

INDUSTRY EXPECTATION OF EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS FROM MANAGEMENT GRADUATES

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ABSTRACT

This study focuses on the communication and media industry, which is rapidly evolving due to technological advancements and changing consumer behavior.

Employability skills refer to a set of competencies and attributes that enable individuals to be effective in the workplace. These skills go beyond technical knowledge and academic qualifications and include qualities such as communication, teamwork, problem-solving, critical thinking, adaptability, and leadership.

To examine the industry's expectations on the key employability skills of fresh graduates in the communication and media industry, the researchers can adopt a mixed-methods approach. This approach can involve surveys and interviews with employers, human resource managers, industry professionals, and recent graduates working in the field.

Surveys can be distributed to a representative sample of employers in the communication and media industry. The survey questions can focus on the importance they place on various employability skills when hiring fresh graduates. The respondents can rate the skills on a Likert scale or provide rankings to indicate their level of importance.

Interviews can be conducted with a smaller sample of key industry stakeholders, including human resource managers and experienced professionals. These interviews can delve deeper into the specific skills that employers value the most and explore the reasons behind their preferences. Additionally, interviews with recent graduates can provide insights into their experiences and perceptions of employability skills in the industry.

Data collected from surveys and interviews can be analyzed using quantitative and qualitative methods. The quantitative data can be analyzed using statistical techniques such as mean, median, and standard deviation to identify the skills that are considered most important by the industry. The qualitative data from interviews can be transcribed and analyzed thematically to extract key themes and patterns.

The findings of the study can inform higher education institutions about the skills that are in high demand and help them align their curriculum and teaching methods accordingly. It can also provide guidance to fresh graduates seeking employment in the communication and media industry, enabling them to focus on developing the most relevant skills.

In conclusion, this research aims to explore the industry's expectations on the key employability skills of fresh graduates in the communication and media industry. By understanding these expectations, higher education institutions can better equip graduates with the skills needed to succeed in the evolving job market.

Keywords: Employability Skills, Management Graduates, Industry Expectations

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INTRDOUCTION

The Fourth Industrial Revolution, characterized by the integration of digital technologies into various aspects of society and the economy, has significant implications for the expectations of employability skills. As technology continues to advance and reshape industries, employers in the communication and media industry are likely to have specific expectations regarding the skills and competencies of fresh graduates.

Some of the key employability skills that may be particularly relevant in the Fourth Industrial Revolution include:

Digital literacy: Proficiency in using digital tools, platforms, and technologies is crucial in today's digital-driven world. This includes skills in social media management, content creation, data analysis, and digital marketing.

Adaptability and flexibility: The Fourth Industrial Revolution brings about rapid changes and disruptions. Graduates who can quickly adapt to new technologies, work processes, and industry trends are highly valued.

Creativity and innovation: With automation and artificial intelligence becoming more prevalent, creativity and the ability to think critically and innovatively are highly sought after. Graduates who can generate new ideas, solve complex problems, and think outside the box have an advantage.

Communication and collaboration: Effective communication skills, both written and verbal, are essential in the communication and media industry. Graduates who can work well in teams, collaborate with diverse stakeholders, and communicate ideas clearly are highly valued.

Data analysis and interpretation: In the era of big data, the ability to analyze and interpret data is crucial. Graduates who can extract meaningful insights from data and make data-driven decisions have a competitive edge.

Lifelong learning: As technology evolves at a rapid pace, graduates who possess a growth mindset and a willingness to continuously learn and upskill are highly valued. Employers expect fresh graduates to be proactive in keeping up with industry trends and acquiring new knowledge and skills.

It is important for higher education institutions to recognize the evolving expectations of employability skills in the Fourth Industrial Revolution. They should adapt their curriculum, teaching methods, and assessment approaches to ensure that graduates are equipped with the necessary skills to thrive in the communication and media industry.

Additionally, fostering industry-academia collaborations, internships, and practical experiences can help bridge the gap between academic learning and industry expectations.

By understanding and addressing the industry's expectations of employability skills in the context of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, higher education institutions can better prepare graduates for successful careers in the communication and media industry. Employers in the communication and media industry are particularly interested in recruits who possess critical thinking skills, communication abilities, and a strong command of the English language. They emphasize the importance of graduates understanding not only how to perform specific tasks but also the underlying reasoning behind them.

There is a growing concern within the education sector about whether higher education institutions are adequately preparing students for the demands of the labor market in the Fourth Industrial Revolution. While studies have acknowledged the increasing importance of generic soft skills, there is still debate about whether higher education institutions are effectively equipping students with these skills. Some employers in Malaysia, for example, express dissatisfaction with the communication skills, English proficiency, and critical thinking abilities of Malaysian graduates.

The industry is seeking graduates who can think critically and possess knowledge that extends beyond mere task performance. Employers are looking for individuals who can reason and understand the rationale behind their work. This implies that modern undergraduate education needs to align more closely with the requirements and training programs of the job sector. However, the evolving labor market and the increasing uncertainty in traditional occupations and employment conditions make it challenging to clearly identify the specific needs of the industry.

Graduate employability skills are a subject of extensive discussion as technology continues to reshape various aspects of our lives. To address this challenge, it is important for higher education institutions to consider the views and expectations of employers. By understanding the skills and knowledge that industry players value, higher education institutions can tailor their programs to meet the changing demands of the job market. Collaborations between academia and industry can also provide valuable insights and opportunities for students to gain practical experiences that enhance their employability.

In summary, the Fourth Industrial Revolution and technological advancements are reshaping industries and creating new expectations for employability skills. Higher education institutions need to ensure that their graduates possess not only technical knowledge but also generic soft skills, including critical thinking, communication abilities, and a strong command of the English language. Understanding the perspectives of employers and fostering collaborations between academia and industry are crucial for aligning educational programs with the evolving needs of the labor market.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Fourth Industrial Revolution brings about changes in job requirements and the way work is performed. The advancement of Internet technology, interconnectedness, and the use of artificial intelligence (AI) have had a significant impact on market demand.

While artificial systems and automation pose a threat to certain jobs, they also create new opportunities for economic development. Companies can leverage emerging technologies to improve profitability, create new goods and services, and enhance the quality of personal lives. A McKinsey & Company study highlighted that emerging technologies have the potential to replace approximately half of all current work tasks, leading to cost savings for companies and the creation of new jobs.

The Fourth Industrial Revolution has transformed various aspects of people's lives, including how they book transportation, order food, make payments, consume media, and engage in learning. Digitalization has reshaped the competitive landscape, challenging existing firms and fostering new business models and innovation.

However, the implementation of automation and digitalization has also resulted in job displacement, particularly in low-skilled positions. Automation has been introduced to replace labor in low-skilled jobs, potentially leading to unemployment for individuals in these roles. Conversely, high-skilled workers are more likely to adapt to and benefit from technological advancements.

This shifting landscape has created a significant demand for digital skills among workers. To remain competitive in the new employment landscape, individuals are under pressure to upskill themselves and acquire digital competencies. Additionally, there is an increasing demand for soft skills in jobs. Employers recognize the importance of qualities such as communication, critical thinking, problem-solving, and adaptability, as these skills are valued in the evolving work environment.

In summary, the Fourth Industrial Revolution has had profound effects on society, culture, and the economy. It has led to the digital transformation of industries, the emergence of new business models, and changes in job requirements. While there are concerns about job displacement, there are also opportunities for economic growth and the creation of new jobs. The demand for digital skills and soft skills is on the rise, emphasizing the need for individuals to adapt and upskill themselves to thrive in the new employment landscape. The search for talented individuals who possess both soft skills and hard skills has become challenging for employers. Numerous studies have highlighted the gap between the skills possessed by graduates and the skills required in the workplace. This section explores the concept of employability, employability skills in the 21st century, and the perspective of upskilling from a human capital theory standpoint.

Employability skills can be categorized into two types, as described by McWilliam and Haukka (2008). The first type is acquired through specific field-related learning at the university level, while the second type is transferable skills that can be applied to achieve organizational objectives. Employability skills refer to transferable skills that are functional for employment purposes. In other words, it implies that individuals have the ability to acquire the necessary skills to perform a job beyond formal credentials like a degree. The possession of attributes and skills required to meet the changing demands of employers is considered employability (Dhakal et al., 2019; Winterton and Turner, 2019). Graduates, in particular, need to shift their focus from purely cultivating hard skills to also developing soft skills such as teamwork, project management, leadership, communication, creative thinking, and problem-solving in the context of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (Teng et al., 2019).

A previous study identified several dimensions of employability skills, including basic literacy and numeracy skills, critical thinking skills, management skills, leadership skills, interpersonal skills, information technology skills, systems thinking skills, and work ethic disposition (Rosenberg et al., 2012). This study examined the perspectives of graduates, academics, and business school managers in the United States. However, it is important to note that our current study focuses on the viewpoint and experiences of employers in the Malaysian context. Effective communication and collaboration between academia and industry are essential to better prepare students with the necessary skills and to review existing program structures to meet the demands of the industry.

In summary, employability skills encompass both field-specific knowledge acquired at the university level and transferable skills that can be applied in various contexts. Graduates need to shift their focus towards developing soft skills alongside technical skills to meet the demands of the Fourth Industrial Revolution. Employability skills identified in previous studies include literacy, critical thinking, management, leadership, interpersonal, information technology, systems thinking, and work ethic. However, it is crucial to consider the specific perspectives of employers in the local context to ensure that educational institutions align their programs with industrial demands. Collaboration between academia and industry is vital to bridge the gap between the skills possessed by graduates and the skills required by employers.

METHODOLOGY

The research instrument used in this study was primarily a questionnaire that was validated by two experts and piloted with a sample of 47 employers. The sample size was determined based on Cohen's rules of thumb, and Cronbach's alpha coefficients were used to assess the reliability of the instrument, yielding a result of 0.89, indicating excellent reliability.

The questionnaire items were adapted from a previous study on basic employability skills and the need for additional training after graduation. Constructs such as numeracy skills, interpersonal skills, leadership skills, and work ethics were chosen and modified to suit the local context. Some items were also adapted from a study on employability skill constructs among polytechnic graduates.

In addition to these references, a wide range of disciplines, industry reports, and government sectors were consulted to compile the list of skills. The Malaysian Qualification Framework and Jobstreet Malaysia's report on required skills in the industry were used as sources for the skills lists.

The selected constructs from academic studies, government reports, and industry sources included numeracy skills, leadership skills, communication skills, interpersonal skills, teamwork skills, digital skills, and personal attributes.

By using a validated questionnaire that incorporates various sources and perspectives, this study aims to gather insights into the industry's expectations regarding the key employability skills of fresh graduates in the communication and media industry. illance of the industry's expectations towards employability skills among young graduates in the communication and media industry.

The data collection process involved distributing questionnaires to 400 relevant employers in six states: Perak, Selangor, Negeri Sembilan, Johor, Sabah, and Sarawak. Originally, the study targeted three states in the Central region of Peninsular Malaysia but was later expanded based on employer feedback. A total of 362 questionnaires were returned, but only 313 could be used for analysis due to incomplete responses.

The sample size of 313 was drawn from a population of 2,552 communication and media industry professionals in Malaysia. The population size was calculated using Jobstreet Malaysia's registered company directory, which includes specific niches within the industry such as broadcasting, telecommunication, finance/bank/insurance, government agencies, and NGO/services.

The questionnaire consisted of three main sections: Section A captured demographic characteristics of the employers, Section B focused on employability skills in the twenty-first century, and Section C addressed personal qualities and working attitudes of potential employees. The questionnaires utilized a 5-point Likert scale for respondents to rate the importance of various skills and qualities.

To ensure the validity of the instrument, two experts validated the content, constructs, and language of the questionnaire.

Overall, the systematic random sampling technique and the sample size of 313 provide insights into the industry's expectations regarding employability skills among young graduates in the communication and media industry in Malaysia.

CONCLUSION

The study sheds light on the challenges faced by fresh graduates, such as unrealistic wage expectations and a mismatch between their education and the jobs they take. It emphasizes the need for higher education institutions to go beyond theoretical education and provide students with practical skills that make them readily employable.

In the context of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, the study emphasizes the importance of a systematic and interconnected response involving various stakeholders, including the public and private sectors, academia, and civil society. It highlights the concerns raised by experts regarding the impact of technology on democracy and the need for discussions and collaborations in civic, academic, and political spaces.

The research contributes to our understanding of factors influencing graduate employability and career prospects, particularly in the communication and media industry. It provides a foundation for universities to address stakeholder demands and identifies areas of individual responsibility as well as potential areas for collaboration between universities and employers.

The findings also suggest that humans remain integral to the Fourth Industrial Revolution, as their innovation and ideas drive changes and complement artificial intelligence. It is crucial to retool skills to align with the needs of the evolving technological landscape.

For higher education institutions, the challenges lie in revising curricula annually to deliver work-ready graduates, equipping students with skills in deploying human and social capital, and helping them become resilient to labor market challenges. It is important to provide students with strategies to navigate the job market effectively, rather than overselling job prospects.

Overall, the study emphasizes the importance of adapting education systems and equipping students with the necessary skills and knowledge to thrive in the Fourth Industrial Revolution. By addressing the challenges and collaborating with stakeholders, higher education institutions can play a vital role in preparing students for the demands of the communication and media industry and the evolving job market.

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