Research on the job adaptability of public relations graduates from Nam Can Tho University in the context of integration and the digital age – employers' perspective

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ABSTRACT

In the era of rapid digital transformation and global integration, work adaptability has become a critical competency for young professionals, especially in dynamic fields such as Public Relations (PR). This study investigates the factors influencing the work adaptability of PR graduates from Nam Can Tho University. Utilizing a mixed-methods approach, including in-depth interviews and quantitative surveys with 100 employers and 140 graduates, the research identifies three key factors: core professional competencies ($\beta = 0.509$), adaptability mindset ($\beta = 0.286$), and career self-development capacity ($\beta = 0.345$). Employers affirm that while graduates possess solid theoretical knowledge and positive attitudes, gaps remain in practical skills and responsiveness to real-world challenges. The study concludes that training quality, learning motivation, and institutional support are crucial in improving graduates' adaptability. Based on the findings, five policy recommendations are proposed: curriculum modernization aligned with industry demands, development of soft skills, stronger industry-academic collaboration, digital tools for personalized learning, and enhanced feedback mechanisms. These solutions aim to equip students with the agility and competencies needed to thrive in the evolving job market.

1. INTRODUCTION

In the context of deep international integration and the strong development of digital technology, the labor market is witnessing rapid shifts in requirements for human resources, especially for new graduates. The Public Relations (PR) industry, characterized by its creativity, flexibility, and sensitivity to constantly evolving

social trends, increasingly demands that workers possess the ability to adapt quickly to such a work environment.

The reality shows that although PR graduates in Vietnam generally receive training with a solid foundation of professional knowledge, there are still significant gaps compared to actual business requirements, especially in terms of soft skills, digital literacy, and innovation capabilities. Recent studies have indicated that, to better meet the demands of the labor market in the digital age, employees not only need professional competence but also comprehensive adaptability, a dynamic concept that can be trained and developed through education and practical experience.

Against this backdrop, the study "Research on the job adaptability of public relations graduates from Nam Can Tho University in the context of integration and the digital age" was conducted to clarify the current situation, analyze influencing factors, and propose practical solutions to enhance job adaptability for PR students. On that basis, the study hopes to contribute to narrowing the gap between training and practical needs, enhancing students' competitiveness when entering the labor market in the current digital transformation phase.

2. RESEARCH METHODS

2.1 Theoretical basis

Work adaptability is understood as an individual's capacity to adjust behavior, mindset, and work methods to effectively cope with changes and new demands in the work environment. This is an essential skill in the era of digital transformation and global integration (Pulakos et al., 2000). According to Savickas' (2012) career adaptability theory, this competency is comprised of four factors: concern, control, curiosity, and confidence.

In addition, the study also inherits foundational theories such as Lifelong learning theory (Jarvis, 2010): emphasizes the role of continuous learning in maintaining adaptive capacity and suggests that learning is a continuous process that occurs throughout one's life and is associated with personal experiences. According to Jarvis, learning is not limited to school but also takes place in all social contexts, through interaction with the environment and others. He argues that each individual learns by reacting, thinking, and adjusting behavior to new situations. Lifelong learning helps people develop holistically, adapt to change, and integrate into society proactively and effectively.

Person-Job Fit Theory (Kristof-Brown, 1996) and Emotional Intelligence Theory (Goleman, 1995) explain the relationship between individual qualities and adaptability. Kristof-Brown's (1996) Person-Job Fit Theory emphasizes the compatibility between individual characteristics (skills, values, needs) and job requirements and organizational environment. A high level of fit helps individuals feel satisfied, committed, and better able to develop their capacities, thereby improving work performance and career adaptability. Similarly, Goleman's (1995) Emotional Intelligence Theory suggests that emotional intelligence – including the ability to identify, understand, and manage one's own and others' emotions – plays an important role in personal and professional success. Individuals with high emotional intelligence are often flexible, persistent, able to control negative emotions, and adapt effectively to change. Combining both theories, job adaptability

depends on both the fit between the individual and the job, as well as the emotional competence of the employee.

Organizational Support Theory (Eisenberger et al., 1986) and Transformational Leadership (Bass, 1985): clarify the role of organizational factors in promoting employee flexibility and adaptability. Organizational Support Theory (Eisenberger et al., 1986) suggests that when employees perceive care, appreciation, and support from the organization, they develop positive attitudes, increase commitment, and exert more effort in their work. Organizational support contributes to creating a favorable work environment, helping individuals feel secure in their development and adapt effectively to professional requirements. Transformational Leadership Theory (Bass, 1985) also emphasizes the role of leaders in inspiring, encouraging innovation, and personal development. Transformational leadership helps employees overcome their limitations, work towards common goals, and be ready to adapt to change. When combined, these two theories show that organizational support and positive leadership play an important role in promoting job adaptability and sustainable career development.

Thus, it can be seen that the Public Relations (PR) industry context is rapidly changing due to the impact of economic integration and digital technology, requiring employees to have the ability to update new communication trends, proficiently use technology, and maintain efficiency in a multicultural and high-pressure environment.

Inheriting the above theories, the proposed research model is formed as follows:
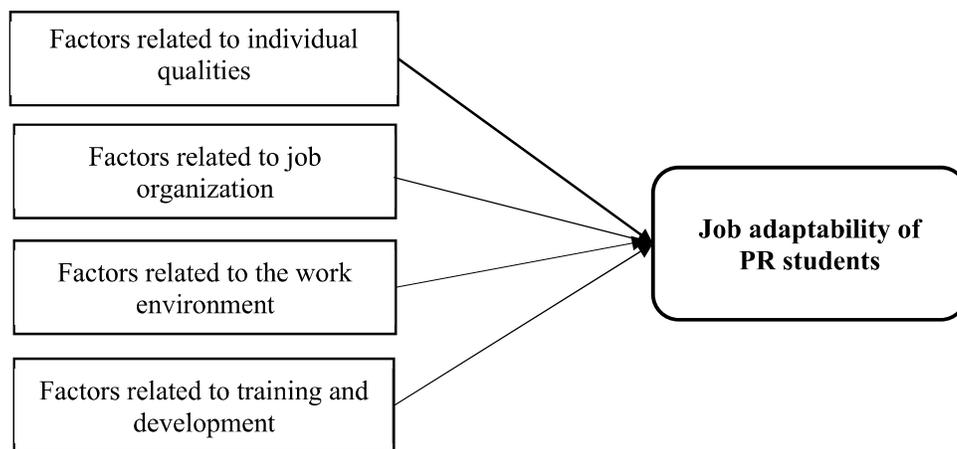
Figure 1. Proposed research model for employers

2.2 Research methods

The study employed a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative methods to ensure a comprehensive understanding. In the qualitative phase, the research team conducted interviews with 12 individuals, including PR graduates, employers, and lecturers, to explore factors influencing job adaptability. These results were then used to construct the quantitative survey scale.

In the quantitative phase, data was collected from 100 employers of PR graduates using a questionnaire with a Likert scale. Data analysis was performed using SPSS software through

statistical techniques such as Cronbach's Alpha, exploratory factor analysis (EFA), and multiple regression. The measured variables were designed around four main groups of factors: individual qualities, job organization, work environment, and training and development. This research methodology not only allowed for quantifying the impact of each factor on job adaptability but also helped in proposing appropriate training and human resource management policies relevant to the PR industry context in the digital age.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Reliability analysis of employer scales

Table 1. Results of scale reliability testing (Cronbach's Alpha)

Observed variable	Scale mean if item deleted	Scale variance if item deleted	Corrected item-total correlation	Squared multiple correlation	Cronbach's alpha if item deleted
A. Professional competence and working skills, with Cronbach's Alpha 0.854					
Professional competence 1	16.58	6.367	0.525	0.488	0.860
Professional competence 2	16.51	5.909	0.669	0.579	0.823
Professional competence 3	16.41	5.618	0.709	0.823	0.813
Professional competence 4	16.59	6.123	0.697	0.498	0.818
Professional competence 5	16.43	5.844	0.752	0.836	0.803
B. Attitude and adaptability to work, with Cronbach's Alpha 0.781					
Adaptability Attitude 1	17.22	4.194	0.384	0.233	0.800
Adaptability Attitude 2	17.16	3.792	0.630	0.499	0.716
Adaptability Attitude 3	17.30	3.646	0.680	0.578	0.698
Adaptability Attitude 4	17.42	3.842	0.598	0.571	0.727
Adaptability Attitude 5	17.50	4.051	0.512	0.443	0.755
C. Communication and networking skills, with Cronbach's Alpha 0.903					
Communication skills 1	15.56	8.996	0.789	0.672	0.874

Communication skills 2	15.33	9.799	0.720	0.558	0.889
Communication skills 3	15.38	9.127	0.772	0.618	0.878
Communication skills 4	15.59	8.406	0.812	0.692	0.870
Communication skills 5	15.34	9.661	0.702	0.561	0.893
D. Technology development and application skills, with Cronbach's Alpha 0.878					
Development capacity 1	15.97	5.989	0.691	0.770	0.857
Development capacity 2	16.01	6.010	0.721	0.783	0.851
Development capacity 3	16.00	5.980	0.745	0.576	0.846
Development capacity 4	16.04	5.473	0.720	0.650	0.851
Development capacity 5	16.22	5.446	0.700	0.603	0.857

Source: Data processing results by authors

The results of the scale reliability test using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient in Table 1 show that all variable groups achieved an acceptable level of reliability, with Cronbach's Alpha coefficients all greater than 0.7. Specifically, the professional competence variable group had a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.854, indicating good scale reliability. All variables in this group had an item-total correlation coefficient > 0.5; thus, they were all retained for subsequent analysis steps. For the attitude of adaptability variable group, the initial Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was 0.781, which is fairly good, but the attitude of adaptability 1 variable had the lowest item-total correlation coefficient (0.384), and if this variable were removed, the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient would increase to 0.800.

However, this variable measures the extent to which students are willing to learn to adapt to new technologies at work. This means the variable measures students' proactive and progressive attitude towards work and lifelong learning, so the author retained it to ensure the integrity of the research results. The communication skills variable group had a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.840, indicating very high reliability. All variables in the group had an item-total correlation coefficient greater than 0.7, demonstrating that the scale was well-constructed and appropriate. Similarly, the analysis and adaptability capacity variable group had a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.878, with all variables having an item-total correlation coefficient > 0.690. This confirms the high

reliability of the scale and its suitability for continued exploratory factor analysis (EFA).

3.2 EFA of employers

To evaluate the structural validity of the scale, the author conducted exploratory factor analysis using Principal Component Analysis extraction and Varimax rotation. The results are presented in Table 2 below:

Table 2. Results of Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA)

Observed variable	Rotated Factor Matrix			Factor content
	1	**2**	**3**	
Communication skills 4	0.825			Important competencies in the context of digital transformation and international integration
Development capacity 5	0.801			
Development capacity 4	0.783			
Communication skills 5	0.766			
Development capacity 3	0.741			
Adaptability attitude 4	0.622			
Professional competence 3		0.830		Basic and essential professional competencies in the industry
Professional competence 5		0.800		
Professional competence 4		0.695		
Communication skills 2		0.621		
Professional competence 1		0.574		
Adaptability attitude 2			0.754	Flexible, proactive, and adaptive attitude to all environments
Adaptability attitude 3			0.745	
Adaptability attitude 1			0.708	
Kaiser-Meyer-Olk (KMO)				0.857

				df	91
Bartlett's Test				Sig.	0.000
Eigenvalues	6.998	1.721	1.173	Eigenvalues of the factor	
Cumulative %	49.989	62.283	70.658	Total cumulative % of variance	

Source: Data processing results by authors

From the results in Table 1, it can be seen that the analysis results show a KMO coefficient of 0.857 (> 0.5), indicating that the data is suitable for factor analysis. Concurrently, Bartlett's Test has a Sig. value of 0.000 (< 0.05), proving that the observed variables have a statistically significant linear relationship with each other. Therefore, the use of factor analysis is entirely appropriate for the research data. The analysis results also indicate that 03 factors were extracted from the initial 14 observed variables, with a total extracted variance of 70.658%, demonstrating that these three factors explain over 70% of the data's variance, which is a very good level of explanation in sociological research. The rotated factor matrix shows that the observed variables have factor loadings all greater than 0.5, and there is no significant overlap between factors, proving that the extracted factors ensure both convergent and discriminant validity.
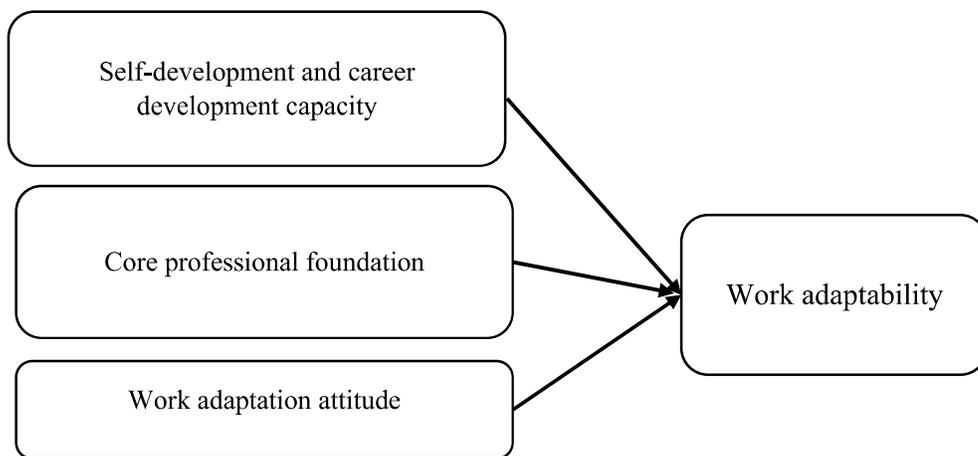
Factor 1: "Self-development and career development capacity". This factor includes variables communication skills 4, communication skills 5, communication skills 2 (professional knowledge), development capacity 3, development capacity 4, development capacity 5 (development capacity), adaptability attitude 4 (self-confident improvisation). This factor reflects specialized knowledge, personal development skills, and flexible adaptability.

Factor 2: "Core professional foundation". This factor includes variables professional competence 3, professional competence 4,

professional competence 5, communication skills 2, and professional competence 1. This factor focuses on basic and essential professional competencies in the Public Relations industry such as writing skills, event organization, and media information analysis and synthesis.

Factor 3: "Job adaptability attitude". This factor includes variables adaptability attitude 1, adaptability attitude 2, adaptability attitude 3. This reflects a ready, proactive, and flexible attitude to adapt to changing work environments, suitable for the current context of digital transformation and integration.

From the above results, the research model is adjusted as follows:

Figure 2. The calibrated employer survey job adaptation model

3.3 Multiple linear regression analysis

Multiple linear regression analysis was used to test the influence of factors (Self-development and career development capacity, core professional foundation, work adaptation attitude) on the dependent variable of work adaptability of Public Relations graduates.

Table 3. Regression model results showing multiple linearity

Model summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	0.943[a]	0.888	0.885	0.201	2.059

a. Predictors: (Constant), FACTOR3, FACTOR1, FACTOR2

b. Dependent variable: Work adaptability

ANOVA test

Model		Sum of squares	df	Mean sum of squares	F	Sig.
1	Regression	30.874	3	10.291	254.920	0.000[b]
	Residual	3.876	96	.040		
	Total	34.750	99			

a. Dependent variable: Work adaptability

b. Predictors: (Constant), FACTOR3, FACTOR1, FACTOR2

Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	T	Sig.	Multicollinearity statistics
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Variation
1	(Constant)	-0.071	0.166		-0.428	0.670	

Self-development and career Development capacity	0.280	0.037	0.345	7.497	0.000	0.548
Core professional foundation	0.452	0.043	0.509	10.490	0.000	0.494
Job adaptability attitude	0.279	0.037	0.286	7.540	0.000	0.805

Source: Data processing results by authors

a. Model fit. The coefficient R = 0.943 and R^2 = 0.888 indicate that the model can explain 88.8% of the variance in the dependent variable (Work adaptability) based on the three independent factors. This is a very high level of explanation. The Adjusted R^2 = 0.885, adjusted for sample size, remains high. The F-test in the ANOVA table has an F value of 254.920 with Sig. = 0.000 (< 0.05), proving that the regression model is statistically significant.

b. Evaluation of independent variables: As shown in Table 4 below:

Table 4. Comparison of the influence levels of independent variables

Factor	Standardized coefficients (Beta)	Sig.	Meaning
Core professional foundation	0.509	0.000	Strongest influence
Job adaptability attitude	0.286	0.000	Moderate influence
Self-development and career development capacity	0.345	0.000	Significant influence

Source: Data processing results by authors

Quantitative analysis identified three main factors influencing students' job adaptability. Firstly, core professional competencies (β = 0.509), including foundational knowledge, writing skills, event organization, and media information processing – this is the strongest influencing factor. Secondly, self-development and career capacity (β = 0.345), demonstrated by lifelong learning, self-improvement, and innovation. Thirdly, a flexible and adaptable attitude (β = 0.286), related to internal motivation, positive thinking, and the ability to embrace change.

From the above results, the linear regression model is established as follows:

Work adaptability = -0.071 + 0.280*Self-Development and career development capacity + 0.452*Core professional foundation + 0.286*Job adaptability attitude

3.4 Policy implications

The research results show that the job adaptability of Public Relations students is influenced by both individual factors and the

training environment and employing organization. From this, several policy implications can be drawn:

Firstly, for Nam Can Tho University: It is necessary to continue updating the curriculum towards practical application, integrating digital technology skills, multi-platform communication, and soft skills. Strengthen links with businesses in teaching activities, internships, and career experiences to create conditions for students to develop adaptability early. Establish a continuous academic advising and career counseling system, especially in the first and second years, to support students through the initial adaptation phase.

Secondly, for employers: Employers should participate in the training process through curriculum feedback, practical teaching, or co-organizing professional activities. It is necessary to build an open work environment with clear development pathways and feedback mechanisms to help young employees adapt more quickly.

Thirdly, for students and learners: Students need to proactively learn and cultivate soft skills and digital competencies to keep up with labor market demands. View job adaptability not just as a short-term skill but as a long-term development capacity, linked to a lifelong learning mindset.

4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study identified three main groups of factors influencing the job adaptability of Public Relations graduates from Nam Can Tho University, including: professional competence, adaptability attitude, and self-development and career capacity. The results show that professional competence has the strongest influence, followed by attitude and self-adaptability skills. This affirms the crucial role of training programs, as well as individual preparation, in enhancing students' integration capacity in the digital and globalized era. Based on these findings, the article proposes five groups of recommendations: (1) updating the curriculum linked to reality and digital transformation, (2) developing soft skills and proactive spirit for students, (3) strengthening business connections and practical career experiences, (4) applying technology in training and learning feedback, and (5) building a multi-dimensional evaluation and feedback mechanism. These recommendations aim to create a flexible, practical, and integrated training ecosystem, helping graduates quickly adapt to the constantly changing work environment.

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