, 2015). Consequently, the subjective meaning of perceived barriers is shaped by each group's position within the social structure (Schmitt & Branscombe, 2002).

The perception of extrinsic barriers is influenced by several factors:

- **Self-Esteem:** Recognizing extrinsic barriers can be distressing, as it may threaten self-esteem by highlighting a lack of control over one's life (Schmitt & Branscombe, 2002). This acknowledgment can be a significant source of stress, potentially affecting overall well-being (Fibbi, Midtbøen & Simon, 2021).
- **Public Discourse on Policy Efforts:** When public and political discourse emphasizes support for minorities, it can make the perception of extrinsic barriers more challenging (Ruggiero & Taylor, 1997). In Vietnam, there is an ongoing tension between the willingness to accept differences and cultural assimilation and has discourse of ethnic minorities inclusion (Baulch et al., 2007). Recent years have seen the implementation of several policies aimed at investing in education and training for ethnic minority and mountainous areas, to increase access to education for ethnic

minority groups by providing them with priority enrolment in preschools and ethnic boarding and semi-boarding secondary schools (after graduating from senior secondary schools, these students are given preferential admission to public university preparatory schools, training institutions, colleges, and universities) (UN Women, 2021). Notable examples include (UN Women, 2021): i) Decree No. 86/2015/ND-CP (October 2, 2015): this decree stipulates exemptions, reductions, and support for school tuition fees; ii) Decree No. 116/2016/ND-CP (July 18, 2016): this decree specifies policies to support pupils and secondary schools in extremely disadvantaged communes and villages; iii) Decree No. 57/2017/ND-CP: this decree outlines policies on enrolment prioritization and learning support for preschool children, pupils, and students from ethnic minority groups with very small populations.

- **Qualifications:** Research on minority groups reveal that individuals with higher levels of education tend to perceive more extrinsic barriers compared to those with lower educational attainment (Enk, Bilgili & Solano, 2022).

THEORETICAL PREMISES

When considering graduates transition-to-work it is important to highlight that employability and “having a job” are not synonyms. Individual employability is considered as “*a set of achievements – skills, understandings and personal attributes – that makes graduates more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations, which benefits themselves, the workforce, the community and the economy*” (Yorke, 2006, p.8). The expression “*more likely to gain employment*” postulated in Yorke’s definition highlights the recognition that a person’s employability involves the interplay among three main inter-related components: individual factors (e.g. qualifications, transferable skills, etc.); personal circumstances (e.g. access to resources, family commitments, etc.); and external or contextual factors (e.g. employers, labour market, macrosocial and policy factors, etc.) (McQuaid & Lindsay, 2005).

Another aspect to highlight is that, despite being an individual’s psychological resource, self-efficacy is influenced by the context in which a person is inserted. Since self-efficacy is specific to each behavior domain, this report focuses on career-related self-efficacy.

More precisely, self-efficacy related to success in higher education, in the transition to work and in the performance of personal and interpersonal competences (softs skills) have been identified in the scientific literature as important for the employability of higher education students. In addition, individual perceptions of support and contextual barriers to employability are important factors to take into account.

Self-efficacy beliefs are formed and influenced by one's interpretation of the information derived from sources such as past mastery experiences, verbal and social persuasions, vicarious experiences and emotional and physiological states (Bandura, 1986). Considering that self-efficacy beliefs are developed within the social context (Bandura, 2023), another key area in the employability issue is related to the employers' perception on higher education graduates' skills. Indeed, employers play an important role in the context that graduates are expected to encounter when transitioning to work. Consequently, capturing employers' perspective makes an important contribution in this matter.

Also, considering that the person and their context are inseparable, the theories and studies in the career area should be comprehensive and integrative (Vondracek, Ford & Porfeli, 2014). To this end, the basic unit to be understood is not just the individual, but the 'individual in transaction with specific contexts' (Vondracek et al., 1986).

Recognizing that ethnic belonging is only one dimension of an individual's identity, we adopted an intersectional and comprehensive approach in this research. We emphasize, on the one hand, that the results presented in this report represent trends and should be interpreted with caution due to the uniqueness of each respondent. Specifically, in Viet Nam, "not all ethnic minority groups are equally disadvantaged" (Baulch et al., 2002, p.4). On the other hand, our intersectional approach acknowledges that ethnicity is just one element of belonging, intersecting with other factors such as social class, gender, age, and area of residence, which seems to be a key component of Vietnamese social reality.

The theory of intersectionality, first developed by African-American scholars and black feminists in the 1980s, emerges from the historical demands of black women in North America during the 19th century, as documented by Angela Davis in her seminal work on women, race, and class (Davis, 2023). Kimberlé Crenshaw introduced this term, initially establishing a connection between women's identities and African-American identities to better understand and describe the oppression faced by black women. While the

intersectional approach does not account for every individual's life journey, it offers significant theoretical and practical contributions by integrating the diversity of experiences and the specific nuances of various social issues. This makes it an approach that is both holistic and context-specific (Nogueira, 2017).

Intersectionality challenges the dominant methods of analyzing social inclusion and exclusion, which are increasingly complex and hybrid. It rightly acknowledges the interplay between power dynamics, ethnicity, gender, and class. For these reasons, we have adopted this approach in our research, as it highlights the multiple factors influencing people's lives and the multicausality associated with their experiences (Crenshaw, 1989; Nogueira, 2017). The application of intersectionality, whether in academia or public policy, consistently aims to advance social justice (Luft & Ward, 2009).

STUDY 1 - ETHNIC MINORITY STUDENTS' INNER PERCEPTION

GOALS AND HYPOTHESES

The study goals related to students are:

- 1) characterize students' career-related psychological resources, namely academic self-efficacy, transition-to-work self-efficacy and soft skills self-efficacy;
- 2) analyse students' career-related psychological resources by gender and ethnic group;
- 3) characterize students' perceptions on barriers and supports when transitioning to work;
- 4) analyse students' perceptions on barriers and supports when transitioning to work by gender and ethnic group.

Based on the aforementioned conceptual framework, the following hypotheses will be taken into consideration:

- H1 Students' academic self-efficacy will differ by gender;
- H2 Students' academic self-efficacy will vary according to ethnic group (minorities and non-minority);
- H3 Students' transition-to-work self-efficacy will differ by gender;
- H4 Students' transition-to-work self-efficacy will vary according to ethnic group (minorities and non-minority);
- H5 Students' soft skills self-efficacy will differ by gender;
- H6 Students' soft skills self-efficacy will vary according to ethnic group (minorities and non-minority);
- H7 Students' perceptions of barriers will differ by gender;
- H6 Students' perceptions of barriers will vary according to ethnic group (minorities and non-minority).

DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES

The universities shared the link to the online survey with the entire population of students (including those belonging to Kinh group) in case they were interested to be part of the study.

The online survey was accessed through a unique URL (link) and sent to students via email and/or Zalo (the most popular chat application used in Vietnam for communications).

Informed consent: *“Data collected is anonymous. Personal data (for example, gender, age) will be divulged only as aggregate and anonymous statistics. Provision of data is optional and you may withdraw from the survey at any time”*.

It is important to mention that there was no obligation or other constraints to the students in order to fill the questionnaire.

Data collection started in May 2024. An invitation email or message was sent to all students, using the contact details available in the administrative offices of each provider. The email and message contained the survey link that was unique for all students.

Aiming at maximising response rates, students could access the survey several times and submit it when all responses were completed. Additionally, during the 4 weeks field period, up to 2 emails and/or messages are sent to students as a reminder to fill out the questionnaire.

Responses were exported from the Excel file to the IBM SPSS (version xxx) for the statistical analyses.

STUDENTS SURVEY

The design of the students' questionnaire was based in literature review and scholars experience in this sector¹. The questionnaire was developed in 6 sections:

SECTION 1 - Introduction, informed consent and respondent information

SECTION 2 - Higher Education Self-Efficacy²

SECTION 3 Transition-to-work Self-Efficacy³

SECTION 4 - Soft Skills Self-Efficacy⁴

SECTION 5 - Perceptions on barriers to the entrance into the labour market

SECTION 6 - Perceptions on support to the entrance into the labour market

The questionnaire was finalised in consultation with the Project consortium, especially with the reviews of Vietnamese partners in order to be adapted to their national context.

Self-report instruments, previously validated within the Portuguese university population, were utilized to assess self-efficacy and academic experiences. Additionally, participants responded to questions regarding sociodemographic and academic information.

HIGHER EDUCATION SELF-EFFICACY SCALE (HESE)

Academic self-efficacy was assessed using HESE (Vieira et al., 2017). The original scale is composed of 20 items, to be answered using a Likert-type format from 1 (not confident at all) to 6 (totally confident). HESE assesses three dimensions: Academic (HESE_Acad) (7 items, e.g., "Learning the contents necessary for my training"), Self-regulated learning (HESE_Reg) (7 items, e.g., "Exerting effort into academic activities") and Social Interaction

¹ Social Cognitive Theory; Bandura (1986).

² HESE; Vieira et al. (2017); Vieira & Alves (2023).

³ TWSE; Vieira & Coimbra (2005); Vieira (2012); Vieira & Alves (2023).

⁴ TPS-SE; Vieira (2014); Audibert et al. (2020).

(HESE_Soc) (6 items, e.g., "Seeking help from colleagues in course activities when necessary"). For the purpose of this project, we used the short version of the scale with 9 items (HESE -9) was used. Higher scores indicate higher levels of academic self-efficacy.

TRANSITION-TO-WORK SELF-EFFICACY SCALE (TWSE)

Transition-to-work self-efficacy was measured by TWSE (Vieira et al., 2007b). The original scale is composed of 28 items, to be answered using a Likert-type format from 1 (not confident at all) to 6 (totally confident). The TWSE evaluates the perceived confidence in one's ability to perform the tasks and to face the challenges associated with job search and adapting to work. The TWSE evaluates Job-search (TWSE_Job) (8 items, e.g., "Writing a curriculum vitae"), Adaptation to work (TWSE_WAdapt) (12 items, e.g., "Accomplish all the tasks my job demands"), and Emotional regulation (TWSE_EmoReg) (8 items, e.g., "After a job refusal, being able to deal with the frustration"). For the purpose of this project, we used the short version of the scale with 9 items (HESE -9) was used Higher scores indicate higher self-efficacy levels.

SOFT SKILLS SELF-EFFICACY

The soft skills evaluation was based in the Transversal and Professional Skills Self-Efficacy Scale (TPS-SE; Vieira, 2014). The TPS-SE is a self-report instrument that aims to assess the confidence level in a set of 21 transversal and professional competences. Answers are given on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from "1 = not confident at all" to "5 = totally confident". It is important to highlight that during the first project meeting, for the purpose of this project, partners were asked to select the most important 11 skills in the Vietnamese context. Subsequently, we used the elected 11 soft skills.

BARRIERS AND SUPPORT TO THE ENTRANCE INTO THE LABOUR MARKET

The identification of barriers and potential support for entering the labour market followed a dual approach. First, desk research was conducted, drawing from relevant international studies that focus on barriers to labour market access, particularly for ethnic

minorities and within the Vietnamese context. The review of scientific literature resulted in a list of barriers, which was then discussed with a panel of national experts, including professionals from academia, NGOs, and employers' associations involved in the EMSIV project partnership. The final list of barriers, which was incorporated into the student questionnaire consists of ten key items:

- 1 Lack of language skills
- 2 Family commitments and roles
- 3 Difficulties in finding information about employment
- 4 Cultural differences
- 5 Ethnic based stereotypes
- 6 Lack of informal network
- 7 Lack of qualifications
- 8 Lack of skills for professions in demand
- 9 Age based discrimination
- 10 Gender based discrimination

The following instructions were given to participants: "Below is a list of different barriers to entering the labour market. Please rate the extent to which you agree or disagree that each item represents a barrier to accessing the labour market." The items are rated on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from "Strongly disagree" (1) to "Strongly agree" (5).

The list of potential support for entering the labour market was designed primarily to inform future actions. This list was also discussed with the panel of national experts (professionals from academia, NGOs, and employers' associations) involved in the EMSIV project partnership. The final list includes six key items:

1. Job-search skills training
2. Career guidance
3. Foreign language training
4. Soft skills training
5. Financial support for training
6. Professional network facilitation and Mediation/Mentoring

The following instructions were given to participants: "Below is a list of items that may or may not support entry into the labour market. Please rate the extent to which you agree or disagree that each item serves as support for accessing the labour market." The items are rated on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from "Strongly disagree" (1) to "Strongly agree" (5).

PARTICIPANTS

The total number of students from ethnic minority groups and enrolled in the participating universities is around 27.148 students. The survey was sent to more than 65,000 students, including those belonging to Kinh group. We have anticipated a response rate in line with other surveys carried out at European level (for example Eurograduate 2018 initiative: average response rate 15.8). However, the response rate of students belonging to ethnic minority groups was 34.9% ($9,495/27,148 \times 100$). This high response rate was only possible to achieve due to the strong commitment and efforts of the Vietnamese partners.

In total, 14,603 valid questionnaires were received: 9,495 (65%) students belonging to ethnic minority groups and 5,108 (35%) belonging to Kinh group. Most students were female (64%) and the mean age was 20 years old with a standard deviation of 1.74.

RESULTS

This section is dedicated to the results which were organised by the following study goals:

Goal 1: characterize students' career-related psychological resources, namely academic self-efficacy, transition-to-work self-efficacy and soft skills self-efficacy;

Goal 2: analyse students' career-related psychological resources by gender and ethnic group;

Goal 3: characterize students' perceptions on barriers and supports when transitioning to work;

Goal 4: analyse students' perceptions on barriers and supports when transitioning to work by gender and ethnic group.

STUDENTS HIGHER EDUCATION SELF-EFFICACY

Below we present the descriptive statistics for students' career-related psychological resources, namely academic self-efficacy, transition-to-work self-efficacy and soft skills self-efficacy.

Table 1 - Higher Education Self-efficacy (total sample)

	Min.	Max.	Mean	Standard deviation
1 Ask colleagues for help with course activities	1	6	3,57	1,25
2 Apply the knowledge learned in the course in practical situations	1	6	3,50	1,18
3 Understand the content covered in the course	1	6	3,55	1,13
4 Make decisions related to my education/training	1	6	3,71	1,17
5 Cooperate with colleagues in course activities	1	6	3,72	1,20
6 Motivate myself to carry out course related activities	1	6	3,67	1,17
7 Establish friendships with course colleagues	1	6	3,88	1,24
8 Update the knowledge acquired in the course	1	6	3,66	1,15
9 Solve unexpected problems related to my education/training	1	6	3,59	1,17

Note. Students indicated their confidence level regarding the current ability to carry out each activity (1= Not at all confident; 2= Not very confident; 3= Fairly confident; 4= Confident; 5= Very confident; 6= Totally confident)

The averages for the different Self-efficacy factors are relatively close, ranging from 3.50 to 3.88. Specifically, the category 'Applying the knowledge learned in the course to practical situations' has the lowest mean, while 'Establishing friendships with course colleagues' is identified as having the highest.

STUDENTS TRANSITION-TO-WORK SELF-EFFICACY

Regarding Transition-to-Work Self-Efficacy, the means are also relatively close, ranging from 3.49 to 3.75. While the lowest mean, for the factor 'Register myself at a Job Centre,' can be considered an outlier, the highest scores are for the factor 'Engage myself in carrying out all my job duties' (Mean=3.75), followed by 'Accomplish all the tasks my job demands' (Mean=3.73).

Table 2 - Transition-to-work Self-efficacy (total sample)

	Min.	Max.	Mean	Standard deviation
1 Adapt myself to my workplace demands	1	6	3,66	1,16
2 Accomplish all the tasks my job demands	1	6	3,73	1,13
3 Engage myself in carrying out all my job duties	1	6	3,75	1,14
4 Not to let myself be devastated with defeatist thoughts after a job refusal	1	6	3,69	1,19
5 Manage to deal with frustration after a job refusal	1	6	3,70	1,19
6 Keep on thinking I am going to find a job after a job refusal	1	6	3,68	1,21
7 Register myself in a Job Centre (including the university student support office, non for profit and commercial job agency both online and offline)	1	6	3,49	1,18
8 Get advice in any institution that helps in the transition-to-work (Job Centres, etc)	1	6	3,57	1,17
9 Enrol in Job agency	1	6	3,56	1,18

Note. Students indicated their confidence level regarding the current ability to carry out each activity (1= Not at all confident; 2= Not very confident; 3= Fairly confident; 4= Confident; 5= Very confident; 6= Totally confident)

STUDENTS SOFT SKILLS SELF-EFFICACY

About Soft Skills Self-Efficacy, the results show more significant differences compared to the Self-Efficacy and Transition-to-Work Self-Efficacy categories. Notably, we found means below 3 for the factors 'Technical and scientific expertise in a specific area of knowledge' (Mean=2.94) and 'Analysis and problem-solving' (Mean=2.97). Additionally, this category had fewer high mean scores, with the highest being 3.13 for 'Teamwork.

Table 3 - Soft Skills Self-efficacy (total sample)

	Min.	Max.	Mean	Standard deviation
1 Analysis and problem-solving	1	5	2,97	0,96
2 Decision-making	1	5	3,07	0,97
3 Planning and organization	1	5	3,00	0,98
4 Time management	1	5	3,04	0,98
5 Oral communication	1	5	3,00	1,02
6 Written communication	1	5	3,11	0,98
7 Interpersonal relationships and conflict management	1	5	3,04	0,98
8 Flexibility and adaptation	1	5	3,09	0,98
9 Team Work	1	5	3,13	0,97
10 Use of information and communication technologies	1	5	3,07	1,00
11 Technical and scientific expertise from a specific area of knowledge	1	5	2,94	1,00

Note. Students indicated their confidence level regarding the current ability to carry out each activity (1= Not at all confident; 2= Fairly confident; 3= Confident; 4= Very confident; 5= Totally confident)

DIFFERENCES SELF-EFFICACY BY GENDER

The analyses of students' career-related psychological resources by gender are presented below. For each career-related psychological resources we compared the respective total score between male and female students.

Table 4 - Higher Education and Transition-to-work Self-efficacy by Gender (T-test)

	Total		Male		Female		<i>p</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	
Higher Education Self-efficacy	3,65	1,029	3,82	1,163	3,57	0,930	< 0,001
Transition-to-work Self-efficacy	3,65	1,031	3,87	1,153	3,53	0,932	< 0,001

Note. Students indicated their confidence level regarding the current ability to carry out each activity (1= Not at all confident; 2= Not very confident; 3= Fairly confident; 4= Confident; 5= Very confident; 6= Totally confident)

Male students showed significant higher mean scores when compared to female students in both Higher Education and Transition-to-work self-efficacy. These findings reveal that male students feel more confident about their capacity to succeed in academic tasks posed by higher education as well as in dealing with the challenges that emerge while transitioning to work.

In regard to soft skills self-efficacy, male students showed significant higher mean scores than their female counterparts. These findings reveal that male students feel more confident about their soft skills, when compared to female students.

Table 5 - Soft Skills Self-efficacy by Gender (T-test)

	Total		Male		Female		P
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
1 Analysis and problem-solving	2,97	0,96	3,19	1,02	2,86	0,91	< 0,001
2 Decision-making	3,07	0,97	3,25	1,02	2,97	0,92	< 0,001
3 Planning and organization	3,00	0,98	3,17	1,03	2,91	0,93	< 0,001
4 Time management	3,04	0,98	3,20	1,04	2,96	0,93	< 0,001
5 Oral communication	3,00	1,02	3,16	1,08	2,92	0,97	< 0,001
6 Written communication	3,11	0,98	3,24	1,04	3,05	0,94	< 0,001
7 Interpersonal relationships and conflict management	3,04	0,98	3,23	1,03	2,94	0,94	< 0,001
8 Flexibility and adaptation	3,09	0,98	3,26	1,02	3,01	0,93	< 0,001
9 Team Work	3,13	0,97	3,26	1,02	3,06	0,93	< 0,001
10 Use of information and communication technologies	3,07	1,00	3,27	1,04	2,97	0,95	< 0,001
11 Technical and scientific expertise from a specific area of knowledge	2,94	1,00	3,17	1,05	2,82	0,95	< 0,001

Note. Students indicated their confidence level regarding the current ability to carry out each activity (1= Not at all confident; 2= Fairly confident; 3= Confident; 4= Very confident; 5= Totally confident)

DIFFERENCES SELF-EFFICACY BY ETHNIC GROUP

When comparing the minorities ethnic group with the Kinh group, findings reveal that that Kinh students feel more confident about their capacity to succeed in academic tasks posed by higher education as well as in dealing with the challenges that emerge while transitioning to work.

Table 6- Higher Education and Transition-to-work Self-efficacy by Ethnic Groups (T-test)

	Total		Minorities		Kinh		p
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	
Higher Education Self-efficacy	3,65	1,02	3,63	0,99	3,7	1,09	< 0,001
Transition-to-work Self-efficacy	3,65	1,03	3,61	0,99	3,72	1,08	< 0,001

Note. Students indicated their confidence level regarding the current ability to carry out each activity (1= Not at all confident; 2= Not very confident; 3= Fairly confident; 4= Confident; 5= Very confident; 6= Totally confident)

In regard to soft skills self-efficacy, Kinh students showed significant higher mean scores than the minorities ethnic group. These findings reveal that Kinh students feel more confident about their soft skills, when compared to minorities ethnic students.

Table 7 - Soft Skills Self-efficacy by Ethnic Groups (T-test)

	Total		Minorities		Kinh		p
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
1 Analysis and problem-solving	2,97	0,96	2,91	0,94	3,09	0,99	< 0,001
2 Decision-making	3,07	0,97	3,02	0,95	3,15	0,99	< 0,001
3 Planning and organization	3,00	0,98	2,94	0,96	3,12	1,01	< 0,001
4 Time management	3,04	0,98	3,01	0,96	3,11	1,00	< 0,001
5 Oral communication	3,00	1,02	2,95	1,00	3,09	1,04	< 0,001
6 Written communication	3,11	0,98	3,08	0,97	3,18	1,01	< 0,001
7 Interpersonal relationships and conflict management	3,04	0,98	2,99	0,97	3,13	1,00	< 0,001
8 Flexibility and adaptation	3,09	0,98	3,05	0,96	3,18	1,00	< 0,001
9 Team Work	3,13	0,97	3,10	0,95	3,19	0,99	< 0,001
10 Use of information and communication technologies	3,07	1,00	3,02	0,98	3,17	1,02	< 0,001
11 Technical and scientific expertise from a specific area of knowledge	2,94	1,00	2,88	0,98	3,06	1,02	< 0,001

Note. Students indicated their confidence level regarding the current ability to carry out each activity (1= Not at all confident; 2= Fairly confident; 3= Confident; 4= Very confident; 5= Totally confident)

PERCEPTIONS ON BARRIERS AND SUPPORTS

The average perception of barriers ranges between 2.89 and 3.39. The categories *Family commitments and role* (Mean=3.39) and *Difficulties in finding information about employment* (Mean=3.38) are those identified as the greatest barriers. *Gender based discrimination* is the item with the lowest average among the barriers proposed in the questionnaire (Mean=2.89), followed by *Ethnic based stereotypes* (Mean=2.95) and *Age based discrimination* (Mean=2.97).

Table 8- Barriers to Entrance the Labour Market (total sample)

	Min.	Max.	Mean	Standard deviation
1 Lack of language skills	1	5	3,31	0,99
2 Family commitments and role	1	5	3,39	1,00
3 Difficulties in finding information about employment	1	5	3,38	0,92
4 Cultural differences	1	5	3,15	1,00
5 Ethnic based stereotypes	1	5	2,95	1,13
6 Lack of informal network	1	5	3,15	1,03
7 Lack of qualifications	1	5	3,14	1,04
8 Lack of skills for professions in demand	1	5	3,28	0,99
9 Age based discrimination	1	5	2,97	1,09
10 Gender based discrimination	1	5	2,89	1,14

Note. For each barrier, students indicated how much they considered that each factor could hinder their entrance into the labour market (1= Strongly disagree; 2= Disagree; 3= Neither agree nor disagree; 4= Agree; 5= Strongly agree).

Regarding students' perception of support for entering the labour market, the results reveal that means across the different items were very similar, ranging between 3.56 and 3.65. This suggests that students considered all the supports as important. Support on *Soft Skills training* (Mean=3.65) is the item with the highest average response, while *Job-search skills training* has the lowest (Mean=3.56).

Table 9 - Supports to Entrance the Labour Market (total sample)

	Min.	Max.	Mean	Standard deviation
1. Job-search skills training	1	5	3,56	0,85
2. Career guidance	1	5	3,59	0,84
3. Foreign language training	1	5	3,63	0,87
4. Soft Skills training	1	5	3,65	0,86
5. Financial support for trainings	1	5	3,61	0,87
6. Professional network facilitation	1	5	3,61	0,87
7. Mediation/Mentoring	1	5	3,58	0,86

Note. For each support, students indicated how much they considered that each factor could support their entrance into the labour market (1= Strongly disagree; 2= Disagree; 3= Neither agree nor disagree; 4= Agree; 5= Strongly agree).

PERCEPTIONS ON BARRIERS AND SUPPORTS BY GENDER

For the ten items presented, the female students consistently reported a significant higher perception of barriers, when compared to male group.

Table 10 - Barriers perceptions by Gender (T-test)

	Total		Male		Female		P
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
1 Lack of language skills	3,31	0,99	3,39	1,00	3,26	0,97	< 0,001
2 Family commitments and role	3,39	1,00	3,47	1,01	3,34	0,98	< 0,001
3 Difficulties in finding information about employment	3,38	0,92	3,41	0,95	3,36	0,89	< 0,001
4 Cultural differences	3,15	1,00	3,23	1,04	3,11	0,97	< 0,001
5 Ethnic based stereotypes	2,95	1,13	3,07	1,15	2,89	1,11	< 0,001
6 Lack of informal network	3,15	1,03	3,23	1,06	3,11	1,00	< 0,001
7 Lack of qualifications	3,14	1,04	3,21	1,06	3,10	1,02	< 0,001
8 Lack of skills for professions in demand	3,28	0,99	3,35	1,01	3,25	0,97	< 0,001
9 Age based discrimination	2,97	1,09	3,08	1,12	2,90	1,06	< 0,001
10 Gender based discrimination	2,89	1,14	3,01	1,18	2,83	1,11	< 0,001

Regarding the perceived importance of support factors for entering the labour market, the majority of results are not significantly different among the groups. Only the perceptions related to *Soft skills training* and *Financial support for training* were significant different between the groups. The female group attributed more importance to these supports than male students.

Table 11 - Supports Perceptions by Gender (T-test)

	Total		Male		Female		P
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
1. Job-search skills training	3,56	0,86	3,58	0,89	3,56	0,83	> 0,05
2. Career guidance	3,59	0,85	3,59	0,88	3,59	0,82	> 0,05
3. Foreign language training	3,63	0,88	3,62	0,90	3,64	0,85	0,024
4. Soft Skills training	3,65	0,87	3,64	0,88	3,66	0,84	0,014
5. Financial support for trainings	3,61	0,88	3,62	0,90	3,61	0,85	> 0,05
6. Professional network facilitation	3,61	0,87	3,62	0,89	3,61	0,85	> 0,05
7. Mediation/Mentoring	3,58	0,86	3,60	0,89	3,57	0,83	> 0,05

Note. For each support, students indicated how much they considered that each factor could support their entrance into the labour market (1= Strongly disagree; 2= Disagree; 3= Neither agree nor disagree; 4= Agree; 5= Strongly agree).

PERCEPTIONS ON BARRIERS AND SUPPORTS BY ETHNIC GROUP

The majority group – Kinh - consistently reported a significant higher perception of barriers, when compared to the Minorities group.

Table 12- Barriers perceptions by Ethnic group (T-test)

	Total		Minorities		Kinh		P
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
1 Lack of language skills	3,31	0,99	3,26	0,99	3,39	0,97	< 0,001
2 Family commitments and role	3,39	1,00	3,37	0,99	3,42	1,01	0,003
3 Difficulties in finding information about employment	3,38	0,92	3,36	0,91	3,41	0,92	0,002
4 Cultural differences	3,15	1,00	3,11	1,00	3,22	1,00	< 0,001
5 Ethnic based stereotypes	2,95	1,13	2,94	1,11	2,98	1,15	0,040
6 Lack of informal network	3,15	1,03	3,11	1,01	3,23	1,03	< 0,001
7 Lack of qualifications	3,14	1,04	3,09	1,03	3,23	1,04	< 0,001
8 Lack of skills for professions in demand	3,28	0,99	3,25	0,98	3,35	0,99	< 0,001
9 Age based discrimination	2,97	1,09	2,91	1,07	3,07	1,11	< 0,001
10 Gender based discrimination	2,89	1,14	2,84	1,12	3,00	1,16	< 0,001

Regarding the perceived importance of support factors for entering the labour market, the majority of results are not significantly different among the groups. Only the perceptions related to *Soft skills training* and *Financial support for training* were significant different between the groups. The minorities group attributed more importance to these supports than their counterparts from the Kinh Group.

Table 13- Supports Perceptions by Ethnic group (T-test)

	Total		Minorities		Kinh		P
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
1. Job-search skills training	3,56	0,86	3,57	0,85	3,55	0,86	> 0,05
2. Career guidance	3,59	0,85	3,59	0,84	3,57	0,85	> 0,05
3. Foreign language training	3,63	0,88	3,64	0,87	3,62	0,87	> 0,05
4. Soft Skills training	3,65	0,87	3,66	0,86	3,63	0,86	0,019
5. Financial support for trainings	3,61	0,88	3,62	0,87	3,59	0,88	0,039
6. Professional network facilitation	3,61	0,87	3,61	0,87	3,60	0,87	> 0,05
7. Mediation/Mentoring	3,58	0,86	3,57	0,85	3,58	0,86	> 0,05

Note. For each support, students indicated how much they considered that each factor could support their entrance into the labour market (1= Strongly disagree; 2= Disagree; 3= Neither agree nor disagree; 4= Agree; 5= Strongly agree).

STUDY 2 ETHNIC MINORITY STUDENTS' OUTER PERCEPTION

GOALS

The outer perception was provided by Vietnamese employers. The goals were to analyse employers' perspectives on:

- recent graduates' work preparedness;
- key work skills for graduates.

DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES

An invitation email was sent to the firms, using the contact details available in the administrative unit of the Industrial Zones. The email contained the survey link. The responses were obtained during May 2024.

EMPLOYERS SURVEY

The employers' questionnaire was based in the literature review and scholars experiences in this sector⁵. The questionnaire was finalised in consultation with the project consortium and HIZA-CES partner played an important role in tuning the questionnaire and adapt it to the local context.

The questionnaire is divided in 4 sections:

SECTION 1 – Introduction, consent and Company/Organization information

SECTION 2 - Respondent information

SECTION 3 - Soft Skills Importance

⁵ Social Cognitive Theory, Bandura, 1986

SECTION 4 - Higher education graduates' skills level

PARTICIPANTS

ORGANIZATIONS

A total of 74 organisations participated in the study. The year of establishment varied between 1958 and 2023. The majority of organisations started their activity between 2001 and 2010 (55,4%).

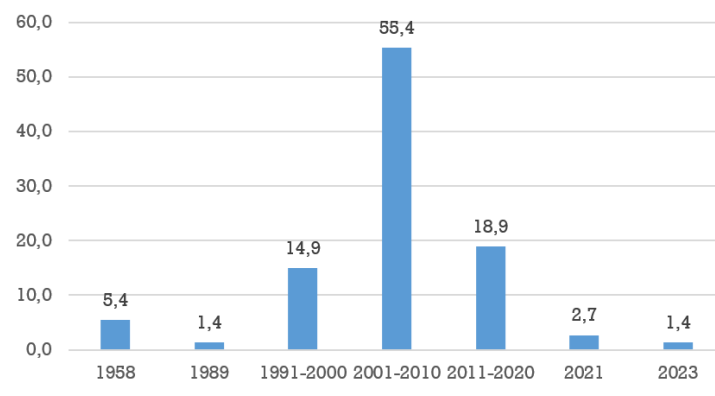


Figure 1. Organisation establishment year (%)

As for the number of employees, most organisations have between 51 to 250.

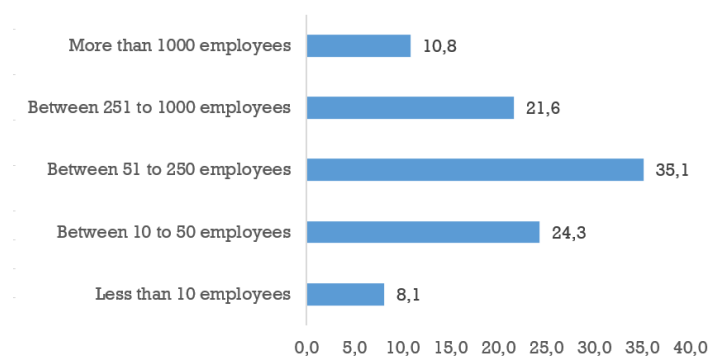


Figure 2. Number of Employees (%)

The majority of organisations are either from the private sector (43,2%) or FDI (Foreign Direct Investment) funded (43,2%).

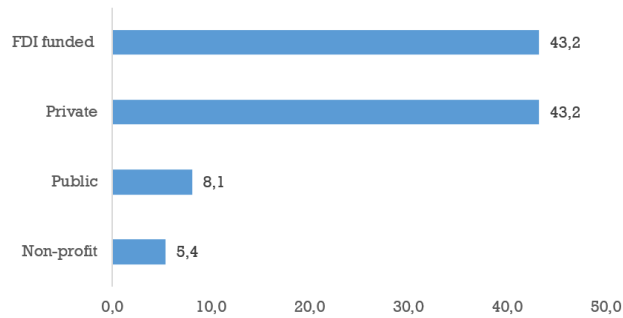


Figure 3. Type of Organisation (%)

The field of economic activity of “Manufacturing and processing” was the most frequently reported (45,9%).

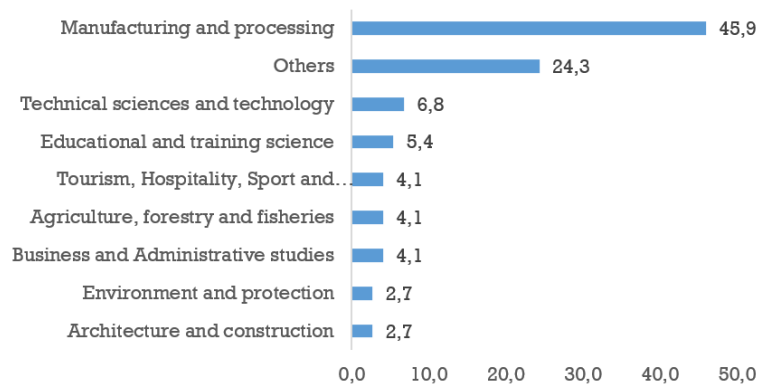


Figure 4. Field of Economic Activity (%)

The majority of organizations (87,8%) employ people from the ethnic minorities. All organisation owners belong to the Kihn ethnic group, except one (Mường).

INDIVIDUAL RESPONDENTS FROM THE PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS

The majority of respondents were female (74,3%) with an age range of 31-40 (52,7%), followed by 41-50 (35,1%), 30 or less (6,8%) and 51-60 (5,4%). All participants had tertiary education (bachelor or post-graduate degree; 70,3% and 28,4% respectively) except one participant with secondary education (1,4%). Only five respondents did not belong to the majority group (Mông, Mường, Sán chay, Tày and Thái, one participant each), 91,9% were from the Kinh group and one person preferred not to answer to this question. A middle level position was occupied by 48,6% of the respondents.

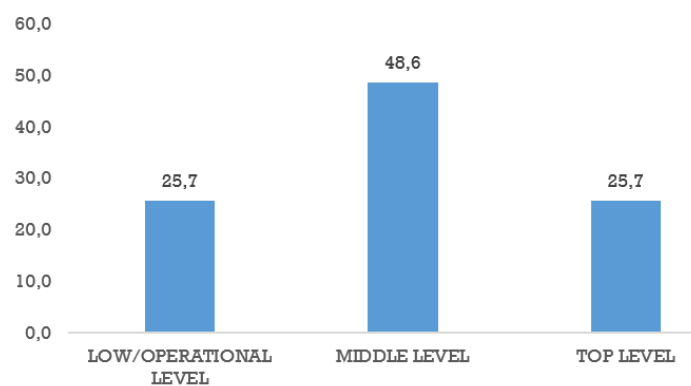


Figure 5. Position in the organization (%)

The majority of respondents expressed a “high” to “very high” willingness to hire graduates from ethnic minorities groups (40,5% and 12,2%, respectively).

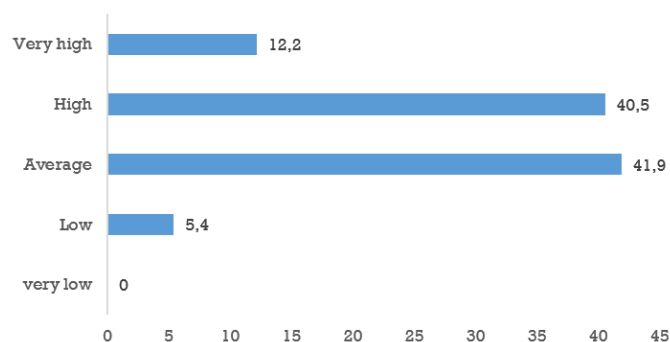


Figure 6. Willingness to hire ethnic minorities graduates (%)

As for the familiarity with recent graduates' skills, most participants declared having experience in recruitment and selection of recent graduates (51,4% - high knowledge), followed by the ones that have contact with one or more recent graduates at work (33,8% - average knowledge), having no opinion on this subject (12,2% - low knowledge) and not having contact with recent graduates at work but I stating a general opinion on this subject (2,7% low knowledge).

RESULTS

Employers perspective on recent graduates' preparedness

The skills in which employers identified higher preparedness from graduates were "Use of information and communication technologies" (M= 3,53), "Team Work" (M= 3,09) and "Oral communication" (M= 3,05). On the other hand, "Decision-making" (M= 2,51), "Planning and organization" (M= 2,68) and "Analysis and problem-solving" (M= 2,70) were the skills evaluated with the lowest means.

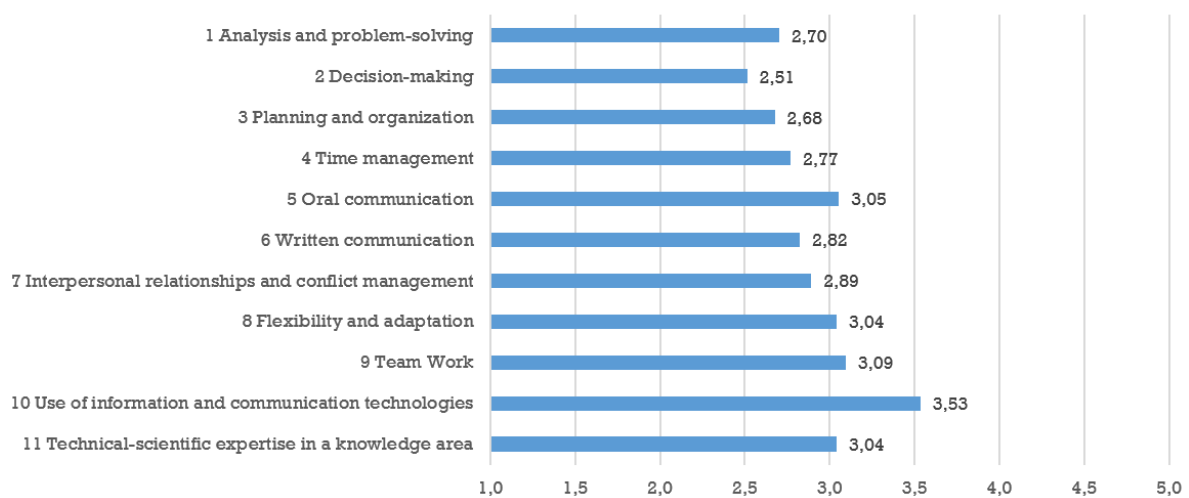


Figure 7 - Employers perspective on recent graduates' preparedness (mean)

Note. For each soft skill, employers evaluated the skills level of recent graduates (1 = Very low 2 = Low 3 = Average 4 = High 5 = Very high).

Employers perspective on key work skills for graduates

Among eleven work skills, employers were asked to select the 5 ones they considered most important for graduates.



Figure 8 - Employers' perspective on key work skills for graduates (%)

Analysis and problem-solving (88%), team work (72%), flexibility and adaptation (65%), planning and organization (58%) and oral communication (53%) were elected by employers as the key workplace skills for graduates.

CONCLUSIONS

This section is dedicated to summarizing the main findings of the two studies. The goals of each of the studies will serve as a guide for the presentation of the results. The goals of the study 1 were: 1) characterize students' career-related psychological resources, namely academic self-efficacy, transition-to-work self-efficacy and soft skills self-efficacy; 2) analyse students' career-related psychological resources by gender and ethnic group; 3) characterize students' perceptions on barriers and supports when transitioning to work; and, 4) analyse students' perceptions on barriers and supports when transitioning to work by gender and ethnic group.

The statistical analysis in the study 1 were based on the valid responses obtained by 14,603 Vietnamese university students (64% Female; Mean age of 20 years old; 65% Ethnic minority groups and 35% Kinh group). Considering the academic self-efficacy, transition-to-work self-efficacy and soft skills self-efficacy, students generally reported being confident about their skills in these areas. When analyzing these career-related psychological resources by gender and ethnic group, the statistical significant findings may be summarized as follows:

- Male students feel more confident about their skills, reporting higher levels of academic self-efficacy, transition-to-work self-efficacy and soft skills self-efficacy than female students;
- Kinh group feel more confident about their skills, reporting higher levels of academic self-efficacy, transition-to-work self-efficacy and soft skills self-efficacy than ethnic minorities students.

Several barriers that may hinder transition-to-work were identified. Also, all the transition-to-work supports presented were valued by students. When analyzing barriers and supports by gender and ethnic group, the statistical significant findings may be summarized as follows:

- Males perceive more negative effect of all the barriers presented than female students;
- Kinh group perceive more negative effect of all the barriers presented than ethnic minorities students;

- Female students considered Foreign Language and Soft Skills Training as more important supports, when compared to their male counterparts;
- Ethnic minorities students considered Soft Skills Training and Financial Support for training as more important supports, when compared to Kinh group.

Study 2 explored the point of view of Vietnamese employers. The goals were to analyse employers' perspectives on recent graduates' work preparedness and key work skills for graduates. The statistical analysis was based on the valid responses obtained by 74 organizations: Private sector (43,2%), FDI - Foreign Direct Investment (43,2%), Public (8,1%); and Non-profit (5,4%). The respondents from the organizations were mainly Female (74%), with an age range of 31-40 (52,7%), followed by 41-50 (35,1%), 30 or less (6,8%) and 51-60 (5,4%).

The main findings may be summarized as follows:

- In general, employers considered recent graduates' work preparedness as positive;
- A higher level of graduates' preparedness was identified for "Use of information and communication technologies", "Team Work" and "Oral communication";
- The lowest level of graduates' preparedness was identified for "Decision-making", "Planning and organization", and "Analysis and problem-solving";
- The most important graduates 'workplace skills elected by employers were "Analysis and problem-solving", "Team Work", "Flexibility and adaptation", and "Planning and organization".

To conclude, it is our hope that the data presented in this report will contribute to the promotion and increase in societal awareness of the topic of ethnic minorities, particularly in relation to students and graduates and their transition to the labour market.

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