

CAREER CHOICE TRENDS AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE IN HO CHI MINH CITY'S SUBURBAN AREAS TODAY

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Abstract

In the context of the robust economic and social development in Ho Chi Minh city's suburban areas numerous job opportunities have emerged for the youth. However, choosing a suitable career to develop oneself and ensure a stable future is crucial for them. Therefore, young people need to consider multiple factors when making career decisions. Having based on qualitative and quantitative data collected from community surveys conducted between 2022 and 2023, the study aims to analyze the current situation and factors influencing career choices among youth in the suburban areas of Ho Chi Minh City. The results indicate that career choices among young people in the suburban areas of Ho Chi Minh City are highly diverse due to the influence of various factors. Notably, urban development reducing agricultural land, along with industrialization, modernization, and communication, are key factors impacting the selection and pursuit of careers in these suburban areas.

Keywords: career choice, mass media, social networks, suburban youth

1. Introduction

Economic and social development is driven by various resources, which change according to different development stages and production and management organization levels. Among these resources, human capital plays a crucial role for breakthroughs in economic development. Focusing on human capital is essential in building and developing a country. Creating an effective human resource base for economic and social development is a critical task influenced by many factors. One important factor is the career orientation and choices of individuals. Career decisions not only impact personal and family economic development but also contribute to the overall progress of society. Studying the factors influencing career orientation and choices among youth helps improve the quality of the social workforce. Stable and suitable employment that aligns with one's abilities and interests enables workers to feel more secure and committed to their professions, thus contributing effectively to the labor force. Career selection is a crucial step that helps young people orient themselves and prepare well for the future. This article analyzes the career trends and the factors influencing career choices among youth in Ho Chi Minh city's suburban areas of Ho Chi Minh City.

2. Literature Reviews and Research Methods

2.1. Literature Reviews

In recent years, numerous studies in Vietnam have addressed the factors determining career choice. Huynh Van Son (2011) analyzed the career choice trends of secondary and high school students in Binh Duong province, finding that most students wish to continue to higher education but lack

specific career orientation. Pham Ngoc Linh (2013) noted that students face many difficulties in choosing a career, which affects their decision to select a university or vocational training after high school graduation. Students' awareness of labor market demands and their psychological characteristics remains limited. Le Van Hao (2016) concluded that high salaries and income are the main motivations for young people in choosing a career. Nguyen Xuan Trung (2018) suggested that research on 12th-grade students' career choices is still sporadic and insufficient, with influencing factors including personal characteristics, professions, influential people, and educational institutions. Nguyen Thi Kim Chi (2018) mentioned positive factors such as the reputation of universities, academic programs, costs, and subjective norms, which impact students' school choices, with a stronger effect on those with good academic performance. Tran Thi Thanh Lan and colleagues (2019) emphasized the role of the Internet in students' career choices in Ho Chi Minh City and Bien Hoa. Tran Van Quy and colleagues (2009) proposed that factors affecting the decision to choose a school and vocational training include job opportunities, school characteristics, efforts to communicate with students, guidance from influential people, and the diversity and attractiveness of professions. Overall, studies in Vietnam often focus on students and career counseling activities. Factors influencing career choice decisions include family environment, media, friends, culture, academic performance, health, potential income, and job opportunities.

In addition, international studies such as R. James's research (2000) have also shown that family environment and media are significant factors influencing students' personalities and career decisions. Bandura and colleagues (2001) stated that environment, talent, skills, and academic achievement affect career choices, and poor choices can lead to failure and disappointment. Ferry and colleagues (2000) also emphasized the role of family, school, and social settings. Sax (1994) suggested that financial prospects greatly influence men's career decisions, while women are more concerned with social values and utilities. Hearn (1984, 1988) pointed out that parents' educational levels and income also play a crucial role in their children's career decisions.

These studies indicate that career choice is a complex process influenced by various psychological and social factors. The purpose of these studies is to understand the different factors affecting students' career decisions, thereby providing useful information for future career guidance. These works offer important references to help identify factors influencing the career choice behavior of young people in the suburban areas of Ho Chi Minh City.

2.2. Research Methods

The study employs a combination of qualitative and quantitative research approaches. The data sources for the analysis process include both primary and secondary data. Quantitative data were collected to present an overall picture of the characteristics of the group participating in the study, to statistically analyze their career choice trends, and to determine which factors influenced these choices. Quantitative data were gathered from 500 questionnaires distributed to young people in the suburban areas of Ho Chi Minh City, including five districts: Binh Chanh, Can Gio, Cu Chi, Hoc Mon, and Nha Be. Additionally, 100 in-depth interviews were conducted with suburban youths to further explore issues related to career choice, including the influencing factors, reasons, contexts, and perceptions related to these decisions. Primary data were collected from 2022 to 2023 to describe the characteristics of the surveyed youths and present their career choices. Meanwhile, secondary data such as socio-economic reports, occupational characteristics, and other relevant documents were also utilized to synthesize and clarify the social context features.

3. Results And Discussion

3.1. Career Choice Trends of Suburban Young People

Currently, the suburban districts of Ho Chi Minh City exhibit a mix of urban and rural areas. These districts are implementing the new rural development program with evaluation criteria based on national standards. The economic, cultural, and social contexts of these suburban districts align with the general conditions of the country under the new rural development program.

Specifically, the national target program for new rural development for the period 2016-2020 includes 11 components with various evaluation criteria, two of which relate to job creation and rural human resource development. The goal of job creation is to develop production associated with the restructuring of the agricultural sector, shift the rural economic structure, and increase people's income. Meanwhile, rural human resource development focuses on improving education in rural areas (Le Quan, 2022). The new rural development program poses many challenges for local authorities, requiring them not only to maintain agricultural production but also to develop other career fields to improve the quality of life for residents.

A survey of career choices among suburban youth indicates that there are 14 professions that young people intend to pursue in the future, including: education, medicine, tourism, finance, management, pharmacy, foreign languages, information technology, business, law, design, engineering, arts, and administration. Among these, the three most chosen fields by young people are tourism, education, and business, accounting for 23%, 21.6%, and 8.2%, respectively. Other fields range from 2.2% to 6.4%, with "engineering" being the least chosen (2.2%).

In the field of tourism, young people in Nha Be district chose the most with 12.6%, while other districts ranged from 2.2% to 2.8%. In the fields of education and business, young people in Nha Be district chose the least compared to other districts, with education at 2.8% and business at 0.4%.

In Can Gio district, young people chose the field of education the most with 5.2%. However, the difference between Can Gio and the districts of Binh Chanh, Hoc Mon, and Cu Chi is not significant (ranging from 4.4% to 5.2%). For the field of business, young people in Hoc Mon district chose the most, accounting for 2.6%. This rate is double the number of choices by young people in Can Gio district (1.2%), while young people in Cu Chi district have choices relatively close to Hoc Mon district (2.4%).

For other professions/fields, young people in Can Gio district have choices in the following order from most to least: administration (2.2%), management (1.6%), medicine (1.4%), pharmacy (1.2%), information technology (1%), finance and law (0.8%), arts and foreign languages (0.6%), design (0.4%), engineering (0.2%). The group of young people who completed college or university tend to work in Ho Chi Minh City in fields such as tourism, information technology, and engineering. Those who choose to return to their hometowns after graduation often work in fields such as law, education, and healthcare. Most of these young people work in government agencies, while others choose freelance businesses. No cases of unemployment were recorded in the study.

According to a young people in Can Gio district, the locality does not have many factories or enterprises, so the demand for local labor is not high. Therefore, young people who drop out of school, if they do not go to Ho Chi Minh City or nearby areas to work as laborers, will stay at home to help their families in fishing and aquaculture, manual labor, or small-scale trading. "The group of young people who drop out of school also follows two paths: if they do not go to the city, they mainly stay at home to help their families, some follow their families to fish and farm seafood, do manual labor, small-scale trading, or work as common laborers in the city. In Can Gio, there are no factories or enterprises, only a few bird's nest processing facilities, and small tourist areas, so not many workers are needed. Previously, there was a branch of a garment company, but it has now closed." (Excerpt from in-depth interview transcript code CG0501).

In Nha Be district, the choices of young people are as follows: foreign languages (2.6%); medicine, finance, management, pharmacy, information technology, engineering, arts, and administration (0.2%). No young people in Nha Be district in this survey chose the field of law.

In Binh Chanh district, career choices include: medicine (2.6%), management (1.8%), information technology (1.4%), finance and arts (1%), pharmacy and design (0.8%), law, engineering, and administration (0.6%), foreign languages (0.4%).

In Hoc Mon district, career choices include: finance and management (1.4%); pharmacy (1.2%); medicine and law (1%); foreign languages and information technology (0.8%); design, engineering, arts, and administration (0.6%).

In Cu Chi district, career choices include: law (1.6%); medicine, management, foreign languages, and information technology (1.2%); finance (1%); arts (0.8%); pharmacy, design, engineering, and administration (0.6%).

The study found that the career choice trends of suburban youth in Ho Chi Minh City are currently based on factors such as gender, age, income from the profession, family tradition, and household living standards.

Gender-based career choices: For the three most chosen professions/fields, the results show the specific number of male and female selections as follows: the education field is chosen the most with 15.2%, followed by the tourism field with 14.8%, and finally the business field with 5.4%. Among these, young women choose jobs in these three professions/fields more than young men. Conversely, in the field of information technology, the number of young men choosing this field is higher than that of young women, with percentages of 2.8% and 1.8% respectively (see Table 1).

TABLE 1. Gender-based choices of professions/fields (Unit: people) (Source: 2022 Survey)

Future Career Prospects	Gender		Total
	Male	Female	
Education	32	76	108
Medicine	9	23	32
Tourism	41	74	115
Finance	3	19	22
Administration	9	22	31
Pharmacy	8	12	20
Foreign Languages	3	25	28
IT	14	9	23
Business	14	27	41
Commerce	4	16	20
Law	3	9	12
Design	3	8	11
Engineering	6	10	16
Arts	8	13	21
Total	157	343	500

The article also conducted a Chi-square test to determine the relationship between gender and career choice in the overall population. The analysis results show that 7.1% of the cells have an expected frequency of less than 5, which is lower than the 20% threshold. Moreover, the analysis results also show that the observed significance (Sig.) corresponding to the Chi-square value is 0.048, which is lower than the standard 0.05, indicating that gender and career choice are related.

Career Choices by Age: Analysis of the survey data shows that youths aged 16 to 18 commonly choose careers in three main sectors: tourism (18.8%), education (15%), and healthcare (5%). Careers in other sectors account for 1.4% to 4.2%, with engineering being the least chosen field.

For youths aged 19 to 22, career choices are concentrated in the following sectors: education (1.4%), tourism (1%), commercial business (1%), healthcare (0.4%), and information technology (0.2%).

For youths aged 23 to 30, the three most popular career sectors are: education (5.2%), commercial business (3.6%), and tourism (3.2%).

Career Choices by Job Income Level: Survey results show that 29.4% of youths choose careers based on high income levels. Specifically, the highest proportion of youths making career choices based on this factor is in Nhà Bè District, at 25%. Youths in Cần Giờ and Bình Chánh Districts have an equal proportion of career choices based on high income, each at 24%.

Qualitative data also shows that youths often focus on choosing high-income careers such as information technology and hotel management. According to their assessment, high-income jobs are typically in sectors with many recruitment opportunities, thus making job searching easier. One youth shared:

"Currently in society, as I see it, the careers that many young people choose are information technology and hotel management. These are the fields where it's easy to get a job, the salary is high, and there are many companies recruiting in modern society" (Excerpt from in-depth interview CG0531).

Career Choices by Family Tradition: Data analysis results show that only 4% of youths choose to continue their family's traditional occupations. In Cần Giờ District, interviewed youths stated that the traditional local occupation is marine fishing and seafood harvesting, and in the past, many households relied on this livelihood. Currently, a few households still continue marine fishing, but fewer youths choose to follow their family's or locality's traditional occupations due to various reasons such as lack of interest, reduced recruitment numbers, or changes in the natural environment. A female youth who just graduated from university and is working in a government agency shared: "Nowadays, youths of my age all go to work, they work for companies, and almost none continue the traditional local occupations. Mostly they work for companies or the government. Previously, marine fishing was common, but now it's mostly the older generation who do it; my peers and siblings don't do it anymore, they've all gone to work" (Excerpt from in-depth interview CG0833). Another youth mentioned the snail-catching occupation: "This has been a long-standing occupation in the locality, and many families still engage in it. Most youths who finish secondary school, if they don't continue studying or engage in manual labor without qualifications, find it easiest to do this job as it requires no capital, just knowledge of where different types of snails are found and how to catch them. Snails are primarily sold to known buyers, and the earnings are not significant as the catch depends on the day and weather. Earning 100,000-200,000 VND a day is considered good. Nowadays, due to climate impact and ecological tourism planning, this occupation is also affected, and there are fewer snails to catch than before" (Excerpt from in-depth interview CG0531).

Career Choices Suitable for Family Living Standards: Besides the mentioned factors, some youths in the study sample also reported choosing jobs based on the ability to meet their family's living standards. In other words, the income from the job must be sufficient to support the family. Youths in Nhà Bè District have a higher proportion of choosing careers based on this factor compared to youths in other suburban districts. This result is similar to choosing careers because of social prestige, accounting for 37%. Youths in Củ Chi District have the lowest proportion of career choices based on this criterion, at only 12%, and this number is not significantly different from youths in Cần Giờ and Hóc Môn Districts (14%). Figure 1 shows the number of youths in Cần Giờ and Hóc Môn Districts making similar choices.

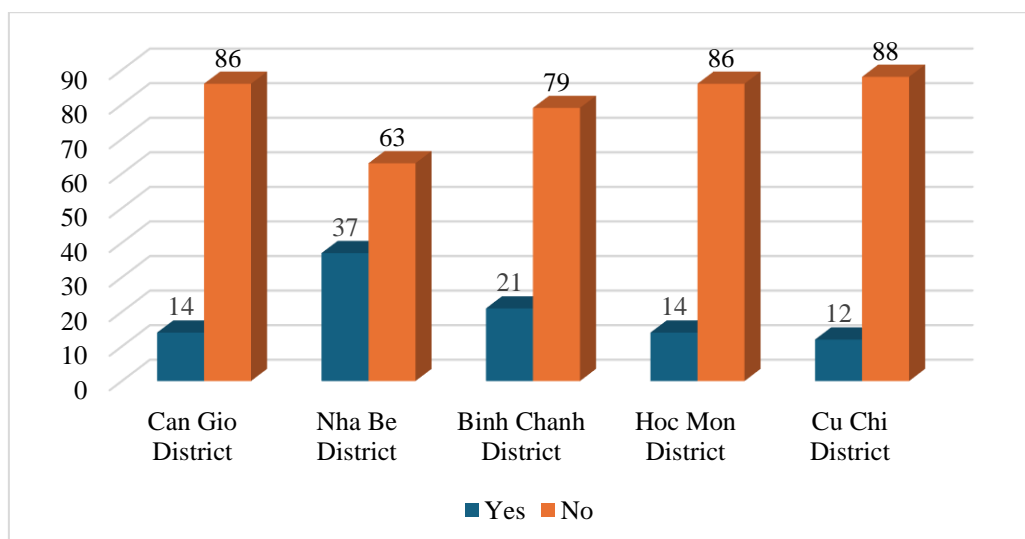


Figure 1. Career Choices Suitable for Family Living Standards (Unit: %) (Source: 2022 Survey)

The views of those directly involved also indicate: "The desire to change careers comes from a personal passion, believing that the profession will earn more money and be respected by society. Additionally, the career must align with the family's living standards" (Excerpt from the in-depth interview, ID CG0831).

Thus, the current state of career choices among youth in suburban areas of Ho Chi Minh City shows that they are often influenced by factors such as age, gender, personal characteristics, job income, and family or local traditional occupations. However, these factors are typically overshadowed by more significant influences, leading to their final decision on choosing a career to pursue and build their future.

3.2. Influencing Factors

The factors influencing the career choice process of young people are categorized into three groups: personal characteristics, social networks, and mass media activities.

Regarding personal characteristics: This is one of the important criteria to consider before young people make their career choice decisions. When asked about the factors considered in choosing a career, the alignment between job characteristics and personal traits is one of the most noted criteria by respondents.

Most of the youth participating in the study believe that choosing a career should align with their traits and characteristics. The survey results show that 61% of the young people agree that 'the chosen profession must be suitable for personal traits and characteristics' (see Figure 2)

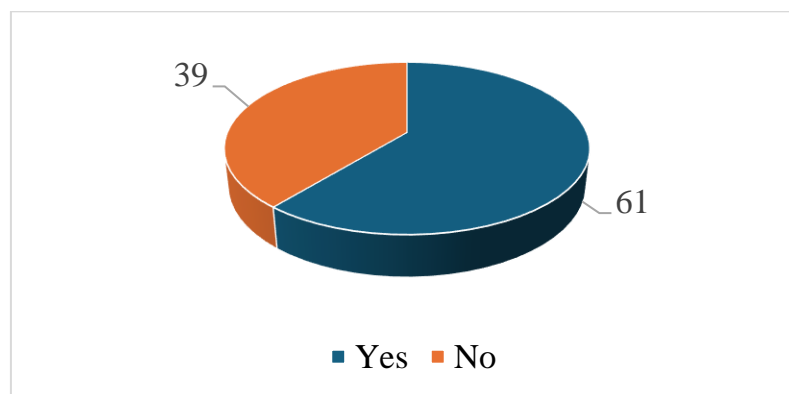


Figure 2. Career Choice Based on Personal Traits and Characteristics (Unit: %) (Source: 2022 Survey)

Data from in-depth interviews also shows similar results, providing details about personal traits and their impact on career choices. A female employee working in administrative roles, who holds a position as an office staff member, stated that her careful nature and desire to serve the community led her to choose to study Public Administration and work in the public sector after graduation. A 10th-grade student shared that she is determined to pursue a career in acting because the profession not only demands artistic skill but also requires high levels of discipline and passion. She said: "The reason I studied Public Administration before was because I wanted to be a public office employee and contribute to local development" (Source: In-depth interview, code BC0531). She also shared: "I see that many young people today want to become famous. But not necessarily by being an actor, TikToker, or YouTuber. I have researched the acting profession and found out about universities offering this major. I have also researched the field and am determined to pursue this career. I believe that being an actor requires relying on one's abilities, with a minimum qualification of 12/12. It requires discipline, ethics, and passion" (Source: In-depth interview, code NB0935).

There is no significant difference in the influence of personal traits on career choice among youth across the five suburban districts surveyed, including Bình Chánh, Cần Giờ, Củ Chi, Nhà Bè, and Hóc Môn.

Over two-thirds of the surveyed youth indicated that their choice of occupation is driven by personal interest in the field, accounting for 74.8%. Among them, young people from Nhà Bè district showed the highest proportion with 26.7%. Young people from Bình Chánh and Hóc Môn districts had nearly equivalent proportions, at 17.2% and 17.4%, respectively, as shown in Figure 3.

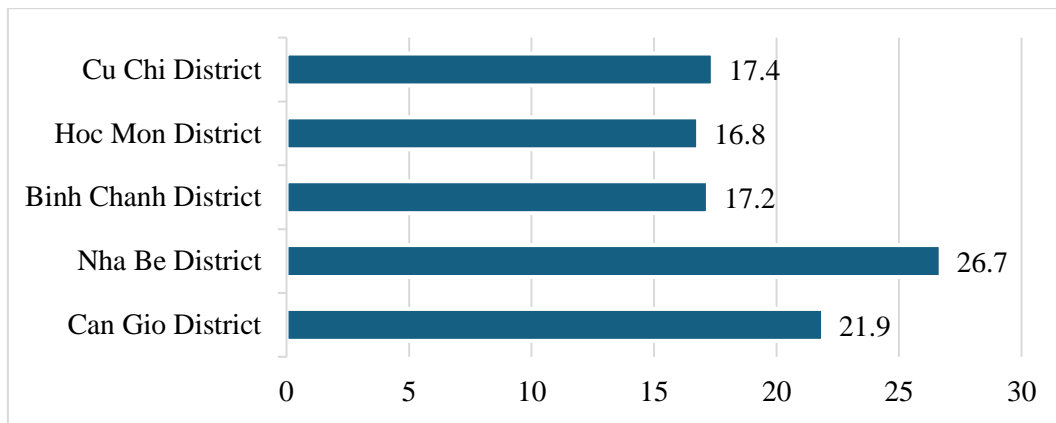


Figure 3. Career Choices Based on Personal Preference (Unit: %) (Source: 2022 Survey)

Qualitative data also indicates that young people often choose careers based on personal interests, which are typically formed from a young age. Additionally, each profession tends to be popular for a certain period, so choosing a career based on trends may lead to frequent job changes. Therefore, young people prefer jobs aligned with their interests. One young person shared: “When choosing a career, you should pick something you like; if you like it, it will be easier to do. Choosing based on trends involves more risks because something may be popular for only a short time, not forever” (Excerpt from the in-depth interview, code NB0832). Another young person mentioned: “Interests develop over time. When I was young, I enjoyed assembling model houses. As I grew up, I became interested in games about construction and arranging different types of buildings, from skyscrapers to single-story houses, along with roads and bridges, so I liked studying urban planning” (Excerpt from the in-depth interview, code HM0832).

When exploring the factors influencing career preferences and choices, most young people indicated that these are results of information gathering and sharing about careers and career guidance. This process is influenced by personal social networks and media activities.

Regarding an individual's social network: When choosing a career, individuals typically base their decisions on the alignment between their attributes and the job requirements, as well as the attractiveness of the job to foster interest. However, social and family relationships also contribute to this decision-making process.

The social network considered includes the relationships between the individual making the career choice and other members of society, such as family, relatives, friends, teachers, and career advisors. The consideration and consultation of information from these sources demonstrate that each individual is also influenced by their social network when making career decisions (see Table 2).

TABLE 2. Sources of Information for Career Choice Among Youth (Unit: %) (Source: 2022 Survey)

Information source	Used	Not used	Total
Self-study on mass media	79.2	20.8	100
Advice from college/university admissions counseling programs	36.4	63.6	100
Advice from parents	28.8	71.2	100
Advice from teachers in high school, college/university	37.4	62.6	100
Advice from relatives	22.8	79.2	100
Advice from friends	15.8	84.2	100

Table 2 shows that 79.2% of youths conduct their research by examining information on various mass media channels. Additionally, other sources of information are also considered, such as advice from college/university admissions programs; advice from parents; advice from teachers in high schools, colleges, or universities; advice from relatives; and advice from friends. Among these, the sources of information consulted by youth in the five suburban districts of Ho Chi Minh City ranked from highest to lowest, include advice from teachers, admissions programs, parents, relatives, and friends.

TABLE 3. Sources of Information for Young People Career Choices by Research Area
(Source: 2022 Survey)

			Can Gio District	Nha Be District	Binh Chanh District	Hoc Mon District	Cu Chi District
Advice from college/university admissions counseling programs	Yes	N	43	38	45	30	26
		%	23.6	20.9	24.7	16.5	14.3
	No	N	57	62	55	70	74
		%	17.9	19.5	17.3	22.0	23.3
Advice from teachers in high school, college/university	Yes	N	34	37	34	31	41
		%	19.2	20.9	19.2	17.5	23.2
	No	N	66	63	66	69	59
		%	20.4	19.5	20.4	21.4	18.3
Advice from parents	Yes	N	31	25	26	25	32
		%	22.3	18.0	18.7	18.0	23.0
	No	N	69	75	74	75	68
		%	19.1	20.8	20.5	20.8	18.8
Advice from relatives	Yes	N	31	13	25	18	22
		%	28.4	11.9	22.9	16.5	20.2
	No	N	69	87	75	82	78
		%	17.6	22.3	19.2	21.0	19.9
Advice from friends	Yes	N	22	0	14	16	17
		%	31.9	0.0	20.3	23.2	24.6
	No	N	78	100	86	84	83
		%	18.1	23.2	20.0	19.5	19.3

Regarding mass media and social networks: When making career decisions, individuals often consult information from various sources. While social networks are utilized to explore and consider specific career paths for education and future development, self-verification and research through media messages on mass communication platforms also play a crucial role in the decision-making process.

The mass media channels accessed by the youth in this study primarily include print newspapers, television, radio, online news, social networks, and YouTube. Among them, 78.2% of the youth use media to seek information for career selection. Notably, youths in Nhà Bè district use mass media for career information more frequently than those in other suburban districts (see Figure 4).

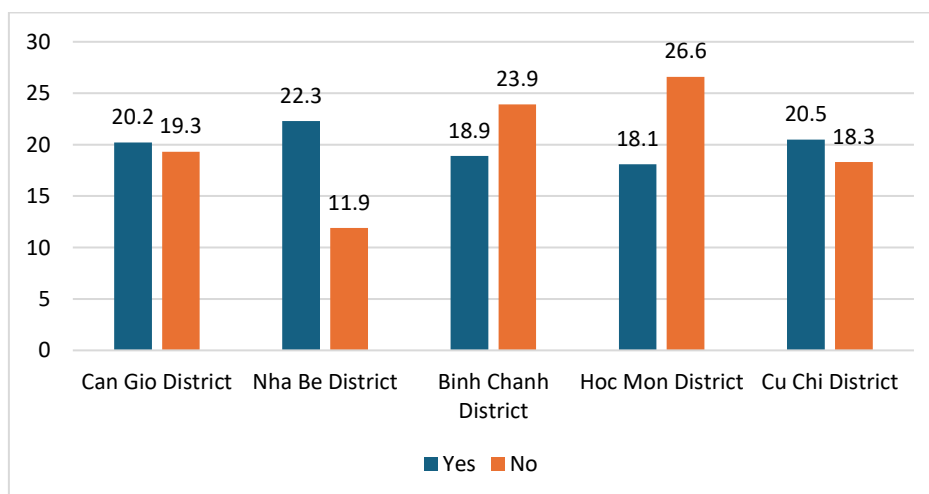


Figure 4. Use of Mass Media for Career Information Reference by Young People According to Study Areas (Unit: People) (Source: 2022 Survey)

The qualitative results also describe that youth seek information from mass media to choose or develop their careers. For example, a young person from Can Gio district shared: “I follow information on the Internet to learn about professions, particularly through a YouTube channel that

teaches graphic design. This channel provides a lot of information and influences career choice; I can self-learn and gain experience through tutorial channels in my spare time” (Source: In-depth Interview Report, ID CG0531). Another young person mentioned: “I often use social media to refer to videos about hairstyling, so social media has a significant impact on me” (Source: In-depth Interview Report, ID CC0932).

Additionally, youths use other channels or media to gather information, such as career counseling fairs, job exchange platforms, or job fairs organized in schools or local communities. Notably, many youths also choose career counseling sessions provided by colleges and universities. Similar results are observed with information from teachers in educational institutions. Information from family and friends is also of interest to many youths, but information from friends is less frequently chosen.

However, some youths also shared that, alongside the positive impacts on career choice, media content can sometimes have negative effects, making it difficult for youths to navigate career options due to the overwhelming amount of forecasted information. “The negative impact of career-related content posted on platforms and mass media is that many people may neglect essential occupations in society, as they may switch to jobs with higher salaries mentioned, leading to an imbalance in career forecasts and labor supply and demand” (Source: In-depth Interview Report, ID HM0832). Another youth noted, “The content shown on mass media can affect career changes, as it provides either negative or positive impacts on one's thoughts. Negative content highlights the downsides of a job, while positive content focuses on the benefits of that job” (Source: In-depth Interview Report, ID NB0833).

Family members' advice often focuses on the hard work and challenges faced by the previous generation in their jobs. For various reasons, many parents and grandparents of youths did not have the opportunity to study and select better-paying jobs, so they worked hard to support their families. Therefore, they guide their children to study well to have opportunities for suitable jobs and improve their lives compared to the previous generation.

Survey results show that factors such as livelihood transition experiences, family living standards, and traditional occupations also significantly influence youths' career choices in this study. Youth are often influenced by the norms and knowledge of family members through observation, learning, imitation, and experience sharing.

In summary, the process of career selection among youth is influenced by three basic groups of factors: (1) The individual's characteristics; (2) The individual's social network, including family, friends, teachers, and career counselors; and (3) Media and social network factors. Although youths are the final decision-makers in choosing their careers, this process often involves absorbing and considering opinions from various sources within both the family and society, along with evaluating multiple influencing factors around them.

5. Conclusion

In the context of strong economic and social development in the suburban areas of Ho Chi Minh City, many job opportunities have been created for the youth. However, choosing a suitable career for personal development and ensuring a stable future is a significant challenge. Young people need to consider many factors to make the right career decision.

This article, based on field research using qualitative and quantitative data collected from community surveys during the 2022-2023 period, analyzes the current situation and factors influencing the career choices of youth in the suburban areas of Ho Chi Minh City. The research findings indicate that youth career choices depend on various factors, including compatibility with personal characteristics, advice from social networks, and the influence of media through mass communication channels and social networks.

Furthermore, the career choices of youth are often adjusted according to factors such as gender, social status, family living standards, and family traditional occupations. These factors play a crucial role in shaping the career decisions of the youth in the suburban areas of Ho Chi Minh City.

The research results indicate that, given the various important factors influencing the career choices of suburban adolescents in Ho Chi Minh City, the future career trends of this labor force will likely shift towards non-agricultural fields. In particular, they are expected to favor jobs related to tourism, trade, services, and finance, as these roles demand dynamism and are well-suited to the young population in the city's suburbs

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Conflict of Interest and Data Availability Statement

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

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