

Current status of career adaptability among commune police officers at grassroots level by gender, educational level, length of service, and working area

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Abstract

This article presents the findings of a study on the current status of career adaptability among Commune Police (CP) officers, examined through several demographic variables, including gender, educational level, length of service, and working area. Based on the analysis of 350 survey responses, the study reveals that, in general, commune police officers reported a high level of career adaptability, with self-confidence and a sense of control rated the highest. In addition, the study also pointed out statistically significant differences in career adaptability with respect to gender, educational level and working area. In particular, male officers with intermediate-level education and working in Region 3 communes (classified as extremely disadvantaged area) demonstrated higher level of career adaptability, and vice versa.

Keywords: Career adaptability, Commune Police officers, gender, educational level, length of service, working area

Introduction

In the context of Vietnam's ongoing administrative reforms - aimed at reducing intermediary levels and streamlining the apparatus for greater effectiveness and efficiency in serving the needs of the people - the Ministry of Public Security has taken the lead in downsizing its apparatus under the guiding principle of comprehensive governance at the provincial level and strong, community-oriented presence at the commune level. Accordingly, the role of Commune Police forces plays a crucial role in ensuring security and public order at the grassroots level, thereby directly contributing to political stability and local sustainable development. Given the increasingly complex nature of their responsibilities, especially in the context of digital transformation, and the growing prevalence of sophisticated crimes infiltrating local communities, such as cybercrime and offenses involving counterfeit, substandard, or illicit goods, Commune Police officers are compelled to continuously enhance their career adaptability to flexibly meet practical requirements. Career adaptability is a key factor that enables Commune Police officers to address emerging situations promptly, adapt to changes in their work environment, and maintain sustainable work performance.

However, in Vietnam, there is a lack of research on the career adaptability of Commune Police officers, particularly in terms of demographic differentials such as gender, educational level, length of service and working area. These variables can deeply affect the Commune Police officers' ability to fulfill their duties at the grassroots level. Clarifying these differences not only has scientific significance in research but also provides a practical basis to help the Ministry of Public Security and provincial-level police agencies in formulating appropriate training policies and personnel deployment. Therefore, this study was conducted to assess the current status and analyze the differences in career adaptability of Commune Police officers based on the four demographic factors mentioned above, thereby proposing directions to improve the effectiveness of their work at the grassroots level.

Research subjects and Methodology

1. Research subjects

The research subjects consist of 350 Commune Police officers currently studying at the People's Police Academy. Details of which are as follows:

Table 1: Selected characteristics of the research subjects

No	Characteristic of the research subjects	Quantity	Percentage	
1	Gender	Male	320	91.4
		Female	30	8.6
2	Educational level	Intermediate level	261	74.6
		Associate degree	18	5.1
		Bachelor's degree	69	19.7
		Postgraduate degree	2	0.6
3	Length of service	Under 5 years	19	5.4
		From 5 to 10 years	98	28.0
		From 10 to 15 years	183	52.3
		Over 15 years	50	14.3
4	Working area	Region 1	95	27.1
		Region 2	102	29.1
		Region 3	153	43.7

2. Research methodology

The study utilizes the Career Adapt-Abilities Scale plus Cooperation (CAAS + C) developed by Savickas and colleagues. This scale consists of five subscales with a total of 33 items, including: Concern (6 items); Control (6 items); Curiosity (6 items); Confidence (6 items); Cooperation (9 items). The scales have been validated for reliability, achieving very good Cronbach's Alpha coefficients, making them suitable for use in this study.

Table 2: Reliability of the Career Adapt-Abilities Scale

No	Dimension	Cronbach's Alpha
1	Concern	0.903
2	Control	0.881
3	Curiosity	0.830
4	Confidence	0.913
5	Cooperation	0.966
Overall Career Adaptability Scale		0.965

The research subjects rated the items on each subscale based on the extent to which the statements reflected their own characteristics, using a 6-point Likert scale as follows: 1 - *Not at all like me*; 2 - *Not like me*; 3 - *Slightly unlike me*; 4 - *Slightly like me*; 5 - *Like me*; 6 points - *Very much like me*. The mean score (M) of the items within each subscale reflects the level of career adaptability of the subject. A higher mean score indicates greater career adaptability among Commune Police officers.

In addition, the scale also includes demographic variables such as: gender, educational level, length of service, and working area.

Research findings

1. Current status of career adaptability of Commune Police officers at the grassroots level

Based on the theoretical framework of Career Construction Theory (CCT) by Savickas and colleagues, the study used the Career Adapt-Abilities Scale plus Cooperation (CAAS + C) to analyze the current status of career adaptability of Commune Police (CP) officers at the grassroots level. To ensure comprehensiveness and objectivity, the study assessed career adaptability across five dimensions: Concern, Control, Curiosity, Confidence, and Cooperation. The current status of career adaptability among Commune Police officers is presented in Table 3 as follows:

Table 3: Current status of career adaptability among Commune Police officers at the grassroots level according to Career Adapt-Abilities Scale

Dimension	N	M	SD
Confidence	350	4.81	0.90
Control	350	4.77	0.94
Cooperation	350	4.61	0.79
Curiosity	350	4.49	0.89
Concern	350	4.34	1.11
Overall career adaptability	350	4.60	0.82

Based on the analysis results presented in Table 3, the career adaptability of CP officers is generally quite good, with a mean score (M) of 4.60 on a 6-point scale and a standard deviation (SD) of 0.82, indicating a relatively high level of agreement among the respondents in the survey sample. Among the five surveyed dimensions, *Confidence* was rated the highest (M = 4.81), followed by *Control* (M = 4.77), *Cooperation* (M = 4.61), *Curiosity* (M = 4.49), and the lowest was *Concern* (M = 4.34). These results reflected that CP officers possess a good level of career adaptability, demonstrated by their readiness to overcome challenges and difficulties to fulfill their duties, their ability to maintain control and take initiative in unexpected situations, their proactive engagement in exploring and understanding their tasks, and their clear orientation toward responsibilities at the grassroots level.

These findings differ from previous studies in certain aspects. The study by Savickas and Porfeli (2012) indicated that young workers and students often place greater emphasis on the dimensions of *Concern* and *Curiosity*, while tending to give *Confidence* lower ratings. Meanwhile, the research by Creed, Fallon, and Hood (2009) demonstrated that the *Curiosity* dimension plays the most important role and has a positive correlation with workers' career orientation. In particular, according to Hirschi (2010),

the dimension of *Concern* is a predictor of workers' career commitment. However, studies on career adaptability in Vietnam have yielded results that are more consistent with the present study, indicating that the dimensions of *Confidence* and *Control* are rated higher than others (Tran Quang Tien, 2020; Nguyen Thi Anh Thu, 2023) [11, 12]. These findings further reinforce the notion that cultural and social conditions influence collective psychological characteristics of a community, which manifest in both general activities and labor practices (Nguyen Thi Kim Chi, 2018; Rindanah, 2018) [3]. Nevertheless, aside from the general influence of cultural characteristics, the CP force has its own characteristics in terms of professional activities and working environment (Nguyen Thi Nhung, 2021) [8, 9]; as a result, the dimensions of career adaptability among CP officers also exhibit unique characteristics. Specifically, for the People's Public Security forces in general and CP in particular, adherence to regulations, orders, and operational procedures is mandatory and emphasized for every officer and soldier. Additionally, the willingness to accept and complete any assigned task is clearly stated in the Honor Oath of the People's Public Security forces: "*Ready to go anywhere, do anything when the Party, State and people require*". These are the key factors that distinguish the People's Public Security forces in general and CP officers in particular from workers in other sectors.

2. Differences in career adaptability of Commune Police at grassroots level by gender, educational level, length of service and working area.

2.1 Gender differences

In reality the gender distribution among commune police officers is significantly imbalanced, with women accounting for only about 10% of the total force. However, this does not affect the validity of research findings, because female officers also play an important role in the Commune Police force and the career adaptability of female officers also contributes to the overall career adaptability of the unit. To compare the levels of career adaptability between male and female commune police officers, we conducted a comparison of the mean scores (M) and standard deviations (SD) for the two gender groups. In addition, an Independent Samples T-Test was used to find out whether there were significant differences in career adaptability between male and female officers. The comparison results are presented in the table below:

Table 4: Comparison of career adaptability of Commune Police Officers by gender

Dimension	Male (N = 320)		Female (N = 30)		t	p
	M	SD	M	SD		
Concern	4.37	1.10	3.89	1.14	2,278	0.023
Control	4.82	0.89	4.22	1.20	3,449	0.000
Curiosity	4.52	0.87	4.17	1.00	2,108	0.036
Confidence	4.85	0.89	4.36	0.95	2,882	0.004
Cooperation	4.66	0.76	4.08	0.90	3,932	0.000
General Career Adaptability	4.65	0.79	4.14	0.96	3,3315	0.001

The overall comparison of career adaptability indicates that male officers (M = 4.65, SD = 0.79) exhibit a higher level of career adaptability compared to their female counterparts (M = 4.14, SD = 0.96). The test results with t = 3.3315 and p = 0.001 show a significant difference in career

adaptability between the male and female groups, confirming the statistical significance of this difference. This finding aligns with previous studies on career adaptability, which suggest that men tend to adapt better than women. This difference stems from the biological and psychological characteristics of men, who often demonstrate better psychological stability and a greater ability to adjust to environmental changes compared to women (Savickas, 2013; Wiwik Sulistiani, 2017; Gong, 2020). However, for highly specialized occupational environments such as the Police Force in general and Commune Police in particular, there are also significant variations in adaptability across various dimensions.

The results of comparing each dimension of career adaptability also show that male officers have higher adaptability than female officers. Among these dimensions, *Control* and *Cooperation* exhibit the most significant differences, with $p = 0.000$. Other dimensions, namely *Concern*, *Curiosity*, and *Confidence*, although display lower degrees of difference, yet remain meaningful. This suggests that male commune police officers, compared to their female counterparts, have a significantly better ability to manage and handle situations, as well as collaborate and coordinate with other forces in the course of their duties. In

practice, it is also observed that dangerous tasks, which involve a high level of uncertainty and require coordination with many forces, are often carried out by male officers (who are commonly stationed in units such as: Local Police; Public Order Police, and Crime Prevention Police).

2.2 Differences in educational level

To compare the career adaptability of Commune Police officers based on educational level, the study conducted statistical analysis using the Mean Scores of each educational group, including (officers holding intermediate level, associate, bachelor’s, and postgraduate degrees). However, due to the limited number of officers with a Postgraduate degree (only two, which may undermine the reliability of the results), this group was excluded from the analysis. Therefore, we only conducted a comparison of career adaptability among Commune Police officers across three educational groups (intermediate level, associate degree, and bachelor’s degree). A One-way ANOVA test was employed to determine whether there are differences in career adaptability among Commune Police officers with different educational backgrounds, both on the overall scale and across the dimensions.

Table 5: Comparison of CP officers’ career adaptability by educational level

Dimension	Educational level	N	M	SD	F	p	Note of Post-hoc Tamhane test
Concern	Intermediate level	261	4.39	1.03	2.66	0.059	Not statistically significant
	Associate degree	18	3.79	1.39			
	Bachelor’s degree	69	4.22	1.27			
	Total	348	4.33	1.11			
Control	Intermediate level	261	4.88	0.84	5.19	< 0.001	IL > B*
	Associate degree	18	4.25	1.21			
	Bachelor’s degree	69	4.50	1.11			
	Total	348	4.77	0.94			
Curiosity	Intermediate level	261	4.59	0.79	5.44	< 0.001	IL > B*
	Associate degree	18	4.03	1.02			
	Bachelor’s degree	69	4.23	1.22			
	Total	348	4.49	0.89			
Confidence	Intermediate level	261	4.90	0.80	5.51	0.002	Not statistically significant
	Associate degree	18	4.31	1.06			
	Bachelor’s degree	69	4.58	1.13			
	Total	348	4.81	0.90			
Cooperation	Intermediate level	261	4.67	0.70	4.09	0.015	Not statistically significant
	Associate degree	18	4.36	0.88			
	Bachelor’s degree	69	4.40	1.00			
	Total	348	4.61	0.79			
Overall career adaptability	Intermediate level	261	4.68	0.71	5.18	0.002	Not statistically significant
	Associate degree	18	4.17	1.01			
	Bachelor’s degree	69	4.39	1.03			
	Total	348	4.60	0.82			

Note: IL = Intermediate level; B = Bachelor’s degree * $p < 0.05$.

The comparison results indicate a significant difference in overall career adaptability levels. The ANOVA analysis yielded $F = 5.18$; $p = 0.002$, indicating a statistically significant difference among the groups. The Levene’s test indicates a variance of 0.002, which is less than 0.05, suggesting that the variances among the groups are not equal. However, the post-hoc Tamhane test reveals no significant differences between any specific pairs of educational levels. When examining the dimensions of career adaptability, only the dimensions of *Control* and

Curiosity exhibit significant differences between the Intermediate level and the Bachelor’s degree groups, with the former demonstrating higher adaptability. This finding suggests that the group of Commune Police officers with intermediate-level education tend to control situations and had better ability to explore the occupational environment than the group compared to those with Bachelor’s degree. In practice, officers with intermediate-level education often have more field experience than those with Bachelor’s degree, as the duration of intermediate training is shorter.

Therefore, they tend to have more practical experience in carrying out commune-level police duties. Additionally, the functions of Commune Police work do not require extensive specialized knowledge but mainly involve administrative duties (e.g., administrative management of social order) and basic duties such as initial investigations and scene protection to support Provincial Police forces. However, considering the long-term requirements, especially in the context of the Commune Police being assigned new tasks and the complicated developments of criminal activities,

including high-tech crimes—enhancing professional qualifications is necessary to ensure effective performance.

2.3 Difference in length of service

When considering the career adaptability of Commune Police officers at grassroots level in relation to their length of service, we categorized the length of service into four groups: Less than 5 years; From 5 to under 10 years; From 10 to under 15 years; and Over 15 years. The statistical results are shown in the table below:

Table 6: Comparison of CP officers’ career adaptability by length of service

Dimension	Length of service	N	M	SD	F	p
Concern	Less than 5 years	19	4.32	1.02	0.12	0.95
	From 5 to under 10 years	98	4.30	1.06		
	From 10 to under 15 years	183	4.32	1.16		
	Over 15 years	50	4.41	1.10		
	Total	350	4.33	1.11		
Control	Less than 5 years	19	4.85	0.78	1.42	0.24
	From 5 to under 10 years	98	4.80	0.83		
	From 10 to under 15 years	183	4.69	1.02		
	Over 15 years	50	4.98	0.82		
	Total	350	4.77	0.94		
Curiosity	Less than 5 years	19	4.64	0.76	0.77	0.51
	From 5 to under 10 years	98	4.52	0.79		
	From 10 to under 15 years	183	4.43	0.93		
	Over 15 years	50	4.61	0.96		
	Total	350	4.49	0.89		
Confidence	Less than 5 years	19	4.94	0.77	0.89	1.10
	From 5 to under 10 years	98	4.82	0.79		
	From 10 to under 15 years	183	4.74	0.97		
	Over 15 years	50	4.99	0.87		
	Total	350	4.81	0.90		
Cooperation	Under 5 years	19	4.73	0.70	2.08	0.10
	From 5 to 10 years	98	4.64	0.79		
	From 10 to 15 years	183	5.53	0.97		
	Over 15 years	50	4.82	0.65		
	Total	350	4.61	0.79		
Overall career adaptability	Under 5 years	19	4.70	0.65	1.12	0.34
	From 5 to 10 years	98	4.62	0.74		
	From 10 to 15 years	183	4.54	0.89		
	Over 15 years	50	4.77	0.74		
	Total	350	4.50	0.81		

The comparison results indicate that there are differences in terms of overall career adaptability as well as specific dimensions of career adaptability among the groups. However, the One-way ANOVA test results show a significance level of $p > 0.05$, indicating that the differences in career adaptability among the groups are not statistically significant.

Thus, the career adaptability of Commune Police officers at the grassroots level does not appear to be affected by their length of service.

2.4 Difference in working area

The study investigated the level of career adaptability among groups of Commune Police officers working in different areas, including: Region 1 communes (initially developing communes); Region 2 communes (disadvantaged communes); Region 3 communes (especially disadvantaged communes, including those in border or island regions). In addition, the study also employed a One-way ANOVA test to examine the differences in career adaptability among these groups, both in terms of overall career adaptability and specific dimensions. The detailed results are presented as follows:

Table 7: Comparison of CP officers’ career adaptability by working area

Dimension	Working area	N	M	SD	F	p	Note of Tamhane Post-hoc Test
Concern	Region 1	95	4.38	0.99	15,563	< 0.001	R1 > R2* R3 > R2*
	Region 2	102	3.85	1.19			
	Region 3	153	4.61	1.03			
	Total	350	4.33	1.11			
Control	Region 1	95	4.87	0.70	13,050	< 0.001	R1 > R2* R3 > R2*
	Region 2	102	4.39	1.15			

	Region 3	153	4.96	0.82			
	Total	350	4.77	0.94			
Curiosity	Region 1	95	4.53	0.71	4,512	0.012	R3 > R2*
	Region 2	102	4.28	1.02			
	Region 3	153	4.61	0.88			
	Total	350	4.49	0.89			
Confidence	Region 1	95	4.89	0.74	10,896	< 0.001	R1 > R2* R3 > R2*
	Region 2	102	4.47	0.63			
	Region 3	153	4.98	0.82			
	Total	350	4.81	0.90			
Cooperation	Region 1	95	4.62	0.64	10,486	< 0.001	R1 > R2* R3 > R2*
	Region 2	102	4.34	0.92			
	Region 3	153	4.79	0.73			
	Total	350	4.61	0.79			
Overall career adaptability	Region 1	95	4.66	0.61	13,435	< 0.001	R1 > R2* R3 > R2*
	Region 2	102	4.27	0.97			
	Region 3	153	4.79	0.75			
	Total	350	4.60	0.81			

Note: R1 = Region 1; R2 = Region 2; R3 = Region 3 * p < 0.05.

The comparison of mean scores and standard deviation for overall career adaptability revealed differences among groups of CP officers based on their working areas. Specifically, officers working in Region 3 communes demonstrated the highest level of adaptability (M = 4.79; SD = 0.75), followed by those in Region 1 communes (M = 4.66; SD = 0.61), and lastly those in Region 2 communes (M = 4.27; SD = 0.97). The results of the Levene test indicate a significance level of 0.001 < 0.05, suggesting that the variances among the groups were not homogeneous. The one-way ANOVA test results with F = 13.435 and p < 0.001 proved that the difference in career adaptability of Commune Police officers according to working areas was statistically significant. Post-hoc analysis using Tamhane's test revealed that Commune Police officers working in the Region 2 communes had significantly lower level of career adaptability than the other two groups. Meanwhile, the difference in career adaptability between officers in Region 3 and Region 1 was not statistically significant (p > 0.05). The comparison of career adaptability across specific dimensions also gave similar results, with Commune Police officers in Region 3 having the highest level of career adaptability, followed by those in Region 1 and finally Region 2.

In practice, although Commune Police officers working in Region 3 communes face more challenging physical and infrastructural conditions compared to those in other areas, they benefit from more favorable policies and incentives. In addition, these officers receive regular support and encouragement from leadership at all levels. Meanwhile, such areas typically have lower population density, resulting in less constant work pressure. These factors contribute to the higher level of career adaptability among Commune Police officers serving in Region 3 compared to those working in other regions.

Conclusion

The study conducted on 350 Commune Police officers indicates that, overall, their level of career adaptability is relatively high (M = 4.60/6). Among the five dimensions measured using the CAAS+C scale, *Confidence* and *Control* received the highest ratings, suggesting that Commune Police officers possess strong psychological resilience, a proactive attitude, determination, and a high sense of responsibility in their work. However, the dimension of

Concern had the lowest average score (M = 4.34), reflecting that some officers lack long-term career orientation, possibly due to the influence of instability in rotation, transfer or unfavorable family conditions. Additionally, the study revealed significant statistical differences in career adaptability based on gender, education level, and working area. Specifically, male officers, those with intermediate education and working in Region 3 (extremely disadvantaged region) exhibited higher levels of career adaptability. Meanwhile, the length of service does not create a significant difference in terms of career adaptability. These results not only affirm the importance of adaptability in enhancing work effectiveness but also provide a practical basis for formulating human resource policies, training, and utilizing Commune Police officers in accordance with the specific characteristics of each locality and demographic group.

The study aimed to clarify the current situation and differences in career adaptability among Commune Police officers at grassroots level across selected demographic factors and has yielded several notable insights. However, certain limitations remain. The use of convenience sampling may limit the generalizability of the results. In addition, other factors that may also affect the career adaptability of Commune Police officers, such as: personality traits; social support; or working conditions, were not addressed in this study. Future research should consider expanding the scope to further explore the impact of these factors on the career adaptability of Commune Police officers at grassroots level.

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