



SOCIAL CAPITAL AND EMPLOYMENT TRANSITIONS IN CONTEMPORARY VIETNAM: TOWARD AN INTEGRATED ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

Nguyen Thi Minh Thuy, Nguyen Duc Huu

Faculty of Sociology and Sustainable Development, Trade Union University, Hanoi, Vietnam

ABSTRACT

In the context of digital transformation, economic restructuring, and the expansion of flexible forms of employment, employment transitions have become an increasingly common phenomenon in Vietnam's labor market. While previous studies have extensively highlighted the role of human capital in shaping employment outcomes, the role of social capital in employment transitions remains underexplored, particularly in transitional economies. This paper aims to synthesize major theoretical perspectives on social capital, review existing studies on the relationship between social capital and employment transitions, and propose an analytical framework suitable for contemporary Vietnam. Drawing on the theoretical contributions of Bourdieu, Coleman, Putnam, and Lin, as well as empirical findings from international studies, the paper argues that social capital influences employment transitions through four key mechanisms: information provision, opportunity linkage, resource mobilization, and psychosocial support. Based on these insights, the study proposes the Social Capital–Employment Transition Framework for Contemporary Vietnam (SCET-V Framework), which conceptualizes bonding, bridging, and linking social capital as influencing employment transition outcomes through intermediary mechanisms while being conditioned by contextual factors such as digital transformation, educational attainment, gender, work experience, and labor market characteristics. The paper contributes to the literature by extending employment transition research beyond human capital perspectives and provides a theoretical foundation for future empirical studies and employment policy development in Vietnam.

KEYWORDS: *Social Capital; Employment Transitions; Labor Market; Digital Transformation; Vietnam; Analytical Framework.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Vietnam's labor market has undergone profound transformations under the simultaneous impact of economic structural transformation, international integration, digital transformation, and the development of new employment models. The share of workers in the agricultural sector continues to decline, while workers in industries, services and the digital economy are increasing. In addition, the strong development of information technology, artificial intelligence and digital platforms has changed the way labor is organized, creating many new job opportunities but at the same time posing significant challenges for workers in adapting to new career requirements. In this context, job transformation has become a common and inevitable social phenomenon. Workers are not only faced with decisions to change their workplace, career, or job position, but also have to adapt to labor market fluctuations due to economic restructuring, production automation, supply chain shifts, and socio-economic shocks. In particular, the development of the basic economy, freelance labor in the digital environment, as well as flexible forms of employment have increased the dynamics of the labor market, making the job transition process more frequent and becoming an important part of the professional life cycle of employees. Traditional studies of employment transition often emphasize the role of human capital such as education, professional skills, work experience, and professional competencies in determining access to and retention of employment. However, in practice, the process of finding job opportunities, changing careers or adapting to a new working environment depends not only on personal capacity but also significantly influenced by the social relationships that individuals possess and are able to mobilize. Information about job opportunities, referrals from acquaintances, financial support from family, sharing career experiences from colleagues, or connections through online communities are all social resources that can have a powerful impact on employment transition outcomes. In the social sciences, resources formed and mobilized through social networks are often generalized under the concept of social capital. Since the foundational contributions of Pierre Bourdieu, James Coleman, Robert Putnam, and Nan Lin, social capital has become one of the important theoretical frameworks for explaining individuals' access to resources, opportunities, and benefits in various areas of social life. For the labor market, social capital is considered a resource to help individuals access employment information, expand career networks, mobilize necessary support and improve their ability to adapt to changes in the working environment. In Vietnam, the role of social capital can take on distinct characteristics due to the influence of cultural values that value family, kinship, compatriots and local communities. In addition, the popularity of social networking platforms and online communities is also creating new forms of social



capital, expanding the scope of connections and access to career opportunities for workers. These characteristics suggest that the study of the relationship between social capital and employment transformation is not only theoretically significant but also contributes to explaining the social dynamics that are shaping the Vietnamese labor market in the contemporary context.

The relationship between social capital and employment has attracted significant attention from researchers over the past several decades. International studies show that social capital plays an important role in accessing recruitment information, finding job opportunities, improving career advancement and improving results in the labor market. Through social networks, individuals can access information resources that are difficult for official recruitment channels to provide adequately, and receive material, spiritual, and professional support in the process of career development. An important research direction has focused on analyzing the role of different types of social capital on employment outcomes. In particular, bonding social capital is considered an important source of support from family, relatives and close friends; Bridging social capital facilitates access to new sources of information and opportunities through diverse social relationships; while linking social capital helps individuals connect with organizations, institutions, and entities that hold resources or power. Empirical studies in many countries have proven that the effective ownership and mobilization of these forms of social capital can create significant advantages in the process of job search and career development. In addition, a number of recent studies have expanded the scope of analysis from the issue of access to employment to phenomena of occupational mobility, occupational adaptation, and resilience to labor market fluctuations. These studies show that social capital not only supports individuals to find jobs but also contributes to improving their capacity to adapt to changes in the working environment, especially in the context of digital transformation, automation and socio-economic crises. However, the majority of current research still focuses on specific employment outcomes such as employability, income levels, or career advancement, while the transition to employment as a dynamic social phenomenon has not received adequate attention.

In Vietnam, employment studies are mainly approached from the perspective of human capital, vocational training, human resource quality or labor market policies. Several studies have addressed the role of social relationships in job search, especially for migrant workers, youth or rural workers. However, these studies often look at social capital as a factor that supports access to initial employment rather than a resource that impacts the entire employment transition. On the other hand, the available evidence is scattered, lacking an integrated approach to explaining the mechanisms through which social capital influences workers' decisions and employment transition outcomes. Notably, in the current context of Vietnam, there are many new forms of job transformation associated with digital transformation, the basic economy, labor migration, repatriated workers and the process of economic restructuring. These changes require a reconsideration of the role of social capital in supporting workers to access information, mobilize resources, adapt to occupations, and improve resilience to risks in the labor market. However, so far there has not been much research to synthesize and systematize theoretical approaches to social capital in relation to employment transformation, nor has there been an appropriate analytical framework to explain this phenomenon in the context of contemporary Vietnam. Stemming from the gaps mentioned above, this paper aims to synthesize and analyze theoretical approaches to social capital, review studies related to the relationship between social capital and job transformation, and propose an analytical framework to explain the role of social capital in the employment transition process in the context of social capital. the current scene of Vietnam.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Key Concepts

In the context of an increasingly flexible and volatile labor market, employment transition has become a widely used concept in labor, career and human resource development studies. However, in academic literature, this concept is often used in conjunction with some related terms such as job change, career transition or occupational mobility, leading to incomplete interpretations. According to the traditional approach, job change primarily refers to an individual's transition from one job position or one employer to another. At the heart of this concept is a change in workplace or job placement that does not necessarily entail a change in career or long-term career orientation. Meanwhile, career transition is understood as the process of change related to an individual's career orientation throughout the working life cycle. This process may include transitioning to a new career field, changing professional roles, or reshaping professional identity in the face of fluctuations in the socio-economic environment. Compared to a job change, career change is usually long-term and more related to an individual's career development. The concept of occupational mobility is commonly used in labor sociology to describe the mobility of individuals between occupational groups or different occupational positions in the social structure. This approach emphasizes changes in the occupational status, career opportunities, and social mobility of workers. Compared to the above concepts, employment transition has a wider scope and more fully reflects the dynamics of the modern labor market. This concept refers to the process of the individual's movement between different employment states in the labor lifecycle, including the transition from unemployment to employment, from one job to another, from one economic sector to another, from wage labor to self-employment or entrepreneurship, as well as forms of career change that arise in the process of adapting to changes in the labor market. According to

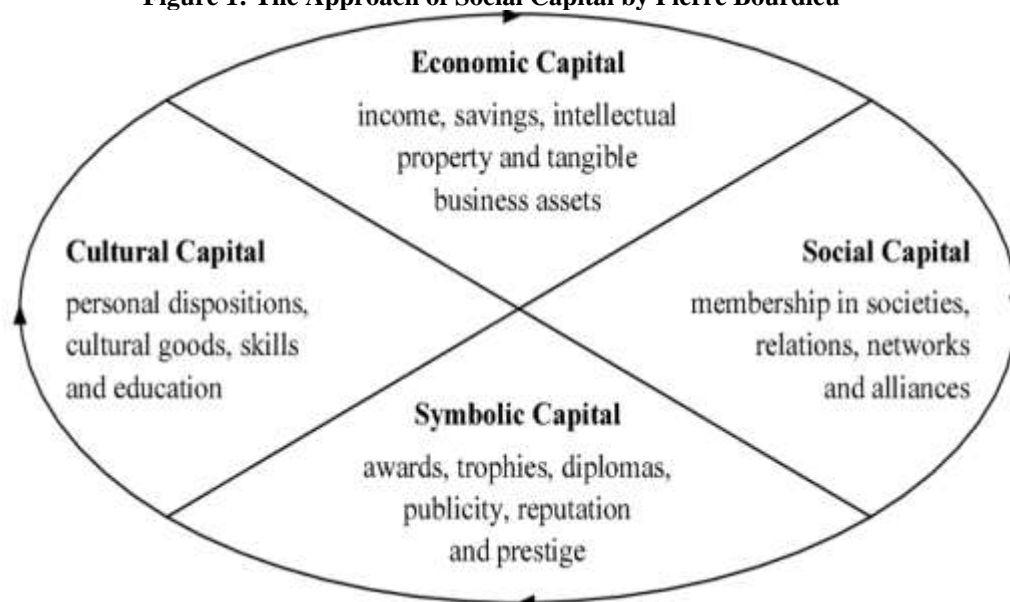
this understanding, job transition is not only the result of individual decisions but is also influenced by the economic, social, institutional and social networks in which the individual participates. In recent years, along with the development of digital transformation, the platform economy, and flexible employment models, the concept of job transformation has increasingly been used to reflect the adaptability of workers to the fluctuations of the labor market. This transition involves not only finding a new job, but also about accessing the resources needed to learn, upskilling, repositioning careers, and building livelihood strategies that are relevant to the new context. On the basis of inheriting the above-mentioned approaches, this article understands that job transformation is the process of moving individuals between different employment or occupational states in order to adapt to changes in the socio-economic environment and improve career opportunities. This process takes place through the interaction between individual resources, institutional conditions, and social resources that the individual has the ability to access and mobilize. In particular, social capital is considered an important resource that has the ability to impact both the process and the outcome of job transition.

2.2. Theoretical approaches to social capital

Social Capital as a Resource Linked to Relational Networks: Pierre Bourdieu's Approach

Social capital is one of the concepts that has a wide influence in contemporary social science. Although it is commonly used in research on development, education, health, governance, and the labor market, the understanding of social capital is not completely consistent. The differences mainly stem from different theoretical foundations on the nature of social relationships and how those relationships generate resources for the individual or community. Of the current approaches, the contributions of Pierre Bourdieu, James Coleman, Robert Putnam, and Nan Lin are considered to be the most far-reaching. Pierre Bourdieu was one of the first scholars to formulate a complete theoretical framework for social capital. According to him, social capital is the sum of actual or potential resources associated with owning a relatively sustainable network of social relationships. These resources are formed through individual participation in social groups, communities, or networks of relationships that are likely to benefit members. A highlight of Bourdieu's approach is the emphasis on the relationship between social capital and social inequality. He argues that the ability to access and mobilize resources from the network of relationships is not evenly distributed among individuals. People of high economic, cultural, or social status often possess a wider network of connections and are able to convert social capital into more effective economic or professional benefits. From this perspective, social capital is not only a resource to support individual action, but also a mechanism that contributes to the reproduction of existing social inequalities. For employment transition research, Bourdieu's approach helps explain why workers with rich networks often have more opportunities to access employment information, receive support in the career transition process, and achieve favorable employment outcomes than those with limited social resources.

Figure 1: The Approach of Social Capital by Pierre Bourdieu



Social Capital as an Attribute of Social Structure: James Coleman's Approach

James Coleman approaches social capital from the perspective of the function of social relations to the actions of the individual. According to Coleman, social capital does not lie in the individuals themselves but exists in the structure of social relationships between them. Factors such as trust, mutual obligations, social expectations, and community norms enable members to act together and achieve

common goals. Unlike Bourdieu, Coleman does not emphasize the aspect of power or inequality, but focuses on the supportive function of social networks. In this approach, social capital helps to reduce transaction costs, enhance cooperation, and facilitate the exchange of information between individuals. As for the job transition, Coleman's theory suggests that relationships based on trust and mutual support can help workers mitigate risks during a job or career change. Individuals who engage in highly engaged social networks are often able to access informational, financial, or emotional support in the face of labor market fluctuations.

Figure 2: Access to Social Capital by James Coleman



Social Capital as a Community Resource: The Approach of Robert Putnam and Nan Lin

Robert Putnam extended the concept of social capital from the individual level to the community and social level. According to Putnam, social capital consists of social networks, mutual norms, and social trusts that facilitate coordination and cooperation for the common good. An important contribution of Putnam was to distinguish between bonding social capital and bridging social capital. Cohesive social capital is formed in closely connected groups such as family, relatives, or close friends, while bridging social capital helps connect individuals to different social groups and expand access to new resources. For employment research, Putnam's approach shows that communities with high levels of trust and social cohesion often create more conducive environments for sharing information, supporting careers, and adapting to changes in the labor market. Nan Lin is credited with developing one of the most influential theoretical frameworks for employment and labor market research. According to Lin, social capital is resources that are part of a network of social relations that individuals can access and mobilize to achieve certain goals. Unlike previous approaches, Lin focuses directly on the mechanism through which social networks generate benefits for the individual. According to him, social capital impacts career outcomes through four basic functions: providing information, creating social influence, validating social prestige, and reinforcing personal identity. These functions help individuals access job opportunities, enhance competitiveness, and improve their professional standing. In the context of employment transition research, Lin's approach is particularly useful because it allows for the specific interpretation of the mechanisms through which social capital influences career transitions, adapts to new work environments, and improves the quality of employment.

Figure 3: Access to social capital by Robert Putnam and Nan Lin



Synthesis of theoretical approaches

Despite certain differences, the above approaches are consistent in the view that social relationships can create important resources for individual and community action. However, each scholar emphasizes a different aspect of social capital. Bourdieu focuses on resources and inequality; Coleman emphasizes the function of social structure; Putnam emphasizes community ethos; while Lin analyzes the mechanism of operation of social capital for career outcomes. For the study of employment transformation in Vietnam, Nan Lin's approach is considered the most suitable for building an analytical framework due to its ability to directly explain the relationship between social networks and career outcomes. However, in order to fully reflect the characteristics of Vietnamese society, it is necessary to combine Lin's perspective with Putnam's approach to cohesive social capital and bridging social capital, and to consider the differences in access to social resources mentioned by Bourdieu. This combination provides the theoretical foundation for the development of an analytical framework for social capital and employment transformation in the subsequent sections of the article.

Figure 4: Synthesis of social capital approaches

Scholar	The concept of social capital	Major Analysts	Main Functions	Value for Employment Transformation Research
<i>Pierre Bourdieu</i>	<i>Resources associated with social networks that individuals can mobilize</i>	<i>Individuals and social groups</i>	<i>Creating advantages in accessing resources, maintaining social status</i>	<i>Explain the differences in job transition opportunities between labor groups</i>
<i>James Coleman</i>	<i>Properties of social relationship structures that support individual action</i>	<i>Social Relationship Structure</i>	<i>Creating trust, obligation, and cooperation</i>	<i>Explain the role of trust and social support in the job transition</i>
<i>Robert Putnam</i>	<i>Social networks, norms, and beliefs foster community collaboration</i>	<i>Community and society</i>	<i>Strengthening cohesion and social collaboration</i>	<i>Explain the impact of crowdfunding on employment opportunities</i>
<i>Nan Lin</i>	<i>Resources are in social networks that individuals can reach and mobilize</i>	<i>Individuals in social networks</i>	<i>Providing information, influence, credibility and support</i>	<i>Direct explanation of the mechanism of the impact of social capital on job transformation</i>

One of the earliest and most popular topics studied is the role of social capital in accessing employment opportunities. Many studies show that a significant percentage of jobs are sought through social connections rather than formal recruitment channels. Personal networks help workers access job information earlier, reduce the cost of finding a job, and increase their ability to connect with employers. Studies of social networks and the labor market show that relationships beyond family and close friends often result in more diverse and valuable job information. Individuals with a broad and diverse social network tend to have access to more career opportunities, thereby improving their ability to find a job that matches their abilities and expectations. In addition to providing information, social capital also contributes to building trust between job seekers and employers. Referrals from acquaintances or members of the professional network are often seen as a reliable signal of the employee's competence and reputation. This is especially significant in contexts where there is a lack of information in the labor market or high recruitment costs.

Besides supporting access to employment, many recent studies show that social capital plays an important role in the career transition. When faced with changes in technology, economic structure, or working conditions, workers often have to look for new career opportunities and adapt to different skill requirements. In the process, social networks become an important resource that helps individuals access information about new professions, learn from the experiences of those who came before them, and receive the support they need to mitigate risks. Some studies suggest that social capital can increase the likelihood of moving from low-productivity jobs to higher-quality jobs. Workers with a wide network of professional relationships often have more opportunities to access better job positions and easily adapt to new career requirements. Conversely, a lack of social capital can increase the risk of prolonged unemployment or leave workers trapped in low-quality jobs. Occupational adaptability is becoming an increasingly important topic in the context of a rapidly changing labor market. Studies show that social capital not only provides material resources and information,



but also creates psycho-social support to help individuals overcome periods of occupational instability. Through networks of family, friends, colleagues, and professional communities, workers can receive encouragement, sharing experiences, and emotional support during a job change or career reorientation. These resources contribute to strengthening confidence, increasing resilience, and reducing the negative effects of employment shocks. The development of digital technology has created new forms of social capital that go beyond traditional networks of relationships. Online social networking platforms, digital professional communities, and technology-based employment ecosystems are significantly expanding the connectivity of workers. In the digital environment, social relationships are no longer limited by geographical distance or traditional community characteristics. Employees can access employment information, join professional communities, exchange experiences, and build a professional image through online platforms. This increases the role of digital social capital as an important resource in the employment transition, especially for young and highly skilled workers. However, studies also show that the ability to access and effectively exploit digital social capital is uneven among population groups. The digital divide, education level, and technology literacy can make a significant difference in the ability to leverage online social resources for job transition.

Research gap and direction for building an analytical framework

An overview of theoretical and empirical studies shows that social capital has been confirmed to be an important resource influencing labor market outcomes. International studies generally agree that social networks can assist workers in accessing employment information, expanding career opportunities, mobilizing necessary resources, and improving their ability to adapt to changes in the working environment. In addition, the development of online connections has also led to the emergence of new forms of social capital, contributing to expanding the scope and methods of accessing job opportunities in the digital economy. Despite this, existing studies reveal some notable limitations. First, the majority of studies focus on specific employment outcomes such as job availability, income levels, career status, or opportunities for advancement. Meanwhile, job transformation as a dynamic process, which includes many stages from perceiving changing needs, finding opportunities, making transition decisions to adapting to the new work environment, has not been comprehensively analyzed. This leads to the mechanisms of impact of social capital during the job transition process not fully explained. Second, although studies have identified many different forms of social capital such as bonding social capital, bridging social capital, and linking social capital, current works often look at each form of social capital individually. The lack of an integrated approach leaves the relationship between forms of social capital and their role in different stages of the employment transition unclear. Third, existing studies are mainly conducted in the context of developed countries, where labor markets operate relatively transparently and employment support institutions are relatively mature. Meanwhile, in developing or transitioning countries such as Vietnam, family relationships, relatives, compatriots and local communities still play an important role in accessing information and employment opportunities. Differences in social and institutional contexts can alter the way social capital is formed, mobilized, and transformed into professional outcomes. Fourth, the development of digital transformation, the platform economy and flexible forms of employment are creating significant changes in the structure and function of social networks. However, studies on social capital and employment still focus mainly on traditional forms of relations, while the role of digital social capital in the employment transition process has not been fully studied, especially in developing countries.

For Viet Nam, although there have been a number of studies addressing the role of social relationships in job search, livelihood support, or occupational adaptation of different labor groups, these studies are often scattered, focusing on individual groups or individual aspects of the labour market. Until now, there has been a lack of an analytical framework capable of integrating forms of social capital, impact mechanisms and employment transformation outcomes in a unified theoretical model that is relevant to the contemporary Vietnamese context. Stemming from the gaps mentioned above, the article argues that the study of the relationship between social capital and employment transformation needs to be approached in a process-oriented manner rather than focusing only on labor market outputs. Accordingly, different forms of social capital can impact job transition through intermediary mechanisms such as providing information, connecting opportunities, mobilizing resources and psycho-social support. The effectiveness of these mechanisms is simultaneously influenced by contextual conditions such as digital transformation, education level, gender, professional experience, and labor market characteristics. On the basis of a synthesis of theoretical approaches and existing research evidence, the next part of the article proposes an analytical framework to explain the role of social capital in the employment transition in the context of contemporary Vietnam.

3. APPROACHING SOCIAL CAPITAL THEORY AND PROPOSING AN ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE CURRENT EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION IN VIETNAM

3.1. Characteristics of social capital in the context of contemporary Vietnam

The application of social capital theory to employment transformation research should be placed in the specific social context in which relationship networks are formed, maintained and mobilized. Although the forms of social capital discussed in international studies are of high general value, the way social capital operates in Vietnam is strongly influenced by historical, cultural, institutional and socio-



economic characteristics. In this context, social capital not only exists in the form of formal professional networks but is also closely tied to family relationships, relatives, local communities and is increasingly expanding into the digital space.

Social capital, family and kinship

The family has long been considered a basic social institution and has a far-reaching influence on the socio-economic life of Vietnamese people. Family, kinship, and kinship relationships not only serve as material support, but also as a source of information, career guidance, and psychological support during important life transitions. In many cases, decisions related to study, career choices, job searches, or job changes are not purely personal but are significantly influenced by family and kinship networks. For the employment transition process, family social capital can facilitate workers to access recruitment information, receive referrals from relatives, or mobilize the necessary financial resources to participate in retraining, entrepreneurship, or livelihood transformation. At the same time, the family also serves as an "informal social safety net", helping workers minimize risks during the period of unemployment or career change. However, an over-reliance on kinship networks can also limit access to new career opportunities, especially when these relationships predominantly exist in social groups that are highly homogeneous and have little connection to external resources.

Community and compatriot social capital

Besides family and relatives, community relationships continue to play an important role in Vietnamese social life. Networks of compatriots, villages, neighborhood groups, mass organizations, and community organizations create spaces of social interaction where individuals can exchange information, support each other, and build trust. In the context of strong labor migration, compatriot networks often become an important connection channel to help workers access housing, find jobs and adapt to new living environments. For local repatriated or livelihood transition workers, community networks continue to play a supporting role in accessing resources, sharing experiences, and developing new livelihood strategies. A prominent feature of community social capital in Vietnam is a relatively high level of social cohesion, formed on the basis of cultural values of village love, mutual support and community responsibility. These characteristics create critical resources for the employment transition, especially for vulnerable groups of workers.

Socio-Professional Capital

Along with the process of industrialization, urbanization and expansion of the service sector, professional networks are increasingly becoming a meaningful form of social capital for Vietnamese workers. Relationships with peers, partners, clients, alumni, professional associations, and professional communities facilitate the exchange of information, sharing of experiences, and access to new career opportunities. Compared to family or community social capital, socio-professional capital is often more diverse and helps individuals expand their access to resources outside of their familiar social environment. This form of social capital is especially important in the context of an increasingly competitive labor market and requires the ability to continuously adapt to changes in technology and career skills. For workers who make a job transition in the direction of improving the quality of work or moving to new career fields, career networks often act as a bridge to help access professional information, job opportunities, and resources to support career development.

Digital social capital in the context of digital transformation

The rapid development of information and communication technology has dramatically changed the way social networks are formed and operated. Where in the past social relationships were primarily built on direct interaction in specific geographical spaces, digital platforms now allow individuals to maintain and expand their networks of relationships beyond traditional limits. In the context of Vietnam, social media platforms, online professional communities and digital job ecosystems are becoming important environments for workers to search for job information, build a career image and connect with new opportunities. The development of digital social capital is particularly meaningful for young workers, highly qualified workers and labor groups participating in the digital economy. However, the ability to access and effectively exploit digital social capital is not evenly distributed among population groups. Differences in educational attainment, digital skills, economic conditions, and geographic location can create significant gaps in the ability to mobilize social resources online. This shows that digital social capital both expands opportunities for job transition and can increase new inequalities in the labor market. From the above analysis, it can be seen that social capital in the context of contemporary Vietnam exists in many different forms and is formed through networks of family, community, occupation and digital space. Each form of social capital has its own characteristics and functions, but it has the potential to impact the employment transition by providing information, connecting opportunities, and supporting workers to access the resources they need. These mechanisms of action will be analyzed in detail in the next part of the article.

3.2 Framework for social capital analysis and employment transformation in the context of contemporary Vietnam

On the basis of synthesizing theoretical approaches to social capital, empirical studies on employment transition and the specific characteristics of the Vietnamese context, the paper proposes the Social Capital-Employment Transition Framework for Contemporary

Vietnam (SCET-V Framework). This analytical framework is built on three basic theses. Social capital is a multidimensional resource formed from the various social networks in which the individual participates. In the Vietnamese context, these social resources exist in many forms, including family and kinship social capital, community social capital, professional social capital, and digital social capital. These forms of social capital can be generalized into three broad groups: bonding social capital, bridging social capital and linking social capital. Secondly, social capital does not directly affect the results of job transformation, but through intermediary mechanisms. The article identifies four main intermediary mechanisms, including: (i) providing information on employment and occupation; (ii) connections to employment opportunities and career development; (iii) mobilization of material, financial and skill resources; and (iv) psycho-social support in the process of career adaptation. These mechanisms reflect the avenues through which social networks can create advantages for the individual in the employment transition. Third, the effectiveness of social capital on job transformation is influenced by different contextual conditions. In this study, contextual factors are considered including digital transformation, education level, gender, professional experience, geographical location, and characteristics of the local labor market. These factors can increase or limit workers' access to and mobilization of social resources. From the above arguments, the paper argues that the employment transition is the result of the interaction between forms of social capital, intermediary mechanisms, and contextual conditions. Workers who possess diverse social networks and are able to effectively mobilize social resources often have more opportunities to access new jobs, successfully adapt to careers, and improve job quality than those with limited social resources. This analytical framework not only helps to explain the mechanisms of the impact of social capital on job transformation, but also provides a basis for the development of future empirical studies for different target groups such as migrant workers, repatriated workers, etc youth, foundation workers or middle-aged workers in the process of occupational restructuring.

Figure 5: Proposed analytical framework for social capital



Compared to previous studies that have often focused on the direct relationship between social capital and employment outcomes, the SCET-V analysis framework proposed in the article has three new points. First, the model approaches job transformation as a dynamic process rather than just looking at labour market outputs. Second, the model simultaneously integrates three forms of social capital, four intermediate mechanisms, and contextual factors in the same unified analytical framework. Third, the model emphasizes the role of digital social capital in addition to traditional forms of social capital, thereby reflecting the transformations of Vietnam's labor market in the context of digital transformation and the basic economy.



4. DISCUSSION

Social capital as an adaptive resource in Vietnam's transforming labor market

The results of the theoretical synthesis and analytical framework proposed in the article show that social capital is not only a resource to support access to employment but also an important mechanism to help workers adapt to fluctuations in the labor market. In the context that Vietnam is undergoing economic structural transformation, digital transformation and increasing job flexibility, occupational adaptability is increasingly becoming a decisive factor for the career stability and development of workers. Traditional approaches often emphasize the role of human capital such as education, professional skills, or work experience in interpreting employment outcomes. However, the SCET-V framework suggests that these individual resources are unlikely to be effective without social networks that support access to necessary information, opportunities, and resources. In other words, the ability to switch jobs depends not only on what the individual knows, but also on who the individual knows and what resources can be mobilized from his social relationships. This is especially evident in the context of Vietnam, where family, kinship, compatriot and community ties still play a significant role in socio-economic life. Social networks not only help mitigate labor market uncertainties, but also serve as an informal support mechanism to help workers navigate periods of career transition or job loss. This shows that social capital needs to be recognized as an important component of occupational adaptability in addition to human capital and other economic resources.

Opportunities and limitations of social capital in employment transition

Although the majority of studies affirm the positive role of social capital in labor market outcomes, approaching social capital as a purely positive resource can lead to one-sided interpretations. In fact, the effectiveness of social capital depends on the structure of the social network, the ability to mobilize resources, and the social context in which the individual is participating. On the positive side, social capital helps reduce the cost of finding a job, expand access to information, support learning experience, and strengthen the ability to adapt to fluctuations in the labor market. For vulnerable groups of workers such as migrant workers, repatriated workers or workers who have lost their jobs due to production restructuring, social networks often serve as important resources to help them maintain their livelihoods and find new career opportunities. However, social capital can also create unintended consequences. Closed social networks can limit access to new sources of information and opportunities from the outside. Excessive reliance on kinship or acquaintances can lead to bias in recruitment, reducing the competitiveness and transparency of the labor market. In addition, due to access to social capital that is not evenly distributed among population groups, social capital can also become a reproduction mechanism of social inequality as Bourdieu has pointed out. In the context of digital transformation, these inequalities can also be extended into the digital space. People with high levels of education, good digital skills, and a wide network of connections are often more able to effectively exploit digital social capital than disadvantaged groups of workers. This suggests that promoting the role of social capital in employment transformation needs to be placed in relation to social justice issues and access to resources.

Implications for research and policy

The SCET-V analytical framework contributes to the expansion of employment studies from a human capital-based approach to a combined approach of human capital and social capital. Considering job transition as a dynamic process allows for a better identification of social mechanisms that affect workers' ability to adapt to their occupations in the context of socio-economic change. For empirical research, the proposed analytical framework can be used to test the role of different forms of social capital for specific groups of workers such as youth, migrant workers, repatriated workers, foundation workers, or middle-aged workers in the process of occupational restructuring. This is a research direction that has the potential to make a significant contribution to labor and development studies in Vietnam. In terms of policy, the findings suggest that employment transition support should not focus solely on skills training or financial support, but rather on strengthening workers' social networks. Job placement programs, career counseling, business matching, start-up support, and professional community development can be seen as measures that contribute to increasing social capital for workers. In the context of digital transformation, the development of online job matching platforms, digital career communities, and digital skills enhancement programs can also help expand access to digital social capital, thereby improving the occupational adaptability and employment transformation capacity of workers.

5. CONCLUSION

In the context that Vietnam's labor market is undergoing profound transformations under the impact of digital transformation, economic restructuring, and the development of flexible forms of employment, job transformation has become an increasingly common feature in the professional life cycle of workers. These changes require new theoretical approaches to explain not only employment outcomes but also the process of adaptation and occupational mobility of workers in a rapidly changing socio-economic environment. On the basis of synthesizing theoretical approaches to social capital and employment-related research, the paper shows that social capital is an important resource influencing the employment transition of workers. In contrast to traditional approaches that primarily emphasize the role of human capital, the paper argues that the ability to transition jobs depends not only on education, professional skills, or labor experience,



but is also significantly influenced by the social networks that individuals participate in and are able to mobilize. These networks provide information, connect opportunities, support resources, and strengthen workers' resilience to labor market fluctuations. Through the synthesis of the theoretical schools of Bourdieu, Coleman, Putnam, and Lin, the paper clarifies important theoretical foundations in the study of social capital. At the same time, a review of international empirical studies shows that although the role of social capital in employment has been widely established, current studies still focus primarily on specific employment outcomes, while the transition to employment as a dynamic and multidimensional phenomenon has not been fully analyzed. especially in the context of transforming economies. An important contribution of the paper is the proposal of the Framework for the Analysis of Social Capital and Employment Transformation in the Context of Contemporary Vietnam (SCET-V Framework). This analytical framework approaches job transformation as a social process shaped by the interaction between forms of social capital, intermediary mechanisms, and contextual conditions. Accordingly, cohesive social capital, bridging social capital and linked social capital impact job transformation through four main mechanisms including providing information, connecting opportunities, mobilizing resources and psycho-social support. The effectiveness of these mechanisms is also influenced by contextual factors such as digital transformation, education level, gender, professional experience, and labor market characteristics. The article also emphasizes that the role of social capital in the transition of employment in Vietnam should be considered in relation to the socio-cultural characteristics of the country. Networks of family, kinship, compatriots, local communities, and increasingly online communities continue to play an important role in the distribution of career information, opportunities, and resources. However, social capital does not always produce positive effects. The uneven distribution of social resources, the closure of some networks of relationships, and inequalities in access to digital social capital can create new barriers to the employment transition of a segment of the workforce. Theoretically, the paper contributes to the expansion of labor market studies in the direction of integration between human and social capital, and provides an analytical framework that can be used to study job transition processes in the Vietnamese context. In practical terms, the findings suggest that employment support policies should pay attention not only to skills training and vocational capacity development, but also to strengthening social networks and workers' access to social resources. Due to the limitations of a theoretical study, the article has not performed empirical testing of the relationships proposed in the model. Therefore, future studies can apply the SCET-V analytical framework to survey specific groups of workers such as youth, migrant workers, repatriated workers, basic workers, or middle-aged workers in the process of career transition. The experimental validation of the model in different contexts will contribute to clarifying the role of social capital in employment transformation in the context of Vietnam and developing countries.

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