

Factors affecting employment choices related to the major of funeral services for Chinese vocational college students

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ABSTRACT

Objective: The aim of this research is to examine the factors that influence Chinese vocational college students who want to work in funeral services and to offer suggestions and strategies for encouraging students to work in the funeral service field for a longer period of time.

Design/Method/Approach: This paper selects students from Chinese funeral colleges and universities for a questionnaire survey. The data was evaluated using regression and correlation analyses in addition to interviews. The factors that influence funeral students' decisions to work in the funeral field were examined.

Results: The results of the data analysis showed that psychological and emotional needs, employment intention and family support ranked among the top three influencing factors for funeral students choosing employment in the funeral industry.

Conclusion: The factors influencing funeral students to choose employment in the funeral industry subjectively are that the actual work does not match the work expectations. Objectively, it is an unadaptation to professional roles.

Keywords: *Chinese vocational colleges employment choices, Funeral service, Major impacting factors, Relevance to the major college student.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The most fundamental problem in people's lives is that everyone must go through the cycles of life and death. Funeral services are an important form of social service that not only serves the departed but also gives their friends and families the necessary help. It serves an irreplaceable social function. As a service industry, its ability to meet societal demands is a crucial component of a nation's capacity to provide basic public services. Consequently, governments at all levels and organizations attach great importance to the development of funeral services and the cultivation of professional talents in this field.

Funeral service education started relatively late in China and has a weak foundation. There are relatively few vocational colleges in the country that offer funeral service majors. The effective transformation of funeral services majors from vocational colleges into a useful workforce for the funeral business is crucial in an environment where there are not enough professionals in this field. It not only enhances the quality of employment for these students but also contributes to the development of service teams in the funeral industry ensuring its long-term sustainable growth.

2. RESEARCH BACKGROUND

Professional funeral service education in China began in the late 1990s. Currently, there are a total of eight vocational colleges offering funeral service majors producing approximately 1,000 funeral service professionals each year. However, this scale is insufficient to meet the growing demand for professionals in the funeral service industry. Additionally, according to professional and industry competition as well as a planned loss of specialized skills, many funeral service companies are constantly faced with the challenge of recruiting or maintaining qualified employees.

On the other hand, the number of students majoring in funeral service at domestic universities has increased significantly in recent years. Nevertheless, the percentage of funeral service major students who choose to remain

in the funeral service industry for long-term employment after learning and experiencing the field is not particularly high.

This study aims to explore the underlying reasons why vocational college graduates majoring in funeral services often choose not to pursue careers directly related to their field of study. It provides insights into ways to enhance the relevance of professional employment choices for funeral service graduates and ultimately increase the industry's employment rate among specialized professionals.

3. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

To investigate and understand the current status of vocational college students majoring in funeral services regarding their willingness for employment related to their field of study.

To explore the factors influencing the employment-related willingness of vocational college graduates majoring in funeral services.

4. LITERATURE REVIEW

This study evaluates relevant studies based on the research goals with an emphasis on important topics such as funeral service talent development and supply, professional relevance, employment choices and influencing factors.

4.1. Research on the Cultivation and Supply of Funeral Service Professionals

People in China have always resisted discussing funerals and have been reluctant to enter this field because of the effects of traditional cultural ideas and administrative management methods. As a result, funeral service education in China has been neglected within the traditional education system and the professional talent cultivation system has been slow to develop.

In China, vocational education in the funeral service sector started relatively late. The introduction of modern funeral service management and vocational technology programmes at Changsha and Jinan civil affairs schools received formal approval from the Ministry of Education in 1995. After more than 20 years of operation and development, modern funeral service vocational education has gradually formed an educational framework that connects secondary vocational education with higher vocational education. There are now three secondary vocational schools and five higher vocational institutions that focus on funeral services (Lu, 2020).

The funeral service sector added more than 5,000 new jobs in 2019 but only 800 people graduated from funeral service schools or less than 16% of the entire demand which was significantly less than what the market needed. Interpersonal interaction for funeral service workers has been severely restricted by society's discrimination against the business. When faced with these obstacles, some graduates decide to quit the funeral service industry because of practical demands which cause the loss of talent and waste financial resources for education.

Currently, the training direction for funeral service majors primarily focuses on frontline skill-oriented professionals who provide funeral and cemetery services. The development of the funeral service sector is firmly based on the expertise of these professionals. However, expertise in areas such as business management, marketing, project planning and design is also indispensable for the growth of modern funeral service businesses. Therefore, China's modern education system needs not only to increase the number of schools offering funeral service programs but also to expand the knowledge domains of the discipline.

All funeral service schools face difficulties in recruiting and training professional teaching staff (Lu, 2020). The main reasons include that all of the faculty members who teach funeral service programmes are not experts; thus, they may find it difficult to adjust to the funeral service curriculum. Secondly, many individuals are unwilling to engage in teaching and research in this field because of societal taboos surrounding the funeral service industry. For example, it is challenging to find teachers specializing in preserving and cosmetic preparation for the deceased in many institutions. Thirdly, industry professionals lack channels for transitioning to teaching roles, making it difficult to meet the teaching requirements of schools. The lack of highly qualified teaching staff significantly constrains the development of funeral service programs in all funeral service institutions.

There are several obstacles in the way of the development of funeral service professionals such as the need for higher educational levels in funeral service vocational education, a relatively weak faculty team, the need for improvements in the scale and model in funeral service talent cultivation and the need for deeper quality in school-enterprise cooperation. Among these issues, raising the educational level is critical and at its core.

Effectively addressing this issue will attract better-quality students, higher-quality faculty and broader development opportunities in funeral service vocational education promoting high-quality development in the field.

The aim of satisfying people's desire for a high-quality means of subsistence should be to direct funeral service vocational education with an emphasis on important responsibilities. It should respond to the funeral service industry's needs for highly skilled, multifaceted technical talent and technological innovation providing talent support for improving industry service levels, promoting industry transformation, upgrading and advancing economic and social development.

Many graduates of the funeral service vocational education programme that was established in mainland China in 1995 have gone on to become technical or managerial core personnel in funeral homes and cemeteries across the country. They have changed the social image of the funeral service industry and elevated overall service quality through their professional competence and selfless dedication. Recognition of graduates by funeral service employers has been steadily increasing over the years. However, some students have faced a number of challenges in their academic careers and in finding employment which they attribute to changes in the larger social environment and unfavourable cultural views. These issues primarily manifest as a lack of job identification, a shortage of practical and hardworking spirit, excessively high job expectations, weakened dedication, reluctance to work in economically underdeveloped areas and at grassroots levels, a strong tendency towards utilitarianism, disloyalty to employers, a lack of credibility and a willingness to break contracts or resign at the slightest opportunity. These issues ultimately stem from students' lack of identification with the funeral service profession. If left unaddressed, they will damage the school's reputation, hinder students' comprehensive development, affect their employability and future sustainability and subsequently impact the overall ethical standards of the industry (Su & Cheng, 2016).

4.2. Research on Employment Relevance to the Major

4.2.1. Employment Relevant to the Major

A significant determinant of how relevant a graduate's work is to their major is the graduate's own employment attitudes. According to a survey by the Michael Institute (2016), the most significant factor among the reasons for graduates' employment being irrelevant to their major was that 'the job does not match their career expectations' (accounting for 33%). Li, Lang, and Deng (2012) discovered that during interviews with students engaged in non-direct work, jobs unrelated to their major often fall into two groups: jobs that are done voluntarily and jobs that are done involuntarily. The former is a choice made based on relatively rational employment attitudes. Certain attributes of the major itself can affect the relevance of graduates' employment to their major. For example, majors with a broader scope may have higher employment rates but lower relevance to the major. On the other hand, majors with a narrower employment scope may provide greater opportunities for graduates to find highly relevant employment. Research by Ma (2018) on Chinese language and literature majors indicates that practical courses including teaching internships, align well with employment requirements and play a direct and significant role in graduates' future work and workplace adaptation. Research by Ding, Ma, and Zhu (2018) also suggests that the mode of internship participation significantly affects the relevance of graduates' employment to their major particularly in the context of theoretical analysis.

According to theoretical analysis, Wang (2019) identified three main categories of factors influencing the relevance of graduates' employment to their major: supply and demand factors, human capital factors and social capital factors. Wang (2019) conducted research on the relevance of university graduates' employment to their major. The quantitative and structural relationships between the supply of talent in higher education and the demand for talent in the labour market are referred to as supply and demand variables. This is considered a macro-level factor. Human capital and social capital factors are analyzed as micro-level factors in this study. Factors such as graduates' professional abilities, academic performance, family economic conditions and parental occupations can all influence graduates' career choices, thus affecting the relevance of their employment to their major.

Guo (2017) found in her research that some students lack confidence in their major leading to negative perceptions that hinder their ability to apply their university knowledge in the job market. Conversely, some students excessively rely on their major and resist acquiring new professional skills in the workplace. Research also revealed that 58% of university graduates are unwilling to accept jobs that do not match their field of study because they perceive these non-matching positions as having limited career prospects. Additionally, some

scholars have studied the factors influencing the relevance of employment to different majors among college students. [Yan \(2021\)](#) conducted research and analysis on the low rate of social work graduates choosing careers directly related to their major suggesting that social work graduates avoid becoming social workers because of deficiencies in the profession regarding political power, economic income and social prestige based on a vocational stratification perspective. [Yao \(2022\)](#) conducted empirical research on the factors influencing the willingness of vocational college agricultural majors to pursue careers directly related to their field of study concluding that behavioral attitudes, environmental control, subjective norms and self-efficacy all significantly predict vocational college agricultural majors' willingness for direct employment.

4.2.2. Research on the Factors Influencing the Relevance of Vocational College Funeral Service Major Students' Employment to Their Field of Study

[Su and Cheng \(2016\)](#) suggest that the most significant factor influencing vocational college funeral service major students' choice of employment directly related to their field of study is occupational identity. Traditional beliefs are the main source of impact on the professional identity of students majoring in funeral services in vocational colleges. The funeral care sector has been severely impacted for thousands of years by the perception that it is one of the lowest-status professions which has been shaped by Chinese traditional culture as well as people's anxiety and taboos around death. As a result, funeral service professionals have long been excluded from mainstream society. Another factor is the unequal portrayal of the funeral service industry by the media. The media often exaggerates the profits in the funeral service industry while portraying its practitioners as lacking professionalism and having low-quality standards. This makes students afraid of entering this field and makes them prefer "high earnings" while considering a career in funeral service. They might get discouraged if they find out that their salary is not as great as others claim. The third factor is the delayed development of the funeral service industry. Due to limitations in material conditions, the construction standards of funeral homes, cemeteries and other funeral facilities are very low, creating an 'ominous and terrifying' atmosphere. Funeral service major students lack basic professional confidence as well as an occupational identity as a result of the unfavourable public perception that the funeral service business naturally has due to such working conditions and services.

[Liu \(2017a\)](#) argues that the overall mental health of funeral service industry workers is not optimistic with prevalent social difficulties and emotional repression. [He \(2021\)](#) points out that this particular group in the funeral care business has had a tough time over a long period of time adjusting to their duties in terms of their family roles, social roles and vocational roles because of the effect of conventional beliefs and cultural prejudices. This manifests as high work-related stress, a low sense of occupational identity, insufficient adaptability, and poor interpersonal skills, among other issues. Existing research shows that occupational identity and job adaptability are the most critical factors influencing vocational college funeral service major students' choice of employment relevant to their field of study.

It is clear from the literature study that the majority of the research on the supply and development of talent for the funeral service industry focuses on the state of the sector as it exists today. It points out the industry's need for a large number of professionals but highlights the insufficient supply of vocational education talent which cannot meet the actual demand. Additionally, it addresses the current status of the funeral service workforce, paying attention to their professional competence, skills and the pressures and adaptability they experience in their careers. However, there is a lack of empirical research into the reasons for the attrition of vocational education talent in the funeral service industry. It is necessary to concentrate on both the "entry" and "exit" factors in order to mitigate the scarcity of professionals in the funeral service sector. Research on the contradiction between talent demand in the industry and vocational education supply has been limited to the study of phenomena lacking an in-depth analysis of their causes.

Reviewing and compiling the literature has led to the observation that Chinese studies on the employment of university graduates have the following characteristics: First, research mainly focuses on employment systems, employment policies, the operation of the employment market, and employment guidance. Secondly, the majority of studies target graduates from regular universities with limited comprehensive research on graduates from vocational colleges. Thirdly, in empirical research, most studies emphasize the increase in graduates' employment rates, paying little attention to employment quality and the research on the relevance of majors and professions is relatively scarce.

5. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

5.1. Research Model

The analysis of factors influencing the vocational relevance and employment intentions of vocational college funeral service graduates needs to take into consideration the professional characteristics of funeral service. The factors impacting the career choices of graduates of funeral service majors in terms of occupational relevance may be divided into four categories through a study and analysis of the literature. These categories include personal, school, family and social influences making a total of six variables (see Figure 1).

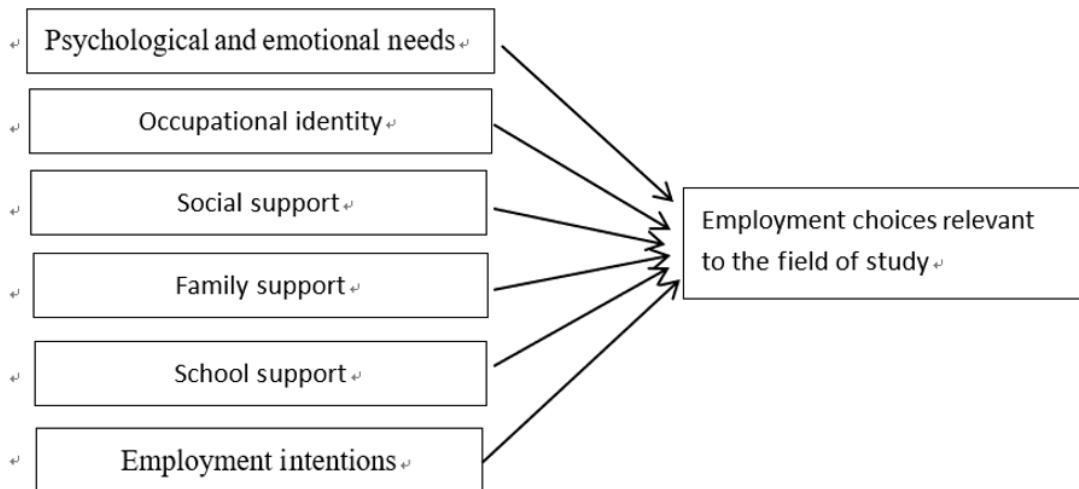


Figure 1. Research models.

5.2. Methods and Sampling

This study employed a questionnaire survey as the research method. The study's target population consists of internship students and graduates majoring in funeral services from five vocational colleges in China that offer funeral service programs covering graduates from the 2017 academic year to the 2020 academic year. A two-stage sampling process was used to ensure the objectivity and authenticity of the research data. Initially, a random sample of 250 individuals was selected and then a second round of screening was conducted considering the comprehensiveness of the obtained sample. Ultimately, a total sample of 300 individuals was determined. 300 questionnaires were distributed and 298 valid responses were collected. Data analysis was conducted using the statistical software tools Statistical Product Service Solutions (SPSS) 25.0 and Advanced Mortar System (AMOS) 22.0. Reliability analysis was performed to examine the reliability of questionnaire items using Cronbach's alpha coefficient test and validity issues of the questionnaire were assessed.

5.3. Research Instruments

In this study, the vocational relevance of employment intentions of vocational college funeral service graduates is set as the dependent variable. The question "Are you willing to continue working in the funeral service-related industry?" is used with responses categorized as a binary variable: "1" for willing and "0" for not willing. The independent variables include "employment intentions, psychological and emotional needs, occupational identity, school support, family support and social support." Variable measurements were conducted using the Likert five-point scoring method.

5.3.1. Questionnaire for Vocational College Funeral Service Students' Employment Intentions

According to Gao and Wand (2018), college students' employment intentions refer to their expectations regarding the location, organization and salary level of their future employment based on their self-assessment and observations of the current job market. This questionnaire measures employment intentions along three dimensions: location, organization and salary level comprising a total of 9 questions. It uses a 5-point Likert scale for measurement.

5.3.2. Questionnaire for the Psychological and Emotional Needs of Vocational College Funeral Service Students

The four elements of psychological and emotional needs that students have for their professions are based on Maslow's hierarchy of requirements: physical and mental health, security, needs for close companionship and love and the desire for self-worth recognition. Twelve items make up this questionnaire, which uses a 5-point Likert scale to assess responses.

5.3.3. Questionnaire for the Occupational Identity of Vocational College Funeral Service Students

This questionnaire which consists of four items, builds on the "Occupational Identity Scale for Chinese Primary and Secondary School Teachers" developed by [Wei, Shi, Zhang, and Li \(2021\)](#) and focuses on role values, occupational behavioural tendencies, occupational values and occupational belonging. It uses a 5-point Likert scale for measurement.

5.3.4. Questionnaire for School Support in Vocational Relevance Employment of Vocational College Funeral Service Students

School support is divided into two dimensions: occupational cognition and occupational experience, totaling 6 questions. A 5-point Likert scale is used for measurement.

5.3.5 Questionnaire for Family Support in Vocational Relevance Employment of Vocational College Funeral Service Students

The family environment often serves as a safe haven or a constraint for vocational college students in their employment choices. Elements of the family environment such as family relationship networks, economic factors, and family values, subtly influence vocational college students' employment behavior ([Liu, 2017b](#)). This questionnaire measures family support in vocational relevance employment from two angles: emotional support and economic support comprising a total of 6 questions. It employs a 5-point Likert scale for measurement.

5.3.6. Questionnaire for Social Support in Vocational Relevance Employment of Vocational College Funeral Service Students

It is acknowledged that there are objective and subjective components to social support taking into account pertinent studies on the subject. Objective aspects primarily pertain to the extent of an individual's social connections and the degree of support they receive while subjective aspects refer to the emotional experiences of feeling respected, supported and understood ([Xiao, 1987](#)). In this context, the questionnaire covers three dimensions: social relationships, social resources and occupational reputation with a total of 9 questions. A 5-point Likert scale is used for measurement. The alpha coefficients for each indicator in the survey range from 0.812 to 0.896 with an overall α coefficient for the questionnaire at 0.866. This demonstrates that the tools used in this research are reliable and the questionnaire content meets the requirements making it suitable for the study. The specific data is shown in [Table 1](#). Exploratory factor analysis was conducted on the items of the questionnaire to assess the structural validity of the scale. The KMO (Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin) value for the graduate scale was 0.867 and Bartlett's sphericity test yielded significant results (Chi-Square=4656.70, df=86, $P<0.001$) indicating suitability for factor analysis. Furthermore, each item exhibited factor loadings greater than 0.5 on their respective factors with a cumulative explained variance of 72.31%. These results demonstrate that the scale possesses good structural validity. This is shown in [Table 2](#).

Table 1. Reliability analysis results of the questionnaire on factors influencing funeral service students' vocational relevance and employment choices.

Factor	Number of questions	The alpha coefficients for each variable	Cronbach's α
Employment intention	9	0.896	0.866
Psychological and emotional needs	12	0.874	
Occupational identity	4	0.812	
Social support	9	0.857	
Family support	6	0.893	
School support	6	0.865	

Table 2. KMO and Bartlett analysis results for the funeral service major students' job adaptation questionnaire.

KMO and Bartlett test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin	Assessment of sampling adequacy	0.867
Bartlett's Sphericity test	About chi-square	4656.70
	Df	86
	Significance	P < 0.001

6. RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

6.1. Statistical Analysis of the Vocational and Relevance Employment Intention of Graduates from Funeral-Related Majors

In the first part of the questionnaire, basic information about the survey participants was analyzed using SPSS software including their place of origin, grade, years of employment and current job positions. The specific data are presented in [Table 3](#).

Among the survey participants, 184 individuals came from urban areas accounting for 64.11% of the total while 114 individuals came from rural areas constituting 35.89% of the sample. In terms of grade distribution, the majority of respondents were from the 2020 grade making up 35.57% of the total. The breakdown for the other grades is as follows: 2019 had 93 individuals representing 31.21%; 2018 had 61 individuals comprising 20.47% and 2017 had 38 individuals accounting for 12.75%. The number of participants in each grade decreased as the graduation year increased.

Table 3. Sample statistics table.

Background variable	Category	Count	Percentage (%)
Place of origin	Urban	184	64.11
	Rural	114	35.89
Grade	2017	38	12.75
	2018	61	20.47
	2019	93	31.21
	2020	106	35.57
Years of employment	0-1	108	36.24
	1	87	29.20
	2	69	23.15
	3	34	11.41
Workplace category	Funeral home	173	58.05
	Public cemetery	48	16.11
	Another funeral	52	17.45
	Non-funeral	25	8.39

In terms of years of employment in funeral-related services, 36.24% of the sample or 108 individuals had worked for one year. Those with less than two years of experience numbered 87 accounting for 29.20%. There were 69 individuals with less than three years of experience constituting 23.15%. Lastly, 34 individuals had three years or more of experience representing 11.41% of the total.

In terms of the workplaces in which students worked, funeral homes accounted for the largest share of employment with 58.05% of participants. Public cemeteries had 48 individuals constituting 16.11%. Other funeral service-related workplaces employed 52 individuals accounting for 17.45% while non-funeral service-related workplaces had 25 individuals making up 8.39%. The specific data list is as follows:

The survey results for the vocational college funeral service majors' intention for profession-relevant employment show that among the 298 students who participated in the survey, 193 students expressed the intention to continue working in funeral service-related jobs which accounts for 64.8% of the total. 105 students indicated that they do not have the intention to continue working in funeral service-related jobs in the future which accounts for 35.2% of the total. The specific data are shown in [Table 4](#).

Table 4. Statistics of vocational college funeral service majors' intention for profession-relevant employment.

Option	Frequency	Percentage
Willing	193	64.80%
Not willing	105	35.20%

6.2. Correlation Analysis

6.2.1. Correlation Analysis between Employment Intention and Selection of Profession-Relevant Employment

The measurement of employment intention encompasses three dimensions: geographical location, job placement and salary level. The choice of profession-relevant employment and employment intention are studied with respect to each other using correlation analysis (see Table 5).

Table 5. Impact of employment intention on profession-relevant employment selection.

		Geographical location	Job placement	Salary level
Professional relevance Employment choice	Pearson correlation	0.253**	0.377**	0.384**
	Sig. (Two-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000
	Cases	298	298	298

Note: **Significantly correlated at the 0.01 level.

The statistical data shows that the correlation coefficient between geographical factors and professional relevance in employment choice is 0.253 and it is significant at the 0.01 level indicating a significant positive correlation between geographical factors and professional relevance in employment choice. The correlation coefficient between organizational factors and professional relevance in employment choice is 0.377 and it is significant at the 0.01 level indicating a significant positive correlation between organizational factors and professional relevance in employment choice. The correlation coefficient between salary level and professional relevance in employment choice is 0.384 indicating a significant correlation between salary level and professional relevance in employment choice.

6.2.2. Correlation Analysis between Psychological and Emotional Needs and Professional Relevance in Employment Choice

The measurement of psychological and emotional needs is conducted across four dimensions i.e. Physical and mental health, sense of security, needs for family, friendship and love, and the expression of self-worth. Correlation analysis is used to study the relationship between psychological and emotional needs and professional relevance in employment choice. The statistical results are shown in Table 6.

Table 6. Impact of psychological and emotional needs on professional relevance in employment choice of vocational college students in funeral service.

		Physical and mental health	Sense of security	Emotional needs	Sense of self-worth
Professional relevance Employment choice	Pearson correlation	0.384**	0.253**	0.377**	0.283**
	Sig. (Two-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
	Cases	298	298	298	298

Note: **Significantly correlated at the 0.01 level.

The statistical data reveals that there are significant positive correlations between various psychological and emotional factors and professional relevance in employment choices among high vocational funeral service majors: Physical and mental health have a correlation coefficient of 0.384 with professional relevance in employment choice with a significance level of 0.01 indicating a significant positive correlation. Sense of security has a correlation coefficient of 0.253 with professional relevance in employment choice with a significance level of 0.01 indicating a significant positive correlation. Emotional needs have a correlation coefficient of 0.377 with professional relevance in employment choice with a significance level of 0.01 indicating a significant positive correlation. Sense of self-worth realization has a correlation coefficient of 0.283 with professional relevance in employment choice with a significance level of 0.01 indicating a significant positive correlation. These findings suggest that psychological and emotional factors including physical and mental health, sense of security, emotional

needs and self-worth realization are significantly associated with the choice of professional relevance in employment among high vocational funeral service majors.

6.2.3. Correlation Analysis between Occupational Identity and Professional Relevance Employment Choices

The measurement of occupational identity is related to role values, occupational behavior tendencies, occupational values and occupational belonging. A correlation analysis was conducted to investigate its relationship with professional relevance in employment choices. The statistical results are shown in [Table 7](#).

Table 7. The impact of occupational identity on vocational relevance in employment choice for higher vocational funeral service major students.

		Role values	Occupational values	Occupational belongingness	Occupational behavior orientation
Professional relevance Employment choice	Pearson correlation	0.362**	0.387**	0.285**	0.277**
	Sig. (two-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
	Cases	298	298	298	298

Note: **Significantly correlated at the 0.01 level.

The statistical data shows that the correlation coefficient between role values and professional relevance in employment choice is 0.362 and it shows a significant positive correlation at the 0.01 level indicating a significant positive correlation between role values and professional relevance in employment choice. The correlation coefficient between occupational values and professional relevance in employment choice is 0.387 and it shows a significant positive correlation at the 0.01 level indicating a significant positive correlation between occupational values and professional relevance in employment choice. The correlation coefficient between occupational belongingness and professional relevance in employment choice is 0.285 and it shows a significant positive correlation at the 0.01 level indicating a significant positive correlation between occupational belongingness and professional relevance in employment choice. The correlation coefficient between occupational behavior orientation and professional relevance in employment choice is 0.277 and it shows a significant positive correlation at the 0.01 level indicating a significant positive correlation between occupational behavior orientation and professional relevance in employment choice.

6.2.4. Correlation Analysis between Family Support and Professional Relevance in Employment Choice

Family support in professional relevance employment choice is divided into emotional support and financial support. A correlation analysis was used to study the relationship between family factors and professional relevance in employment choice. The statistical results are shown in [Table 8](#).

Table 8. The impact of family support on professional relevance in employment choice in vocational funeral service major students.

		Emotional support	Financial support
Professional relevance Employment choice	Pearson correlation	0.371**	0.006
	Sig. (Two-tailed)	0.000	0.812
	Cases	298	298

Note: **Significantly correlated at the 0.01 level.

The correlation coefficient between professional relevance in job selection and family emotional support is 0.371 and it shows a significant positive correlation at the 0.01 level. This suggests that there is a significant positive relationship between professional relevance job selection and family emotional support. The correlation coefficient between professional relevance job selection and family financial support is 0.006 and the p-value is 0.812 (> 0.05). This indicates that there is no significant correlation between professional relevance job selection and family financial support.

6.2.5. School Support and Its Correlation with Professional Relevance in Job Selection

Professional relevance in job selection and school support are divided into occupational cognition and occupational experience. A correlation analysis is used to study the relationship between school factors and professional relevance in job selection and the results are shown in [Table 9](#).

Table 9. The impact of school support on professional relevance and job selection among vocational college funeral service majors

		Occupational awareness	Occupational experience
Professional relevance Employment choice	Pearson correlation	0.315**	0.383**
	Sig. (Two-tailed)	0.000	0.000
	Cases	298	298

Note: **Significantly correlated at the 0.01 level.

The correlation coefficient between professional relevance employment and occupational awareness is 0.315 and it shows a significant positive correlation at the 0.01 level indicating a significant positive correlation between professional relevance employment and occupational awareness. The correlation coefficient between professional relevance employment and occupational experience is 0.383 and it also shows a significant positive correlation at the 0.01 level indicating a significant positive relationship between professional relevance employment and occupational experience.

6.2.6. Correlation Analysis of Social Support and Professional Relevance in Employment Choices

Professional relevance employment and social support are divided into two aspects: subjective perception and objective existence including social relationships, social resources and occupational reputation. A correlation analysis was used to study the relationship between social factors and job adaptation and the results are shown in Table 10.

Table 10. The impact of social support on the professional relevance in employment choices for vocational college funeral service majors.

		Social relationships	Social resources	Professional reputation
Professional relevance Employment choice	Pearson correlation	0.275**	0.245**	0.316**
	Sig. (two -tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000
	Cases	298	298	298

Note: **Significantly correlated at the 0.01 level

The correlation coefficient between professional relevance of employment choice and social relationships is 0.275 which is significant at the 0.01 level indicating a significant positive relationship between professional relevance in employment choice and social relationships. The correlation coefficient between professional relevance employment choice and social resources is 0.245 which is significant at the 0.01 level indicating a correlation between professional relevance employment choice and social resources. The correlation coefficient between professional relevance in employment choice and professional reputation is 0.316 which is significant at the 0.01 level indicating a significant relationship between professional relevance employment choice and professional reputation.

6.3. Binary Logistic Regression Results and Analysis

In this study, the "professional relevance of employment choice" of graduates from vocational colleges majoring in funeral services is taken as the dependent variable. The dependent variable is a binary variable namely, whether they are willing to continue working in the funeral service industry or not. The independent variables include "employment willingness, psychological and emotional needs, professional identity, family support, school support and social support." A binary logistic regression analysis was conducted based on the dependent variable's binary character in order to get more insight into the particular aspects affecting graduates majoring in funeral services when opting for employment using SPSS software. The results were obtained (see Table 11).

Among the influencing factors on professional relevance and employment choice for funeral service students, psychological and emotional needs have the greatest impact with a regression coefficient of 2.514 and it shows significance at the 0.01 level ($p=0.000<0.01$). This implies that for each unit increase in psychological and emotional needs, the likelihood of funeral service students choosing professionally relevant employment increases by a factor of 7.756. Secondly, job willingness is another significant factor with a regression coefficient of 2.116 and significance at the 0.01 level ($p=0.000<0.01$). This means that for each unit increase in job willingness, the likelihood of funeral service students choosing professionally relevant employment increases by a factor of 7.638.

Table 11. The results of the binary logistic regression analysis.

	B (Coefficient)	Standard error	Wald	Degrees of freedom	Significance	Exp.(B)	95% confidence interval for exp(B)	
							Lower bound	Upper bound
Employment intent	2.116	0.248	60.182	1	0.000	7.638	4.521	12.537
Psychological and emotional needs	2.514	0.251	61.293	1	0.000	7.756	4.237	8.238
Professional identity	1.687	0.259	43.837	1	0.000	5.611	3.264	8.972
Family support	1.716	0.227	56.574	1	0.000	6.180	4.715	8.281
School support	1.476	0.243	36.407	1	0.000	4.248	2.653	6.796
Social support	1.293	0.237	29.677	1	0.000	3.558	2.297	5.836

7. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The research findings indicate that the top three influencing factors on professional relevance in employment choices for funeral service students are psychological and emotional needs, job willingness and family support. Among the students who are unwilling to choose employment in the funeral service industry, the main reasons are as follows:

Psychological and Emotional Needs: Funeral service students believe that engaging in professionally relevant work affects their ability to develop and maintain relationships including family, friends and romantic relationships. Additionally, the emotionally demanding nature of funeral service work, limited communication and interaction with colleagues and the perception of high job intensity with inadequate compensation contribute to their reluctance. Many students find the work emotionally taxing and the work environment less than harmonious.

Job Willingness: Students give priority to income and compensation packages within the employment willingness factor. They are concerned not only with the absolute salary amount but also with fair compensation systems and labor rewards. Location also plays a role with many students preferring job opportunities closer to their homes. However, central urban areas where such opportunities exist tend to have higher entry requirements and fewer talent gaps in the funeral service sector.

Family Support: Family support is a critical factor as family members often experience social and psychological pressure and express concerns when their children choose careers in the funeral service industry.

In addition to these three primary factors, occupational identity, social support and school support also have some influence on funeral service students' choices regarding professionally relevant employment. This influence is primarily reflected in the psychological support students receive when they face challenges and difficulties in funeral service work. In summary, funeral service students commonly experience a certain level of discomfort when exposed to funeral service job positions. This discomfort results in a misalignment with their job willingness as the actual working conditions often exceed their psychological expectations. This shared issue contributes to the reluctance of students with practical experience to continue pursuing professionally relevant career choices in the funeral service field. Institutions need to strengthen students' professional identity and industry practice, help students establish correct career values and cultivate students' professional qualities. Enterprises need to pay attention to the physical and mental health of employees and improve the employment mechanism. Reduce students' psychological gap and job discomfort after entry and enhance their confidence and ability to engage in funeral services.

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INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD STATEMENT

The Ethical Committee of the International College, Krirk University, Thailand has granted approval for this study on 21 October 2022 (Ref. No. 1021-2022).

TRANSPARENCY

The authors confirm that the manuscript is an honest, accurate, and transparent account of the study; that no vital features of the study have been omitted; and that any discrepancies from the study as planned have been explained. This study followed all ethical practices during writing.

COMPETING INTERESTS

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

Both authors contributed equally to the conception and design of the study. Both authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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