

# Transition from university to work: The perspective of speech-language-hearing students

Patrícia Pupin Mandrá<sup>1</sup> Veridiana Dias de Oliveira Piccirillo Ferreira<sup>2</sup> Matheus Francooy Alpes<sup>3</sup> 

<sup>1</sup> Universidade de São Paulo, Faculdade de Medicina de Ribeirão Preto - FMRPUSP, Departamento de Ciências da Saúde, Divisão de Fonoaudiologia, Ribeirão Preto, São Paulo, Brasil.

<sup>2</sup> Universidade de São Paulo, Faculdade de Medicina de Ribeirão Preto - FMRPUSP, Curso de Fonoaudiologia, Ribeirão Preto, São Paulo, Brasil.

<sup>3</sup> Universidade de Sorocaba - Uniso, Colegiado de Fonoaudiologia, Sorocaba, São Paulo, Brasil.

A study conducted at the Universidade de São Paulo, Medical School of Ribeirão Preto – FMRP-USP, Speech-Language-Hearing Program, Department of Health Sciences, Ribeirão Preto, SP, Brazil.

**Financial support:** Programa Unificado de Bolsas da Universidade de São Paulo, PUB-Ensino (2022-2023)

**Conflict of interests:** Nonexistent

#### Corresponding author:

Patrícia Pupin Mandrá  
Departamento de Ciências da Saúde,  
Faculdade de Medicina de Ribeirão Preto - USP  
Avenida Bandeirantes, 3900  
CEP: 14049-900 - Ribeirão Preto, SP,  
Brasil

Received on March 3, 2024

Received in a reviewed form on April 17, 2024

Accepted on September 26, 2024

## ABSTRACT

**Purpose:** to investigate the transition from university to work and career development among speech-language-hearing pathologists.

**Methods:** an observational, cross-sectional, descriptive study, with a non-probabilistic convenience sample. The 34 selected volunteers were in the last term of their speech-language-hearing program at a public university. The validated instruments (Career Development Scale for University Students, Self-Efficacy Scale in the Transition to Work, and the Professional Opportunities Perception Scale) were made available in digital format via Google Forms®. The responses were tabulated in a spreadsheet to analyze the data, descriptively.

**Results:** the analyses revealed a disadvantage in professional identity, affecting motivation and satisfaction. Career decision-making presents above-average results, impacting the clarity of objectives. The locus of professional control emphasizes success linked to personal effort. Self-efficacy is moderate, reflecting confidence in professional performance. Expanded career exploration indicates concern and proactivity. The perception of opportunities was moderately negative.

**Conclusion:** this research investigated the transition from university to work in speech-language-hearing therapy and revealed pessimism regarding motivation and insertion in the job market, and self-confidence in relation to self-efficacy at work and the search for improved career development.

**Keywords:** Universities; Career Mobility; Job Market; Speech, Language and Hearing Sciences



## INTRODUCTION

The word career originates from the Latin “*via carraria*” (road for carriages) and began to be used by the French to designate a life path, personal development, and the advancement of this journey<sup>1,2</sup>. From the 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards, it began to be recognized as a professional path<sup>3</sup>.

Careers begin with important decisions in transitioning from the end of university education to the beginning of work (entering the job market) and, later, career development. Upon completing their degree, young people enter adulthood, a phase of uncertainty, tension, and anxiety regarding the future. The new challenges consist of entering a productive and independent life through work, adapting to the productive environment, and consolidating their professional and personal identity<sup>4-6</sup>. This phase, known as the transition from university to work<sup>7</sup>, can generate internal conflicts concerning recent graduates’ professional choices<sup>8</sup>.

Recent university graduates are likely to have confidence in their professional future, find opportunities appropriate to their field and personal goals, adapt to the professional role, and achieve financial independence<sup>6,7,9</sup>.

The transition to the job market begins while still in the university and ends after adapting to work<sup>10</sup>. The quality of the student’s involvement with their education and the development of skills useful for the professional world can either positively or negatively impact this transition<sup>8,9,11</sup>.

A successful transition from university to work is multidimensional and assessable through a set of indicators characteristic of the early years of a career<sup>9</sup>. This issue has become relevant in the 21<sup>st</sup> century due to the complex transformations in contemporary society, characterized by various uncertainties and changes, substantially impacting this process<sup>11,12</sup>. This is a new stage in life, full of new responsibilities and transformations that, although predictable, occur in a short time and often without prior preparation and guidance<sup>12</sup>.

The above issues raised the question, “How does the transition to a speech-language-hearing (SLH) career occur?”, which guided this study, aiming to investigate the transition from university to work and the development of an SLH career.

## METHODS

This is an observational, cross-sectional, descriptive, quantitative study, with a non-probabilistic, convenience sample. It was approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the Clinics Hospital of the Medical School of Ribeirão Preto at the Universidade de São Paulo (HCFMRP-USP), SP, Brazil, under evaluation report no. 12458/2023 and CAEE no. 66124122.6.0000.5440. All volunteers were asked to read and agree to an informed consent form, made available in a virtual environment, in accordance with Resolution 466/2012 of the Brazilian National Health Council.

All students enrolled in the final year of the program in 2022 and 2023 and who agreed to participate by electronically signing the informed consent form were eligible as volunteers. The forms of volunteers who did not fully respond to all items of the instruments were excluded.

The study used three validated scales, commonly used in career research. The Career Development Scale for University Students (CDSUS) has 42 statements to measure five dimensions: 1) career identity, 2) career decision, 3) expanded career exploration, 4) professional self-efficacy, and 5) locus of professional control. After reading the questionnaire, respondents were asked to indicate their opinion on a numerical Likert scale, ranging from 1 point (the statement is completely false about you) to 5 points (the statement is completely true about you)<sup>13</sup>. The Self-Efficacy Scale in the Transition to Work – Brazilian version (SESTW-Br) has 22 items, randomly distributed in two subscales, corresponding to the following dimensions: a) self-efficacy in adapting to work, and b) self-efficacy in emotional regulation in the job search. The instrument has six response options, ranging from 1 (not at all confident) to 6 points (completely confident), indicating that the stronger the self-efficacy, the higher the score<sup>14</sup>. The study also used the Professional Opportunities Perception Scale (POPS) to measure the personal perception of the positive job market and the expectation of obtaining a job. It has five statements, with a response on a 5-point Likert scale of agreement<sup>15</sup>.

Two official invitation formats were created to recruit volunteers – one disseminated on social media (Instagram, Facebook, and WhatsApp groups), and the other sent by email to the general institutional address of students in the program. The link to the informed consent form was embedded in both; after clicking on

the acceptance button, the volunteer was directed to the form (Google Forms) containing the instruments digitized by the researchers. The form was available for response for 60 days, counting from the beginning of the dissemination.

At the end of this period, the responses were tabulated in a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet, followed by data analysis from each scale and descriptive statistical analyses.

## RESULTS

The sample comprised 34 volunteers, students in the eighth semester of the SLH program at a public

university. Eight participants answered one or more evaluation scales incompletely and were excluded. Hence, the sample had 26 participants (24 females and 2 males), aged 21 to 36 years, with a mean of 21 years (SD 4.5). All were finishing their first undergraduate degree, 40% were awarded resources from the University's affirmative action policies (scholarships and/or financial aid), and their families had a per capita income between R\$ 933.00 and R\$ 1,944.00 per month.

A high overall mean score (> 3.0) was found in all CDSUS dimensions, as shown in Table 1. The opinions in the decision and career identity dimensions varied greatly, with a mean standard deviation of 1.0.

**Table 1.** Measures of central tendency of the Career Development Scale for University Students (CDSUS) applied to speech-language-hearing undergraduate students at a Brazilian public university

CDSUS dimensions	n	Mean	Median	SD	Min	Max
Career decision	26	3.7	3.8	1.01	1.5	5.0
Expanded career exploration	26	3.9	4.3	0.9	1.0	5.0
Professional self-efficacy	26	3.8	3.9	0.7	2.5	5.0
Locus of professional control	26	3.8	4.1	0.7	2.0	4.8
Career identity	26	3.8	4.0	1.1	1.0	5.0

Source: Research data. Captions: n = total number of participants; SD = standard deviation; Min = minimum; Max = maximum

The SESTW-Br provided data on self-efficacy and emotional self-regulation for adapting to work, indicating a mean confidence level of 5.2 and 4.5, respectively – Table 2. The mean score in self-efficacy in adapting to work was 69.5 points (min. 14 – max.

84) (mean score to be considered confident, 49), and in self-regulation, it was 35.7 (min. 8 – max. 48) (mean score to be considered confident, 28). Hence, they were considered confident.

**Table 2.** Measures of central tendency of the Self-Efficacy Scale in the Transition to Work (SESTW-Br) applied to speech-language-hearing undergraduate students at a Brazilian public university

SESTW-Br	n	Mean	Median	SD	Min	Max
Self-efficacy in adapting to work	26	5.2	5.0	0.5	4.4	6.0
Self-efficacy in emotional regulation	26	4.5	4.7	0.9	2.1	6.0

Source: Research data. Captions: n = total number of participants; SD = standard deviation; Min = minimum; Max = maximum

The participants had a mean of 2.8 in the POPS, with a mean score of 13.9, indicating a positive perception regarding the job market.

## DISCUSSION

Psychological assessment tools are strategies professional counselors use to help identify career-related variables. However, it is important to highlight the relevance of data from extra-class factors, which can support the present study findings.

A survey on the profile of SLH pathologists in the state of São Paulo showed a predominance of women (97.9%) and a mean age of 25 years at graduation<sup>16</sup>, similar to the results of this study. Furthermore, socio-economic aspects are relevant in constructing the professional profile and transitioning from university to work. Many of these students were in their first undergraduate degree, had been awarded resources from the university's affirmative action policies (scholarships and/or financial aid), and their families had a per capita income of up to two minimum wages.

The descriptive data analysis reveals a disadvantage in career identity in the CDSUS. The closer the result is to 5 points, the greater the indication of interference in aspects related to motivation, commitment, and satisfaction with the professional choice. The career decision assessment indicated a result above the expected mean, which may impact the clarity of objectives, goals, and the achievement of professional desires. The locus of professional control indicated that the conviction of professional success among sample participants is more related to personal effort or initiatives than environmental circumstances or causal factors. The analysis of professional self-efficacy data suggests the participants' conviction about their ability to perform the professional activities assigned to them satisfactorily. Finally, the expanded exploration of careers indicates that, in general, the research participants were concerned and attentive to their careers. All these data could be observed through proactive behaviors in relation to exploring new opportunities, searching for additional information, and establishing a network of professional contacts to achieve their goals<sup>17</sup>.

The rapid changes in the work environment have made self-efficacy relevant to the career. Those who believe in their abilities to face challenges and act with determination and motivation, demonstrating

self-efficacy, tend to have more optimistic attitudes regarding their professional trajectory, resulting in a better ability to adapt to the demands of the work environment and career changes and transitions<sup>18-20</sup>.

The SESTW-Br uses a Likert-style response key from 1 to 6 points – the lower the score, the less intense the belief in self-efficacy in the transition to work. These values showed that the sample participants were moderately confident with their work and personal self-efficacy. In this scenario, a young person who reveals greater self-confidence with their ability to apply for a job will likely do so, because positive self-efficacy beliefs are linked to the experimentation of behaviors. On the other hand, the lack of such confidence can encourage the individual to avoid certain behaviors and increase the tendency to give up when faced with obstacles, hindering the job search<sup>21</sup>.

The perception of professional opportunities refers to a positive assessment of the job market and an optimistic expectation of obtaining a satisfactory job in their field<sup>16</sup>. The POPS data analysis is consistent with a moderately negative prospect of insertion into the job market. It was expected that people with greater career adaptability, who perceive career-related events as more controllable and are more confident in their abilities, would also be more optimistic with professional insertion<sup>16</sup>.

The study participants were moderately confident in their work and personal self-efficacy and expressed a moderately unfavorable assessment of their prospects for entering the job market. This may be linked to different uncertain scenarios established by a possible economic crisis, increased unemployment, precarious work, and loss of labor and social rights, resulting from the legalization of temporary jobs and the trend towards informal work. This includes longer working hours, reduced salaries, lack of protection, deregulation, job outsourcing, and unstable continuity of work<sup>21</sup>.

The results showed that personal effort and initiative play a crucial role in achieving goals. It shows that many participants were confident in their ability to perform professional activities satisfactorily and revealed constant attention and concern for improving their careers. In addition, the descriptive results suggest that the participants' self-perception reveals moderate confidence in the emotional regulation necessary to perform their activities at work. This initial reflection is relevant for a better understanding of this process with SLH pathologists.

Research on entering and transitioning into the job market has been common in recent years. However, SLH publications are still scarce, which is a differential aspect of this publication. The study limitations include the few participants and university, which may directly impact the research results. Moreover, the lack of a more robust data analysis and the impossibility of generalizing the results must be considered.

Therefore, it is suggested that this investigation be continued within the same and other institutions to identify the data better and characterize this phenomenon in different contexts.

## CONCLUSION

Participants were self-confident regarding their work self-efficacy and sought to improve their career development. They also highlighted points of pessimism regarding motivation and insertion in the job market.

Thus, further studies are needed on this topic to explore the various intrinsic and extrinsic aspects that influence the decisions taken concerning SLH professional development.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Gratitude is extended to the Undergraduate Dean's Office at the Universidade de São Paulo (USP) for the undergraduate research scholarship.

## REFERENCES

1. Grangeiro RR, Barreto AJTP, Silva JS. Análise de artigos científicos sobre carreira em administração. *RPCA*. 2018;12(1):47-60. <https://doi.org/10.12712/rpca.v12i1.11344>
2. Silva RC, Dias CAF, Silva MTG, Krakauer PVC, Marinho BL. Carreiras: novas ou tradicionais? Um estudo com profissionais brasileiros. *ReCaPe*. 2012;(1):19-39. <https://doi.org/10.20503/recape.v2i1.9337>
3. Rosa FAS, Zampier MA, Stefano SR. Tipos de carreira: análise da produção científica. *ReCaPe*. 2017;7(1):358-73. <https://doi.org/10.20503/recape.v7i1.32650>
4. Ribeiro ML, Silva FO, Braga MCB, Malta HL. Motivações estudantis para escolha profissional. *Rev. educ. PUC-Camp*. 2018;23(2):155-73. <https://doi.org/10.24220/2318-0870v23n2a3903>
5. Gottschalk LLL, Monteiro JK, Andretta I. Coaching cognitivo-comportamental: relato de uma intervenção breve de carreira na transição universidade-trabalho. *Psicol Estud*. 2019;24(1):397-400. <https://doi.org/10.4025/1807-0329e39798>
6. Carneiro VT, Sampaio SMR. Em busca de emprego: a transição de universitários e egressos para o mundo do trabalho. *Rev. Contemp. Educ*. 2016;11(21):41-63. <https://doi.org/10.20500/rce.v11i21.2215>
7. Teixeira MAP, Oliveira MC, Melo LL, Taveira MC. Escalas de desenvolvimento de carreira de universitários: construção, características psicométricas e modelo das respostas adaptativas. *Rev. Psicol., Organ. Trab*. 2019;19(3):703-12. <http://dx.doi.org/10.17652/rpot/2019.3.16557>
8. Silva CSC, Teixeira MAP. InternshipeExperiences: Contributions to the school-to-work transition. *Paidéia*. 2013;23(54):103-12. <https://doi.org/10.1590/1982-43272354201312>
9. Fleming S. Envolvimento acadêmico e autoeficácia na transição para o trabalho: um estudo com universitários concluintes [Dissertation]. Salvador (BA): Faculdade de Filosofia Ciências e Letras, Universidade Federal da Bahia; 2015.
10. Okumoto AYP, Oliveira MC, Silva LLM, Taveira MC. Engajamento e sucesso na transição para o trabalho: estudo com medidas repetidas. *Psicol. cienc. prof*. 2022;42(1):1-10. <https://doi.org/10.1590/1982-3703003232824>
11. Santos AL, Gimenez DM. Inserção dos jovens no mercado de trabalho. *Estud. Av*. 2015;29(85):153-68. <https://doi.org/10.1590/S0103-40142015008500011>
12. Rodrigues VO, Oliveira MC. Adaptabilidade de carreira e sucesso na transição universidade-trabalho: estudo prospectivo com medidas repetidas. *ReCaPe*. 2023;13(1):114-33. <https://doi.org/10.23925/recape.v13i1.54970>
13. Teixeira MAP. Desenvolvimento de carreira em universitários: construção de um instrumento. *Anais do III Congresso Brasileiro Psicologia Ciência e Profissão*; 2010 [acessado 22 ago 2023]. Disponível em: <http://www.cienciaeprofissao.com.br/III/anais/anais.cfm>
14. Vieira D, Soares AM, Polydoro SAJ. Escala de auto-eficácia na transição para o mundo do trabalho (AETT): um estudo de validação para a realidade brasileira. 2006; Braga, Portugal; Conferência internacional de avaliação psicológica: Formas e contexto. p.293-9.
15. Teixeira MAP. A experiência de transição entre a universidade e o mercado de trabalho na adultez jovem [Thesis]. Porto Alegre (RS): Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul, Programa de Pós-graduação em Psicologia do Desenvolvimento; 2002.
16. Audibert A, Teixeira MAP. Escala de adaptabilidade de carreira: evidências de validade em universitários brasileiros. *Rev. bras. Orient*. 2015;16(1):83-93. [http://pepsic.bvsalud.org/scielo.php?script=sci\\_issues&pid=1679-3390&lng=pt&nrm=iso](http://pepsic.bvsalud.org/scielo.php?script=sci_issues&pid=1679-3390&lng=pt&nrm=iso)
17. Farias AML. Estatística descritiva. Instituto de Matemática e Estatística 2020 [Book on the internet]. Available at: <https://www.professores.uff.br/anafarias/wp-content/uploads/sites/210/2021/01/estdesc-0.pdf> Accessed 2023 dez 6.
18. Teixeira MAP, Gomes WB. Decisão de carreira entre estudantes em fim de curso universitário. *Psicol: Teor Pesq*. 2005;21(3):327-34. <https://doi.org/10.1590/S0102-37722005000300009>
19. Barros LO, Ambiel RAM. Instrumentos de avaliação psicológica em orientação de carreira: análise da produção nacional. *Psic. Cienc. Prof*. 2020;40(1):1-10. <https://doi.org/10.1590/1982-3703003203346>
20. Martins IRC. Autoeficácia na transição universidade-trabalho e adaptabilidade de carreira em finalistas do ensino superior [Dissertation]. Ribeirão Preto (SP): Universidade de Ribeirão Preto, Faculdade de Filosofia, Ciências e Letras de Ribeirão Preto; 2019.
21. Vieira D, Maia J, Coimbra JL. Do ensino superior para o trabalho: análise factorial confirmatória da escala de autoeficácia na transição para o trabalho (AETT). *Aval. Psicol*. 2007;6(1):03-12.

**Authors' contributions:**

PPM: Conceptualization; Data analysis; Supervision; Writing - Original draft.

VDOPF: Data curation; Data analysis; Writing - Original draft.

MFA: Data analysis; Writing - Original draft.

**Data sharing statement:**

The authors may make available the table with the original data from this research, without identifying the participants, upon request to the corresponding author via email.