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Exploring Vietnamese University Students' Acquisition and Development of Graduate Employability Capital

Do Thi Ngoc Anh[1], Do Khanh Hang[1], Ngo Thi Hai Yen[1,*], Vu Ngoc Tung[2]

[1]VNU University of Social Sciences and Humanities, 336 Nguyen Trai, Thanh Xuan, Hanoi, Vietnam
[2]VNU University of Languages and International Studies,
Pham Van Dong, Xuan Thuy, Cau Giay, Hanoi, Vietnam

Abstract: This study reports on the extent to which Vietnamese higher education students perceived employability capital. Drawing on the theory of Tomlinson (2017) [1], we investigated their levels of capital by using two primary sources of quantitative and qualitative data, thus informing the students' lived experiences and voices behind their preparation for the future career. Findings showed that the students perceived forms of capital very differently and acknowledged all forms of capital are crucial and supporting each other for the sake of work readiness. Conclusions and implications are also presented at the end of the manuscript.

Keywords: Employability capital, human capital, social capital, cultural capital, psychological capital, identity capital.

1. Introduction

In light of the interconnected world, education has become more diverse in form and shape. It means that education allows those of responsibility and those in need to be more critical in response to the changing socio-cultural and socio-economic landscapes [2]. Particularly, the booming Internet services have provided more accessible learning opportunities, including physically and virtually [3]. Therefore, regardless of any location, everyone deserves to have access to education in achieving personal growth and career sustainability. Looking into it, it is deemed important that the roles of education in whatever forms or shapes are presently beyond knowledge production related to the disciplines. Instead, they should also cover the needs of developing the higher education graduates' knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed to help them navigate in their target career-related fields.

Having said that, it is critical that higher education should be more concerned about not only how to help the undergraduates with the diplomas, but also how to succeed in seeking employment and maintaining their competitive advantages in their job fields [4]. All of these things are so compelling that higher education should pay adequate attention to employability

capital for the to-be undergraduates along their academic progress [5]. This is true in international and national settings, and Vietnam is no exception. Vietnamese higher education has accepted more challenges to become internationally recognized in the global map of education, with more and more higher education institutions increasing the academic standards to meet the global qualities and establishing international partnerships to make their campus more international and intercultural.

This research is to understand the Vietnamese higher education students' experiences regarding employability capital. This research is important because it can help the nation's educational leadership teams, school leaders, faculty members, and students to be more aware of this important scholarship of employability capital [6]. However, the main goals of this research are not to criticize any current efforts of Vietnamese higher education towards the internationalization of education, but to provide more recent insights that in turn help them with educational policies and practices to achieve the goals as much sustainably as possible.

This research is to investigate a Vietnamese university in the Northern region, with 321 students in the fields of social sciences and humanities. This mixed-method research hopes to fill the gaps of missing literature on the topic of employability capital in Vietnam, but present some suggestions on this important work. Particularly, surrounding the question about the extent to which the Vietnamese higher education students perceive their employability capital in their degree programs, this study will reveal some pertaining literature and theoretical framework. Then, after the methodology section, we will report on the findings and discuss them in themes. Implications and limitations will be discussed at the end of this manuscript.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Employability

Regarding employability, many views have been put forward on this concept. Originally, Hillage and Pollard (1998) defined

employability as simply *"the capability to gain initial employment, maintain it, and obtain new employment if required"* (cited in [7]). Later, as society developed and education became more concerned, the definition of employability also changed. Different perceptions, different beliefs among stakeholders such as government, employers, universities and students, etc. have motivated them to have different priorities but all work towards the same goal. It is to improve the employability of students [7-11].

Firstly, looking at recruiters' point of view, according to Knight and Yorke (2002), employers often prefer to hire individuals with workplace experience, especially those who can show what they've learned from it [12]. They are moving away from the ideal concept of academic credentials and assigning importance to more practical and useful skills that include individual graduate attributes such as resilience and commitment, along with more general skills including communication and teamwork [13, 14].

From the view of higher education institutions, Mason, Williams and Cranmer (2009) have pointed out that any formal work skills acquired cannot be simply transferred, as many skills that undergraduates develop are rooted in, embedded in, and further developed through the actual work context in which these skills are used [15]. Students need time to interact with the real working environment, self-study, practice and hone new skills, ensuring to maintain and improve their own competitiveness. Theory is only partly because "learning with practice" brings high efficiency.

Internally, the students rarely participate in tutoring and/or co-teaching programs because they consider them less important activities. They value formal classroom learning that provides knowledge and part-time work that provides the financial means to support their studies. Likewise, many students fail to realize the importance of developing job skills to secure employment, and instead believe that certificates and grade point averages will help them get a job. Undergraduate students are lacking in career management and many

students fail to develop this while in college, hoping instead to increase their employability more organically.

In general, employability should involve not only skill sets and knowledge, but also personal attributes that make a person more likely to become employed and succeed in their chosen occupations [12], but also an integration of different assets or resources [1, 9, 16-18]. Considering our research, we find that this definition is consistent with our research direction.

2.2. Tomlinson's Graduate Capital Model

The model of Tomlinson is related to factors that assist students perceive their ability. From that, students can make the best use to meet recruitment, especially for fresh undergraduates. In his view, undergraduate students need to advance the following capital when they participate in the human resource system of society. The five capital comprises human capital, social capital, cultural capital, psychological capital, and identity capital. This model helps students find themselves, subsequently, how students improve themselves to adapt and work effectively upon graduation.

2.3. Human Capital

As to Tomlinson's study, human capital is defined as knowledge and skills which undergraduates acquire to underpin their entry into the labor market [1]. Students attain human capital in the form of acquired knowledge through formal education and training at the university level, thereby expanding opportunities for students in the job market [19]. Tomlinson stated that additional formal education is able to make individuals become more skillful and therefore more productive at work. Besides, Becker argued that human capital refers to many forms of knowledge, useful information, shared ideas, applicable skills and accumulated health of individuals [20].

Tomlinson finds that human capital plays a meaningful role in employment outcomes [1]. It is worth noting that, based on grade point averages, China regards human capital as a measure of graduate employment prospects. Even so, there are a number of factors responsible for human capital alone that cannot guarantee a job for undergraduates. One possible reason is that the value of human capital is relative. It is influenced by where students perform and are assessed along with language competence, cultural literacy, physical appearance, religion, accreditation by the professional body, etc. On the other hand, human capital can remain hidden from employers and disadvantage undergraduates in their job search efforts, especially with limited self-disclosure. Undergraduates need to achieve diplomas with other types of capital, actively developing their knowledge and skills to stay competitive in a given labor market.

2.4. Social Capital

The idea of social capital was developed by James S. Coleman in 1988 with the paper entitled "Social Capital in the Creation of Human Capital" [21]. Coleman built on his empirical findings and focused on family relationships and community relations to explain when students performed better in school than the expectation of their socioeconomic background. In this paper, Coleman established the concept of social capital as the one to explain social mobility. In this regard, Tomlinson deems social capital refers to the relationship and connected social networks from family, peers, the university environment, and social institutions that can create favorable conditions for students to access the labor market [1, 22].

2.5. Cultural Capital

According to Tomlinson (2017), cultural capital refers to knowledge, information, regulations, and work-related practices that undergraduates are able to show cultural competence and social status [23]. This capital is demonstrated by a "personality package" including accent, body language, and humor. Moreover, Bourdieu finds that "Cultural capital can exist in three forms, including the embodied state (in the form of long-lasting

dispositions of the mind and body), the objectified state, in the form of cultural goods (pictures, books, dictionaries, instruments, machines, etc.), and the institutionalized state [24].

2.6. Psychological Capital

Psychological capital closely related to resilience and persistence is a great important part of fresh undergraduates. In light of high expectations, work intensity and a lack of cultural knowledge in the workplace can create significant mental stress on workers. Tomlinson [1], after Ahmad et al., [25], mentioned that psychological capital helps undergraduates build their sense of adaptation and proactive responses to their current and upcoming career challenges.

2.7. Identity Capital

Jackson [26] and Tomlinson [1] defined identity capital as the "level of personal investment a graduate makes towards the development of their future career and employability" (pp. 345) or "the formation of an attitude of personal responsibility regarding one's role in the profession, a commitment to behave ethically and morally, and the development of feelings of pride for the profession" [27].

3. The Present Study

3.1. Research Questions

To what extent do Vietnamese higher education students perceive their employability capital along their degree programs?

3.2. Research Methodology and Design

Referring to the advice of Creswell [28], we used a mixed-method approach to learn about influences of the capitals to students' employability development and their perception of them. Lisle [29] also supported that the use of a mixed-method approach can better help us to understand more about the nature of phenomenon to be researched, with two forms of data complementing each other and

altogether presenting the combined effects of research clarity.

3.3. Research Design

This research was primarily informed by the research team's attempts to consolidate a wide range of theoretical, conceptual, and methodological resources related to employability capital in higher education. First, we considered the developed stances of theories on employability in order to make it more relevant to the Vietnamese settings, especially regarding higher education in the Northern Vietnamese culture. Secondly, we relied on the well-developed model by Tomlinson [1] about how employability capital can be constructed on a basis of human, cultural, social, psychological, and identity capital. It was most likely that these forms of capital do not separately function in its own sake, but complement each other for the purpose of developmental comprehension. Last, we took into account the context-driven insights, depending on the regular conversations with the relevant people (e.g. school leaders, faculty members, and students) in order to design the questionnaires and interview protocols more effectively and efficiently.

Our research has two stages. In the first stage in support of the quantitative data collection, the official questionnaires were the final product of many drafts which were then piloted with a certain group of target students, revised for the clarity and language, and analyzed for the statistical accuracy and reliability. In the second stage, we then invited the participating students to join the semi-structured interviews based on the statistical insights. The interviews were recorded for verbatim transcription and coded for qualitative analysis. The qualitative findings were reviewed, analyzed, and reported on the line-to-line basis and stored for the research purposes only. Regardless of any stage, the participants were informed that they would be able to withdraw at any time with prior notice and they were required to complete the signed consent forms.

3.4. Instruments

The survey was structured with two sections; (1) is participants information which included some basic information such as: age, gender, major, language proficiency, (2) is self - rating to the question that related to five capital in the form on a Likert scale from 1 to 5 (with 1 denoting "Strongly Disagree" and 5 denoting "Strongly Agree"). A total of 40 items were used to describe the five employability capital (identity, social, cultural, human, and psychological), as proposed by Tomlinson [1]. The survey required 5 to 10 minutes to complete. The responses were checked carefully for missing or false input to our prime requirement, after that, they were removed to fully completed survey fields.

The interview protocol was developed and edited with 23 questions in total. We guarantee that the language used will be clear and there will be little or no ambiguity. The questions were centered on participants' lived experiences in their lives which can relate or reveal some certain capital through their examples. We create interview questions with the aim of being able to extract information about the influences of five employability capital as the ultimate purpose on their personal, academic and career growth. The data that we collected were only used for research purposes and were stored securely and confidentially.

3.5. Settings and Procedure

Throughout the research process, we used simple random sampling to recruit participants in the study. We conducted an online form to survey students at a university in Hanoi. The research university is a public one, providing undergraduate, Master's and doctoral programs. This collection was primarily between early September and October 2021. All rely on the voluntary principle, so the participants have the right to keep information confidential and withdraw from the research whenever they want. The calculations were completed to understand the means (M) and standard deviations (SD).

The in-depth interviews aim to collect detailed information beyond initial and surface-level answers. They (P.1, P.2, …, P17) took place with 17 students from various disciplinary backgrounds on the Zoom platform. The data were audio-recorded based on students' permission. Each interview lasted from 35 to 40 minutes. The interviews were to explore experiences relating to employability capital and how they utilize it to plan for their future careers. The next step is to carefully transcribe the audio between November 2021 and January 2021 and select two to three answers which are the clearest and most suitable. After having discussed the employability capitals in the landscape of the undergraduate students in a Hanoi university, we wrote the discussion session.

3.7. Research Participant

The demographics of our participants are available in Table 1. In this cross-sectional design, we removed 41 responses that were outliers to have the final number of 321 Vietnamese higher education students. No responses were removed prior to data analysis, as all survey questions and items were completed by participants. The data were reviewed for internal consistency, and Cronbach's alpha was 0.926, which suggested that the data were reliable for further analysis. Concerning the four forms of employability capital, the KMO measures of sampling adequacy appeared very high, significantly higher than the minimum KMO value of 0.6 [30]. These confirmed that the adequacy of the magnitude of the correlation was met. Except Psychological Capital, factor analysis was run twice because differences of two items (Q.5 and Q.9) were lower than 0.3. In the following, details regarding the five forms are shown in Table 2, given that Psychological Capital was an outcome of the second run.

Students participating in the survey include students from the first to the fourth year of Vietnam National University. The total number of responses used for data analysis was 321. Of

which, there were (1) 46 men and 275 women; (2) there were 34 first-year students, 181 second-year students, 70 third-year students and 36 fourth-year students or more; and (3) there were 131 Beginning level learners, 157 Intermediate level, and 33 Advanced level.

Table 1. Demographics

Demographics	Sub-item	No.	%
Gender	Male Female	46 275	14.3 85.7
Years of Study	Year 1 Year 2 Year 3 Year 4 and over	34 181 70 36	10.6 56.4 21.8 11.2
Language proficiency[*]	A1 – A2 B1 – B2 C1 – C2	131 157 33	40.8 48.9 10.3

*assessed in accordance with Common European Framework of Reference.
(https://www.commoneuropeanframework.org/cefr).
Cite sourse: SPSS report, v.20.

The second stage is the online interview. 17 people from different majors volunteered for the open interview. The participants' majors are Psychology, Anthropology, Information Management, Linguistics, Oriental Studies, Archivology, and Office Management. Interviews were conducted online via Zoom (due to the impact of the COVID-19 epidemic, face-to-face interviews are limited). Participants can comfortably share their opinions and avoid misunderstandings, so the interview used Vietnamese. The information provided by the participants is absolutely confidential and serves only for research purposes.

4. Findings

4.1. Quantitative Findings (Table 2)

Table 2. KMO and Bartlett's Test

	KMO	Bartlett's	df.	*Correlation range*	% of variance
Human capital	0.738	361.554[*]	15	0.040 - 0.508	59.953
Social capital	0.654	311.043[*]	15	0.064 - 0.528	57.329
Cultural capital	0.770	435.762[*]	28	0.066 - 0.528	50.769
Psychological capital	0.697	278.060[*]	10	0.079 - 0.448	65.099
Identity capital	0.684	192.546[*]	06	0.101 - 0.376	49.554

*significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)
Cite source: SPSS report, v.20.

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The principal components were performed for each form of capital, in which different established items were clustered based on an Eigenvalue greater than 1.0 with varimax rotation. The scales that resulted from the four separate tests are as follows:

i) There is a 2-factor scale to *Human Capital*, including *Soft skills* (2 items) and *Preparation for Future Work* (4 items);

ii) There is shows a two-factor scale to *Social Capital*, including Network (2 items) and *Pro-activeness* (4 items);

iii) There is shows a two-factor solution to Cultural Capital, including Attitudes towards Cultural Characteristics (3 items) and Knowledge about Cultural Characteristics (4 items);

iv) There is shows a two-factor solution to *Psychological Capital*, including *Willingness* (1 item) and *Motivation and Personal Flexibility/Compliance* (4 items);

v) There is shows a one-factor solution to identity capital, including *Self-awareness and Sense of Doing* (4 items).

After reliability testing using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient, the results are that all subscales have appropriate reliability (Cronbach's Alpha coefficients of the sub-scales Human capital, Social capital, Cultural capital, Psychological capital, and Identity capital are 0.702, 0.600, 0.682; 0.647, and 0.613).

According to Tables from 3 to 7, these statistical findings suggested that the target students' level of employability capital tended to vary from one form of capital to another. Except for concerns about social capital which experienced some low rates (e.g. network with the values below 3.000, but others above 3.600), the others were positive. The most optimistic outlooks belonged to the students' human capital (e.g. all above 3.500, except for one aspect at 3.343), closely followed by their identity capital (e.g. all above 3.600, except for one aspect at 3.060). When coming to cultural capital and psychological capital, the target students were found to perform effectively, even though the former seemed to be more optimistic than the latter.

4.2. Qualitative Findings

In this section, the students' reflective accounts will be made available based on each form of employability capital. The research team members considered that the exclusion of data does not necessarily fail to prove the evidence of students' employability capital to a large extent, but chose based on the most relevant and suitable due to the word count. At the end of this qualitative section, we will provide a table-based summary of what informs employability capital among the target student participants. The participants will be numbered based on our initial plan and data storage.

4.3. Human Capital

Human capital is a key foundation for students to access employment opportunities, commonly including the knowledge and skills that undergraduates acquire to adapt to the labor market. Moreover, it definitely covers socio-cultural and physical factors. According to survey and interview results, *human capital* is assessed based on six items (Table 3).

The first two items indicate that students recognize the significance of soft skills and try to cultivate them for their future careers.

"... I often read the news online on community sites for students and young people,... Then I also learned many things from my classmates. We talk and share how to,...

improve our communication skills or actively send each other opportunities,... As for time management skills, I think it relies mainly on

our method. I will try the advice on the internet and select the one that works for me to improve my competency" (P. 2).

Table 3. Forms of Human Capital

	Question	M	SD
Soft skills	12	4.455	0.715
	11	3.810	0.817
Preparation for future work	29	3.745	0.831
	31	3.612	0.830
	03	3.343	0.877
	32	3.963	0.794

Cite source: SPSS report, v.20.

The third item is related to the concentration on advancing specialized skills. In the third item, the students acknowledged that the current knowledge they possessed is not enough.

"Uh,... It seems to me that I still need to enhance my knowledge. That means the knowledge I acquired in the last two years at university is insufficient. There is a lot I need to learn because I haven't learned much" (P. 3).

The fourth item refers to being active in planning a future career. The opinion expressed is as follows:

"Currently, I intend to work for NGOs and community projects as I like helping people. But now, I endeavor to improve my foreign language skills to prepare for my future career" (P. 4).

The fifth item mentions that the students acquired necessary skills for their future careers through university. In term of this, two students shared that:

"... The university provides me with certain background knowledge. Thereby, I apply it to real-world work. Secondly, in the 3rd and 4th years, the university lets students do an internship. Those are also the opportunities that the university creates for us to practice for our future career,..." (P. 5).

On the other hand, there is also another opinion that

"... Admittedly, my university also has pretty good lectures...but other universities and the job market require more than that. My

university only updates the new curriculum for the next course, and the previous one does not, so I feel that I am not as good as other students,..." (P. 6).

The last item shows the student's consciousness that the knowledge and skills they already had would be useful for them to participate in future recruitment. That is, for example:

"As far as I'm concerned, we need to have something that they want, such as being ambitious, always self-learning, and self-improvement are the most necessary factors. To me, professional competence and soft skills are equally essential. If we do without one of these, it will not be hard to adapt to the rigors of life,..." (P. 7).

Overall, the data set obtained is consistent with previous studies. Alternatively, in the context of the university that the participants are attending - a university that focuses on researching knowledge systems about society and human beings assembling themselves into social networks, students had a higher evaluation of soft skills, especially communication skills. Foreign language proficiency output standards were also increasingly improved to meet the requirements of the labor market in Vietnam and internationally. On balance, however, the data set shows that the university we surveyed did not meet the demand for soft skills courses. In light of the limitless practice, the effectiveness of the soft skills courses provided by the school was still not high.

However, many educational environments still have limitations in curricula, so they do not meet the actual needs of students.

4.4. Social Capital

Social capital refers to students' social network, which is the connection of family, friends, colleagues' relationships. It is characterized by the ability to develop social networks, establish attachment activities as well as access to career opportunities for undergrgraduates. There are six core items to form an individual's *social capital.*

The first item refers to the students having a wide social network. They believed that studying in the university was very good for developing social relationships (Table 4).

Table 4. Forms of Social Capital

	Question	M	SD
Network	06	2.972	0.966
	24	2.178	1.158
Proactiveness	13	3.667	0.938
	14	3.920	0.848
	23	3.729	0.993
	25	4.034	0.853

Cite source: SPSS report, v.20.

"Currently, I feel that going to university also helps my relationships to be expanded through courses,… I find myself tending to widen my relationships in a way that,... well,... tries to keep in touch with people,... " (P. 4).

Another aspect is through activities outside of school hours:

"I work part-time at a restaurant. They recruit students as the main staff. While working we can study and interact with co-workers,... relationships can expand a lot, and I can improve knowledge. In addition, I am also doing a tutor job,…" (P. 8).

From above, it is also found that the students actively expanded their network of social links according to the third item and actively explored future career-related opportunities as in the fourth item.

The second and fifth item stated that the students chose careers according to their own passion and consider their parents' orientation as an advice.

"Actually, my parents were not the ones to orient me. Moreover, a while ago, the person who guided me was not very good, only suggested to me a little. I found out on my own

and have a passion for this major, so I choose to enroll in this one" (P. 9).

The final item that builds up social capital is the ability of students to identify unhealthy relationships, which has been clarified through the following comments:

"Everything should be in moderation. If it's too narrow, it's not good but if it is, it should be selective because like I said, if I'm in a relationship with anyone, I need to spend my time on it,… It's important that I also have a capacity commensurate with the relationship" (P. 11).

To sum up, we find that the undergraduate students have the ability to create their social networks and take advantage of getting more career opportunities. The students' autonomy was also clearly expressed in choosing a career orientation according to their passion. When exposed to the university environment, students also know how to take advantage of that environment to develop a network of social relationships. With the high ability to integrate, most students today have a wide social network and know how to manage them appropriately. In addition, students are also guided to learn about future career-related opportunities, especially

those that can complement their major and increase their exposure to the career environment.

4.5. Cultural Capital

In cultural capital, it is crucial to mention the importance of the culture of organizations, and can present your characteristics (behavior, way of speaking, strengths, weaknesses) plainly. Thus, cultural capital is expressed in undergraduates through the ability to know themselves as well as to perceive the relationship between themselves and the organizations and businesses that they intend to join. From there, students will adjust their profile to suit the environment of that company. That can be called designing a "tactical" for accessing the right labor market. Through research results, there are seven items that make up a person's *Cultural capital (*Table 5).

Table 5. Forms of Cultural Capital

	Question	M	SD
Attitudes towards cultural characteristics	20	4.433	0.630
	19	4.218	0.730
	30	4.318	0.697
Knowledge about cultural characteristics	04	3.140	0.927
	17	3.399	0.934
	08	3.794	0.834
	01	3.907	0.736

Cite source: SPSS report, v.20.

The first item is the polite attitude and respect for everyone in the working environment.

"My dream environment for work is an environment with fairness, employees have creative contributions in an environment without judgment,that means the environment has a,... respect for each other's opinions even if there are differences" (P. 1).

The second item refers to a trustworthiness of a personal. They frankly shared:

"Of course. The big reason is because loyalty is one of my virtues" (P. 1).

The third item to be considered when it comes to cultural capital is respect for cultural differences in the workplace. The next one is the personal knowledge of many different cultures. It has been expressed through a response:

"... you can understand that in a corporate environment, if you are qualified enough to work in a large multinational company, for example, each person will. If we have a culture of our own, in order to understand people, we must first know their culture, understand their environment first,..." (P. 3).

"There are many differences between the university environment and the work environment. For example, in a university environment, if I (think for a long time) are guided by teachers and friends, then it will be a competitive environment, I will still be guided by my boss, but I just feel that it I'm a bit restrained, I can't have a close relationship like with my friends in college" (P. 6).

From that, it also shows the understanding about the culture of the environment in which they will work in the future. This is mentioned in the fifth item.

The sixth element that creates cultural capital is having an open mind.

"In a university environment, there are too many influences from everyone, from school to school, from different regions, then the behavioral culture of the regions is also different and the level of knowledge of people is also different,... So I will learn a lot of those things" (P. 12).

And the last is also an indispensable factor, which is a perception of individuals about his/her own ability (excellent, good, average, and so on).

"I think I understand 90%,… Yet the remaining 10% are things that keep me from making decisions" (P. 10).

The participants conducting the survey had a respectful awareness and attitude toward cultural differences due to the nature of social majors needing to reconcile with different cultural individuals. At the same time, because the school's sectors that have students participating in the survey the majority of them are academically and research-oriented, it will take time for students to adapt to the dynamic work culture. Students here also have an open mind, a spirit of willingness to learn knowledge and experience from everyone, and appreciate creativity in the working environment. They desire a healthy work environment where people can understand each other and don't fight or bully together. With that, students in general have a certain understanding of many different cultures, differences in rules, how to behave, and the level of competition between the university and the future environment. However, students' understanding is directed only towards a certain environment, especially the one in which they can work in the future. Along with the process of exploring the outside world, students also take their time to care about themselves, and this has given them the ability to be aware of their competence.

4.6. Psychological Capital

Psychological capital is understood as an individual's endurance, the ability to adapt and integrate flexibility into working environments, and suffering from challenges and pressures. According to our results, *psychological capital* is made up of five items (Table 6).

The first item concerns the prediction and acceptance of students' off-industry work.

"I see that I don't suitable for the major,… The information and documents need to be secured in a fairly absolute way, but I am also a talkative and communicative person. However, after studying this major, it also has,… a bit of knowledge for me to apply to the administrative profession. As paperwork and information are needed in any industry, I can apply that knowledge to other industries" (P. 7).

The following two items are the available motivation of the individual to accomplish their goals, especially in future work.

"Oh I get the main motivation from my family. Here people often call it "peer pressure", because my friends are very good. I look at them and I feel like I'm inferior so I have to try harder" (P. 8).

"Actually, I'm just living for myself. I feel that if I am not rich, my life will be so hard later. I love myself and my family so much… Thus, I will have a lot of money, I can help many people. Not only my family but many others as well" (P. 10).

"It often will depend on the type of work. If this job is suitable, I can take it as a motivation for a long-term commitment" (P. 14).

Table 6. Forms of Psychological Capital

	Question	M	SD
Willingness to do different jobs	10	3.564	0.637
Motivation and personal flexibility and compliance	21	3.745	0.872
	02	3.558	0.882
	16	3.371	0.816
	22	3.583	0.895

Cite source: SPSS report, v.20.

The fourth item is flexibility in problem solving.

"Flexibility is very important. I adapt quite quickly,… Only the teachers who suit me are fascinated, and the teachers don't match, either I don't listen or I learn myself. Some subjects which I feel that the lecturers are not suitable for, I'm out" (P. 8).

The last item is a sense of compliance with the individual's rules.

"I am also a person who often plans for myself and sets goals for the daily work I have to do. However, for some jobs like writing or reading, I work quite arbitrarily. When joining the workforce, I will be more inclined to work with a plan than an arbitrary one because if I work too arbitrarily myself, the work goal will not be very high" (P. 15).

In the context of *psychological capital*, most higher education students have the flexibility in solving problems of learning in particular and life in general. When they encounter difficulties or challenges, depending on the scale of the target, they will have appropriate behaviors. At the same time, flexibility is also reflected in the ability to accept sideline jobs compared to the current field of study. That is a testament to the fact that students have made plans and prepared for themselves different contingency plans. To be able to achieve the set goals, they always have the motivation, it can be from themselves, their family, their peers, a suitable job or the desire to help many people. All of these are both motivation and pressure to help students avoid distractions by external temptations and keep trying. In general, the research results show that when it comes to psychological capital, students that took the interviews and the survey for the research do not have much difference with the above conclusions. The reason may be that most of today's young people are not afraid of change. They are willing to do jobs that are different from their training and they desire a better life.

4.7. Identity Capital

Identity capital is an important factor in the development of human personality. This is a factor for students to identify their own life goals, realize which are the main and secondary goals, understand their self-worth and improve self-esteem and self-confidence. What is emphasized is understanding their own experiences, values and achievements to support the development of their career profile; have personal plans to accomplish their goals; form and present themselves professionally with relevant parties (such as employers,...), facilitate the individuals' transition from university to the work environment. Based on analysis and synthesis of results that we have collected, *Identity capital* consists of four important items.

Table 7. Forms of Identity Capital

	Question	M	SD
Self-awareness and sense of doing	07	3.804	0.811
	15	3.689	0.835
	28	3.642	0.847
	18	3.060	1.214

Cite source: SPSS report, v.20.

Firstly, it must be mentioned the individual's cognitive abilities about the strengths and weaknesses of their competence.

"Oh,… actually, when I went to university, I understood myself and my weaknesses,… I am an impatient person. If I do any work that I think about and do, I will definitely do it. If I give myself time to think about its advantages and disadvantages, I will definitely start to think about giving up and not wanting to do it anymore" (P. 16).

The second item is the investment of the individual's time and effort to prepare for the future profession and the third item that makes up an individual's Identity capital is the ability to usefully utilize the time spent on future work-related intentions. They understand what baggage is required to increase their access to employment opportunities.

"Currently, my plan is that after finishing four years of university study, I will go up to two years of Graduate school to get a Master's degree in Vietnam. If I have a chance, I will experience it abroad. Therefore, I am spending time learning foreign languages, at least four languages in order to access more academic materials and prepare for the future" (P. 2).

"I am studying English and I am also focusing on my studies to prepare for a relatively good academic result so that in the future, in addition to professional knowledge, I have to know social knowledge and basic ones. I try to improve my communication skills, too. Next is finding information skill, as it is very important whether now or in the future, whatever I do, I have to look for relevant information, analyze it and synthesize it. Teamwork skills also need to be improved. Leadership skills are needed, too" (P. 5).

And finally, individuals don't compare themselves to others.

"Now, there is a phrase that Gen Z often says is "Peer pressure". I also think I'm a little bit pressured, but I have to delete that thought because I can still try every day, I will improve myself to let me be the best when I graduate from university" (P. 6).

From what has been stated, we come to the conclusion that students at the university environment conducting the survey in particular and today's generation of students in general can't avoid the pressures in learning and life, typically peer pressure or achievement pressure,... However, with the right self-awareness, they can overcome and learn how to pull up their socks day by day. Students have simultaneously understood their own strengths, their weaknesses and their effects on the work environment and personal experiences or some other aspects of their lives. Of course, the investment of time and effort to prepare for the future profession is necessary, especially for specific environments with high professional requirements. During the process, students make plans to be able to use their time usefully for future purposes, such as studying abroad or improving their foreign language skills. Besides, they also consciously hone and update themselves with a lot of soft skills that they consider to access better career opportunities in the future.

Table 8. Qualitative findinds summary
(Authors'self-prepared)

CAPITAL	Human	Social	Cultural	Psychological	Identity
KEYWORDS	Soft skills Background Preparation Self-consciousness Professional knowledge	Social network Attachment Career orientation Pro-activeness Connections Relationships	Attitude Workplace environment Cultural differences Understanding Respect Open mind Cognition	Resilence Flexibility Motivation Pressure Acceptance	Cognitive abilities Investment Compare Peer pressure Identity crisis

5. Discussion

This research attempted to answer the main research question about the extent to which the Vietnamese students in higher education of Northern Vietnam perceive their employability capital. To answer this question, we have built on the research design based on the mixed-methods, then assist the participating students

in self-rating their own sense of employability capital drawn on the model developed by Tomlinson [1] and in reflecting on their (non-) academic experiences within and beyond the 4-year degree programs of a North-located Vietnamese university. This concurrent mixed method design helped us to gain comprehensive insights into how employability capital was able to emerge in response to the current degree programs in the research university and how the students perceived the opportunities to be able to develop their employability capital.

In particular, these two sources of quantitative and qualitative data enabled us to interpret the findings in a way that can solve the gaps of quantitative findings which cannot provide the clearer evidence of how employability capital exists in the students' lived experiences as well as solve the gaps of qualitative findings which cannot allow us to have a fuller view of how employability capital was seen as (un-)desired outcomes of higher education programs at a certain university of research [29].

Viewed from the quantitative perspectives, the target students' human capital had the most promising aspect of development. The fact is that the students were able to grow not only academic but also non-academic qualifications (e.g. knowledge, skills, and dispositions) needed for their future employment prospects. This is an outstanding example of this university of research regarding how well the programs should be designed in a way that speaks to the needs of global, national, and local workforce [7, 11]. This two-way growth between academic and non-academic qualifications is helpful to help the students remain qualified for and competitive in the job markets [16]. Examining the non-academic aspects of human capital, it is critical for us to pay attention to other forms of capital which would be developed from the non-academic capital. For example, social capital allows them to gain more understanding of evolving, changing, and sophisticated job markets. The target students tended to kept themselves in a state of pro-activeness and active engagement in different ways in an attempt to help them

recognize their positions and roles to succeed in multi-purpose communication as well as to gain personal achievements [31-33]. We think that these positive tendencies resulted from the university's careful consideration and attempts to incorporate more sociocultural aspects to diversify the contents of teaching and learning. This extended strategy of teaching and learning was believed as a benefit towards the students' critical thinking to prepare for the post-graduation career roadmap.

In addition to social capital, cultural capital plays an important role. Broadly speaking, cultural capital is considered as unique characteristics that represent social customs, belong to certain people groups, and that reveal these people groups' socio-historical artifacts. The findings implied that acquiring a good source of social capital during the degree program is of much value in creating the solidarity and loyalty of the students. It means that the students need to develop their sense of belonging in the job market of choice which can be new or familiar. They should be able to recognize cultural similarities and differences between their home and work culture landscapes. Their recognition will then help them integrate themselves into the new settings with minimal culture shock, respect the new culture with ethno-relative worldviews, and contribute to the new culture with more diverse forms of thinking.

The final two forms of capital also offered significant thoughts. According to the quantitative findings, the students performed quite well in sustaining their personal motivations in future work and willingness to consider as many types of employment as possible in order to maximize their work opportunities [34]. Aligned with their job interests and career commitments, they were kind of both flexible and determined to examine the job suitability in relation to the disciplinary experiences and job requirements. These students were also found good at knowing who they are and how best they can do based on their personal strengths. From that, they can make gradual and consistent progress as

wanted. Keeping this in mind, we argue that these tendencies are great contributions to their sustainable career pathways and competitively position themselves in the target job market.

Moving onto examining the qualitative findings, those suggested the relationships internally and externally. Inwardly, human capital is considered as one of the intangible assets that each individual owns. A highly human capital graduate will be able to apply the knowledge he/she has studied at the university into work and then identify the right path to seek opportunities to enter the labor market. In the context of Vietnamese society, our research results are in accordance with the previous argument, that the knowledge and skills needed for the future career will be supplemented through formal education [19]. Our data set shows that students tend to focus on soft skills, furthermore, students stated that they cultivate soft skills through informal education such as part-time jobs or social experiences. This point is compatible with the current educational context when students proactively seek new pastures to close the gap with the working environment that they aim to work in the future.

Viewed from different sides, the ability to express themselves appropriately and effectively will also help students achieve their desires in the labor market. They are also associated with occupational expertise [36], human capital is therefore a core component of graduate employability [17]. Human capital with the current educational context when students have more choices about how to enhance themselves.

The process of expanding an individual's social network can be done by taking advantage of their own relationships, looking for opportunities to communicate with many people and challenging themselves in a lot of new environments. A study shows that undergraduates from lower and marginalized socioeconomic backgrounds are disadvantaged in this area and often have to make more efforts to enrich their social network [22]. With that situation, universities are good background for students to have the opportunities to learn about

rapid and quick changes and the complexities of different job markets. We think that is also a factor which creates quite close cohesion between social capital and human capital, when students can take advantage of their relationships to seek opportunities to access the work environments they want.

Although the social capital dimension of networking has the potential to significantly enhance graduate employability outcomes [17] . Social capital, the richness of each person's social capital is different and harmonizing social relationships is not easy. If they are not skillful, they can make the relationships in a problematic way, leaving them with concerns and no time for other important aspects of learning. In addition to avoiding unhealthy relationships, maintaining and securing connections to those that individuals consider important, they also need to proactively reach out to relationships that can expose themselves to the future career environments and improve their own employability experiences. Their personal beliefs also largely reflected on their own career orientation. Knowing what they want and how they achieve their social goals, they have to consult and select from the opinions of those around them such as parents or friends and from there, choose the directions that they think are appropriate.

In our research, the manifestation of cultural capital is mainly in two aspects, namely awareness and attitude of the individual. Factors such as politeness, respect for coworkers, work environment, and an individual's knowledge of different cultures are foundations for expanding their social network. It is the link between cultural capital and social capital. Besides, their willingness to learn from cultural differences and open-mindedness would be able to help them increase their access to potential career opportunities and improve their employability. Also, an open-minded progressive attitude will be necessary. When those two factors combine, they will collaboratively form the students with a certain level of openness, understanding, and a high spirit of learning with the premise that they need to

explore in order to fully understand their personal and professional capacity.

Cultural capital can affect how effective the work of students seems to be. According to Pham [22], almost all respondents expressed concerns about having a shallow understanding of the working environment in their field. They did not have good insights about the cultural script or constitution of a workplace, the hidden recruitment rules and expectation of employers, including desired behavioral dispositions and competences [22]. In conclusion, for those with limited cultural understanding, they will find it difficult to communicate with others naturally, difficult to get along with colleagues and easy to reduce their ability to advance in their career.

Psychological capital, psychological capital is a backbone of fresh undergraduates because it helps undergraduates to overcome barriers, adapt to new circumstances, and proactively respond to unavoidable career challenges. One of the manifestations of psychological capital is related to students' predictions and willingness to do different jobs. It proves that they have prepared plans for themselves to face future work-related challenges. Also, it shows the dynamism and not being afraid to challenge the new generation of students in the new era. The survey results show that they are all motivated by themselves, family, or peers with a sense of compliance with personal principles to keep themselves always towards their goals. That is the specific thing about psychological capital, where personal motivation can affect the flexibility of each individual. And it believed that all the items that were stated in Psychological Capital can be useful for personal modification in the working environment for further future. If the index of psychological capital is high, it will help students have better adaptation, which may have a positive correlation with Cultural Capital, especially on the correlation between Psychological capital and the attitude aspect.

Finally, identity capital also has a direct effect on psychological capital when individuals consider their motivation as well as their pressures. The most frequently mentioned

issue is peer pressure - when individuals compare themselves to others despite differences in their backgrounds and personal circumstances. However, they are also quite aware of the strengths and limitations of their own capabilities, and have invested time and effort to prepare for their future career, including knowledge and skills that they consider essential. As a matter of course, in order to be able to respond to a volatile labor market, students need to be able to make useful use of the time they spend on future work-related projects. However, it can be asserted that self-awareness is a necessary condition before an individual's intentions for future plans. Because only when a person has a clear understanding of their own potential, then, the plans and investments for themselves can really work.

Therefore, to develop professional identity, students are responsible for strengthening their employability, understanding their personal values and competences, as well as assessing their suitability to the culture, norms and behaviors of the profession towards which they are oriented. With students, identity capital can be considered as the way they build plans for the future, helping them to orient themselves to the labor market they are aiming for later.

In short, all the aspects in each capital are qualitatively linked with each other [7, 11, 22]. The characteristics of each student's profession are different and depending on the requirements of employers, thus students need to take an appropriate approach. In addition, on the part of universities, it is necessary to pay attention to training soft skills for students, creating favorable conditions for students to apply theoretical knowledge to real life in a useful way. The university also needs to increase the opportunity for practical experience so that students can get acquainted early, have a certain understanding and adapt to the requirements of the labor market, especially in highly specialized disciplines. Adjustments from the universities and stakeholders are necessary, but each of the individual students needs to actively seek opportunities and improve themselves to

increase their employability and keep up with the progress of the time G.

6. Conclusion and Implications

This study reports on the extent to which Vietnamese university students perceived employability capital during their degree programs. We found that they perceive and tend to make use of all forms of capital very differently in support of their career preparation. From our findings, we are both positive and negative about this Vietnamese university in terms of their attention to developing students' employability capital. Positively, they challenged their traditional approach to teaching and learning by including more innovations and allowing students to be more aware of how their future professional career. Negatively, the students seemed to have a lack of resources to strengthen their non-academic skills in addition to their academic ones because the university may not have sufficient staff to assist their students.

From this study, we would like to have some suggestions. First, the university should be more concerned about students' learning experiences that support their employability capital. They can collaborate with the employers, community leaders, or social organizations in order to know and design the learning experiences related to cultural understanding and employability aspects [37, 38]. Also, we recommend that the university should be aware of sustaining the employability capital in the long run, so that the students can better join and support the university along this important aspect of learning experience. Lastly, employability capital should be integrated into the courses besides extracurricular activities, so that the teaching staff and students can work together, decide what should be taught and learned, and make their learning experiences more inclusive.

This work is not without any limitations. We invite future researchers to develop this aspect in Vietnamese higher education. The scope should be expanded to more schools in different areas of the country. Also, we need to validate the questionnaire to make it more broadly conceptualized and inclusively relevant, so the quantitative findings become more accurate and reflective. Last, the interview questions can continue to be developed to include more narrowed aspects of students' experience with employability and development of employability capital.

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