Exposure to employment training and guidance among university students

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Abstract

For students in Ceuta transitioning to working life, it is essential to establish optimal educational and professional itineraries to meet the needs of their geopolitically transnational context and their vulnerable situation. The objective of this study is to describe the university profile of students studying for degrees in Ceuta and their experience of training and vocational guidance courses. The study uses a descriptive and cross-sectional design. A total of 210 students studying for different undergraduate degrees in Ceuta were selected through stratified random sampling, with the aim of determining which student profiles have experience of training and vocational guidance, and to develop a regression model for this purpose. To collect data, a questionnaire was developed to assess student experiences of training and career guidance courses. The results reveal that students taking degrees in Education report more experience of training and career guidance courses than those studying for Nursing or Business Administration and Management. Likewise, the regression model proved to be valid, predicting 87.1% of cases and explaining between 0.480 and 0.645 of the dependent variable, showing that students with a tendency to take training and career guidance courses are those enrolled in the first years of their degrees and coming from a Baccalaureate background.

Keywords: higher education; vulnerable environments; socio-educational factors; educational and professional guidance

Resum. *Adhesió a la formació i orientació laboral de l'alumnat universitari*

Per a la transició a la vida activa de l'estudiant universitari de Ceuta es fa imprescindible establir itineraris educatius i professionals òptims per donar resposta al context geopolític transnacional i, per tant, al seu entorn vulnerable. Aquest estudi té com a objectiu descriure el perfil universitari dels graus ceutís i la relació que s'estableix amb l'adhesió de l'alumnat a matèries de formació i orientació laboral. En aquest estudi, amb un disseny descriptiu i de tall transversal, van participar-hi 210 estudiants matriculats en els diferents graus universitaris de Ceuta, que es van seleccionar mitjançant un mostratge aleatori estratificat. La finalitat era determinar quin perfil d'estudiant tendeix a crear-se en matèria de formació i orientació laboral i per fer-ho es va establir un model de regressió. Per a la recollida de dades es va elaborar un qüestionari per avaluar l'adherència de l'alumnat a matèries de formació i orientació laboral. Els resultats revelen que els estudiants de titulacions educatives manifesten una adhesió més gran que els procedents d'Infermeria o Administració i Direcció d'Empreses. Així mateix, el model de regressió va resultar ser vàlid i va mostrar que l'alumnat amb tendència a adherir-se a matèries de formació i orientació laboral és el matriculat als primers cursos de les titulacions i prové d'un itinerari de Batxillerat.

Paraules clau: educació superior; entorns vulnerables; factors socioeducatius; orientació educativa i professional

Resumen. *Adhesión a la formación y orientación laboral del alumnado universitario*

Para la transición a la vida activa del estudiante universitario de Ceuta se hace imprescindible establecer itinerarios educativos y profesionales óptimos para dar respuesta a su contexto geopolítico transnacional y, por ende, a su entorno vulnerable. Este estudio tiene como objetivo describir el perfil universitario de los grados ceutís y la relación que se establece con la adhesión del alumnado a materias de formación y orientación laboral. En este estudio, con un diseño descriptivo y de corte transversal, participaron 210 estudiantes matriculados en los diferentes grados universitarios de Ceuta, que se seleccionaron mediante un muestreo aleatorio estratificado. La finalidad era determinar qué perfil de estudiante tiende a crearse en materia de formación y orientación laboral y para ello se estableció un modelo de regresión. Para la recogida de datos se elaboró un cuestionario para evaluar la adherencia del alumnado a materias de formación y orientación laboral. Los resultados revelan que los estudiantes de titulaciones educativas manifiestan una mayor adhesión que los procedentes de Enfermería o Administración y Dirección de Empresas. Asimismo, el modelo de regresión resultó ser válido y mostró que el alumnado con tendencia a adherirse a materias de formación y orientación laboral es el matriculado en los primeros cursos de las titulaciones y proviene de un itinerario de Bachillerato.

Palabras clave: educación superior; entornos vulnerables; factores socioeducativos; orientación educativa y profesional

Summary

1. Introduction

Among the various problems and challenges that exist in today's global society, to alleviate the economic crisis and reduce high unemployment rates, particularly among youth, it is necessary to promote inclusive and equitable quality education, including providing different learning environments that offer an opportunity for all. In this regard, one of the 17 objectives of the 2030 Agenda approved by the United Nations General Assembly in 2015 was the importance of career guidance as a key factor, both in school, especially in the transition from secondary education to university, and throughout life (Hernández-Franco & Franco-Álvarez, 2019).

For university students joining the employment market, it is essential to take into account whether they have had training and guidance in employment issues as part of their educational experience (Bermúdez-López et al., 2020; De Valverde et al., 2020; Kim et al., 2020; Martínez-Clares et al., 2020; Rodríguez-Álvarez et al., 2018; Sartorius, 2020; Virkkula, 2018).

Vocational guidance draws on a student's individual interests, aspirations and future goals. It is provided by a professional adviser, and takes into account the student's academic progress and personal career preferences. Inadequate vocational guidance can lead to students making poor decisions regarding university degree or career choices. Career guidance, meanwhile, serves as a bridge between the education system and the job market (Martínez-Martínez et al., 2016a, 2016b).

This type of guidance is aimed at matching skills and training acquired in the educational system with the careers for which they are most suitable. Career guidance is linked to both vocational training and university education (Bandomo et al., 2016; Virkkula, 2018).

Finally, and focusing on the prevailing labour context, there is employment guidance. This type of guidance focuses on the jobs available in the labour market and on guiding students to acquire the knowledge, aptitudes, skills and competences, both general and specific, that are demanded in most of the jobs offered at that time (Andreassen et al., 2019; Sánchez-Bolívar et al., 2019), creating a link between professional training and the labour market (Andreassen et al., 2019; Del Cerro-Velázquez & Ramón-Cano, 2018; Robertson & Melkumyan, 2020).

In Ceuta, employment training and guidance adhere to the requirements of Spanish legislation. That is to say, they follow the modular training system found on every mid- and higher level training course, in the form of the Employment Training and Guidance (ETG) module, which is taught in the first year of each course, and the Enterprise and Entrepreneurial Initiative (EEI), which is taught in the second year (Sánchez-Bolívar et al., 2019).

The content of the Employment Training and Guidance (ETG) module consists of worker's labour law, collective rights and unionism, active job search, and prevention of occupational hazards (Sánchez-Bolívar et al., 2019). Consequently, professional training is seen as a process that has to be main-

tained and reconfigured throughout one's life in order to achieve complete academic, social and work development (Canzittu, 2020).

In relation to this, Egdell and Robertson (2020) highlight the importance, on the one hand, of students receiving specialized professional guidance and employment knowledge prior to university in order to select a university degree that corresponds with their vocational interests; and on the other hand, they note the importance of being better suited to the job market in the area of work they will want to join in the medium or long term.

At university level, all Spanish universities offer employment guidance programmes and integration platforms. Some degrees, such as the degree in Social Education, include specific subjects on training and career guidance in the curriculum, for example: 'Professional guidance: Ethical and deontological reflection for practice'.

Authors such as Çinkir (2015), Chen and Sun (2017), Hernández-Franco and Franco-Álvarez (2019), Keijzer et al. (2020), and Martínez-Martínez et al. (2017; 2016a; 2016b) have demonstrated the importance of students taking Employment Training and Guidance (ETG) courses or similar subjects, so they can choose which direction to take for further education (upper secondary education, vocational training, university degree, etc.), their chosen profession and the jobs they wish to apply for. In the same way, incorrect guidance can lead to erroneous professional-training decisions that will have repercussions on the student's future in the form of feelings of social inadequacy, incompetence at work, stress, depression, etc. (Bueno et al., 2013).

Similarly, studies such as David et al. (2020), Kettunen et al. (2020) and Wu (2020) show that students who receive employment training and guidance have a higher level of professional and social skills, as well as greater development in management skills and a high level of employability.

Given the importance of professional guidance, the main objective of this study is to define the sociodemographic profile of university students in Ceuta, a Spanish city bordering Morocco, whose university campus is affiliated with the University of Granada (located on the mainland). In addition, the study aims to establish a predictive model, using binary logistic regression, to analyse students' engagement with vocational training and career guidance courses, to assess how these influence their choice of university degree.

2. Method

2.1. Participants

A total of 210 students studying for undergraduate degrees in Social Education, Early Childhood Education, Primary Education, Business Administration and Management, and Nursing at the Ceuta Campus of the University of Granada participated in this exploratory and cross-sectional study. To select the students, a sample was drawn from each undergraduate programme on campus, excluding students from other educational levels and various educational stakeholders (professors, university staff, deans, etc.). Participants were

selected using stratified random sampling, with a sampling error of 0.05%. The natural year groups of each course were selected as strata, with a representative sample being selected in each case.

The gender distribution was 76.7% (n = 161) women and 23.3% (n = 49) men, with a minimum age of 18, a maximum of 51, and a mean of 22.22 years old (Table 1). In terms of religion, 41.4% (n = 87) defined themselves as Christian/Catholic, 39.5% (n = 83) as Muslim, and 14.3% (n = 30) as atheist. For degree subject, the sample distribution was 29.5% (n = 62) studying Business Administration and Management, 27.6% (n = 58) studying Social Education, 21.9% (n = 46) studying Early Childhood Education, and 21% (n = 44) studying Nursing.

Table 1. Basic descriptive data

Characteristics		n	%
Gender	Male	49	23.3
	Female	161	76.7
Religion	Christian/Catholic	87	41.4
	Muslim	83	39.5
	Hindu	1	0.5
	Other	9	4.3
	Atheist	30	14.3
Degree	Early Childhood Ed.	46	21.9
	Social Education	58	27.6
	Business Admin.	62	29.5
	Nursing	44	21.0
Year	First	85	40.5
	Second	80	38.1
	Third	34	16.2
	Fourth	11	5.2
Access course	Upper secondary	117	55.7
	Vocational	82	39.0
	Sports Tech	2	1.0
	>25 years	3	1.4
	>45 years	1	0.5
	Other university degree	5	2.4
EGS	Yes	35	16.7
	No	175	83.3
ETG	Yes	90	42.9
	No	120	57.1

Note: EGS = Employment Guidance Service; ETG = Employment Training and Guidance.

Source: Own elaboration.

In terms of year group, the largest group were first-year students, who accounted for 40.5% (n = 85) of the total sample, while 38.1% (n = 80) were second-year students, 16.2% (n = 32) third-year students, and 5.2% (n = 11) fourth-year students.

The majority of participants had accessed their degree course via upper secondary education (55.7% (n = 117) of the sample) or higher vocational training (39.0% (n = 82)).

2.2. Instruments and variables

To define the sociodemographic variables and relate them to employment training and guidance, a specific questionnaire was designed. This measured the variables of gender, age, religion (Christian/Catholic, Hebrew/Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, atheist, or other), degree, access course, previous educational/vocational/professional/work guidance (yes or no), and previous employment advice (yes or no). It was based on a questionnaire developed by Martínez-Martínez et al. (2016a, 2017).

2.3. Procedure

Following completion of the data collection instrument, contact was established with the relevant coordinating faculty member of each of the undergraduate degree courses at the Ceuta Campus, and an appointment was made to explain the study and the instrument to them.

Once access to the student body was granted, a date and a time within the academic timetable were agreed on for participants to complete the questionnaire in person. To guarantee confidentiality and anonymity, the researcher explained the correct way to fill in the questionnaire and clarified any of the students' questions.

Data was collected and questionnaires were completed in December and January 2020. Following data collection, the completed questionnaires were organized and codified. The research adhered to the ethical standards of the Ethics Committee in Human Research of the University of Granada (1230/CEIH/2020) and the Declaration of Helsinki.

2.4. Data Analysis

Data analysis was performed using IBM SPSS® 24.0 statistical software. Frequencies were used for the basic descriptive analysis, while contingency tables were used for the comparative study. The significance of the relationships was established according to Pearson's Chi-square at $p \leq 0.05$. Chi-square was used because the variables analysed were qualitative.

The model on adherence to training and job orientation was carried out using a binary logistic regression, using the Hosmer-Lemeshow test to determine the goodness of fit and Pearson's Chi-square for the significance of the relationships, set at $p \leq 0.05$. The Reliability Index (CI) for Exp (B) was set at 95%.

3. Results

Regarding employment training and guidance (ETG), 42.9% (n = 90) of participants said they were taking or had taken courses relating to employment training and guidance, while 57.1% (n = 120) said they had not. Likewise, 83.3% (n = 175) said they had never used an Employment Guidance Service (EGS), while 16.7% (n = 35) had.

For the relationship between gender and experience of employment training and guidance, no statistically significant differences were found (p> 0.05), although the number of women who said they had taken an ETG course was 44.7% (n = 72) compared to 36.7% (n = 18) of men, while the percentage of men who said they had not taken an ETG course was 66.3% (n = 31) compared to 36.7% (n = 18) of women (Table 2).

Table 2. Experience of career training and guidance by gender; religion; access route; qualification level; and access to employment guidance services

Variables % (*n*)						Sig.
Gender						
	Male		**Female**			**Sig.**
ETG Yes	36.7% (*n*=18)		44.7% (*n*=72)			0.323
ETG No	66.3% (*n*=31)		55.3% (*n*=89)			
Religion						
	Christian/Catholic	**Muslim**	**Hindu**	**Other**	**Atheist**	**Sig.**
ETG Yes	39.1% (*n*=34)	44.6% (*n*=37)	0	22.2% (*n*=2)	56.7% (*n*=17)	0.262
ETG No	60.9% (*n*=53)	55.4% (*n*=46)	100% (*n*=1)	77.8% (*n*=7)	44.3% (*n*=13)	
Access						
	Upper Sec. **Voc. Tr.**	**Sport Tech**	**>25 years**	**>45 years**	**Other uni. degree**	**Sig.**
ETG Yes	11.1% (*n*=13) 89.0% (*n*=73)	50% (*n*=1)	33.3% (*n*=1)	0	40.0% (*n*=2)	0.000*
ETG No	88.9% (*n*=104) 11.0% (*n*=9)	50% (*n*=1)	66.7% (*n*=2)	100% (*n*=1)	60.0% (*n*=3)	
Degree						
	Early Childhood Ed	**Social Ed**		**BAM**	**Nursing**	**Sig.**
ETG Yes	54.3% (*n*=25)	51.7% (*n*=30)		19.4% (*n*=12)	52.3% (*n*=23)	0.000*
ETG No	45.7% (*n*=21)	48.3% (*n*=28)		80.6% (*n*=50)	47.7% (*n*=21)	
Year						
	First	**Second**		**Third**	**Fourth**	**Sig.**
ETG Yes	43.5% (*n*=37)	38.8% (*n*=31)		47.1 (*n*=16)	54.5% (*n*=6)	0.700
ETG No	56.5% (*n*=48)	61.2% (*n*=49)		52.9% (*n*=18)	45.5% (*n*=5)	
EGS						
	Yes		**No**			**Sig.**
ETG Yes	80.0% (*n*=28)		35.4% (*n*=62)			0.000*
ETG No	20.0% (*n*=7)		64.6% (*n*=113)			

Note: ETG = Employment Training and Guidance. EGS = Employment Guidance Service.
Source: Own elaboration.

No statistically significant differences (p> 0.05) were identified between attendance on ETG courses and religion. However, 56.7% (n = 17) of atheists said they had taken a course on employment training and guidance, compared to 44.3% (n = 13) who said they had not. In contrast, 60.9% (n = 53) of Christian/Catholic students said they had not taken an ETG course, while 39.1% (n = 34) said they had. Likewise, 44.6% (n = 37) of Muslim students said that they had taken an ETG course, while 55.4% (n = 46) had not.

Regarding the route by which students gained access to university studies, there are statistically significant differences (p <0.05) in attendance on ETG courses (p = 0.000 *), with 89.0% (n = 73) of the Advanced Vocational Training (AVT) students saying that they had taken an ETG course during their higher-level training course, while 11.0% (n = 9) said they had not (because this had already been validated). In contrast, 88.9% (n = 104) of students from upper secondary school reported not having taken an ETG course, while 11.1% (n = 13) had.

In terms of the university degree that the students were studying, the table shows that there are statistically significant differences (p <0.05) between degree course and experience of ETG courses (p = 0.000 *). For example, 80.6% (n = 50) of students studying Business Administration and Management (BAM) said they had not taken an ETG course, while 54.3% (n = 25) of students in Early Childhood Education, 51.7% (n = 30) of students in Social Education and 52.3% (n = 23) of Nursing students said they had.

No statistically significant differences (p> 0.05) were identified between the academic year of the students and experience of ETG courses.

Regarding the relationship between taking an ETG course and having previously consulted employment guidance services, there were statistically significant differences (p <0.05) between them (p = 0.000 *), as 80.0% (n = 28) of students who had used an employment guidance service had taken or were taking an ETG course. Meanwhile, 64.6% (n = 113) of the students had not consulted the guidance service nor taken an ETG course.

Next, the binary logistic regression model is shown in order to determine the predominant profile of the subjects who tend to have taken an ETG course (Table 3).

First, it can be established that the model helps to explain the profile of someone who does a degree or training model relating to employment guidance, since the significance of the Chi-square in the omnibus test obtained a value of p <0.000*. Likewise, it is capable of predicting correctly in 87.1% of cases and explains between 0.480 and 0.645 of the dependent variable, so the model is quite acceptable.

The relationship of the independent and dependent variables (Table 3) obtained statistically significant differences for the associations given with degree course (p = 0.007 *) and form of access (p = 0.000 *), revealing an inverse relationship for both (B = −1.454 and B = −4.157), while gender, religion, course year and use of career guidance services (B = −0.748; B = −0.490;

B = 0.168 ; B = 0.296) are not relevant in terms of taking employment training and guidance courses.

Thus, being a first year student multiplies the probability of taking an employment training and guidance course by 0.23, while the upper secondary route increases the probability by 0.02. Therefore, it is determined that the profile of subjects who tend to have taken an ETG course consists of students who are enrolled in the first years of university degrees and who have arrived at the university through upper secondary education.

Table 3. Binary logistic regression for enrolment on an employment training and guidance course.

	B	E.T.	Wald	gl	Sig.	Exp(B)	I.C. 95% for EXP(B)	
							Inferior	Superior
Gender	−0.748	0.543	1.895	1	0.169	0.474	0.163	1.373
Religion	−0.490	0.602	0.662	1	0.416	0.613	0.188	1.993
Year	−1.454	0.544	7.152	1	0.007*	0.234	0.081	0.678
Degree	0.168	0.577	0.084	1	0.771	1.183	0.381	3.667
Access	−4.157	0.523	63.069	1	0.000*	0.016	0.006	0.044
EGS	0.296	0.609	0.236	1	0.627	1.344	0.407	4.433

Note: *Significance of B

Source: Own elaboration.

4. Discussion and conclusions

This study set out to define the sociodemographic profile of university students in Ceuta and to develop a predictive model using binary logistic regression to identify key variables influencing whether students have taken courses relating to vocational training and career guidance. The findings contribute to a better understanding of how personal, academic and contextual factors interact in shaping students' educational decisions and professional development.

The data show a clear predominance of female students across the university degrees offered on the Ceuta campus. This finding aligns with previous research (Cuevas-López & Díaz-Rosas, 2019; Sánchez-Bolívar et al., 2019; Zurita-Ortega et al., 2018; San Román-Mata et al., 2018; Sartorius, 2020), which indicates that certain degrees such as Nursing or Social Education have traditionally attracted more women. Studies by Chacón-Delgado and Moso-Díez (2018) and Wu (2020) also point to gender as a decisive factor in higher education choices, with female students favouring degrees oriented toward care-giving professions, and male students more frequently enrolling in fields such as Computer Science or Physical Education.

Regarding religious affiliation, the sample reflects the intercultural nature of Ceuta, with a near-equal distribution between Christian/Catholic and Muslim students, and minority representation of Jewish and Hindu populations.

This contrasts with other national studies (Zurita-Ortega et al., 2018; San Román-Mata et al., 2018), which report a Catholic majority, followed by atheist or agnostic students. However, the current study found no significant relationship between religious identity and experience of training and guidance courses. As Kim et al. (2020) suggest, students tend to choose their degrees based more on personal interest than on religious beliefs.

A significant distinction was observed based on students' academic backgrounds prior to university. The majority of those from a Baccalaureate background reported little or no exposure to courses relating to career guidance, while students from vocational training programs indicated greater familiarity and experience in this area. This difference reflects the curriculum structures at each level: vocational training includes modules on employability and guidance, whereas Baccalaureate pathways do not (Santana-Vega et al., 2019; Martínez-Martínez et al., 2016b, 2017). These findings support prior research by Chacón-Delgado and Moso-Díez (2018), which calls for an integrated system of educational and career guidance throughout all academic stages.

The representation of degrees in the sample was generally balanced, although a slight predominance was noted in students enrolled in Business Administration and Management. Overall, students from Social Sciences outnumbered those in Health Sciences, which may reflect local employment dynamics. Ceuta's labour market is primarily oriented toward public sector jobs such as education and military service, with more limited healthcare employment opportunities, as the city only has one hospital. Domínguez et al. (2012) noted that Nursing degrees in Ceuta are often used as a stepping stone to study and work in mainland Spain, partly due to the high levels of burnout among local healthcare professionals.

The results also reveal that students' experience of employment training and guidance varies by degree. Business Administration students show low levels of engagement, likely because most come from Baccalaureate backgrounds with little prior exposure to career guidance. In contrast, students of Social Education, many of whom come from vocational training, are more engaged with ETG, viewing it as helpful for career development (Beer & Mulder, 2020; Tapani & Salonen, 2019). While this finding is consistent with San Román-Mata et al. (2018), other studies (e.g., Esmond, 2019) highlight a disconnect between university curricula and the labour market, emphasizing the need for improved alignment. Martínez-Clares and González-Lorente (2018) found similar participation rates across knowledge areas, although in cities with broader academic offerings than Ceuta, which may explain the differences.

Regarding students' year of study, those in their first and second years demonstrated lower experience of career guidance courses than those in their third and fourth years. This is likely due to the latter's increased exposure to academic internships and employability-focused content, which facilitate a smoother transition into the labour market (Martínez-Clares & González-Lorente, 2019; Milot-Lapointe et al., 2020; Robertson & Melkumyan, 2020).

These findings emphasize the importance of strengthening early-stage guidance in university programmes to support career planning from the outset.

In relation to the study's objectives, two main student profiles emerge using the predictive model. The first includes students in the early years of their degrees, particularly those in Business Administration, Nursing or Computer Science, who have accessed university through the Baccalaureate pathway. This group shows lower experience of vocational training and guidance courses, suggesting a greater need for targeted support. The second profile comprises students, primarily women, who are in their third or fourth year of degrees such as Social Education, and who entered university via vocational training. These students show higher engagement with ETG courses and appear better prepared to define their professional pathways, regardless of their religious background.

In conclusion, the study offers valuable insights into the sociodemographic and academic characteristics that influence students' engagement with career guidance. It demonstrates the predictive utility of a logistic regression model in identifying students who may benefit most from early intervention. These findings underscore the importance of integrating career guidance into both secondary and higher education curricula and suggest a need for tailored strategies to support students based on their educational background, degree programme and stage of university.

This leads us to conclude that, despite the limitations of Ceuta's educational offering, it is necessary to establish greater training in career guidance in high school and secondary education programmes to prepare students to make decisions appropriate to their personal preferences and academic abilities.

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