

# Factors That Affect Ho Chi Minh City Psychology Students' Career Value Orientation and Educational Solutions

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## Abstract

This treatise mentions the factors that affect Ho Chi Minh City psychology students' career value orientation and educational solutions. In this treatise, the author reports the results from a study of psychology students' career value orientation. According to the results, the factors that affect psychology students' career value orientation register at a nearly high degree. Among them, two factors which needs attentions in student intake and student education are personality and career passion. Solutions to the education of career value orientation to Ho Chi Minh City psychology students are: 1). Constructing a compulsory course in the psychology program to enhance the expression of their career value orientation, 2). Educational institutions synchronously cooperating with relevant organizations in the career value orientation education process, 3). Family, educational institutions, and society closely collaborating in the career value orientation process.

**Keywords:** career value orientation, psychology, students, Vietnamese universities, values

## 1. Introduction

Value orientation in general and career value orientation is one of the basic factors in the tendency of personality structure, which plays important role in the process of forming and developing students' personality. Career value orientation is the tendency in which the subject sorts out the meaningful values to occupational activities, and this orientation is expressed through perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors of the subject. Career value orientation of psychology students is the tendency of selecting meaningful values for learning activities and will be reflected through perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors of students majoring in

psychology.

The career value orientation of psychology students is a complex process which is affected by numerous factors. These factors can be categorized into two groups: social factors (objective factors) and individual factors (subjective factors). The former group includes the education provided at departmental and institutional level, unofficial circles of friends, family conditions, etc. The latter group includes academic achievements, personality, career passion, students' psychology, etc. In this study, the author only mentions the fundamental factors that affect the subjects' career value orientation. They are students' personality, career passion, the influence of unofficial circles of friends, the education by departments and institutions. Based upon this, the author presents some solutions to the career value orientation education of psychology students in Ho Chi Minh City.

There are, in fact, many issues of career value orientation that researchers have recently studied. One of them is the influential factors which once explored help to establish feasible solutions.

In "Influences of ethnic and nonethnic variables on the career decision making self-efficacy of college students" Gloria and Hird (1979) point out the difference between 687 (589 white and 98 ethnic) students' self-efficacy, anxiety, and ethnic identity. Among these subjects, white students have a higher self-efficacy in career options, less trait anxiety, and clearer ethnic identity. In this study, ethnic identity is found to predict students' self-efficacy in career options and trait anxiety among ethnic students, but it fails to predict white student's self-efficacy (Gloria & Hird, 1979).

Fassinger (1985) in "A causal model of college women's career choice", studies a sample of 309 freshmen and sophomores. These subjects provide their information on work experience, academic performance, the influence of their role models, encouragement level by other people, attitude to work, attitude to self, attitude to sex role, interests and plans, and the practicality of career choices. The author finds that academic performance, success orientation and attitude to gender equality predict students' career orientation, which in return predicts their behavior in career choices (Fassinger, 1985).

In their article "Career self-efficacy expectations and perceived range of career options in community college students", Rottberg, Brown and Ware (1987) study the relationship between students' socio-economic background, race, gender, self efficacy in career option and their orientation of gender role in career options. They find that students' interests and gender role orientation predict their self-efficacy in career options (Rotberg, Brown, & Ware, 1987).

O'Brien and Fassinger (1993) in "A causal model of the career orientation and career choice of adolescent women" study the relationship between career orientation and career choices among adolescent women. The sample in their study includes 409 adolescent women who were senior high school students at a female school in a central state of the U.S.A. This study points out the factors that predict career orientation and choices, including competence, self, attitude to sex role, and relationship with mothers. Female adolescents in the study who have

an open attitude to sex role and close but independent relationship with their mothers tend to respect their own career choices. Those who have strong competencies and a high self tend to choose unconventional and high class careers (O'Brien & Fassinger, 1993).

O'Brien (1996) in "The influence of psychological separation and parental attachment on the career development of adolescent women" studies the influence of separation or parental attachment on 282 high school female students' self-efficacy, unanimity, practicality and orientation of their careers. The scales employed in this study are "psychological separation" and "career self efficacy". In his article "The influence of psychological separation and parental attachment on the career development of adolescent women," the author finds that those who are attached with their mothers at an average level, base themselves on their mothers to resolve individual problems, feel emotionally attached with their mothers, and embrace a belief and attitude similar to those of their parents are those who have a strong self efficacy and have good career orientation as well as practicality (O'Brien, 1996).

In "Effects of self-efficacy-enhancing interventions on the math/science self-efficacy and career interests, goals, and actions of career undecided college students", Luzzo, Hasper, Albert, Bobby and Martinell (1999) present the influence of the methods on university students' self efficacy in career options, interests, objectives, and behaviors in career choices. These authors study the effects of academic performance and observational learning on the self-efficacy in career options and interests, objectives (or career aspirations) and behavior in study program options of those students who do not have clear orientation. In this study, those who have good academic performance but do not have career orientation are randomly placed into four groups: one under effects of academic performance, one under effects of observational learning, one under combined effects of academic performance and observational learning, and the other control group. The result shows that academic performance and the combination of academic performance and observational learning enhances students' self-efficacy in career options (Luzzo, Hasper, Albert, Bibby, & Martinelli, 1999).

Rainey and Borders (1997) in their article "Influential factors in career orientation and career aspiration of early adolescent girls" study and compare two models of career development among 276 female seventh and eighth graders in a rural area. The first model is employed to predict the subjects' career orientation and the second model to predict their career aspirations. In each model, the authors study endogenous factors, such as the subjects' attitudes to sex roles, relations between mothers and daughters (separation and attachment) and exogenous factors, such as academic performance. These factors fail to predict the subjects' career orientation in the first model but in the second model, career aspirations can be predicted through the relations between the subjects and their mothers (Rainey & Borders, 1997).

Järnlström (2000) studies a sample of 533 undergraduates. The author employs the Myers-Briggs' Personality Inventory in the Finnish version and Schein's Career Anchors. In his article "Personality preferences and career expectations of Finnish business students", the author reports that career orientation among economic majors depends on their technical knowledge (26%), management ability (17%), and independence (14%) (Järnlström, 2000).

In “Interpersonal influences on students’ academic and career decisions: the impact of sexual orientation”, Nauta, Saucier and Woodard (2001) study the difference in the influences of interpersonal relations on career options between homosexual and heterosexual students. In contrast with his hypothesis, the homosexual students have more career role models than their counterparts. What all of them have in common is their career aspirations are to the same degree influenced by their career role models. However, the difference is that the homosexual students admit that they receive little support from those around them in career options. They also have a clear awareness of the sex orientation of their career role model and the support from those of the same sex orientation (Nauta, Saucier, & Woodard, 2001).

Whiston and Keller (2004) in “The influences of the family of origin on career development: a review and analysis” reviews the research studies from the 1980s onwards on the effects of family background on career orientation among family members. Their perceptions of careers are influenced by their family structures, such as their parents’ careers, and the activities within the family, such as support, attachment, independence, etc. out of these, the activities within the family exert more complicated effects and are influenced by such contextual factors as ethnicity, gender, and age (Whiston & Keller, 2004).

Macera and Cohen (2006) studies the work performance of students taking a course in career orientation (regarding study program choice, job opportunities, postgraduate applications, etc.) with the participation of psychology practitioners. The study sample includes 168 students taking this course from different study programs. 36% of them are freshmen, 40% sophomores, 30% juniors, and the rest seniors. In “Psychology as a profession: an effective career exploration and orientation course for undergraduate psychology majors”, the authors report that 93% of them after this course change and/or feel more confident in their career plans (Macera & Cohen, 2006).

In a study of the influences of majors (counseling and clinical psychology), degrees (PhD and Masters), and gender on orientation of study, career aspirations, creativity, and expected wages with 498 psychology graduate students, Cassin, Singer, Dobson, and Altmaier (2007) report in their article “Professional interests and career aspirations of graduate students in professional psychology: an exploratory survey” that counseling psychology students have their clear career orientation, career aspirations, and expected wages while clinical psychology students do not. Masters’ and doctoral students also bear differences in their career orientation and aspirations (Cassin, Singer, Dobson, & Altmaier, 2007).

In “Exploring types of career orientations: a latent class approach” Gerber, Wittekind, Grote, and Staffelbach (2009) reports on the career orientation of two samples, the first consists of 835 staff and the second 737 staff. In the first sample, the authors find four types of career orientation (traditional/promotion, traditional/loyalty, independent, and disengaged). Two thirds of the subjects choose traditional careers, which accentuate the fact that career orientation has not changed (Gerber, Wittekind, Grote, & Staffelbach, 2009).

In “Parental emotional warmth and career decision-making difficulties: a model of intellectual-cultural orientation and conscientiousness”, Hou, Wu, Liu (2013) assesses the effects of parental emotional warmth, consciousness, and intellectual-cultural orientation on

students' career orientation in China. The sample in this study includes 1196 students. According to the result of this study, parental emotional warmth affects students' consciousness and in turn consciousness affects the difficulty of their career orientation. In addition, the relationship between parental emotional warmth and the difficulty of career orientation is affected by the intellectual-cultural orientation (Hou, Wu, & Liu, 2013).

Many studies have shown that: (1) Young people and students are the one who gain direct attention in the study of career value orientation, since this is a crucial issue in orienting the youth's value; (2) The factors that affect the youth's career value orientation are diverse.

In Vietnam, career value orientation has also become a major topic, which is illustrated in many studies.

Just as noticeable, Pham Thi Duc (1998 - 2000) studies the effects of some values on the learning activity and career choices among high school students. According to the author, most high school students are more strongly and directly oriented towards mental values rather than physical values in the learning activity. Also, their career value orientation in the learning activity is closely associated with citizenry responsibility. This is a signal of character development in this cohort (Pham, 2000).

In understanding personality traits in career value orientation, Nguyen Duc Tri (2005) lends attention to the formation of career characters. According to the author, career characters consist of four internal structures: career trends, career competencies, cognition and characters, and the others, such as personality traits, gender, age, etc. These four internal structures play an important role in directing career choices and employment (Nguyen, 2005).

To help individuals understand themselves and find a proper career, Hoang Kien, Nguyen The Truong, and Pham Tat Dong corroborate that individuals need to find an "optimal career choice domain" wherein they can answer all three questions: What career do I like? (interests), What career can I practice? (competence), and What career do I need? (social need, labor market demand). These are what the authors term "optimal career choice domain". In other words, interests and competencies are individual characteristics, which are basic elements to meet the demand of a certain industry. However, in order to find a proper career, these three elements are not sufficient, as it is essential that career seekers possess other characteristics such as ideology, value orientation, personality traits, awareness, etc. Apart from that, health and socio-economic background should also be considered (Pham, 2010)

In his study "Value orientation of laborers in some enterprises in Hanoi", Nguyen Huu Thu (2012) also mentions the issue of career value orientation. The author seeks to understand the reality and degree of career value orientation at the 19/5 Textile Enterprise and Canon Vietnam. He especially studies the three aspects via which the subjects' value orientation is revealed: value orientation towards relationships with family, community, and other people, value orientation towards jobs and career, and value orientation towards individuals and the ideal self. Simultaneously, he points out the trends of value orientation development, the factors that influence laborers' value orientation, and jot down some socio-psychological recommendations for educating value orientation proper to the requests of Vietnam's social

development and cultural and legislative norms in the era of openness and integration (Nguyen, 2012, pp. 01 - 11).

Nguyen Hoang Hai (2012) in his dissertation, “Education of career value for students major in primary education through practices of teaching” stated that Effective organization of education of career value for students is a key factor to ensure the training quality of a teaching school, contributing to build a teaching staff with pattern moral and lifestyle, high qualification and great skill for society. Among ways to educate career value for students major in primary education, teaching practice is considerably important. As a connection of theory and reality, teaching practice facilitates students to be deeply aware of career value, experience career values and apply them in various contexts of real primary education. Through research outcomes, it can be concluded that building education of career value by a process integrated in teaching practice process is feasible and highly effective (Nguyen, 2012).

In general, studies of career value orientation shows that in recent years, there has been more attention to value orientation and career value orientation in Vietnamese academia. Most of these studies have been conducted on different subjects, focusing on the relationships between career value orientation and specific values of each career, and those between career value orientation and individual characters.

## **2. Subjects and Methods**

### *2.1 Sampling*

The research subjects in this study are students who major in psychology in Ho Chi Minh City. They come from the following universities: Ho Chi Minh City University of Social Sciences and Humanities, University of Teacher Education, and Van Hien University. This study used the method random sample, stratified by school years and sex.

The number of respondents in this study is 719 students. The author conducted an initial survey on 150 respondents and the official one on the rest.

### *2.2 Instruments*

The questionnaire is used as the rating scale. The questionnaire consists of questions designed to measure the influence of students on: (1) Traits (3 clauses), (2) Passion for job (3 clauses), (3) Unofficial group of four (4 clauses); and (4) School and faculty education (4 clauses). Each clause has three possible answers, one must choose only one out of three alternatives. As follows

- Option 1 - Disagree: 1 point;
- Option 2 - Partially agreed: 2 points;
- Option 3 - Absolutely agree: 3 points.

### *2.3 Data Analysis*

This study uses the qualitative and quantitative data analysis as follows: after obtaining data from the practical survey, SPSS program was used for statistical processing and analysis quantitative and qualitative assessment, in order to ensure the reliability of the results. Statistical parameters used in this study are descriptive statistics and inferential statistics.

Descriptive statistics: The following indicators are used: frequency, mean, standard deviation,...

The mean score is used to calculate the score of each group.

Standardized deviation is used to describe the dispersion or concentration of sample responses.

Descriptive statistics: The following are used : Compare mean, Pearson correlation test,...

With Mean values obtained from 3 or more groups, ANOVA will determine whether the means of three or more groups are different when F - The test of variance analysis has a statistically significant value with probability  $p < 0.05$ .

With Mean values obtained from two groups, the independent sampling t - test determine whether the mean of one a single group is different from the average of the other groups. The mean values were considered statistically significant when the t - test of the variance analysis was statistically exceeded with the probability  $p < 0.05$ .

In addition, qualitative data processing is used to analyze the content of the study (data obtained from expert opinions, interview method,...).

## **3. Influential Factors and Educational Solutions**

### *3.1 Influential Factors*

It is clear that students' career value orientation is affected by numerous factors. In this research study, the author opted for only fundamental factors that have a strong influence. They are students' academic performance, characters, career passion, influences of unofficial circles of friends, the education of students at departments and institutions.

#### *3.1.1 Students' Characters*

With a mean of 2.74 and standard deviation 0.43, the influence of students' characters on their career value orientation registers at a nearly high degree. As Table 1 shows, students' activeness, sociability, extroversion, and confidence more often orient them towards the values of social positions ( $M=2.98$ ,  $SD=0.32$ ). Meanwhile, students' calmness orient them towards the values of expertise in their future career ( $M=2.73$ ,  $SD=0.46$ ). The statistics about cowardly and unconfident students ( $M=2.62$ ,  $SD=0.53$ ) while matching with reality sends a warning that they may lag behind in expertise.

**Table 1.** Influences of characters on psychology students' career value orientation

Order	Influences of characters	Students' evaluation (%)			Mean	SD
		Incorrect	Nearly correct	Correct		
1	Active, sociable, extrovert, and confident students orient themselves towards social positions in their future career	0.4	10.2	89.3	2.89	0.32
2	Calm students orient themselves towards expertise values in their future career	1.0	25.2	73.8	2.73	0.46
3	Cowardly and unconfident students rarely share any information on their career	2.7	32.6	64.8	2.62	0.53
<b>Mean and standard deviation</b>					<b>2.74</b>	<b>0.43</b>

### 3.1.2 Career Passion

This factor directly affect students' career value orientation, as shown in the table below

**Table 2.** Influences of career passion on psychology students' career value orientation

Order	Influences of career passion	Students' evaluation (%)			Mean	SD
		Incorrect	Nearly correct	Correct		
1	Career passion leads to proper attitude towards implementing professional ethics	2,0	6.8	91.2	2.89	0.37
2	Career passion leads to a desire to accumulate knowledge to enhance expertise, which paves a way for a better position in the chosen career	2.0	32.5	65.4	2.63	0.52
3	Career passion leads to proper attitude towards implementing professional ethics and develop relations with colleagues	2.3	8.6	89.1	2.87	0.40
<b>Mean and standard deviation</b>					<b>2.79</b>	<b>0.43</b>

The mean of 2.79 shows the nearly high degree of psychology students' passion, which exerts more influences on their career value orientation than the character factor does. According to these students, career passion gives them proper attitude towards implementing professional ethics (M= 2.89, SD= 0.37). The second most influential aspect of career passion is that it gives students proper attitude towards implementing professional ethics and develop relations with colleagues (M= 2,89, SD = 0.37). The least influential aspect of career passion is that it gives students a desire to accumulate knowledge for expertise enhancement, which is a conditions for a better position in the chosen career (M= 2.63, SD=0.52).

### 3.1.3 Unofficial Circles of Friends

Unofficial circles of friends are very important to students. They influence students' life in many regards.

**Table 3.** Influences of unofficial circles of friends on psychology students' career value orientation

Order	Influences of unofficial circles of friends	Students' evaluation (%)			Mean	SD
		Incorrect	Nearly correct	Correct		
1	Mechanism of spillover and imitation among friends have influence on students' choice of career values	11.2	45.4	43.4	2.32	0.66
2	Whether economic, promotional, or moral students' career value orientation often depends on friends	28.0	37.2	34.8	2.07	0.79
3	If close with friends who more lean against economic values, individuals will orient themselves towards economic values	7.0	44.1	49.0	2.42	0.61
4	If friends are more about promotional values, individuals will choose those values related to expertise to enhance their positions	15.7	43.1	41.1	2.25	0.71
<b>Mean and standard deviation</b>					<b>2.26</b>	<b>0.69</b>

With the mean of the whole scale and the standard deviation ( $M=2.26$ ,  $SD=0.69$ ), the influences of the unofficial circles of friends registers at a nearly high degree. However, it is not so high as those of the influences of the two previous factors. Regarding the influences of friends, economic values exert the most influence on their career value orientation ( $M=2.42$ ,  $SD=0.61$ ). The second most influential aspect takes place through spillover and imitation ( $M=2.32$ ,  $SD=0.66$ ) among friends. This can be interpreted that students imitate each other in awareness, attitude, and behavior when it comes to career choices. The least influential aspect is the promotional values among friends ( $M=2.25$ ,  $SD=0.71$ ).

### 3.1.4 The Education by Departments and Institutions

As shown in Table 4, the education by departments and institutions have direct influences on the students' career value orientation.

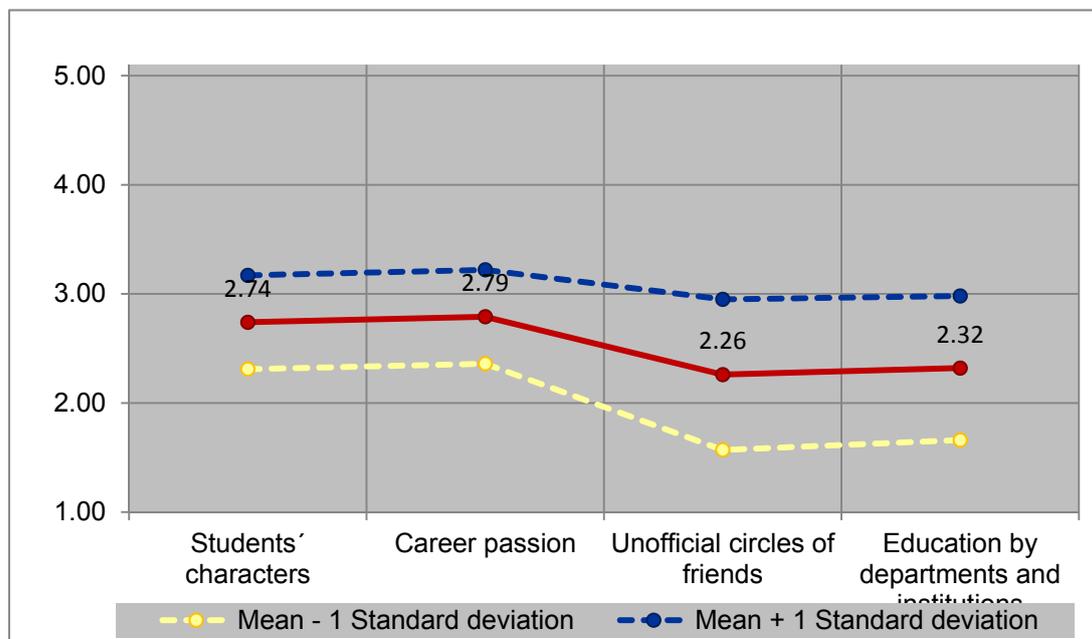
The mean ( $M=2.32$ ) and standard deviation ( $SD=0.66$ ) indicate that the influences of the education provided by departments and institutions register at a nearly high degree. The most influential aspect is the departmental and institutional orientation of students towards expertise collaboration and implement professional ethics ( $M=2.52$ ,  $SD=0.55$ ). The second most influential aspect is the taught contents and employed methods which excite and create career passion for psychology students ( $M=2.32$ ,  $SD=0.66$ ). Although not so strong as the influence of the last aspect, its influence can not be excluded as one of the crucial

components in students' career value orientation.

**Table 4.** Influences of education by departments and institutions and on psychology students' career value orientation

Order	Influences of unofficial circles of friends	Students' evaluation (%)			Mean	SD
		Incorrect	Nearly correct	Correct		
1	Taught contents and employed methods excite psychology students and their career passion	11.2	45.4	43.4	2.32	0.66
2	The education by departments and institutions will help students well perceive professional ethics in psychology, from which students orient themselves towards moral values of the chosen career	15.7	43.1	41.1	2.25	0.71
3	The education by departments and institutions orients students professional ethics	20.2	38.7	41.1	2.21	0.75
4	The education by departments and institutions orient students towards expertise collaboration and implement professional ethics	3.1	42.3	54.6	2.52	0.55
<b>Mean and standard deviation</b>					<b>2.32</b>	<b>0.66</b>

### 3.2 A Comparison of the Influential Factors



**Figure 1:** Comparison of the influences of the factors

(Difference of Mean among the four factors are statistically significant at  $p < 0.05$ ).

All the influences of all the factors subsumed have a mean of 2.52 and standard deviation 0.55. It is concluded that the influences of the factors in this study register a nearly high degree on psychology students' career value orientation. Out of these factors, career passion exerts the strongest influences, followed by characters, the education by departments and institutions, and friends, respectively.

#### **4. Educational Solutions to Students' Career Value Orientation**

Based upon the literature review and empirical findings in this study, the author presents the following solutions.

##### ***Solution 1: Constructing a compulsory course in career value orientation to enhance the expression of psychology students' career value orientation***

This suggested course is to affect the awareness, attitude, and actions of psychology students. For example, "Introduction to the psychology program" as a compulsory course in bachelor of psychology programs, can help students familiarize themselves with psychology and obtain some basic knowledge of the programs, the competencies required as a bachelor of psychology, and the requests by the industry wherein they will practice their career. At the same time, this course will also help students establish proper learning motives and clear career value orientation for their professional practice. If possible, this course can consist of two chapters, focusing on such contents as introduction to psychology and career guidance. Besides, field trips, research practice, teaching practice, and counseling practice play an important role. Learning with examples of career achievements should be also considered.

##### ***Solution 2. Synchronous cooperation between institutions and relevant organizations during study programs***

In order to enhance the expression of psychology students' career value orientation, a system of solutions should be synchronously implemented: 1). Institutions cooperate with centers of human resources and labor markets statistics related to the industries wherein psychology is practiced, 2). Relevant organizations (e.g. institutes of education research, centers of human resources and labor markets statistics, etc.) conduct studies of demands by psychology-related industries, 3). Relevant organizations (e.g. Institutes of education research, institutes of pedagogy research, etc.) study the personality traits that are suitable to study psychology and methods for this purpose, and 4). Departments and institutions need to innovate their study programs to the direction of competence development.

##### ***Solution 3. Strong collaboration between institutions, family, and society***

As a role model, parents should pay attention to and orient students' towards awareness, attitude, and action on harmonously implementing all career values for the chosen career.

When it comes to the role of departments and institutions, group work may help psychology students establish harmonious career value orientation. Academic clubs are also the places where students harmoniously orient themselves towards the economic, promotional, and moral values in their chosen career. Just as important, teachers' integrity is indispensable in orienting students towards career values.

In the context of market economy and international integration, unofficial circles of friends greatly influence students' economic value orientation. Therefore, it is necessary to promote education programs designed to harmoniously orient them towards economic, promotional, and moral values. Media activity in career value orientation also takes effect if its contents and forms are exciting and age-suitable.

In conclusion, the analysis of the study results shows that students' characters and career passion are the most influential factors to their career value orientation. For this reason, these two factors should be taken into account in psychology programs. Based upon the analyzed results, the following solutions are suggested: 1). Constructing a compulsory course to enhance the expression of psychology students' career value orientation, 2). Synchronous cooperation between institutions and relevant organizations during study programs to educate career value orientation to students, and 3). Cooperation between institutions, family, and society for the purpose of psychology students' career value orientation.

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