

IMPACT OF COMMUNICATION COMPETENCE ON GRADUATE EMPLOYABILITY

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ABSTRACT

The labour market of the 21st century places a significant emphasis on candidates' capacities to demonstrate that they have strong "soft skills." Employers frequently expect not only academic knowledge and practical expertise, but also soft skills, which are widely seen as being on par with academic knowledge and practical expertise in terms of their significance in the labour market. Employers frequently expect not only academic knowledge and practical expertise, but also soft skills. It is common practise for employers to anticipate not just academic knowledge and practical ability, but also soft qualities in potential employees. It is generally accepted that the ability to communicate clearly and effectively is one of the most significant "soft skills" that employers look for in candidates for work in the 21st century. This study's objective is to evaluate the extent to which graduates in the Maldives are employable by taking into consideration a wide range of qualities, such as the degree to which they are proficient in communication. The quantitative research study with a cross-sectional design that was carried out in the Maldives and involved involvement from a total of 316 students who were enrolled in one of two different institutes of higher education included their input. The linear regression method was used to analyse the link between the two, and the findings

indicated that communication skills had a modest influence on the employability of graduates in the setting of the Maldives.

Keywords: *Employability, graduates, communication skill, higher education, Maldives*

1. INTRODUCTION

According to the human capital theory, the level of education that an individual has is one of the most important factors that goes into establishing the value of that person's human capital (Marginson, 2019). Yet, in the current economic climate, which includes the economy on a worldwide scale, you need both hard skills and soft abilities in order to effectively solve problems and navigate around hurdles. It is now common practise to require employees to possess soft skills, given that such capabilities contribute to a person's overall growth and competitiveness in the labour market. This is due to the fact that soft skills contribute to a person's overall growth and competitiveness in the labour market. This is as a result of the fact that possessing soft skills contributes to an individual's overall development as well as their competitiveness in the labour market. Even while the graduates have a high level of hard skills (that is, technical knowledge and competency), they are weak in these more transferrable qualities (Alam et al., 2022). The lack of "soft skills," which are abilities that are necessary to deal with the most recent changes in industry, is the cause of the most increasing worry about the employability of graduates. These abilities are required to deal with the most recent changes in industry. This is due to the fact that these skills are essential in order to keep up with the most current developments in the business. As a result of this, possessing good "soft skills" is very necessary in order to adapt to the most current advancements in the industry (Tang, 2019).

Despite having a population that is much lower than that of other countries, the Maldives is one of the countries that is grappling with this common problem. This is despite the fact that it has a population that is far less than that of other countries. College grads are entering the workforce at a time when there is a severe scarcity of competent positions to fill. In spite of the fact that 5.2% of the population is unemployed due to a lack of employable skills, the nation employs more than 100,000 people who are not native to the country. This is due to the fact that many of the jobs that are available need specialised abilities. This is owing to the fact that immigrants tend to have higher levels of education than those who were born in the country. This has been a very serious reason for concern in recent times (Ministry of Higher Education, Maldives, 2019; National Bureau of Statistics, 2018). The capacity to think critically and creatively, as well as communicate clearly, is an example of an essential "soft talent" that is vital in today's labour market. Another crucial "soft skill" is the ability to network effectively. Working well with others, being able to work well with others, and working well with others are all examples of crucial "soft skills." Additional examples include being able to work well with others. Due to the lack of these skills among graduates, a significant portion of young Maldivians are either unemployed or working in fields that are unrelated to the degrees they have earned (Ministry of Education, 2019; Ministry of Higher Education, Maldives, 2019). There is a problem in the Maldives, just as there is a problem in other countries, with graduates not having the skills that are essential to be successful in their jobs.

Businesses have access to a resource that is highly beneficial to them, and that resource is their workers, particularly those workers who are knowledgeable and experienced in the fields in which they are employed. If a company wants to remain productive and competitive in the global market, it is of the utmost importance for it to staff its operations with people that has a high degree of competence (Brown, 2017). Because of this, companies are always looking for prospective employees that possess a high level of soft skills, which are very important for achieving success in the workplace. As a direct result of this, businesses are continuously on the lookout for employees who possess a significant amount of soft talents (Abas-Mastura et al., 2018). The alarmingly rapid growth of the fear that people all over the world may be unable to find work because they lack the employability skills that employers seek has resulted in an increase in the frequency with which people express their fear. This has led to an increase in the frequency with which the anxiety is expressed. The rise in the unemployment rate among college graduates may have been caused by a variety of factors, such as a personality that conveys a lack of confidence during interviews, a mismatch between personal quality and industry necessity, or poor communication skills. Additionally, the rise in the unemployment rate among college graduates may have been caused by a mismatch between personal quality and industry necessity. Another potential explanation is that businesses are placing a greater premium on individuals with relevant work experience rather than academic credentials. In addition to this, there may have been a disparity between the personal traits possessed and the needs of the industry (Buzzeo et al., 2016).

The industries place a focus, not only on the technical capabilities of employees, but also on what are known as the "soft skills" that workers possess. This is in addition to the technical capabilities of employees. Additionally, the development of technology and virtual workplaces (which include circumstances such as work-from-home situations) has increased the emphasis on developing the soft skills of employees in the workplace. This is due to the fact that these developments have made the acquisition of these skills more important. This is because these advances have made it more vital to have certain talents, which is why it's become more important to acquire them. This is due to the fact that a greater number of individuals are now working from the comfort of their own homes, which may be connected to the growth in the prevalence of telecommuting. One possible explanation for this is that workers are now able to complete their work from the privacy and convenience of their own homes, which has contributed to an improvement in overall productivity (Schislyaeva & Saychenko, 2022). As a direct and immediate consequence of this, the development of the non-technical capabilities of graduates has progressed into the position of being a required requirement (Pang et al., 2018; Subramanian, 2017). The term "soft talents" is used to refer to a wide range of abilities that are required in order to begin working in a certain profession. The following are some examples of these competencies: Since it is impossible to join the workforce without having these abilities, they are often referred to as "employability skills."

This study's objective is to determine the extent to which a graduate's communication skills influence their likelihood of finding work in the context of the Maldives and among other graduates from that country. The Maldives have been chosen as the venue for this specific research project. The Maldives have been selected as the location for this particular study

endeavour, which will take place there. The literature on graduate employability and the value of soft skills is scant in the setting; as a result, the present research will make a significant addition to the environment in which it will be done. Thus, this paper attempts to contribute to the present knowledge gap of research that has been conducted on the communications skills and employability of students especially in the Maldives.

2. THEORETICAL UNDERPINNING

There are many different schools of thought on the influence that a person's "soft talents" could have on the career prospects that are open to them. These "soft talents" include things like communication skills and the ability to work well with others. In the context of this discussion, the terms of human capital and human development or capabilities are tied to conversations about employability and less tangible skills (Alam et al., 2022). According to the human capital theory, the process of establishing an economy must include the acquisition of an appropriate level of education as one of its fundamental building blocks. In addition, it is now widely acknowledged that education is a precondition indispensable to the flourishing of economies all over the globe (Nafukho et al., 2004).

In 1961, Thodore W. Schulz conceived up a concept that would one day be referred to as the Human Capital Theory. According to this concept, the knowledge, skills, and abilities that the employees of an organisation have are referred to as the "human capital" of that organisation. This capital may be measured in terms of an organization's competitive advantage. The awareness that the learning potential of people is equivalent to the learning capacity of other resources connected to the production of goods and services is the core concept that underpins the Human Capital Theory. This is the most significant contribution made by the theory (Nafukho et al., 2004). It would seem, in light of this, that making effective use of the resources that one has access to is advantageous not just to the person, but also to the organisation, and maybe even to society as a whole.

The human capital strategy is one that takes into account the skills and knowledge that employed graduates already possess in order to determine how employable such individuals are from the perspective of an employer. In other words, the strategy takes into account the skills and knowledge that employed graduates already possess (Nafukho et al., 2004). According to Effiong and Mary (2014), the bulk of the key principles of human capacity or development centre on professional training, the generation of knowledge, the illumination of the public sphere, and cultural knowledge. The human capabilities hypothesis, which is also known as the "development hypothesis," investigates the issue of job options for recent college graduates from the vantage point of a resource viewpoint.

On the other hand, according to the human capital theory, education is the single most essential element in determining not just the rate of economic development but also the extent to which a person participates in the economy of other countries and the world as a whole (Burgess, 2016). Businesses often look to the availability of talented people as a deciding element in terms of productivity as well as overall performance.

In a nutshell, there is a substantial body of evidence to support the idea that there is a significant connection between the idea of human capital and the process of skill development that is carried out by employers. This idea is supported by the idea that there is a significant connection between the idea of human capital and the process of skill development that is carried out by employers. The idea that there is a strong link between the two lends credence to the idea that there is such a correlation. The cultivation of "soft skills" in recently graduated students is an investment in the sector's future workforce and provides a significant opportunity.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

A statistic referred to as "employability" is used by businesses to assess the marketability of recent college graduates (Alrifa & Raju, 2019). Employability of college graduates is one of the most highly debated issues on the world stage in the twenty-first century. This is especially true in the United States. Many businesses are under the impression that graduates of higher education institutions (HEIs) do not have the fundamental soft skills necessary for entering the workforce in the 21st century. Employability is a combination of soft talents that enhances a person's chances of acquiring a job and succeeding in their industry. These abilities include things like communication and problem solving (Fulgence, 2015). Similarly, employability can be thought of as a collection of skills that are necessary not only to obtain employment but also to advance in the chosen line of work, which, in the end, is to the benefit of the employee, the employer, and the industry as a whole. These skills include not only the ability to acquire employment but also the ability to grow in the chosen line of work (Okolie et al., 2019; Abas-Mastura et al., 2019). One recent study by Long and Nga (2022) found that field trips boost students' perceptions of graduate employability.

Employability, on the other hand, takes into account not only the possibility of finding work but also the possibility of advancing one's career and accomplishing one's professional objectives. The following inference may be drawn as a result of this: In addition to possessing the necessary information, being employable requires a specific set of soft skills. In today's highly competitive labour market, it is often believed that possessing skills that are relevant to the 21st century is essential in order to be successful (Reddy, 2019). The many fields need for candidates to possess a wide range of employability skills, including communication, collaboration, critical thinking, creative thinking, cultural and social interaction, self-management, and flexibility, to name just a few of these (Joynes & Rossignoli, 2019; Sehgal & Nasim, 2020; Tanius et al., 2018; Wrahatnolo & Munoto, 2018).

Reading, writing, speaking, as well as the ability to understand what is being said by others, are often included in the concept of communication competence. When applied to matters of economics and industry, it takes on a whole different sense. Ability to explain and clarify essential ideas via written, oral, and multimedia communication in a variety of contexts and forms is a prerequisite for many vocations and is characterised as the capacity to do so in a variety of situations and formats (Ryan, 2013). Examples of the forms of communication and interpersonal skills that are useful in today's work market include independent conversations

in person or over the phone, as well as written communications that can be understood by the receivers, such as memorandums and emails (Tang, 2019). Recent study had shown effective physician-patient nonverbal communication improved patient satisfaction and recovery (Sudirman et al. 2022).

Also, graduates' communication skills are evaluated at the job interview via the use of a variety of activities like making presentations, producing official letters and reports, and other similar tasks. So, in today's highly competitive job market, having great communication skills is of the biggest significance (Griffin & Coelho, 2019; Sudjimat, 2017). Individuals who are successful in mastering this capacity have the self-confidence required to interact with others in a manner that is not only more effective but also more gratifying. Recent research suggests that educational institutions of higher learning need to focus a greater emphasis on assisting their students in developing their communication skills (Attri & Kushwaha, 2018; Griffin & Coelho, 2019). It is commonly found that graduates do not have communication talents that are appropriately developed (Aliu & Aigbavboa, 2019; Clokie & Fourie, 2016; Meeks, 2017).

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this study, a quantitative cross-sectional research technique was used to investigate the question of how effective communication and teamwork abilities are in relation to the employability of recent graduates in the Maldives. Participants in the research comprised graduates with a range of educational experiences and levels of schooling. Undergraduate students who received their degrees from two distinct Maldives educational institutions in 2018 and 2019 were selected for the purpose of data collecting. This is because these students represented the most recent grads at the time that the data was gathered. This is the reason why this was the case. We used a technique known as simple random sampling because it provides each individual in the population with an equal possibility of being selected for the research project and it permits an equivalent degree of bias to be present in each sample (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). According to the chart that was supplied by Krejcie and Morgan (1970), a total of 313 members of the community that was being investigated were chosen at random for the research (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016).

In order to compile the necessary information for this investigation, an improved online questionnaire for conducting surveys was used.

Both Bezuidenhout (2011) and Kelly et al. (2019) were used as references throughout the process of selecting and modifying the items (Bezuidenhout, 2011; Kelly et al., 2019). The items were evaluated using a Likert scale that had five points, and the results were tabulated. The content validity was verified by the use of expert review, and a pilot research was carried out with a sample size of fifty students who were not included in the population of the study but who had the same features and degree of dependability as the population of the study.

Because it has been shown that statistical procedures are ineffective when used to judge individuals and the environment, it is necessary to adopt an approach that is significantly more

effective than numerical analysis. This is because it has been demonstrated that statistical procedures are ineffective when used to judge both individuals and the environment. This study does not attempt to propose a new theory; rather, it aims to address existing research difficulties by analysing questionnaire responses using regression analysis using structural equation modelling (SEM) using IBM AMOS statistical version 24.0. This research was carried out with the intention of addressing existing research difficulties. The IBM AMOS statistical version 24.0 was used in the development of the approach that was utilised in this investigation. Multiple A regression analysis was carried out so that a more accurate description of the connection that exists between the variables, in addition to the impact that the independent factors have on the variable that was the subject of the study, could be achieved (Saunders et al., 2016; Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). Before moving on to perform a regression analysis, a descriptive analysis was carried out with version 25 of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) in order to gain a deeper comprehension of the demographic characteristics as well as the other variables. This was done so that the results of the regression analysis could be better interpreted. Before going on to perform the regression analysis, this step was taken in order to acquire a better knowledge of the data that was being used.

The hypothesis (H) of the research is: The capacity to communicate effectively has been shown to correlate to increased employability

5. RESULTS

5.1 Demographic data analysis

The results of the descriptive study of the demographic data indicated that 71.8% of the respondents were female, while only 28.2% of the respondents were male. This was owing to the finding that there were more women than there were males attending colleges and universities in the Maldives, which led to this findings. Those individuals in the sample who were between the ages of 18 and 25 made up 26.3% of the whole population, while those individuals in the sample who were between the ages of 26 and 35 made up 45.3% of the overall population. According to the data that was collected, 86.7% of the respondents were working full-time jobs, whilst 13.3% of the respondents were either working part-time jobs or temporary occupations. The vast majority of those who took part in the research, or 46.8 percent of the total, held down full-time employment in addition to pursuing their undergraduate degrees on a full-time basis. 26.9% of participants reported that they had found employment within the first six months after graduating from college, while 8.2% of participants stated that it took them between six and 12 months to find employment, and 11.7% of participants reported that it took them more than 12 months to find employment. In conclusion, the research revealed that 85.1% of those who participated in the survey were already employed in the sector that served as the primary focus of their investigation.

5.2 Inferential data analysis

The table 1 below shows the summery statistics for standard deviation and mean. The results depicts that the respondents of the current study agreed that there is relationship between Communication Skill (CMSkill) (M = 4.02, SD = 0.634) and Employability (EMPL),(M = 4.19, SD = 0.517).

Variable	N		Mean		SD
	Valid	Missing			
CMSkill	316	0	4.02		0.634
EMPL	316	0	4.19		0.517

Table 1: Summery statistics for SD and mean

To investigate the relationship between Communication Skill and Employability Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was utilized.

Correlations		
	EMPL	
Pearson Correlation	EMPL	1
Sig. (1-tailed)	CMSkill	0.440
	EMPL	0.000
	CMSkill	

Table 2: The result of Pearson correlation coefficient

To determine whether or not there is a connection between having strong communication skills and being able to find work, we analysed the data using the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient (Table 2). The findings indicated that there is a positive correlation between the two variables, and that this correlation is statistically significant ($r = .440$, $n = 316$, $p.00000$). The data also indicated that this correlation is statistically significant. The results show that the degree of association is not very strong, as the findings demonstrate (Schober et al., 2018).

A linear regression analysis was performed, and the results can be seen in Table 3. This was done so that a computation could be made and a prediction could be made regarding the influence of graduate employability. When applied to the task of forecasting graduate employability, the CMSkill model produced values that were statistically significant ($R^2 = .193$, $p = 0.000$).

Table 3: Result of simple linear regression analysis

Model Selection					Unstandardized	Standardized	Sig.
Mode	R	R2	F	df1	Coefficients	Coefficients	
					B	Beta	
					Std		
					.Error		
1	.440a	.193	75.35	1	Constant		.000
					2.751	.168	.440
Residual = 314					.358	.041	.000

The findings of the statistical analysis shows that the p value is less than 0.05 ($p < 0.05$). the result of the current analysis shows that the p value is .000, therefore the null hypothesis is rejected, accepting the alternative hypothesis, thus concluding that there is a relationship between communication skill and employability of graduates in the context of Maldives.

5. DISCUSSION

According to the results of this study project, the term "communication competence" refers to the capacity to grasp what other people say and inquire about in a professional setting and to respond in a way that is suitable for the environment in which the conversation is taking place. According to Griffin and Coelho (2019) and Sudjimat (2017), having great communication skills is necessary if you want to increase your chances of landing a job, advancing in your field, and climbing the corporate ladder. In order to test this purpose, the Maldives carried out a regression analysis, and the findings suggested that there is a link between graduate employment and the ability to communicate effectively. It was determined that this connection is important. The conclusion reached here was arrived at by looking at the evidence from each of these points of view, finally.

Since the p value for this correlation was 0.000, which was much lower than the threshold value of 0.05, we may conclude that there is a substantial link between the two variables. This indicates that the graduates of the two educational institutions that took part in the study believed that their capacity to communicate effectively had improved as a result of their education and training throughout the entirety of the educational system, which is very important for them to be able to get a job. The graduates also believed that their ability to communicate effectively had improved as a result of their education and training throughout the entirety of the educational system. In addition, this suggests that the graduates think that they have increased their capacity for effective communication as a direct consequence of the education and training that they have received during the whole of their school experience. Employability and communication skills have been shown to have a significant and favourable relationship with one another, according to previous studies (Griffin & Coelho, 2019; Hosain et al., 2021; Saad Fadhil et al., 2021; Sonnenschein et al., 2020). These studies can be found in Griffin & Coelho, 2021; Hosain et al., 2021; and Sonnenschein et These investigations may be found in the paper that was written by Griffin and Coelho (2019), as well as the ones

written by Hosain and associates (2021) and Saad Fadhil (2019). The findings of this research provide credence to the idea that was discussed earlier in this paragraph.

On the other hand, both employees and employers believe that graduates who are just starting out in their jobs do not have adequate communication skills (Aliu & Aigbavboa, 2019; Attri & Kushwaha, 2018; Clokie & Fourie, 2016c; Pitan, 2017). It is highly likely that higher education institutions (HEIs), which are required to be completed by students in order to earn their tertiary education credential, are not doing a very good job of assisting students in the development of their communication skills, or more generally, their soft skills, as a component of the curriculum that they are required to complete in order to earn their tertiary education credential. If one were to take this into consideration, it would provide light on why there is such a disparity. The results of the research suggest that educational institutions that provide courses at the level of higher education should make more efforts to improve the communication skills of their graduates by adding instruction on the subject within the syllabi of the courses that they offer. Something should be done to ensure that graduates are more equipped for the workforce once they leave school (Attri & Kushwaha, 2018; Bharathi, 2016). Therefore, it has been decided that graduates who are interested in working in the Maldives and who have just received their degrees need to have excellent communication skills in order to be competitive for job prospects there. This decision was reached as a result of the fact that graduates who are interested in working in the Maldives and who have just received their degrees.

6. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, having strong communication skills is essential for enhancing one's employability since it enables one to connect well with others. This is because employers value people who are able to work well with others. It is crucial to focus on increasing one's communication skill as it may make the growth of other abilities simpler. Effective communication may make the development of other talents easier. The current study, which was conducted in the context of the Maldives and involved two higher education institutions as well as the perceptions of graduates, came to the conclusion that communication skills are extremely important for a person's ability to find employment as well as for the advancement of their career. The study also found that these skills are extremely important for a person's ability to advance their career.

The findings also give a basis for doing further study on the topic in the years to come since they establish a framework for doing so. The potential for reaching a better degree of accuracy in the data obtained is brought about by the inclusion of even more educational institutions than were previously considered. Moreover, the efforts that higher education institutions put towards strengthening the employability abilities of graduates and preparing them for employment may be investigated from a more holistic viewpoint. Because of this, it is possible to have a deeper comprehension of their efforts. It is of equal importance to explore how the programmes that are given in higher education help to the development of communication skills since doing so may provide methods in which the existing situation might be improved.

Recent graduates from undergraduate programmes may become more successful and more employable if greater emphasis is put, within the context of tertiary education programmes, on the development of communication skills and other graduate employability qualities. This would help to lessen the current difference that exists in the levels of expertise that are now existent. It has been shown that an individual's capacity to communicate lucidly and effectively is not only significant but also has a favourable association with the employability of that individual. As a direct result of this, educational programmes at the level of higher education need to put a larger focus on the development of this talent. Employability skills need to be included into the curriculum of higher education institutions, and these institutions ought to have policies in place to make this a reality. Skills that are employable should be a required part of the curriculum at higher education institutions.

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