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BRIDGING THE GAP: CHALLENGES IN EMPLOYABILITY FOR COMMERCE GRADUATES

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Keywords	Abstract
Employability, Job Market, Commerce Graduate.	Employability is the collection of abilities, skills, and information that help someone find and keep a job. It includes both technical proficiency and employable soft skills like problem-solving and communication. The increasing number of commerce graduates in the job market has highlighted several challenges in securing employment. Despite having academic qualifications, many graduates struggle to meet employers' expectations due to a lack of relevant skills and practical experience. This study evaluates the challenges faced by commerce graduates in employability (job obtainment). The technique used in the study is one sample t-test. The findings of the study indicated that Skill gap, Poor Soft Skills, Less Confidence in Interviews, Inability to Adapt to Changing Job Roles, and Fear of Taking Initiative are low impact challenges, whereas, Lack of Practical Experience, Intense Competition, Limited Industry-Specific Training, Insufficient Networking, Lack of Technology skills, Over-Reliance on Academic Degrees, and Limited Digital & IT Knowledge are high impact challenges faced by commerce graduates in employability (Job obtainment).

1. INTRODUCTION

Employability in the twenty-first century requires three categories of skills that are generally applicable to the majority of employment. Communication skills, teamwork, and leadership are examples of interpersonal skills that can help people engage with one another and are considered human capital. They can therefore help to enhance performance at work. Motivation, openness to learning and embracing new things, analytical thinking, and decision-making skills are examples of intrapersonal

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capabilities. Graduates need these skills to be more innovative and to broaden their knowledge in the profession. ICT skills include operating ICT software and tools and applying technology in a way that suits the graduates' ability. Most employers prefer to hire new graduates with good interpersonal skills, teamwork abilities, fluency in English, and proficiency in information and communication technology (ICT) (Singh and Singh, 2008). Furthermore, graduates have poor employability skills and lack the capabilities required to thrive in the job (Hossain, 2018). According to Rehman (2014), employability for graduates is defined as a collection of job accomplishments in terms of abilities, knowledge, and personal attributes. It can demonstrate that an individual can get employment and succeed in their area, which benefits both the organisation and the individual.

These skills are essential for assessing graduates' aptitudes and technological proficiency in the majority of developing nations struggle with unemployment, which has a big impact on their capacity to maintain their economies (Omar & Rajoo, 2016). When someone cannot find work that will enable them to sustain themselves, they are considered unemployed (Chen & Chan, 2019). Increased unemployment is indicative of inefficient utilisation of its human resources. A nation's GDP will suffer greatly with each increase in the jobless rate. Countries should control labour market unemployment as a result of these negative consequences. hot topic for a long time. According to Van der Berg and Van Broekhuizen (2012), unemployment among those with a valid academic degree is known as graduate unemployment.

Job Obtainment

The process of effectively obtaining a job after finishing school or training is known as "job Obtainment." Finding employment prospects is simply one aspect of it; another is matching one's experiences, education, and abilities to the job's criteria. Employability skills, networking, sector knowledge, and the capacity to adjust to pressures at work are important characteristics that impact job accomplishment. In today's competitive job market, workers must have strong interpersonal, problem-solving skills, and communication skills to stand out to potential employers. Economic conditions, industry-specific trends, and geographic location all have a huge impact on job obtainment chances. Getting a job ultimately comes from a combination of external factors, deliberate job searches activities, and individual preparedness.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Kamble, S., & Pandey, S. (2021).

The study sought to create a common concept of employability skills by evaluating the disparate views of employability among academia, employers in the IT industry, and recent engineering graduates. The study discovered that, depending on their circumstances, industry, academics, and recent graduates all had diverse interpretations of employability. The IT sector placed a high value on professional and communication skills, recent graduates placed a strong emphasis on communication skills, and academic institutions prioritized employability and communication skills. Skill expectations were inconsistent as a result of stakeholders' lack of a common understanding.

2.2 Guo, M. (2023).

The goal of the study was to examine graduate employability in terms of hard skills, soft skills, leadership, creativity and innovation, and interpersonal skills. According to the report, graduates faced a variety of employment issues that called for cooperation between businesses, governments, and

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educational institutions. Improving graduates' competitiveness and performance in the job required strengthening both hard and soft talents as well as their leadership, creative, and interpersonal skills.

2.3 Liao, H. (2023).

The study's objectives were to analyse scholarly works on the employability of college graduates, pinpoint important areas for further research, and point out areas where earlier work was lacking. The study identified seven major themes in recent research on employability: the factors that affect graduate employability, the connection between employability and higher education, a collaboration between academia and industry, the significance of professional networks and social capital, the impact of social mobility, the effects of globalisation and workplace diversity, and the role of soft skills.

2.4 Salahuddin, et al. (2023).

The purpose of the study was to investigate the connection between Malaysian graduate unemployment, job mismatches, and employability abilities. According to the study, job mismatches and employability abilities both had a major impact on graduate unemployment. Graduates without jobs shown deficiencies in critical abilities like creativity, problem-solving, leadership, and communication. The results made clear how crucial it is to strengthen these abilities to increase graduates' career prospects and match industry demands.

2.5 Tee, T. K., & Muh, Z. (2024).

The study sought to ascertain, depending on variables such as gender, study program, and VC after graduation, the challenges faced by Vocational College graduates in choosing occupations, matching their study program with their profession, and comprehending the abilities employers need. According to the survey, picking a career, matching their educational program to available positions, and figuring out the talents that employers value was all extremely difficult for graduates. While the difficulty of connecting education with careers did not change based on gender, gender-related disparities in problems and talents were noted.

2.6 Khare, M. (2018).

The goal of the study was to investigate the difficulties in preparing Indian higher school graduates for the workforce, with an emphasis on systemic problems and the requirement for long-term employability skills initiatives. The study discovered that a lack of employability skills made it impossible for India's growing number of graduates to live up to employers' expectations. Systemic inequalities in the higher education sector made it more difficult for young people to find and keep jobs.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

(I) To analyse challenges faced by Commerce Graduated in Employability.

(II) To give appropriate suggestions to overcome the challenges.

Hypothesis:

Null Hypothesis (H₀):

The mean score of challenges faced by commerce graduates in employability is ≤ 3 , indicating that these challenges have little to no significant impact on their employability.

Alternative Hypothesis (H₁):

The mean score of challenges faced by commerce graduates in employability is > 3 , indicating that

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these challenges have a significant impact on their employability.

3. METHODOLOGY

Table 1: Research Methodology

Research Design	Descriptive
Data Collection	Primary and Secondary
Sampling Technique	Non-Probability Purposive Sampling
Sample Size	80 Commerce Graduates
Sample Size Determination	According to Faul et al. a minimum sample size of 45 is required for conducting a one-tailed one-sample t-test.
Statistical Technique	Parametric One-Sample t-test
Statistical Tool	R Studio Software

Data Analysis and Interpretation:

Table 2: One sample t test

Items	t – statistics	P – value	Ha: mean score of challenges faced by commerce graduates in employability:> 3
Skill gap	-19.09	1	Low Impact
Lack of Practical Experience	19.43	0.000	High Impact
Intense Competition	20.00	0.000	High Impact
Limited Industry-Specific Training	22.22	0.000	High Impact
Poor Soft Skills	-22.09	1	Low Impact
Insufficient Networking	20.76	0.000	High Impact
Less Confidence in Interviews	-21.34	1	Low Impact
Inability to Adapt to Changing Job Roles	-22.78	1	Low Impact
Lack of Technology skills	19.76	0.000	High Impact
Over-Reliance on Academic Degrees	20.18	0.000	High Impact
Limited Digital & IT Knowledge	19.00	0.000	High Impact
Fear of Taking Initiative	-20.16	1	Low Impact

The results of the one-sample t-test highlight significant disparities in the challenges faced by commerce graduates in terms of employability. Factors such as lack of practical experience ($t = 19.43$, $p = 0.000$), intense competition ($t = 20.00$, $p = 0.000$), limited industry-specific training ($t = 22.22$, $p = 0.000$), insufficient networking ($t = 20.76$, $p = 0.000$), lack of technology skills ($t = 19.76$, $p = 0.000$), over-reliance on academic degrees ($t = 20.18$, $p = 0.000$), and limited digital & IT knowledge ($t = 19.00$, $p = 0.000$) were found to have a statistically significant high impact on employability, as their mean scores were significantly greater than 3. This indicates that commerce graduates struggle primarily due to inadequate exposure to practical training, evolving industry needs, and digital transformation, which employers now prioritize. Conversely, challenges such as skill gap ($t = -19.09$, $p = 1.000$), poor soft skills ($t = -22.09$, $p = 1.000$), less confidence in interviews ($t = -21.34$, $p = 1.000$), inability to adapt to changing job roles ($t = -22.78$, $p = 1.000$), and fear of taking initiative ($t = -20.16$, $p = 1.000$) were deemed to have a low impact, suggesting that while these issues may exist, they are

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not as critical in hindering employability.

In most of the Cases P value < 0.05 thus H_0 is Rejected and it can be concluded that The mean score of challenges faced by commerce graduates in employability is > 3 , indicating that these challenges have a significant impact on their employability.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The investigation shows that major challenges that affect commerce graduates' employability include a lack of real-world experience, fierce competition, a lack of training tailored to their field, a lack of networking opportunities, and a lack of digital abilities. The need for improved skill development, hands-on training, and digital literacy is highlighted by these elements, which also show the widening gap between academic learning and industrial requirements. However, it was discovered that factors such as a lack of soft skills, a fear of taking initiative, and skill gaps had less of an impact, indicating that these might not be the main obstacles. Through internships, industry-academia partnerships, and upskilling initiatives, graduates' career prospects and job preparation can be significantly enhanced by addressing high-impact concerns.

5. SUGGESTIONS

Policymakers and educational institutions need to concentrate on closing the knowledge gap between industry and academics. Enhancing hands-on experience and work preparedness can be achieved through the introduction of industry-specific certifications, internships, and practical training. Connecting graduates with possible employers can be facilitated by enhancing networking opportunities through mentorship programs and alumni participation. To satisfy the changing needs of the labour market, the curriculum should also incorporate the development of digital and technology skills. Promoting entrepreneurial thinking, flexibility, and lifelong learning will also provide graduates the self-assurance and agility they need to thrive in a cutthroat job market.

6. AUTHOR(S) CONTRIBUTION

The authors agreed to have no connections or engagements with any group or body that provides financial and non-financial assistance for the topics and resources covered in the article.

7. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declared that no potential conflicts of interest concerning the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

8. PLAGIARISM POLICY

The authors declare that any kind of violation of plagiarism, copyright, and ethical matters will be handled by all authors. Journalists and editors are not liable for the aforesaid matters.

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