



Social Factors in Shaping Career Awareness and Readiness of Saudi Youth for the Labor Market: An Applied Study on Students of Al-Leith University College

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Abstract

This study explores the transition from university education to the labor market from a sociological perspective that emphasizes the social and cultural dimensions shaping young people's career awareness, moving beyond traditional economic explanations. It aims to analyze the gap in socio-professional capital among students at Al-Leith University College by examining their reliance on social sources of information (family, friends, the internet, and the college) in constructing their career perceptions and readiness for labor market integration. The study adopted a descriptive-analytical methodology, utilizing data collected through a validated electronic questionnaire administered to a stratified sample representing various academic disciplines and levels. The findings revealed variations in the roles of social sources in shaping career awareness: the family emerged as the primary source for transmitting professional values and defining the symbolic status of occupations, while the internet provided a space for digital empowerment and expanding professional alternatives. In contrast, the college demonstrated a limited institutional role in career guidance and counseling. The results indicate that the challenge lies not in the scarcity of career information but in the weak coordination among social influence systems shaping youth choices, leading to a gap between traditional references and the requirements of the modern labor market.

Keywords: Sociology of Work, Career Awareness, Socio-Professional Capital, Social Transformation, Career Guidance.

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1. Introduction

The transition from university education to the labor market is no longer merely a temporal passage; rather, it has become a complex social phenomenon wherein economic, cultural, and technological transformations intersect with the reshaping of young people's professional self-concept in a changing context (Al-Anzi & Al-Sakhavi, 2024). The study of professional awareness among students of the University College in Al-Leith acquires particular importance as a mirror of Saudi societal transformations and a sociological gateway to understanding the relationship between academic knowledge, the symbolic structure of society, and the aspirations of the new economy.

The significance of this study increases amid the structural transformations led by the Kingdom through Vision 2030, which not only focuses on diversity, efficiency, and economic innovation but also aims to reformulate concepts of work and success. This transformation faces a challenge represented by the "socio-professional gap," which is not limited to weak skills or lack of vocational preparation but extends to the cultural and normative structure that shapes young people's perceptions toward work and defines the concept of professional success within a value system where traditional and modern values interact (Al-Qaraawi, 2022).

The study proceeds from the premise that the labor market is not merely an economic structure but a symbolic social field in which material, cultural, and social capitals interact in a struggle to reproduce status and identity (Bourdieu, 1986). From this perspective, human capital is reconsidered as a technical dimension that remains deficient unless integrated within the network of social relations and symbolic meanings, thereby forming socio-professional capital that enables the individual to transform their knowledge into an active position within the professional field.

This analysis relates to diagnosing the duality of standards facing university youth between the discourse of the college, which presents academic specialization as a path for social advancement, and the discourse of the market, which defines efficiency according to productivity, flexibility, and adaptability. This tension produces a state of identity confusion and pushes students to seek a balance between individual aspirations and the requirements of social belonging (Al-Shehri, 2019).

The Saudi labor market in its current structure reflects broader social transformations: an economy moving toward diversification, a society redefining its roles, and an educational system seeking modernization (McCafferty, 2022). However, the absence of integration between these fields leads to structural distortions, most notably weak investment in national competencies, the separation between theoretical knowledge and practical practice, and divergent professional perceptions between genders.

The study aims to explore how professional awareness is shaped through the interaction of family, college, and the digital space, as three institutions constituting the triangle of contemporary professional socialization. It also seeks to construct a critical conception of the possibility of redirecting socio-professional capital to support national development without losing the value balance and cultural belonging of youth.

Thus, the study transcends the limits of descriptive diagnosis to deconstruct the symbolic structure of work in Saudi society, and to monitor the interaction of symbols, values, and representations in shaping young people's perception of self, work, and future, thereby adding a scientific contribution to applied sociology and the sociology of work and development.

1.1. Statement of the Problem

The study problem lies in the disparity between the high level of academic qualification among Saudi youth and the difficulties of their actual integration into the labor market, despite the expansion of the national economy and the abundance of professional opportunities. The problematic centers on the nature of the social and cognitive structure through which professional awareness and mechanisms of career choice are built among university students,

reflecting a gap in the formation of socio-professional capital. This gap manifests in three main dimensions:

1. Students' reliance on limited traditional circles, such as family and friends, as sources of professional information, which restricts their awareness of the variables and requirements of the modern labor market.
2. The lack of clarity regarding the impact of each information source (college, family, friends, internet) on professional decision-making, and the difficulty of determining the most influential and reliable source.
3. The widening gap between theoretical knowledge provided by academic institutions and procedural knowledge related to practical skills and actual employment requirements.

Based on this, the main research question revolves around: How do patterns of social sources of information (family, friends, college, internet) affect the formation of socio-professional capital among students of the University College in Al-Leith, and what is the impact of these patterns on their future preparations and challenges in the labor market?

3.1. Objectives of the Study

- Diagnose the "socio-professional capital" gap among students of the University College in Al-Leith by analyzing their patterns of reliance on various social sources (family, friends, internet, college) in forming their professional awareness and readiness for the labor market.
- Map the social landscape of professional information by determining the relative weight and actual importance of each source, measuring the degree of reliance upon it, and the quality of information it provides.
- Reveal the social structures underlying professional decisions by analyzing the role of each information channel in shaping students' perceptions about the value of jobs and accessibility to them, reflecting the symbolic and social dimensions influencing their choices.
- Assess the perceived effectiveness of professional information sources by measuring the level of confidence in their reliability and their ability to prepare students practically and psychologically for the labor market, not merely providing them with theoretical information.
- Explore the "social learning" model in professional formation by testing the relationship between the diversity of social information sources and the broadening of students' professional horizons, and measuring the impact of this diversity on enhancing their psychological and professional readiness for effective engagement in the labor market.

3.2. Research Questions

This study proceeds from a set of main questions:

1. What is the nature and degree of dependence of University College in Al-Leith students on social sources (family, friends, college, internet) in obtaining information related to the labor market?
2. How do students' perceptions of "ideal" and "possible" jobs differ according to the main social source in building their professional information?
3. To what extent do students evaluate the effectiveness and reliability of each source in preparing them to face labor market challenges with awareness and competence?

4. To what extent does the diversity of social sources of information contribute to expanding students' perceived career options and enhancing their confidence in their ability to adapt to the labor market?

3.3. Research Hypotheses

Based on these questions, the study hypotheses are formulated as follows:

1. There is a positive statistically significant correlation between students' reliance on the internet as a source of professional information and the high level of their readiness for the labor market.
2. There is no statistically significant correlation between students' reliance on the college as a source of professional information and the high level of their readiness for the labor market.
3. There are statistically significant differences in the level of readiness for the labor market attributable to the student's academic specialization.
4. Students' reliance on the internet, reliance on family, academic specialization, and gender contribute to varying degrees in predicting their degree of readiness for the labor market.

3.4. Significance of the Study

- Provide a sociological interpretive framework for studying the labor market from a socio-cultural perspective, using the concept of socio-professional capital as an integrated alternative to traditional economic approaches.
- Reveal the hidden social processes that shape professional awareness and career choices among university youth, especially in non-urban environments such as Al-Leith Governorate.
- Develop a quantitative measurement tool for studying complex social and psychological phenomena related to professional information sources, thereby enriching research tools in professional and educational sociology.
- Provide college administration and training officials with accurate data on patterns of reliance on social sources and points of weakness in students' professional formation, supporting the design of compensatory and developmental career guidance programs.
- Direct employment and institutional communication strategies in the public and private sectors toward the most influential social channels in shaping youth professional orientations.
- Empower students with awareness of the social mechanisms underlying their professional decisions, and encourage them to diversify their information sources and build their socio-professional capital effectively and independently.
- Contribute to achieving the objectives of the Kingdom's Vision 2030 related to youth empowerment and human capital development, by diagnosing the social and cultural obstacles that limit the effectiveness of their integration into the Saudi labor market.

3.5. Limitations of the Study

- Spatial Limitations: The study was confined to the University College in Al-Leith within its specific geographical and social environment.
- Human Limitations: It included male and female students of the college, excluding graduates or individuals outside the educational system.
- Temporal Limitations: During the first and second semesters of the academic year 2024-2025.

- **Methodological Limitations:** Focused on four sources of information (family, friends, internet, college) without addressing other sources, and relied on self-reported data from participants.

2. Theoretical Framework and Previous Studies

2.1. Theoretical Framework

In this framework, the researcher seeks to present an integrated analytical model for re-reading the problem of transition from university education to the labor market from a critical sociological perspective. Rather than limiting the analysis to traditional approaches that focus on the skills gap or the mismatch between educational outcomes and labor market requirements, the study adopts an integrative vision combining structural, cultural, interactive, and digital analysis within a unified conceptual framework represented by "socio-professional capital." This methodological choice reflects a response to an urgent theoretical need, as the literature indicates the inadequacy of monolithic models in explaining the complexities of professional formation in rapidly changing societies. While human capital theory links education to income, it fails to explain the variation in employment opportunities among graduates with equal academic qualifications. Meanwhile, structural theories focus on institutions but may neglect the symbolic and interactive dimensions influencing professional decisions at the individual level.

The theoretical framework proceeds from a fundamental hypothesis: the gap in "socio-professional capital"—integrating informational, symbolic, and psychological resources—constitutes the decisive factor in explaining the challenges of transition to the labor market. This concept does not negate previous models but integrates them into a comprehensive explanatory framework that enables understanding of the complex dynamics of professional transformation in the Saudi context, where traditional references contend with the requirements of modernity and digital transformation.

To achieve this integration, the theoretical framework is organized into three interconnected axes: the theoretical foundations of professional formation with a critique of prevailing models in local and international literature; the structural components of socio-professional capital, including the symbolic, social, and informational resources influencing professional decisions; and the Saudi context through analysis of normative duality and the institutional gap between education and the labor market.

The framework concludes by presenting a proposed explanatory model linking these axes into a unified vision, aiming to provide a comprehensive scientific basis for understanding the formation of professional awareness and professional empowerment strategies among university youth.

2.1.1. First: Theoretical Foundations of Professional Formation

The transition from individualistic approaches to the social model in explaining professional formation constitutes a fundamental turning point in the sociology of professions. A review of the historical literature has revealed the limitations of traditional economic approaches that focus on education as a technical factor for producing skills, without considering the interactions between social structure, individual agency, and the symbolic meanings

accompanying work. The need emerges for a comprehensive explanatory model that integrates these elements to clarify how professional awareness and career decision-making are formed within a changing socio-cultural context.

1. Critique of Human Capital Approach

The human capital approach (Becker, 1964) proceeds from the fundamental hypothesis that education is an investment in a "bundle of skills" that increases an individual's productivity and value in the labor market. Despite the important analytical contributions of this approach in explaining the relationship between education and income, it suffers from essential methodological shortcomings, namely:

- **Abstraction of the phenomenon from its social context:** It treats the labor market as a neutral competitive space, ignoring that the economic value of skills is determined within social fields subject to power relations and symbolic domination (Bourdieu, 1986).
- **Neglect of disparity in transforming skills into opportunities:** The approach assumed that possessing an academic qualification automatically translates into employment opportunities, ignoring the reality that individuals vary in their ability to transform their skills into tangible social positions due to their varying possession of social and symbolic capital.
- **Ignoring the symbolic dimension of the credential:** The theory neglected that the value of a credential is not merely technical but is a symbolic value determined according to its position in the social hierarchy and the prevailing professional classification structure.

2. Social Capital and Explaining Disparity in Opportunities

Social capital theory (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1988) provided a perspective focusing on the interactive dimensions of resources within social networks, explaining that disparity in opportunities is not only attributed to individual skills but to the nature of social relationships:

- Bourdieu views social capital as "the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of relationships," where these networks grant access to exclusive information, recommendations, and endorsements that enhance an individual's relative advantage.
- Coleman indicated that social capital represents a collective resource that facilitates social action, explaining that the density and quality of networks determine individuals' ability to achieve their goals.

Despite these contributions, classical studies of social capital remain focused on structure and networks, without giving sufficient attention to the content of knowledge transmitted through networks, or how individuals absorb this knowledge and transform it into tangible action in the professional path.

3. Symbolic Interactionism in Understanding Professional Identity Construction

Symbolic interactionism (Mead, 1934; Blumer, 1969) provided a dynamic entry point to individual agency in the process of professional formation, through:

- **Meaning formation through social interaction:** Blumer argued that individuals act toward things based on the meanings they attribute to them through an interpretive process grounded in symbolic interaction with others (Blumer, 1969).

- **Professional identity construction through "taking the role of the other":** Professional identity is formed through the individual's testing of themselves in light of the professional community's perceptions and others' reactions, allowing them to develop an integrated conception of their professional self (Mead, 1934).

- **Limitations of the interactionist perspective:** Despite the strength of this framework in analyzing the subjective dimension, it may neglect the structural and cultural constraints that delimit the scope of interaction, as the meanings individuals adopt are conditioned by their position within the social structure and are not entirely free (Carter & Fuller, 2015).

The integration of these three perspectives in developing the concept of "socio-professional capital" as a more comprehensive analytical framework is justified as follows:

- **First:** It bridges the gap between structure and agency by combining structural resources (information networks) and the ability to employ them (self-efficacy), emphasizing that possessing a resource only acquires value to the extent that it is translated into effective practice.

- **Second:** It expands the scope of social capital analysis beyond studying the "relationship network" as mere structure, toward analyzing its social and cognitive content of values, information, and mutual trust that influence professional choices.

- **Third:** It provides a sociological reading of symbolic conflict by moving from analyzing "possession of capital" to analyzing competition for legitimacy among different sources of influence, such as family and the internet, which present contrasting value patterns regarding the concept of prestigious employment.

Through this proposition, the researcher argues that the concept of socio-professional capital does not exclude previous theoretical models but reframes them within an interactive dialogue demonstrating that success in the labor market is not merely the product of individual skills or social networks, but is a dynamic outcome of the individual's ability to manage the interaction between different forms of capital within the context of structural transformations witnessed in contemporary society.

2.1.2. Second: Structural Components of Socio-Professional Capital

Socio-professional capital constitutes a composite structure in which three fundamental components interact, forming the internal system that organizes the process of professional formation (Mohamed, 2024). The aim of this analysis lies in revealing the dynamics of dialectical interconnectedness between these components as an intertwined network of resources, meanings, and social action.

1. Social Informational Capital: The Division of Cognitive Labor in Professional Formation

This dimension represents the system of social sources of professional information and patterns of reliance upon them, referring to the "division of cognitive labor" among four main channels, each with a specific function in directing professional action:

- **Family (Closed Capital):** A reservoir of "local strategic knowledge," providing the individual with information about local work culture, employer expectations, and job stability

requirements in traditional sectors, representing a repository of "practical wisdom" accumulated across generations (Bourdieu, 1986).

- **Internet (Open Capital):** Provides "globally transferable knowledge," including modern technical and procedural skills and application mechanisms for cross-border jobs, constituting a channel for digital empowerment (Castells, 2010).
- **Peers (Horizontal Capital):** Provide "comparative and normative knowledge," acting as a symbolic mirror of the individual's relative position among peers and contributing to the social normalization of professional fears and ambitions.
- **Educational Institution (Institutional Capital):** Presumed to provide systematic and documented knowledge, but studies often indicate a gap between the presumed role and actual performance (Mohamed, 2024).

2. Perceived Symbolic Capital: Domination and Shaping the Concept of "Prestigious Employment"

This dimension refers to the value and legitimacy aspect in professional formation, relating to the issue of "symbolic domination" in determining what is considered prestigious employment (Bourdieu, 1991). It manifests in three axes:

- **Sources of Legitimacy:** The social sources that grant legitimacy to occupations, where the family often exercises symbolic domination over traditional standards of prestige and social status.
- **Value Classification:** How different social sources evaluate the symbolic value of professions, which may create contradictions between traditional family discourse and modern economic discourse (Barsky, 1991).
- **Production of Symbolic Confusion:** Arises when different sources, such as family and the internet, compete in granting legitimacy to conflicting professional patterns, generating normative duality and existential anxiety among youth.

3. Professional Self-Efficacy: The Bridge Between Knowledge and Action

Professional self-efficacy represents the personal driver that transforms informational and symbolic resources into tangible professional action. This dimension draws on Bandura's theory of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997) and manifests in:

- **Confidence in skills:** The individual's belief in their technical and professional abilities acquired during their educational journey.
- **Confidence in procedural knowledge:** The individual's conviction in their knowledge of how to search for a job, prepare a CV, and successfully conduct interviews.
- **Confidence in professional performance:** The individual's feeling of their ability to succeed in critical professional situations and compete in the labor market.

This efficacy depends on the previous components, as accurate information and symbolic support enhance confidence, while information conflict or weak encouraging sources weaken it.

4. Interactive Relationships Between Components: Integrative Dynamics

These components do not operate in isolation from each other; rather, the components of socio-professional capital interact in an integrated dialectical system:

Circular Feedback: Information received from social networks (informational capital) feeds value perceptions (symbolic capital), which in turn affect the level of confidence (self-efficacy), reshaping the effectiveness of network utilization.

- **Amplification and Compensation:** A strong component can compensate for weakness in another, such as the internet compensating for absence of family information, or high confidence compensating for weak social networks.
- **Competition and Conflict:** When values and information conflict between sources (such as traditional family versus modern internet opportunities), internal conflict occurs that reduces the overall effectiveness of the system.
- **Unequal Influence:** One component may acquire a decisive role at certain stages; the family may have strong symbolic influence in early stages, while self-efficacy becomes more important later.

The researcher emphasizes that socio-professional capital is an integrated dynamic system, not merely an accumulation of disparate resources; possessing qualifications alone does not guarantee their transformation into actual opportunities without the integration and balance of its structural components.

2.1.3. Third: The Saudi Context

Societal transformation in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia constitutes a vital framework for understanding the dynamics of professional formation among youth, where structural transformations interact with traditional structures to produce a unique context in which the study's problem manifests in its various dimensions.

1. Structural Transformation: Vision 2030 and Reshaping the Saudi Work Field

Vision 2030 represents a comprehensive transformational project that redefined the "rules of the game" in the Saudi labor market, through:

- **Economic Restructuring:** Transition from a rentier oil economy to a productive and diversified economy, leading to the emergence of new professional sectors and a shift in the ranking of traditional sectors in terms of attractiveness and prestige.
- **Changing Professional Value Criteria:** Transition from traditional criteria based on job stability and guaranteed salaries in the government sector, to criteria focusing on productivity, innovation, and flexibility in the private sector and entrepreneurship.
- **Transformation in the Roles of Social Actors:** Emergence of new actors in professional guidance, especially digital platforms and private sector companies, reducing the traditional monopoly of the family and educational institution.

2. Normative Duality: The Conflict Between Past Values and Future Requirements

Normative duality arises as a result of the interaction between traditional and modern value systems, manifesting in:

- Conflict over Defining "Successful Employment": Between the traditional perception based on the "secure job" with stable benefits, and the modern perception that values transitional jobs based on skills and cumulative opportunities.
- Contradiction in Validation Mechanisms: Between the traditional linear path (education → job → retirement) and the modern non-linear path (education → training → projects → failure → learning → new opportunities).
- Contradiction in Success Criteria: Between success measured by fixed material and social indicators (salary, social status) and success measured by dynamic indicators (impact, digital reputation, work freedom).

Consequently, this duality generates "value confusion" among youth, as they find themselves between loyalty to previous generations' values and attraction to modern transformation opportunities, complicating the process of professional identity construction and assimilation of modern labor market requirements.

3. Institutional Gap: Deviation from the Presumed Role of the Educational Institution

The study reveals an institutional gap between the role assigned to the educational institution as a central mediator in the transition to the labor market and its actual performance, represented in:

- Credibility Gap: Students perceive that information provided by the college about the labor market is less realistic and current compared to digital channels.
- Mediation Gap: The institution's failure to play the role of mediator between traditional standards and modern labor market requirements, leaving the student to face the conflict alone.
- Empowerment Gap: Weakness of career guidance programs in transforming academic knowledge into practical confidence applicable in job searching or passing professional interviews.

As a result of these gaps, students develop individual compensatory strategies, transforming the process of professional formation into an individual task rather than an organized social process.

4. Digital Empowerment: The Internet as a New Social Field

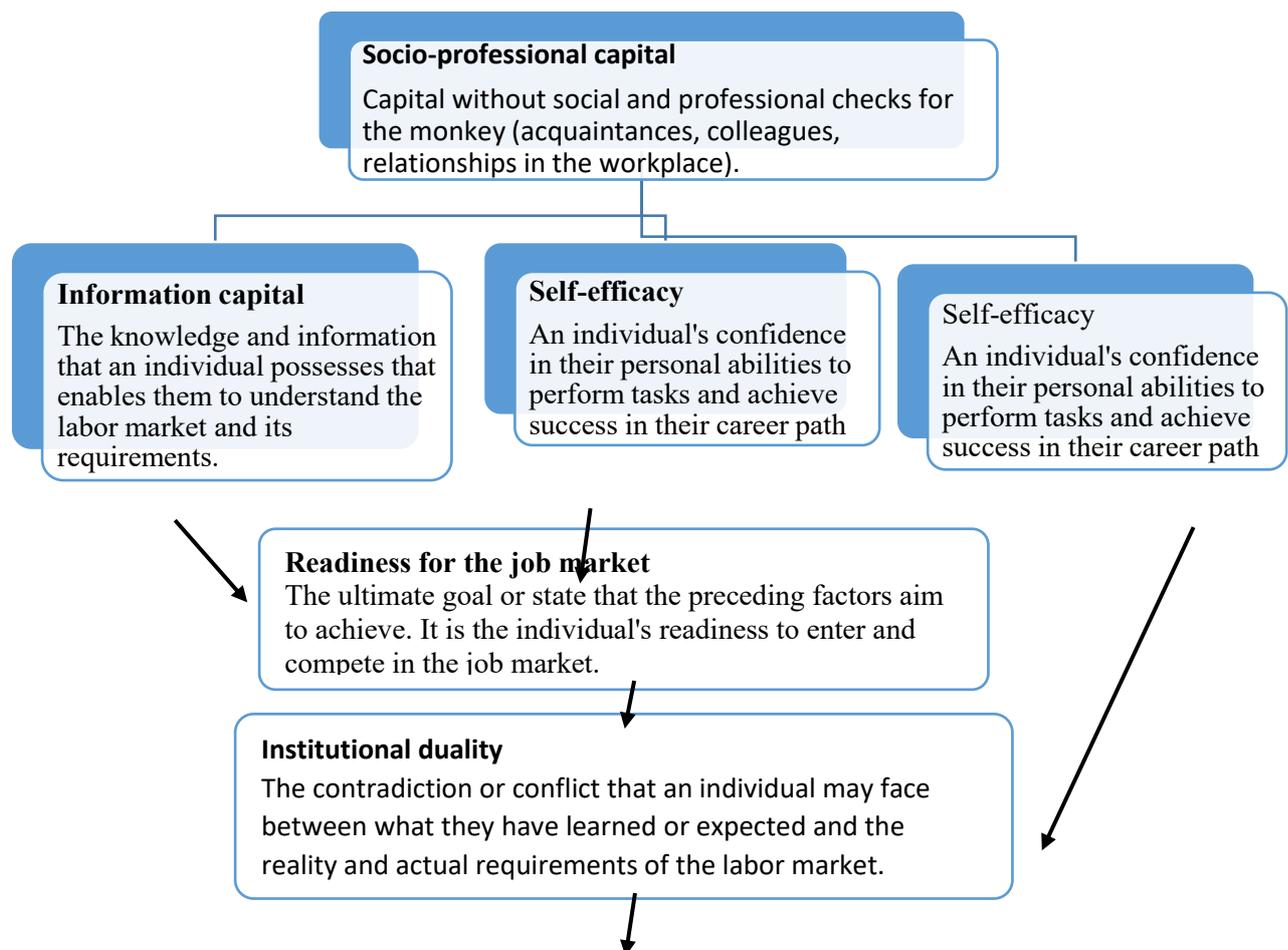
The internet represents a modern social field challenging the traditional domination of family and educational institution through:

- Redistribution of Informational Capital: Breaking the monopoly of professional information and providing renewed global knowledge about skills and job opportunities.
- Creating Parallel Legitimacy: Offering alternative value systems about "success" and "professionalism," and presenting non-traditional models such as digital entrepreneurs and freelancers.
- Strategic Empowerment: Granting youth tools to transcend structural constraints, through developing self-skills, building virtual professional networks, and accessing remote work opportunities.

The researcher indicates that this empowerment remains uneven, as the digital gap creates differences in the ability to invest in the digital field, reproducing social disparities in new ways. In this context, the Saudi reality presents a distinctive case, where youth find themselves at a crossroads between three competing professional identities: a traditional identity derived from the family, a modern identity determined by labor market requirements, and a digital identity enabled by electronic platforms, in the absence of effective institutional support that coordinates between these identities.

2.1.4. Fourth: The Explanatory Model

The researcher presents an integrated conceptual model linking theoretical components and field data, elucidating the essential relationships between study variables and translating them into testable hypotheses. In this model, socio-professional capital plays the role of the central axis, consisting of three interacting components: social informational capital, perceived symbolic capital, and professional self-efficacy, which determine readiness for the labor market. This dynamic system interacts with the institutional and cultural contexts, represented by the institutional gap and normative duality, to determine the extent of youth's ability to transform their social, cognitive, and symbolic resources into tangible practical opportunities.



The Saudi context

This represents the real-world arena where the "labor market readiness" developed by the individual through socio-flexible, informational, and symbolic capital, as well as their self-efficacy, is tested—taking into account institutional duality, all within the unique characteristics of the Saudi context.

Source: Prepared by the researcher

The researcher emphasizes in this framework that professional effectiveness does not emanate from any single component, but from the integration of components within a changing environment, where the institutional gap or value discrepancy can hinder or enhance the ability to employ socio-professional capital. Thus, the model constitutes an applied analytical tool for understanding the formation of professional awareness among youth in the Saudi context, and linking it to measurable field data, transforming the complex theoretical framework into a practical guide for analyzing factors influencing the transition from education to the labor market.

2.1.5. Fifth: Operational Concepts and Terms of the Study

1. Socio-Professional Capital

The concept consists of two complementary elements: capital in its economic and social sense, i.e., the resources or assets that an individual possesses and that contribute to achieving social and professional benefits or opportunities; and socio-professional, referring to the social dimension related to professional relationships and the exchange of support, status, and knowledge within the professional field.

Theoretically, socio-professional capital is defined as the sum of social, cultural, and cognitive resources that an individual possesses within the professional space, which enhance their ability to access and invest in professional opportunities and positions. This concept intersects with Bourdieu's (1986) and Coleman's (2003) social capital theory in terms of its focus on the interactive roles of symbolic resources in shaping social and professional mobility.

Operationally, the concept is defined in this study as the degree to which university students possess effective professional and social relationships within the university environment, and their level of awareness of mechanisms for investing these relationships in their professional guidance toward the labor market.

2. Transition from Education to Work

Transition refers to the shift from one state to another, and in this context is defined as the transition that an individual undergoes from the educational system to the professional system, i.e., from academic study to the work environment. This transition is considered a complex socio-economic process influenced by structural, cultural, and institutional factors, comprising successive stages of skill acquisition, adaptation to labor market requirements, and reconstruction of professional identity (Van Dijk, 2020; Letnar & Širok, 2025).

Operationally, the concept is defined in this study as the degree of university students' readiness to transition to the labor market in terms of cognitive and skill competence, and the extent of alignment between their academic specializations and local labor market requirements.

3. Social Informational Capital

Linguistically, "reference" indicates recourse to a source relied upon in decision-making. Social informational capital refers to the set of sources and social relationships that individuals rely upon to form their perceptions about professions and make their professional decisions. These sources include family, peers, teachers, media, and digital platforms (Letnar & Širok, 2025). The concept represents an extension of what is known in contemporary literature as social informational capital, which integrates communication networks and sources of social and cognitive influence in directing professional behavior.

Operationally, the concept is defined in this study as the degree of university students' reliance on diverse social and institutional sources in building their professional decisions.

4. Perceived Symbolic Capital / Professional Identity

Identity is derived from the verb "to be," meaning the self or essence, while "professional" relates to profession, i.e., specialized work or craft. Professional identity refers to the individual's perception of themselves as a member of a specific professional group, including the values, standards, perceptions, and behaviors that determine their roles and status within the professional field. This perception is considered a form of symbolic capital, granting the individual confidence, social value, and professional recognition within their practical community (Beijaard et al., 2004).

Operationally, the concept is defined in this study as the degree to which a university student adopts the values of their future profession and feels belonging to their specialized field.

5. Vocational Self-Efficacy / Vocational Formation

Vocational self-efficacy refers to an individual's belief in their ability to perform professional tasks and succeed in meeting labor market requirements. The concept is used interchangeably with the term vocational formation, which refers to the process of forming and developing professional identity through education, experience, and socialization. It is a dynamic concept reflecting the way an individual acquires their professional skills and attitudes in light of prevailing professional values and standards (Guile & Griffiths, 2001).

Operationally, the concept is defined in this study as the degree to which a university student possesses confidence in their abilities to practice professional tasks and integrate into the labor market.

6. Normative Duality

Linguistically, "duality" derives from "dual," meaning the combination of two opposing elements or systems, while "normative" refers to the rules or social models that guide behavior. The concept of normative duality refers to the state of coexistence between two systems of values and standards within the social or institutional field, where prevailing traditional values intersect with new standards emerging from cultural or digital transformations. This state is

considered a distinctive characteristic of societies undergoing transition toward digital modernity, as forms of tension between old cultural references and new technical practices appear in university behavior and professional interactions (Selwyn, 2020).

Operationally, the concept is defined in this study as the degree of tension between traditional academic values and modern digital standards within the university environment.

7. Digital Empowerment

The term "empowerment" derives from the verb "to empower," meaning to grant ability or authority, while "digital" refers to the employment of digital technologies in the fields of knowledge and work. Digital empowerment is defined as individuals' ability to use technology to expand their potential in learning, participation, influence, and decision-making within professional and social spheres. The concept transcends the technical dimension to a sociological dimension concerned with reshaping power and knowledge relations in light of digital transformation (Van Dijk, 2020).

Operationally, the concept is defined in this study as the level of university students' use of digital tools and platforms in developing their professional competencies and enhancing their academic participation.

8. Institutional Gap

The institutional gap refers to the disparity between the presumed role of the educational institution in professionally qualifying students and its actual role as perceived by beneficiaries. This disparity often results from weak integration between higher education policies and labor market needs, or deficiencies in career guidance mechanisms within the university (Marginson, 2024).

Operationally, the concept is defined in this study as the low degree of students' reliance on the college as a reliable source of professional information, and their weak evaluation of the effectiveness of career guidance services provided to them.

2.2. Previous Studies

In an endeavor to frame the research problem and situate the current study on the knowledge map, the researcher reviews in this section the most prominent relevant previous studies. Letnar and Širok (2025), in their study "The Role of Social Capital in Employability Models: A Systematic Review and Suggestions for Future Research," presented their critical systematic review, which revealed that social capital, despite its vital importance, is systematically marginalized in academic employability models. This finding constituted compelling evidence of a fundamental theoretical gap, calling for a reconsideration of prevailing models.

Proceeding from this gap, Wohlgezogen and Cotronei-Baird (2024), in their study "In Search of Responsible Career Guidance: Career Capital and Personal Purpose in Restless Times," moved to a deeper critique of the philosophy underlying these models, proposing the necessity of reconciling the instrumental "career capital" approach with the humanistic "personal purpose" approach. However, their critique, though profound, remained confined to the ideal framework of educational design, without descending into the complexities of social reality where this struggle unfolds.

Here emerges the contribution of Tomlinson (2023), in his study "Graduate Employability and Its Basis in Possessive Individualism," who delved into the philosophical roots of the problem, considering that the "possessive individualism" model is responsible for reducing the graduate to a "bundle of skills." Tomlinson undertook a brilliant theoretical deconstruction of the prevailing model, accusing it of ignoring social and contextual dimensions.

However, while Tomlinson engaged in deconstruction, Coetzee (2023), in her study "Students' Career Capital Resource Needs for Employability in the Technology-Driven Work World," attempted to provide a practical alternative through her precise diagnosis of students' needs in the digital age, using the "career capital" model. Nevertheless, her study remained focused on diagnosing need (what do students need?), without analyzing the mechanisms of its fulfillment or social disruption (how and why do they—or do they not—obtain these needs?).

To affirm the importance of social mechanisms, Broschinski et al. (2022), in their study "The Role of Family Social Capital in School-to-Work Transitions of Young Adults in Germany," provided strong quantitative evidence from Germany that family social capital (such as communication and emotional security) is a decisive, not secondary, factor in successful transition to the labor market. This study transformed the hypothesis from a theoretical possibility into a measurable reality.

But, if the family is supportive in Germany, McCafferty (2022), in his qualitative review of the United Kingdom through the study "An Unjust Balance: A Systematic Review of the Employability Perceptions of UK Undergraduates from Disadvantaged Socio-Economic Backgrounds," revealed the other side of the coin: how socio-economic privilege grants some students family and cultural capital that can be strategically employed, while others are deprived of it, creating structural disparity in employment opportunities even before graduation.

To ground this historical role of the family in a different context, Kovacheva's (2004) study from Bulgaria, "The Role of Family Social Capital in Young People's Transition from School to Work in Bulgaria," showed how the family functions as a primary "safety net" and "last resort" in light of weak formal institutions. This study reminds us that the family's role is not new, but its nature differs radically according to the relative strength of other institutions in society.

Some Arab studies were also concerned with observing manifestations of this problem in their specific contexts. In Al-Azzawi and Al-Sakhavi's (2024) study entitled "Social Networks and Their Effects on Intellectual Orientations of Saudi Youth," they addressed the educational and framing role of communication media in shaping the broad intellectual orientations of Saudi youth, affirming these platforms' ability to build shared reference frameworks.

But, if these platforms shape general intellectual awareness, how does this affect specific choices? To answer this, we turn to Al-Zahrani and Salem's (2018) study, "The Role of Social Media in Shaping Saudi Youth's Attitudes Toward the Kingdom's Vision 2030," which focused more deeply on Twitter's role in shaping youth attitudes toward a specific project: Vision 2030. This study creates an ideal bridge for understanding how knowledge flows from digital platforms to personal projects.

Moving from the public sphere to psychological motivations, Mohamed (2024), in her study "Contributing Factors to the Psychological Capital Scale Among Students of the Faculty of Education, Helwan University in Light of Gender and Specialization Variables," provided a diagnosis of students' internal state, measuring the component factors of psychological capital (such as self-efficacy and hope). However, her question remained focused on the resulting "psychological state," rather than the "social factors" shaping it.

Here emerges the importance of Mathbout et al.'s (2022) study, "Factors Influencing Specialization Choice Among King Abdulaziz University Students," which revealed a perplexing paradox in the professional awareness of Saudi students: "the student's ability to choose" ranked first, while "professional inclinations and desires" lagged. This finding indicates a gap between apparent choice driven by external considerations and the student's genuine desire.

To understand these "external considerations" at the systemic level, we need the macro-level analysis provided by Al-Qaraawi (2022) in her study "Saudi Labor Market Requirements Between Reality and Higher Education Challenges to Achieve Vision 2030: The Japanese Experience as a Model," which analyzed the structural challenges of alignment between educational outcomes and the labor market under Vision 2030. However, her analysis, though competent, remained at the level of policies and strategies, without observing how these major transformations translate at the level of individual choices and perceptions.

At the individual level, Al-Qawl and Sha'athan (2017), in their study "University Youth Attitudes Toward Private Work 'Entrepreneurship' According to the Theory of Planned Behavior," provided a precise diagnosis of students' attitudes toward self-employment, showing a low "efficacy determinant" among them despite high desire. This gap between desire and confidence is a direct embodiment of the "socio-professional capital" crisis that this research discusses.

Finally, the present cannot be understood without reference to the past, where Al-Harhi (2000), in his study "The Political Economy of Labor in Saudi Arabia: The Causes of Labor Shortage" (Doctoral dissertation, State University of New York at Binghamton), early diagnosed the nature of unemployment in the Kingdom as "structural unemployment," stemming from the separation of education from the labor market. This foundational study reminds us that the problem we are addressing is not emergent but deeply rooted structurally, and that solutions must be equally profound.

2.3. Research Gap and Study Contribution

In light of the foregoing literature review, it becomes evident that the knowledge field has witnessed remarkable development represented in two main directions: the first trend moved toward deconstructing the prevailing individual model of employability and emphasizing social determinism as a pivotal factor, while the second was occupied with observing manifestations of the crisis in the local context, from the formation of intellectual awareness to the problem of structural alignment between education and the labor market. Despite the value of these contributions, the reviewed research map highlights an urgent need for a complementary analytical lens, moving analysis from the level of abstract theoretical critique to understanding

lived reality, and transforming descriptive observation into interpretation of the deep social mechanisms governing the process of professional formation.

From this standpoint, the problematic of this research emerges through the concept of "socio-professional capital," which does not arise in a vacuum but adopts an integrative approach that absorbs and transcends the contributions of predecessors. It takes into account the early structural warnings about the nature of unemployment, the clear paradoxes in youth professional awareness, the noticeable gap between desire for work and confidence in competence, the pivotal role of the family affirmed by comparative literature, and the essential influence of digital platforms in shaping orientations. It places all of these within a unified framework, explaining how professional formation is a complex process of social construction, not merely an individual decision. Within this framework, professional paths are understood as the product of dynamic interaction, and often conflict, between different forms of capital—informational, symbolic, and psychological—to which youth are exposed, amidst major societal transformations and ambiguity in institutional role.

Therefore, this study does not merely present an additional variable in existing models, but offers a new explanatory framework that transforms professional formation from being an individual choice or single-source influence into being the outcome of dynamic and tension-filled interaction among the multiple social fields to which youth belong and within which they form their professional identities.

3. Research Methodology

3.1. Research Tool

- The study adopted a refereed electronic questionnaire as the primary data collection tool, designed according to a precise scientific methodology that considers logical consistency and conceptual progression in measuring the dimensions of the research variables.
- The construction of the tool was based on a critical review of measures used in previous studies in the fields of professional sociology and social capital, adapting them to suit the cultural and social specificity of the Saudi context and the analytical objectives of the study. The tool's items were formulated based on core theoretical concepts, foremost among which are the concepts of socio-professional capital and social informational learning as structural determinants of professional awareness and its formation mechanisms among university youth.
- The final version of the questionnaire consisted of five interrelated sections addressing: participants' demographic data, their degree of reliance on professional information sources, the nature and quality of information derived from each source, the level of influence of these sources on shaping professional awareness, and their overall readiness for the labor market, reflecting the integration of cognitive, psychological, and sociological aspects of the study topic.
- The study population consisted of male and female students at the University College in Al-Leith Governorate, across various academic specializations and study levels, as they represent a youth segment within which the initial features of professional awareness and readiness orientations toward the labor market are formed.
- The study sample was selected using stratified random sampling to ensure balanced representation of various specializations (administrative, technical, health, and humanities) as

well as academic levels, enabling a more accurate reading of differences among student groups in light of the study variables.

- The study adopted the descriptive-analytical approach as the most appropriate for observing the studied phenomenon and analyzing relationships between its variables, aiming to understand the role of social sources of information in shaping socio-professional capital among students at the University College in Al-Leith. The results were statistically analyzed using SPSS software through descriptive and inferential methods to verify hypotheses and interpret relationships between variables.

3.2. Validity and Reliability of the Tool

To verify the tool's suitability for measuring the targeted phenomena, three types of validity were examined:

1. Face Validity

The preliminary draft of the questionnaire was presented to a group of academic specialists in sociology and applied statistics to evaluate the clarity of the items and their appropriateness for the study objectives. The review resulted in minor linguistic and conceptual modifications that improved the clarity of the items and their semantic consistency.

2. Content Validity

The tool was reviewed by three professors of research methodology and sociology to assess the extent to which the items represented their conceptual dimensions and their consistency with the theoretical structure. Based on their opinions, a limited number of items were reformulated to ensure the tool's comprehensiveness and balance across different axes while maintaining conceptual precision for each dimension.

Table 1: Face and Content Validity Analysis of the Questionnaire

Measured Dimension	Number of Items Before Review	Number of Items After Review	Main Modifications Based on Reviewers' Comments
Reliance on Information Sources	5	5	Replaced phrase "successful personalities" with "on social media platforms."
Quality of Information	4	4	Clarified the term "work environment culture" by adding an example "and employer expectations."
Readiness for Labor Market	5	5	Reversed the response direction in the anxiety item to align with other items.
Total Tool Items	14	14	—

3. Construct Validity

Construct validity of the tool was statistically verified using Exploratory Factor Analysis to ensure that the items of each scale accurately and independently represented their theoretical dimensions. The analysis was conducted using Principal Components Analysis with Varimax rotation and Kaiser Normalization to increase the clarity of the factor structure and reduce overlap between factors.

Table 2: Factor Analysis Results for Labor Market Readiness Scale

Item No.	Statement	Factor 1 Self-Efficacy	Factor 2 Clarity and Certainty	Communalities
2	I possess the necessary skills to compete in the labor market.	0.856	0.102	0.743
3	I know how to search for suitable job opportunities.	0.821	0.154	0.698
4	I am confident in my ability to pass job interviews.	0.788	0.089	0.628
1	I have a clear vision of my professional path after graduation.	0.213	0.892	0.840
5	I feel anxious about my professional future (reversed).	0.165	0.845	0.738
Factor	Eigenvalue	Explained Variance %	Cumulative Variance %	
Factor 1	2.45	35.1%	—	
Factor 2	1.68	28.9%	64.0%	

The results showed that all items had factor loading values exceeding (0.70), indicating homogeneity of items and independence of dimensions. It was found that the labor market readiness scale consists of two distinct main factors: self-efficacy and clarity and certainty. The cumulative explained variance reached (64.0%), a high percentage reflecting the appropriateness of the factor structure of the scale and its internal construct validity.

Concurrent criterion validity was also verified through correlation coefficients between the main dimensions of the study variables, as shown in the following table.

Table 3: Correlation Coefficients Between Main Dimensions (Concurrent Criterion Validity)

Scale	(1)	(2)	(3)
(1) Reliance on Internet	1	—	—
(2) Reliance on Family	-0.15	1	—
(3) Readiness for Labor Market (Total)	0.42**	-0.18*	1

The results showed a positive and statistically significant correlation between reliance on the internet and readiness for the labor market ($r = 0.42, p < 0.01$), indicating that increased reliance on internet sources is associated with a higher level of professional readiness. A weak negative correlation also appeared between reliance on family and readiness for the labor market ($r = -0.18, p < 0.05$), reflecting that excessive reliance on traditional family guidance may limit youth orientation toward modern professional opportunities.

4. Reliability

The reliability of the tool was verified to ensure its internal consistency and stability using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient for each dimension of the questionnaire, as shown in the following table.

Table 4: Reliability Analysis Results Using Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient

Scale	Number of Items	α Value
Reliance on Information Sources Scale	5	0.84
Labor Market Readiness Scale	5	0.81
Total Tool	14	0.87

The results showed that reliability coefficients ranged between (0.81) and (0.87), values exceeding the minimum acceptable limit in social studies (0.70), indicating high internal consistency among items. The reliability coefficient for the reliance on information sources scale reached (0.84), for the labor market readiness scale reached (0.81), while the overall value for the tool reached (0.87), reflecting stability and clarity in participants' responses and methodological consistency in the construction of the tool.

4. Results and Statistical Analysis of the Study

4.1. Demographic Data

Demographic data of the study sample were analyzed to identify the characteristics of participants and ensure their representation of the study population. The sample included (320) male and female students from the University College in Al-Leith, distributed according to the variables shown in the following table:

Table 5: Results of Demographic Data

Characteristic	Categories	Frequency	Percentage (%)

Gender	Male	152	47.5%
	Female	168	52.5%
Academic Specialization	Business Administration	98	30.6%
	Computer Science	85	26.6%
	Health Sciences	72	22.5%
	Humanities Studies	45	14.1%
	Other	20	6.2%
Academic Level	First Year	105	32.8%
	Second Year	95	29.7%
	Third Year	70	21.9%
	Fourth Year and Above	50	15.6%
Grade Point Average (GPA)	Less than 2.0	25	7.8%
	2.0 – 3.0	110	34.4%
	3.0 – 3.5	115	35.9%
	3.5 – 4.0	60	18.8%
	4.0 – 5.0	10	3.1%

The results showed that the percentage of females reached (52.5%) compared to (47.5%) males, reflecting a relatively balanced representation between genders. Business Administration specialization ranked first at (30.6%), followed by Computer Science (26.6%), then Health Sciences (22.5%), while Humanities Studies recorded (14.1%) and other specializations (6.2%). This indicates the predominance of applied and administrative specializations within the sample. It was also found that most participants were in the first and second years, with a total percentage of (62.5%), followed by the third year (21.9%), then the fourth year and above (15.6%), indicating that the majority of the sample were students in early academic stages. Regarding GPA, the largest proportion ranged between (2.0 – 3.5) at (70.3%), compared to (21.9%) for those whose averages exceeded (3.5), and (7.8%) for less than (2.0), a distribution reflecting a natural progression in academic achievement levels.

4.2. Measuring the Degree of Reliance on Information Sources

This section aims to determine the level of students' reliance on social sources for obtaining professional information, through analyzing the arithmetic means and standard deviations of the responses of the study sample consisting of 320 male and female students, using a five-point Likert scale (1–5) reflecting levels of reliance from low to very high.

Table 6: Arithmetic Means and Standard Deviations for Degree of Reliance on Information Sources

No.	Information Source	Mean	Standard Deviation	Importance Rank	Interpretation
1	Family	4.2	0.8	First	Very High Reliance
3	Internet	3.8	1.1	Second	High Reliance
2	Friends	3.1	1.2	Third	Medium Reliance
5	Successful Personalities (Social Media)	2.9	1.3	Fourth	Medium-Low Reliance
4	College (Career Guidance)	2.4	1.1	Fifth (Last)	Low Reliance

The results indicate that family ranked first with a mean of (4.2), demonstrating the continuation of its pivotal role as a primary source of professional information and social support among students. It was followed by the internet with a mean of (3.8) and a standard deviation of (1.1), reflecting variation in the extent to which individuals benefit from digital resources and disparities in technical awareness, indicating a digital gap in the formation of socio-professional capital. Friends and successful personalities through social media came in the middle ranks with means of (3.1) and (2.9) respectively, indicating a limited role for these two sources, concentrated in moral support and inspiration rather than transmitting direct professional information. As for the institutional source represented by the college and career guidance services, it came in last place with a mean of (2.4), indicating weak reliance on official channels within the educational institution, and revealing a gap between what the college provides and what students expect in terms of actual professional support.

The researcher argues that the results show a clear hierarchical structure of professional information sources among students, headed by the family as a stable social source, followed by digital platforms experiencing uneven expansion, while official sources decline to the lowest levels of reliance, reflecting the continued centrality of traditional social capital against the slow growth of institutional and digital capital in the university environment.

4.3. Quality of Information from Each Source

This section aims to analyze the nature of the cognitive content provided by different social sources and its impact on shaping students' socio-professional capital. The responses of the sample (N=320) were measured using a three-point scale (1–3), where higher values indicate better quality or greater abundance of information.

Table 7: Students' Mean Scores for Obtaining Types of Information from Different Sources (Scale 1–3)

Type of Information	Family	Friends	Internet	College
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Information about required skills	1.8	2.1	2.9	2.3
Information about salaries and career progression	2.7	2.4	2.7	1.9
Information about application procedures and interviews	1.5	1.7	2.8	2.0
Information about work environment culture	2.5	2.5	2.3	1.8

The results show a clear pattern of functional division of information among sources. The internet emerged as the primary source of technical and procedural information, achieving the highest means in the skills (2.9) and application procedures (2.8) items, demonstrating its role as a main platform for self-learning and acquiring practical skills associated with the labor market. In contrast, the family excelled in providing symbolic and strategic information, particularly related to salaries (2.7) and work environment culture (2.5), reflecting its role in transmitting implicit social knowledge that determines prevailing perceptions about status and professional stability within Saudi society. Friends played a moderate role across all items, with relative balance between knowledge of skills and work culture, indicating they serve as a medium for exchanging informal experiences and personal stories, rather than being a source of reliable information. The college ranked last in most items, without leading in any type of knowledge, achieving the lowest means in the areas of salaries (1.9) and work culture (1.8), reflecting its limited role as an integrated source of professional information and the weak effectiveness of its guidance channels compared to non-institutional sources.

The researcher argues that these results indicate an unbalanced structure in the system of professional knowledge production among students, where elements of socio-professional capital are distributed among sources playing different roles: the family provides symbolic knowledge, the internet provides procedural knowledge, friends provide social support, while the college remains of limited influence. This fragmented structure makes the student rely on individual integration between technical knowledge acquired digitally and social standards transmitted familiarly, explaining the disparity in professional awareness and practical readiness within the sample.

4.4. Qualitative Impact of Sources

This section aims to analyze the qualitative and symbolic impact of social sources on students' professional values, ambition motivations, and self-confidence, as moral dimensions shaping socio-professional capital. The analysis was based on the distribution of frequencies and percentages of the sample's responses (N=320).

Table 8: Frequencies and Percentages of Most Qualitatively Influential Sources

Impact Dimension	Family		Friends		Internet		College	
	Freq	Percent.	Freq.	Percent.	Freq.	Percent.	Freq.	Percent.
<i>Most influential source in defining</i>	186	58%	48	15%	58	18%	28	9%

<i>"prestigious employment"</i>								
<i>Most influential source in increasing confidence to obtain a job</i>	80	25%	32	10%	144	45%	64	20%
<i>Most influential source in expanding career options</i>	38	12%	26	8%	218	68%	38	12%

The results show a clear variation in the roles of social sources between value-symbolic impact and practical-empowering impact, with a noticeable weakness in the presence of the educational institution as an active source in shaping professional orientations. The family occupies first place in determining the perception of "prestigious employment" with a percentage of (58%), as it is the primary reference for social value and occupational status, transmitting standards of stability, acceptance, and prestige. This role reflects the continued dominance of symbolic and cultural capital produced by the family, reproducing prevailing professional values within the social structure. The internet ranked first in terms of practical impact, achieving the highest percentages in enhancing confidence (45%) and expanding career options (68%), highlighting its role in cognitively and professionally empowering the student. This impact goes beyond transmitting information to building cognitive and procedural capital that gives the individual a sense of ability to control their professional path, opening new horizons beyond traditional social constraints. The results also showed that the impact of friends and college is limited. Friends play a social normalization role limited to exchanging experiences without influencing professional convictions or decisions. As for the college, despite achieving (20%) in enhancing confidence, its impact remains formal-institutional, as it is viewed as a credential-granting entity rather than an active source of empowerment or expansion of professional alternatives.

The researcher interprets that the results indicate that the student's professional formation is based on a dual equation: the family determines the symbolic value of the job, while the internet determines the possibilities of accessing it. This parallelism between symbolic dominance and cognitive empowerment reflects an internal conflict between belonging to the traditional value system and openness to modern work patterns, in the absence of an effective institutional role for the college in building socio-professional capital.

4.5. Measuring Readiness for the Labor Market

This section aims to measure the level of psychological, cognitive, and skill readiness among students to enter the labor market, as the final output of the socio-professional capital building process. The analysis included five main dimensions: confidence, future vision, skills, job search mechanisms, and level of professional anxiety, with reverse formulation of the item related to anxiety to ensure consistency of direction in the analysis, where agreement with it reflects a negative response.

Table 9: Arithmetic Means and Standard Deviations of Students' Readiness for the Labor Market (Scale 1-5)

No.	Statement	Arithmetic Mean	Standard Deviation	Interpretation
5	I feel very anxious about my professional future after graduation.	4.1	0.9	Very high level of anxiety
2	I possess the necessary skills to compete in the current labor market.	2.8	1.2	Medium-low confidence in skills
3	I know how to search for suitable job opportunities.	2.9	1.1	Medium knowledge of mechanisms
4	I feel confident in my ability to successfully pass job interviews.	2.5	1.3	Low confidence in interviews
1	I feel that I have a clear vision of my professional path after graduation.	2.4	1.2	Very weak clarity of vision

The results reveal features of a structural crisis in students' professional readiness, represented by high anxiety, weak future vision, and low confidence in skills and procedural abilities, reflecting a deficiency in the formation of socio-professional capital and its dispersion across non-integrated sources. It is evident from the table that the highest mean was achieved in the anxiety item (4.1), contrasted with the lowest mean in clarity of vision (2.4), indicating a state of ambiguity and psychological instability toward the professional future. This pattern embodies the phenomenon of anomie as described by Émile Durkheim, where the individual lives between conflicting social standards without a clear institutional reference to regulate their expectations or guide their choices. The family defines the concept of "prestigious employment" according to a traditional value system, while the internet reveals new work patterns conflicting with it, resulting in cognitive and moral contradiction that generates professional anxiety and loss of direction (Fayyad, 2018). The means for skills (2.8), search mechanisms (2.9), and confidence in interviews (2.5) also show incomplete theoretical knowledge that does not transform into applied competence. This knowledge-action gap reflects a scattered acquisition of information from the internet without institutional training support to transfer it into actual practice. It also reveals deficiencies in field training programs and career guidance within the college, limiting opportunities for experimentation and building practical self-confidence.

The researcher interprets that the results reveal a fragmented socio-educational structure producing a student who possesses scattered information without a clear vision for its employment; the family remains the symbolic reference for what is "desirable," the internet provides what is "possible," while the college's role as a link between the two fields recedes. This duality places the student at a professional crossroads between inherited values and the

requirements of technical modernity, between individual ambition and institutional reality, leading to high anxiety and weak professional confidence. From the perspective of the sociology of education and work, the results indicate a deficiency in the integration of socio-professional capital components, where knowledge is separated from skill, and professional identity weakens, forcing the student to recompose these elements individually in the absence of an integrated institutional system.

The following is a brief presentation of the main descriptive results derived from applying the questionnaire to the study sample (N=320), which illustrate the features of socio-professional capital among college students in terms of its sources, quality, value orientations, and psychological aspects.

Table 10: Summary of Main Descriptive Results

Dimension	Strongest Source	Weakest Source	Most Prominent Challenge
Degree of Reliance	Family (4.2)	College (2.4)	Dominance of traditional source and marginality of institutional source
Quality of Information (Skills)	Internet (2.9)	Family (1.8)	Gap in transmitting modern skills from traditional sources
Quality of Information (Salaries/Culture)	Family (2.7)	College (1.8)	Gap in strategic knowledge from institutional source
Impact on Values ("Prestigious Employment")	Family (58%)	College (9%)	Dominance of traditional standards over student values
Impact on Confidence and Options	Internet (45%, 68%)	Friends (10%, 8%)	Internet's superiority as an empowerment source and weak peer influence
Readiness for Labor Market	Anxiety (4.1)	Clarity of Vision (2.4)	High professional anxiety and weak clarity of future direction

The results clarify the varying roles of social and professional sources in shaping students' socio-professional capital. The family maintained its position as a traditional source dominant over value orientations and perceptions of occupational status, while the internet emerged as a primary source for acquiring practical knowledge and skills, whereas the college's role declined to a marginal position in most dimensions, indicating an absence of integration between academic education and professional formation. The indicators also reflect cognitive and emotional duality combining reliance on the family in determining values and ambitions, and reliance on the internet in developing skills, with continued high professional anxiety and low clarity of future vision, indicating weak interconnection between social and institutional support. The results also show significant differences according to demographic variables. Females recorded higher reliance on family (4.4) compared to males (4.0), while males showed

greater reliance on the internet (4.0 vs. 3.6), reflecting variations in socialization patterns and circles of trust between genders. Computer Science students achieved the highest reliance on the internet (4.3), compared to the predominance of Humanities students in reliance on family (4.5), according to the nature of the specialization and its cognitive environment. The mean anxiety among fourth-year students also increased (4.4) compared to first-year students (3.9), without a corresponding improvement in clarity of professional vision (2.5 vs. 2.3), due to approaching graduation and increasing future pressures in light of weak institutional support.

The researcher interprets that the results reflect an unbalanced model of socio-professional capital formation among students, based on selective interaction between traditional and modern sources in the absence of an effective institutional role; the family determines the value framework, the internet provides knowledge and skills, while the college's role as a link between individual ambitions and labor market requirements is absent, leading to the formation of professional capital that combines traditional values and modern knowledge with a high level of professional anxiety.

4.6. Results and Statistical Analysis for Testing Research Hypotheses

The researcher employed inferential statistical methods to test the research hypotheses and determine the strength of the relationship between socio-professional capital variables. Pearson's correlation coefficient (Pearson's r) was used to measure the strength and direction of the relationship between independent and dependent variables at a significance level ($\alpha = 0.05$).

1. H₁: There is a positive statistically significant correlation between the degree of the student's reliance on the internet as a source of professional information and the high level of their readiness for the labor market.

The hypothesis was tested using Pearson's correlation coefficient to measure the digital empowerment relationship between the mean of the student's reliance on the internet (independent variable) and the degree of overall readiness for the labor market (dependent variable):

Table 11: Results of Pearson's Correlation Coefficient Test for the First Hypothesis (Digital Empowerment Relationship)

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	Correlation Coefficient (r)	Significance Level (p-value)	Strength and Direction of Relationship
Reliance on Internet	Readiness for Labor Market	+0.42	0.001	Positive, moderately strong, statistically significant relationship

The results indicate a positive, moderately strong correlation between the student's reliance on the internet and their level of readiness for the labor market ($r = 0.42$, $p = 0.001$), which is highly statistically significant. This result reflects that increased reliance on the internet as a source of professional information is associated with higher professional and psychological readiness for integration into the labor market. The analysis also shows that the internet

functions as a channel for digital empowerment, providing diverse cognitive and skill resources including the development of technical skills, exploration of professional experiences, and access to self-training opportunities and professional guidance through digital platforms. This reflects the internet's role as an effective mediator in building socio-professional capital, by enhancing applicable skills, increasing confidence in self-abilities, and supporting professional decision-making.

The researcher interprets that these results align with recent trends in international literature linking digital transformation to increased professional readiness and transition from education to employment (OECD, 2023; UNESCO, 2022). He indicates that the student's reliance on the internet represents a shift from the traditional learning model to the digital self-empowerment model, enhancing their autonomy in shaping their professional path and contributing to the formation of social-digital capital that expands knowledge networks and opens channels of interaction with virtual labor markets and entrepreneurial initiatives, making the internet a pivotal component in reshaping the socio-professional capital of the university generation.

2. H₂: There is no statistically significant correlation between the degree of the student's reliance on the college as a source of professional information and the high level of their readiness for the labor market.

The hypothesis was tested using Pearson's correlation coefficient to measure the institutional confidence gap between the mean of the student's reliance on the college (independent variable) and the degree of overall readiness for the labor market (dependent variable).

Table 12: Results of Pearson's Correlation Coefficient Test for the Second Hypothesis (Institutional Confidence Gap)

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	Correlation Coefficient (r)	Significance Level (p-value)	Strength and Direction of Relationship
Reliance on College	Readiness for Labor Market	+0.08	0.15	Weak positive relationship, not statistically significant

The results indicate that the relationship between the student's reliance on the college and their level of readiness for the labor market is very weak and not statistically significant ($r = 0.08$, $p = 0.15$), indicating an absence of actual correlation and that any observed convergence is due to random variation. This reflects that students' benefit from the college as a source of professional information is not concretely associated with their readiness to enter the labor market, demonstrating the limited professional role of the academic institution. The results reveal a clear institutional gap in building socio-professional capital, as the college did not contribute as expected in linking theoretical knowledge with practical professional experience, reflecting the weakness of the institutional communication system, deficiencies in guidance and practical training channels, and its inability to transform academic capital into employable professional capital.

The researcher considers that the weak relationship between reliance on the college and professional readiness is a structural indicator of the institutional confidence crisis, resulting from the college's decline as a pivotal source of professional guidance, weak alignment of academic curricula with labor market requirements, and low effectiveness of training and guidance programs. As a result, the family and the internet continue to perform alternative roles in shaping socio-professional capital, while the college recedes to a marginal position lacking actual impact on the student's professional path.

3. H3.: There are statistically significant differences in the level of readiness for the labor market attributable to the student's academic specialization."

The hypothesis was tested using One-Way ANOVA to compare the mean levels of readiness for the labor market among different academic specializations (Business Administration, Computer Science, Health Sciences, Humanities Studies, Other Specializations) as an independent variable, against the degree of overall readiness for the labor market as a dependent variable.

Table 13: Results of One-Way ANOVA for the Third Hypothesis

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	Degrees of Freedom	Mean Square	F Value	Significance Level (p-value)
Between Groups	25.45	4	6.36	5.65	0.001
Within Groups	352.18	315	1.12		
Total	377.63	319			

The results indicate highly statistically significant differences ($p < 0.01$) in the level of readiness for the labor market attributable to academic specialization, demonstrating that the nature of the specialization clearly affects the degree of students' professional readiness.

- **Post-Hoc Comparison Test (Tukey's HSD) to Determine the Direction of Differences**

Table 14: Results of Post-Hoc Comparison Test (Tukey's HSD)

Comparison Between Specializations (I–J)	Mean Difference (I–J)	Significance Level (p-value)
Computer Science – Humanities Studies	+0.82	0.005
Business Administration – Humanities Studies	+0.75	0.012
Health Sciences – Humanities Studies	+0.48	0.105
Computer Science – Business Administration	+0.07	0.945

The results show that statistically significant differences are concentrated between students of applied specializations (Computer Science and Business Administration) and students of Humanities Studies, where students of applied specializations enjoy a higher level of readiness for the labor market. As for differences among applied specializations themselves, they are not statistically significant, indicating convergence in levels of professional readiness among these categories. These results reflect the hierarchical structure of socio-professional capital within the university field; applied specializations are associated with clearer and more measurable job opportunities, while humanities specializations face ambiguity in professional paths, increasing students' sense of uncertainty and weakening their professional vision.

The researcher argues that these results align with Bourdieu's concept of institutional capital (Bourdieu, 1986), which indicates that some specializations possess higher symbolic and material value in the labor market, enhancing their students' confidence and professional readiness. They are also supported by previous studies (Brown & Hesketh, 2004; OECD, 2022) showing that students in applied fields acquire early practical competencies through training opportunities and direct communication with the labor market. The differences between specializations also clarify that the superiority of applied fields does not reflect differences in individual abilities, but reveals a structural imbalance in the distribution of professional opportunities within the educational system; technical and administrative specializations have a stronger institutional connection with the market and provide applied experiences that translate directly into professional capital, while humanities specializations lack this connection, placing their students in a position of "symbolic capital without a market." These differences also represent a manifestation of the social structure reproducing professional and cognitive inequality among academic specializations, where some fields are given symbolic and material priority in the market.

Accordingly, the researcher indicates that developing socio-professional capital requires rebalancing the relationship between academic education and the labor market to ensure equal opportunities in building professional readiness for all specializations.

4. H4.: The degree of reliance on the internet, the degree of reliance on the family, academic specialization, and gender contribute to predicting the degree of the student's readiness for the labor market.

This hypothesis aimed to test the ability of a set of independent variables—degree of reliance on the internet, degree of reliance on the family, academic specialization, and gender—to predict the degree of the student's readiness for the labor market, with the assumption that reliance on the internet constitutes the strongest predictor within the model. To achieve this, multiple linear regression analysis was used to estimate the contribution of each variable in explaining the variance in the dependent variable (overall readiness).

Table 15: Results of Multiple Linear Regression Analysis for the Fourth Hypothesis (Integrated Predictive Model)

Model Variables	Unstandardized Coefficient (B)	Standard Error	Standardized Coefficient (Beta)	t Value	Significance Level (p-value)

(Constant)	1.452	0.245	—	5.927	0.000
Reliance on Internet	0.391	0.068	0.480	5.750	0.000
Reliance on Family	-0.115	0.052	-0.150	-2.212	0.028
Gender (Male)	0.089	0.078	0.072	1.141	0.255
Specialization: Computer Science	0.284	0.101	0.220	2.812	0.005
Specialization: Business Administration	0.198	0.104	0.148	1.904	0.058

The results showed that $R = 0.557$, $R^2 = 0.310$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.292$, with $F = 17.85$ at $p = 0.000$, indicating that the model as a whole is highly statistically significant ($p < 0.001$) and that the variables together explain about 31% of the variance in the level of readiness for the labor market, a respectable rate in behavioral studies. The regression coefficients indicate that reliance on the internet represents the strongest and most positively influential predictor (Beta = 0.480, $p < 0.001$), meaning that increased reliance on it is associated with a significant increase in professional readiness. In contrast, reliance on the family shows a significant negative effect (Beta = -0.150, $p = 0.028$), indicating that family guidance sources do not fully align with modern labor market requirements and may limit the student's openness to new professional opportunities. The gender variable was not statistically significant ($p = 0.255$), while academic specialization, especially Computer Science, showed a significant positive effect ($p = 0.005$), reflecting its consistency with the needs of the digital market.

The researcher argues that the results embody a fundamental transformation in the sources of social guidance, where reliance on the internet has become the main determinant in shaping students' socio-professional capital, by providing cognitive and skill resources more aligned with contemporary market requirements, while family influence remains traditional and less capable of supporting professional readiness. This transformation highlights the central role of the digital space in building professional awareness and students' orientations toward the future.

Proceeding from the researcher's endeavor to go beyond descriptive analysis of bivariate relationships, this part aims to reveal the deep internal structures of the readiness for the labor market variable, with the aim of building a deeper interpretive understanding of the formation of professional awareness components among university students through analyzing the structural dimensions of readiness.

4.7. Factor Analysis for Readiness for the Labor Market Variable

Principal Component Analysis with Varimax rotation was used to reduce the readiness statements to a set of essential factors representing the internal construct of the concept.

Table 16: Results of Factor Analysis for Readiness for the Labor Market Statements

No.	Statement	Factor 1: Perceived Self-Efficacy
2	I possess the necessary skills to compete in the current labor market.	0.856
3	I know how to search for suitable job opportunities for my qualifications and specialization.	0.821
4	I feel confident in my ability to successfully pass job interviews.	0.788
1	I feel that I have a clear vision of my professional path after graduation.	0.213
5	I feel very anxious about my professional future after graduation. (Reversed)	0.165
Eigenvalue		2.45
Explained Variance %		35.1%

The results showed the presence of two distinct dimensions with clear psychological and sociological significance:

- The first factor explains 35.1% of the total variance and represents perceived self-efficacy, i.e., the student's confidence in their abilities, skills, and practical readiness to compete in the labor market.
- The second factor (not shown in the table but present in the analysis) explains 28.9% of the variance and represents clarity of vision and professional certainty, expressing stability of perceptions about the professional future and absence of anxiety or hesitation.

The total explained variance reached 64%, indicating the strong conceptual representation of these two factors in constructing the "readiness for the labor market" variable. The results indicate that professional readiness among university students includes a procedural dimension represented by actual self-efficacy, and a psychological and directional dimension reflecting clarity of vision and stability of professional direction, which explains the field variations between possessing skills and the absence of clarity of professional path among some students.

4.8. Advanced Regression Analysis

As a continuation of the structural analysis that revealed the two dimensions of the readiness for the labor market concept, the researcher focused in this section on building a predictive model to determine the most influential factors in shaping the dimension of **clarity and professional certainty**, as one of the most important dimensions of readiness and the most sensitive to social and cognitive factors. Multiple linear regression was used to analyze the relative impact of a set of social and educational variables on students' degrees of professional clarity.

The second factor extracted from the factor analysis (clarity and professional certainty) represented the dependent variable, while the independent variables included reliance on the internet, family, and college, in addition to gender and academic specialization.

Table 17: Results of Multiple Linear Regression Analysis for Predicting Clarity and Professional Certainty

Model Variables	Unstandardized Coefficient (B)	Standard Error	Standardized Coefficient (Beta)	t Value	Significance Level (p-value)
(Constant)	1.12	0.31	—	3.61	0.000
Reliance on Internet	0.45	0.09	0.51	5.00	0.000
Reliance on Family	-0.21	0.07	-0.25	-3.00	0.003
Reliance on College	0.09	0.08	0.08	1.13	0.260
Gender (Male)	0.15	0.10	0.11	1.50	0.135
Specialization: Computer Science	0.35	0.13	0.26	2.69	0.008

$R^2 = 0.35$, with $F = 12.94$, $p = 0.000$, indicating high statistical significance for the model, explaining 35% of the variance in degrees of clarity and professional certainty. The results indicate that reliance on the internet is the strongest positive predictor (Beta = 0.51, $p < 0.001$), demonstrating that students who rely on the internet possess clearer awareness of work paths and more accurate understanding of market requirements, enhancing the clarity of their professional vision and confidence in decision-making. In contrast, reliance on the family constituted a negative predictor (Beta = -0.25, $p = 0.003$), reflecting traditional conservative family guidance that may limit the student's openness to new professional opportunities. Reliance on the college did not show a significant effect ($p = 0.260$), indicating its limited role in building clarity of professional vision, while gender was not an explanatory variable, whereas Computer Science specialization showed a moderate and significant positive effect ($p = 0.008$), reflecting the clarity of the career path for applied specializations compared to others.

In light of this, the researcher concluded that clarity of professional vision is determined through a three-way interaction between: **the digital cognitive source**: the internet as a modern and effective source enhancing professional certainty and confidence; **the traditional social source**: the family as a guide that may limit professional openness; and **the institutional source**: the college, which remains in a position of functional neutrality without clear impact on building professional clarity. This model highlights the central role of the digital space in supporting clarity of professional vision, against the inverse effect of traditional guidance, while the institutional role remains limited or marginal in this dimension of socio-professional capital.

5. Results and Recommendations

5.1. Results

The study's results reveal a structural diagnosis of the professional formation crisis among university youth, resulting from the interaction of conflicting social forces that produced a state of "professional alienation" among the generation ready to enter the labor market.

- First: The family remains the most influential source in directing professional choices, through providing advice and bestowing social legitimacy according to a traditional value system linking prestigious employment with social status. Although this provides stability, it restricts the diversity of professional options and places the young person between personal ambition and normative pressure that reinforces stereotyping and limits innovation.
- Second: The internet has transcended its role as a cognitive medium to become a social platform for professional empowerment, granting students the ability to explore new paths and interact with global professional experiences, contributing to the building of "liberating professional capital," where youth take the initiative in formulating their professional paths based on diverse and changing sources of information.
- Third: The college's position as a reliable source of professional information has declined, reflecting a gap in institutional legitimacy. The weakness of guidance programs and the separation of theoretical curricula from the labor market weakened the educational institution's role as a link between academic knowledge and professional application, leading to low clarity of professional vision among students.
- Fourth: The university student lives a value duality between a family system focusing on job security and social status, and a digital system promoting a culture of competence and mobile opportunities, generating fragmentation of professional identity and placing the individual between two different worlds of legitimacy: social and skill-based.

The results also showed that professional readiness consists of two main dimensions: self-efficacy (skill) and professional direction (clarity and certainty). Although the internet enhances efficacy through self-learning, the absence of organized institutional guidance separates skill from direction, turning unguided competence into a source of professional anxiety.

In light of the weak institutional role of the college, professional formation has become an individual process in which the student bears the responsibility of charting their future without structural support, increasing professional anxiety and revealing the imbalance between labor market transformations and the stability of the social guidance structure.

5.2. Recommendations

The study's results indicate that the professional crisis among university youth is not a lack of skills or knowledge, but a structural imbalance in the distribution of roles among social actors in professional guidance, where the family dominates legitimacy, the internet dominates influence, while the educational institution loses its position as an organized bridge between the two domains. From this standpoint, the researcher presents the following recommendations in a brief and practical manner:

1. Adopt an Integrative Career Guidance Model focusing on building a conscious professional identity among students, enabling them to manage the contradiction between

traditional references and modern labor market requirements, beyond merely providing job information.

2. Integrate Socio-Professional Literacy into University Curricula through courses and training workshops, to develop skills for critical selection of digital sources, transform academic knowledge into professional opportunities, and enhance dialogue with the family about career options.

3. Create an Intermediary Digital Platform serving as a cognitive and social bridge between family and internet, localizing global content in accordance with local specificity, and providing practical resources for students and families about future career paths.

4. Adopt a Structured Professional Networks Model through applied professional clubs supervised by specialists and entrepreneurs, to enable students to gain practical experiences, develop social and professional capital, and transform theoretical knowledge into field practice.

5. Implement Awareness Programs for Parents through digital platforms and media to enhance understanding of modern professional transformations, enabling families to support their children while maintaining values of stability and responsibility.

6. Activate the Cultural and Media Role to produce visual and documentary content highlighting successful youth models that blend individual ambition with social belonging, and promote a community professional culture that celebrates diversity and legitimizes modern paths within the framework of national values.

The researcher concludes that the solution lies not in the scarcity of knowledge, but in organizing the conflicting information space within an integrated institutional framework. The recommendations aim to reengineer the societal role of the college as a platform combining the value stability provided by the family and the cognitive freedom granted by the internet, qualifying youth to develop balanced professional awareness, confidence in their identity, and the ability to make informed professional decisions in the context of a changing labor market.

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