



Full Length Research Article

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS WITH REFERENCE TO EMPLOYERS OF PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTOR

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ABSTRACT

The main objective is to identify the employability skills required by public and private companies and to conduct a comparative evaluation of how the public and private sector employers perceive the employability skills. Fourteen variables that make up employability skills based on past research were examined in this study. Data were collected through questionnaire on online survey mode that intended to gauge employers' perceptions. The sample respondent had taken employers from public and private sector. The research instrument was given to two academic experts and one industrial expert to validate Questionnaire. The findings revealed that questionnaire design is reliable with Chronbach's alpha =0.863. The results of this study revealed that public and private companies' employers placed similar importance in terms of the rating of employability skills.

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INTRODUCTION

In an era of globalization and competitiveness, employers are looking for versatile graduates who are able to drive their organizations to compete successfully in the market. Now-a-days, obtaining a good degree is no longer sufficient for getting a job. Graduates should equip themselves, not only with technical skills, but more importantly with employability skills. Graduates' employability is one of the fiercely debated issues in the current economic climate. Rapid changes taking place in the economy create a pressure upon employers to identify and recruit graduates that possess critical employability skills relevant to current demands. The emphasis being placed on these soft skills, also known as employability skills, is associated with and reflective of the current trends in graduate recruitment. Employers expect students to have well developed employability skills, so that they can make an immediate contribution to the workplace when recruited. Employability skills term varies by country. Another term used for Employability skills were the soft skills, generic skills, core skills or essential skills. Overtoom, (2000) Employability skills are those basic skills necessary for

getting, keeping, and doing well into job. It is a group of important skills instilled in each individual in order to produce productive workforce. This is parallel with individuals who have strong characteristics such as a high sense of self, innovative, productive, skilful, and competitive, a strong sense of determination, and creative in facing the challenges of the national as well as global platforms. Besides that, employability skill is also crucial in all professions as well as in education.

Literature Review

Yorke, (2008) Graduate employability is a set of achievements skills, understandings and personal attributes that makes graduates more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations, which benefits themselves, the workforce, the community and the economy. Zubaidah and Rugayah Mohamed, (2008) over the past few decades, employers' needs and job requirements in the work environment have changed dramatically. In a challenging economic condition, new graduates are not only required to possess knowledge of an academic subject, but they must also be equipped with the relevant soft skills that will enhance their competency to join the job market. Munir *et al.* (2005) listed the skills and abilities required by graduates in the arts and related fields (i.e., Humanities, Social Sciences, Communication, Management, and Information Technology)

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by Malaysian employers. Their study showed that the order of the list reflected the importance of each attribute from the surveyed employer's point of view. This indicates that the ranking of competencies of potential graduates, as needed by employers, is as follows: management skills, personal qualities, communication skills, interpersonal skills, thinking skills, and ICT skills. However, they also found that the ranking of competency skills and abilities of graduates varied according to the type of firm. For example, industry related firms placed high weight age on personal qualities (i.e., helpful, knowledgeable, skilful, obedient, and compliant); and service-related firms placed considerable emphasis on management skills (i.e. able to delegate work, positive expectations, and comments towards others' potential). Parmjit Singh *et al.* (2013) the study focused on the differences in perceptions of the multinational and local employers with regards to generic skills. It appears that the multinational employers are far less forgiving as, across the board, they ranked the graduates' generic skills as significantly lower compared to local employers. The differences in work and organizational culture between the multinationals and local companies could also figure significantly in this mismatch. Multinationals operate along international working standards to which their staff is expected to adhere while local companies would generally operate along local work culture standards which is far more 'relaxed', hence, the discrepancies in the rankings.

Anho, JosifEfe, (2011) The findings from the study reveal that over 94 percent of the private sector employers perceived graduates of Nigeria Universities to be of high quality while 80 percent of the public sector employers perceive them as high quality. The study reveals that rating/perception of the private sector employers is higher than those of the public sector employers. Both sectors rated the graduates as high quality on the 20 indices of quality. It shows that the rating of both the sectors were favorable in some indices, especially in information technology, oral and written communication, entrepreneurship, resource management among others. The favorable ratings could be attributed to the rapidly increasing volume of information technology services in the country. The finding also shows that there are significant differences in the perception and rating of the quality and employability of the graduates by the public and private sectors. Whilst the private sector employers consider graduates of Nigeria Universities as high quality; the public sector employers rated the graduates as low quality.

Hazril Azmin Saariand Abdullah Mat Rashid, (2013) the finding of the study shows there is a significant difference between the employability skills of the NDTs apprentice in regard to their companies attached. The result shows that the NDTs apprentices who attached with the MNC companies more likely to have better employability skills compared to the GLC and SME companies. The result also shows that the NDTs apprentices attached with the GLC companies is significantly have better employability skills compared to the NDTs apprentices at the SME companies. Finding of the current study reveal that all item of employability skills measures shows a significantly different among the three types of companies except for communication, interpersonal skills and teamwork. Further analysis shows that the MNC companies rates their NDTs apprentices slightly higher in

making decisions, resolving problems, work planning, thinking skills, and information management compared to the GLC and SME companies. Sharifah *et al.* (2011) found out that the different perception of graduates' employability skills is lie on the priorities of requirement of the companies. They stated that the MNC companies emphasis on graduates with employability skills in planning, thinking skills and follow by other skills. Meanwhile, the GLC and SME companies priorities requires a well performing graduates in their field of expertise, ethics and values follows by other skills.

Chung and Yet, (2009), in their study investigated the competence that meets the specified requirements of employers and analyze the effectiveness of the personal quality and employability skills in the private universities in Malaysia. Results showed that students are competent in personal qualities and skills that are tested. However, skills such as critical thinking, planning, problem solving, oral communication, decision making, and negotiations show different perception between employers and students. This shows that there were deficiencies in the education system and should be viewed seriously by the educational institution. Mohamad Sattar Bin Rasul, (2010) suggested teachers in educational institutions need to improve the understanding, implementation and measurement methods of employability skills. Employability skills are also important in helping people adapting with changes and improve career opportunities in the workplace. His findings showed that employability skills such as basic skills, thinking skills, resources skills, information skills, interpersonal skills, systems and technology and individual quality is at high level. While basic skills, creative thinking, decision making, problem solving, risk management, interpret and disseminate information, leadership, negotiates, monitor and improve performance and handling equipment at a moderate level.

Martin *et al.* (2008) however identified and based their study on 14 employability skills: communication, team-working, problem-solving, literacy, numeracy, general information technology (IT), timekeeping, business awareness, customer-care, personal presentation, enthusiasm/commitment, enterprising, vocational job-seeking and advanced vocational job-specific skills. The National Association of College and Employers (NACE) (Job Outlook Survey, 2014) has compiled a list of the top 20 skills requested by employers. These skills in rank order are as follows: (1) analytical skills; (2) communication skills; (3) computer skills; (4) creativity; (5) detail-oriented; (6) risk-taker; (7) flexibility/adaptability; (8) friendly; (9) honesty/integrity; (10) interpersonal skills; (11) leadership and management skills; (12) motivation/initiative; (13) organizational and time management skills; (14) real life experiences; (15) self-confidence; (16) strong work ethic; (17) tactfulness; (18) teamwork skills; (19) technical skills; and (20) well-mannered/polite. These skills are considered to be important for potential employees to possess and apply to their job. The lists of employability parameters is been extracted from (Chung Khain Wye and Yet Mee Lim, (2009), National Association of College and Employers (NACE), Job Outlook Survey, (2014), Martin *et al.* (2008), Mohamad Sattar Bin Rasul, (2010), Munir, Aniswal, and Haslina; Overtoom, (2000) and Chavan, R. R. and Surve, A.Y. (2014)). The resulting parameters employability skills indicated fourteen factors which are communication skills, problem solving,

teamwork, planning and organizing, creativity/ innovation, ICT skills, self-management skills, time management/ prioritizing, independent work, analytical skill, decision making, integrity and honesty, leadership, self-confidence.

Objectives

The main objectives of this research are to examine whether there is any significant difference between the perception of the public and private sectors employers with regards to employability skills.

Testing of Hypothesis

H0: There is a no significant difference in the perception of the public and private sectors employers on employability skills.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The survey questionnaire is used as a research instrument which captures the general information of the employer and also assess the employers' perception on the importance of employability skills listed using five-point Likert Scale ranging from 1 being "Not Important" to 5 "Most Important" and industry expectations. The questionnaire, incorporating the 14 employability skills, which are 1) Communication skills, 2) Problem solving, 3) Teamwork, 4) Planning and organizing, 5) Creativity/innovation, 6) ICT Skills, 7) Self-management skills, 8) Time management/prioritizing, 9) Independent work, 10) Analytical Skill, 11) Decision Making, 12) Integrity and Honesty, 13) leadership, 14) Self-confidence. The survey has been conducted with the help of online survey. The researcher has forwarded the questionnaire to 200

employers or executives who are actively involved in recruitment processes, such as the Human Resource Manager, Personnel Manager, and Human Resource Executive, from public and Private companies. Respondents have also been asked to list the top employability skills that they consider as most important to be in the possession of a successful job applicant. Open-ended questions have subsequently been addressed to the respondents requesting them to suggest other skills not listed in the questionnaire but are deemed as crucial to be possessed by job applicants. The instrument was given to two academician experts and one industrial expert to validate questionnaire. The statistical software, SPSS, has been used to perform Chronbach's alpha as the reliability measure for this study. The value of the Cronbach's coefficient for this instrument in this study's sample was 0.863. This indicates that the 14 item scale is quite reliable. The Mann Whiney test was carried out to find out if public and private employers have any significant differences in their perceptions of how they rate their graduates.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

On the basis of above Table 1 mean score of all 14 employability skills perceived by public as well as private employers are greater than 3 and standard deviation are also very less that means all 14 of the employability skills were considered important by the both employers. The Mann Whiney test was administered to measure the significant differences perceived by public and private sector employers in respect to employability skills of graduates. As shown in Table 2 the two-tailed significance value for all skills are greater than significant level 0.05 ($p > 0.05$).

Table 1 Descriptive statistics for public and private employer's perception on employability skills

Employability skills	Public Employers		Private Employers	
	Mean	Stdev	Mean	Stdev
Communication	4.31	0.4830	4.37	0.6742
Team work	4.51	0.5270	4.46	0.5222
Planning and organizing	4.02	0.8164	3.64	1.2862
Creativity/innovation	3.92	0.8755	3.63	0.9244
ICT Skills	3.40	0.8432	3.27	0.7862
Self-management	3.70	0.6749	3.54	0.8202
Time management	3.91	0.7378	4.18	0.4045
Independent work	3.90	0.9944	3.82	0.8738
Analytical skills	4.01	0.4714	3.81	0.7507
Decision making	4.30	1.0593	4.09	0.8312
Integrity and Honesty	4.70	0.6749	4.81	0.40452
Leadership skill	4.00	0.9428	4.00	0.7745
Self-confident	4.50	0.5270	4.45	0.6875

Table 2 Result of Mann Whitney U test for comparison between public and private employers' on employability skills

Employability Skills	Mean Rank		Mann Whitney U	Z	Asymp. Sig. (p-value)
	Public	Private			
Communication	10.50	11.45	50.0	-0.4039	0.6862
Problem solving	12.30	9.81	42.0	-1.0570	0.2904
Team work	11.25	10.77	52.5	-0.2032	0.8389
Planning organizing	11.65	10.40	48.5	-0.4798	0.6313
Creativity/innovation	11.80	10.27	47.0	-0.5951	0.5517
ICT	11.25	10.77	52.5	-0.1892	0.8498
Self-management	11.50	10.54	50.0	-0.3847	0.7004
Time management	9.75	12.13	42.5	-1.0555	0.2911
Independent work	11.35	10.68	51.5	-0.2638	0.7919
Analytical skills	11.90	10.18	46.0	-0.7327	0.4637
Decision making	12.05	10.04	44.5	-0.7956	0.4262
Integrity and Honesty	10.80	11.18	53.0	-0.2059	0.8368
Leadership skill	11.25	10.77	52.5	-0.1894	0.8497
Self confidence	11.00	11.00	55.0	0.0000	1.0000

* Significant at $p < 0.05$

Therefore it can be concluded that there was no notable difference in the public and private employers on employability skills, hence, hypothesis is accepted. Therefore it can be concluded that both public and private sector employers have similar opinion on graduates' employability skills.

Conclusions

The results show that all 14 of the employability skills were considered important by employers. Amongst all integrity and honesty, problem-solving, team work, Self-confidence, communication, decision making and time management/prioritizing skills were most important skills whereas creativity/innovation, decision making, ICT skills were considered moderately important. Both private and public sectors employers rated the employability skills as important. It shows that the rating of both the sectors were favorable in all skills. Also, it can be concluded that, there is a no significant difference in the perception of the public and private sector employers on employability skills. The public and private sector employers have similar opinions on graduates' employability skills irrespective of their status.

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