

# Factors for Enhancing the Employability of University Graduates in Myanmar

Aye Aye Aung<sup>1</sup>, Amiya Bhaumik<sup>2</sup>, Oyyappan Duraipandi<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Graduate Student, Department of Business Management and Accountancy, Lincoln University College, Malaysia

<sup>2</sup>Professor, Department of Business Management and Accountancy, Lincoln University College, Malaysia

<sup>3</sup>Professor, Department of Business Management and Accountancy, Lincoln University College, Malaysia

<sup>1</sup>trayeayaung94@gmail.com, <sup>2</sup>amiya@lincoln.edu.my, <sup>3</sup>oyyappan@lincoln.edu.my

<sup>1</sup>0009-0002-0675-9299, <sup>2</sup>0000-0002-9188-2269, <sup>3</sup>0000-0001-6076-0720

**Corresponding Author\*:** Aye Aye Aung

---

## Abstract

*In today's rapidly evolving labor market, graduate employability has become a pressing concern, particularly in developing countries like Myanmar. This study investigates the key factors influencing graduate employability in Myanmar, focusing on academic performance, technical skills, communication skills, leadership and motivational skills, teamwork, and problem-solving skills. A quantitative research approach was adopted, using a structured questionnaire to collect primary data from the employers, HR managers, and general managers. A total of 198 respondents actively participated in the research, and the data were analyzed using SmartPLS. The findings reveal that academic performance and technical skills significantly and positively influence graduate employability, followed by leadership, motivational, teamwork, and problem-solving skills. However, communication skills have no significant effect on graduate employability. The results highlight the fresh graduates' requirements for entry into the labor market and employment.*

*Keywords: University Graduates, Skills, Employability, Myanmar.*

---

## INTRODUCTION

The employability of university graduates has become a critical issue as industries continue to evolve with rapid technology advancements and globalization. Employers seek candidates with several skills and knowledge to implement in the workplace. Graduate employability has been a general concern among educators, policymakers, and educational stakeholders due to the competitive job market [1]. Due to political, economic, and pandemic crises, fresh graduates face difficulties in finding appropriate job positions after graduation. Moreover, employers seek graduates who have sufficient employable skills and competencies that are demanded in the current job market. University graduates need several competencies to adapt to the labor market and job expectations. Several key factors influence the employability of university graduates, including academic performance, technical skills, communication skills, leadership and motivational skills, and teamwork and problem-solving skills [2]

Although universities and higher education sectors provide various theoretical and practical knowledge for graduates, the concept of graduate employability is changing due to economic, political, technical, and pandemic factors. In Myanmar, employers seek to hire qualified graduates whose skills match the job position and accomplish their targeted business goals. Both private and public higher education sectors provide different skills and tactics. However, the job market is competitive for graduates. The employability of university graduates in Myanmar has become a critical concern due to the increasing mismatch between graduates' skills and the labor market. This study explores the factors affecting university graduates' employability in Myanmar. The results will contribute to higher education systems providing the required skills and techniques, and the graduates will notice which skills employers expect them to have.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Graduate employability complicates skills and competencies to obtain the desired professional position in a competitive job market [3]. Employers need graduates' communication skills and educational background when they hire [4]. Moreover, the graduates' technical skills, realistic experience, and academic performance are critical to employment in desired positions. Academic background and performance are critical for graduates to enter the job market. Students' employability and career success chances improve when they perform well during academic pathways. Academic performance directly

impacts graduates' employability. Academic performance, including a high grade point average and extracurricular activities, can result in suitable and desirable job positions and employability [5]. Academic performance directly and significantly impacts graduates' employability in Bangladesh. However, academic performance does not significantly affect graduates' employability [6].

In addition to academic performance, technical skills are critical for graduates. Due to IT and internet access development, technical skills have become vital for employers and employees in a competitive world [7]. Digital competencies are sufficient for fresh graduates to be employable in the digital era. In Malaysia, employers prefer graduates with updated technical skills and competencies [8]. Technical skills become a competitive edge for graduates to be employable in a crowded job market. Companies prefer hiring graduates who require minimal technical skills training [9]. However, Hosian and associates described those technical skills as not directly affecting graduates' employability in Bangladesh [2].

Moreover, workplace communication skills are vital for graduates to communicate with different stakeholders, including co-workers, managers, and clients [10]. Communication involves verbal and non-verbal communication skills that create effective teamwork and enhance productivity [11]. Employers prefer graduates with positive and active communication skills to handle workplace issues and build a favorable organizational climate. Good communication skills can improve problem-solving skills and build an effective team. Communication skills significantly affect graduates' employability in Bangladesh [2]. Nazron and associates disagreed on the significant effect of communication skills on employability in Malaysia [12].

Leadership and motivation skills are essential for career growth and workplace productivity. For fresh graduates, leadership and motivational skills can be developed through teamwork and sharing responsibilities [13]. Employers seek graduates with strong leadership and motivation to handle workplace issues, build effective teamwork, and accomplish the assigned tasks within limited resources. Highly motivated graduates have more chances to get jobs than demotivated ones. Leadership and motivation skills are critical for graduates to get a job in India [14]. However, Hosian and associates showed that leadership and motivational skills have no significant and direct effect on graduates' employability in Bangladesh [2].

Teamwork and problem-solving skills are as important for graduates as other academic qualifications to get a job [15]. Employers seek graduates with critical skills such as teamwork and problem-solving abilities to collaborate effectively in the working environment and contribute to personal and team performance. Teamwork is critical in every organization as collaboration is essential to achieve targeted goals and competitive edges. Graduates who demonstrate teamwork skills show that they can work harmoniously with colleagues [16]. Problem-solving skills are important for solving unexpected and possible work issues [17]. Graduates with strong problem-solving abilities have a great chance of being employable in today's job market. Problem-solving skills help to solve communication and workplace issues and improve organizational effectiveness. Hosian et al. found that teamwork and communication skills strongly affect graduates' employability in Bangladesh [2].

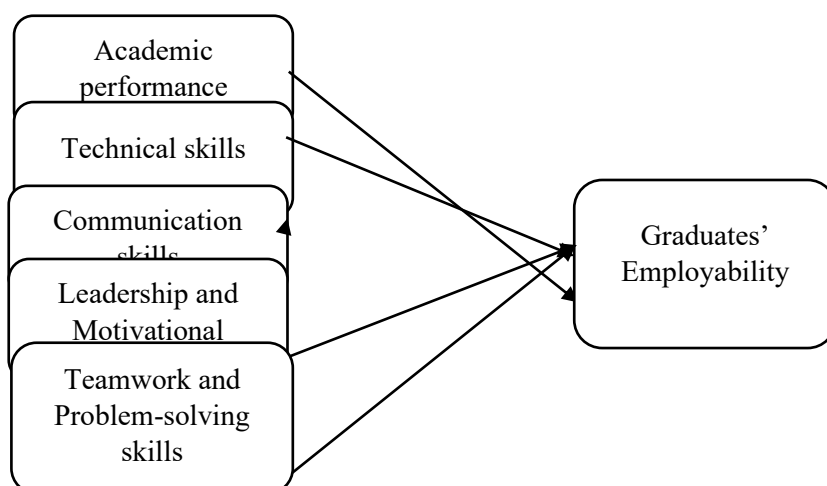


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework (Hosian et al., 2021)

The above conceptual framework (Figure 1) has been developed from a review of previous literature and articles. The independent variables are academic performance, technical skills, communication skills, leadership and motivational skills, and teamwork and problem-solving skills as factors of graduates' employability. Graduate employability is the dependent variable.

### Research Method

The quantitative research methods are implemented to analyze the conceptual framework (Figure 1) and stated hypotheses. The primary data are collected using a structured questionnaire from the targeted participants. This research targeted the employers and human resource managers responsible for recruiting and selecting new employees. The convenience sampling method is applied to select the sample from the targeted frame. The questionnaire is distributed to HR groups to collect primary data. The questionnaire comprises 20 items: academic performance, communication skills, leadership and motivation, teamwork and problem-solving skills, and graduate employability. A total of 198 respondents participated in this study. The collected data are analysed by SmartPLS (version 4).

### FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 describes the demographic characteristics of the participants. It indicates that most respondents are female (64.1%), and just over one-third of respondents are male (35.9%). Over half of respondents (63.6%) are aged between 36 and 41 years, followed by 42 and 47 years, and 48 years and above. Nearly half of the respondents (44.9%) work as general managers, and 37.4% are employers. Over half of the participants (57.1%) have six to nine years of working experience, and nearly one-third have two to five years of working experience.

Table 1: Personal Factors of Respondents

Personal Factors		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	71	35.9
	Female	127	64.1
Age	30 to 35 years	19	9.6
	36 to 41 years	126	63.6
	42 to 47 years	31	15.7
	48 years and above	22	11.1
Working Position	Employer	74	37.4
	General Manager	89	44.9
	HR Manager	35	17.7
Working Experience	2 to 5 years	54	27.3
	6 to 9 years	113	57.1
	10 years and above	31	15.7

Source: Survey data

Table 2 presents the question items' descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation). The mean score describes the respondents' perception of the question items. The questionnaire is composed of a five-point Likert scale (1=totally disagree to agree 5=totally). The average score is 3. When the score is more than 3, the respondents positively perceive stated items and vice versa. According to results in Table 2, the respondents have positive perceptions of the testing items related to academic performance, technical skills, communication skills, leadership, teamwork, and graduate employability. However, the respondents have a weak perception that the organization encourages employees to develop leadership skills. Moreover, teamwork is essential when hiring.

Table (2): Descriptive Statistics

Variables		Mean	Std. Deviation
AP1	Academic performance is an indicator of a candidate's employability in my organization.	3.641	.8046
AP2	My organization considers academic performance an important indicator of employability, although it is not the only one.	3.884	.6543
AP3	The condition of good academic performance can be relaxed for exceptionally qualified job candidates.	3.500	.9492
TS1	Technical skills are one of the mandatory competencies for employability in my organization.	3.298	.9490
TS2	Candidates with sound technical skills are in high demand.	3.833	.8108
TS3	Candidates with technical skills are better equipped to solve any challenges.	3.747	.7244
CS1	Candidates must have sound communication skills and other requirements.	3.722	.7043
CS2	Candidates with better networking capabilities are highly valued.	3.990	.6451
CS3	Better communication skills make a candidate confident.	3.848	.6739
LMS1	Only a good leader can motivate his/her followers	3.556	.8457
LMS2	We strongly seek candidates with leadership and motivational skills.	3.848	.6023
LMS3	My organization is among the best places to develop leadership and motivational skills.	3.692	.6220
LMS4	My organization encourages its employees to develop leadership and motivational skills.	2.773	.8921
TPS1	Teamwork is an essential quality to be hired.	2.722	1.0219
TPS2	We strongly seek candidates with better teamwork capabilities.	3.768	.6425
TPS3	Candidates are tested through brainstorming for teamwork capability.	3.293	1.0349
GE1	Only the best candidates are employed at my organization.	3.535	.9047
GE2	My organization provides a better chance for fresh graduates.	3.606	.8101
GE3	Before hiring, all the selected candidates undergo strict and detailed selection tests before hiring.	3.525	.9381
GE4	The HRM professionals at my organization are experts at using the best candidates.	3.798	.6680

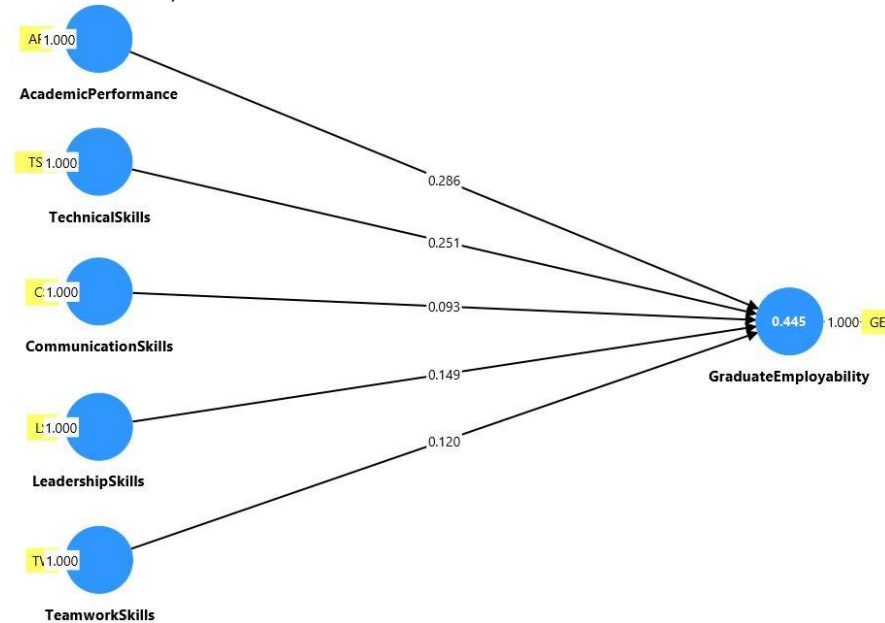
Source: Survey data

The structural equation modelling method uses SmartPLS (version 4) to measure the correlation matrix. According to Table 3 and Figure 2, the path coefficient values show a positive correlation between graduate employability, academic performance, communication skills, technical skills, leadership motivational skills, teamwork, and problem-solving skills. Academic performance has a direct significant effect on graduate employability (path coefficient = 0.286), followed by technical skills (path coefficient = 0.251), leadership and motivation skills (path coefficient = 0.149), and teamwork and problem-solving skills (path coefficient = 0.120). Communication skills do not significantly affect graduate employability (path coefficient = 0.093).

Table (3) Path coefficient

	Path coefficients	P-value
Academic Performance -> Graduate Employability	0.286	0.000
Communication Skills -> Graduate Employability	0.093	0.138
Technical Skills -> Graduate Employability	0.251	0.000
Leadership and Motivational Skills -> Graduate Employability	0.149	0.037
Teamwork and Problem-solving Skills -> Graduate Employability	0.120	0.043

Source: Survey data



**Figure 2: Results of the study (source: survey data)**

According to the results described in Figure 2, academic performance and technical skills are critical for graduates to be employed. In Myanmar, employers, HR managers, and general managers generally focus on academic backgrounds and academic performance when selecting and recruiting new employees. Joutei et al. (2021) indicated that academic performance is directly related to graduates' employability [5]. Moreover, employers find the fresh graduates who qualify with high-tech technical skills to invest in the workplace. Ismail et al. (2020) reported that technical and digital skills are critical competencies for graduates to be hired in a competitive workplace [8, 9]. Furthermore, the current study indicates that leadership and motivational skills, teamwork, and problem-solving skills are important for graduates' employability. Employers seek new staff with strong leadership and self-motivational skills in the workplace. Priyadarshini et al. (2019) approved that leadership and motivational skills are critical for fresh graduates [14]. Employers and HR managers also emphasize the teamwork and problem-solving skills of graduates to hire. Alrifai and Raju (2019) showed that teamwork and problem-solving skills are vital skills for employees [15]. However, this study describes that the communication skills of fresh graduates have no significant impact on their employability. The result is against the previous research done by Gupta and Mahajan (2024), where communication skills are critical for fresh graduates to be hired [10]. However, Nazron et al.'s (2017) findings support the result of the current study, where communication skills have no significant effect on graduates' employability.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings can be concluded that better academic performance and strong technical skills are major factors influencing graduates' employability, while leadership and motivational skills, as well as teamwork and problem-solving skills, have a moderating influence on graduates' employability. Communication skill has no significant effect on graduates' employability. According to the results, the organizations prioritize academic performance, technical skills, leadership, motivational skills, teamwork, and problem-solving skills to recruit new staff. Thus, the graduates and fresh job seekers should improve their academic background and performance before entering the job market. Moreover, technical skills are critical for today's business world. Thus, the graduates should improve their technical skills and attend technical training before seeking jobs. In the workplace, leadership and motivational skills are important. Thus, the fresh graduates should learn leadership skills and understand motivational skills and tactics. In addition, the graduates should understand the role of teamwork and problem-solving skills in the workplace to collaborate with others and perform teamwork. Moreover, communication skills have become critical for personal and professional development; fresh graduates should have positive communication skills. To be employed, the fresh graduates need to be aware of the critical workplace skills and requirements and prepare for their professional careers.

## REFERENCES

- [1] M. Cheng, O. Adekola, J. Albia and S. Cai, "Employability in higher education: a review of key stakeholders' perspectives," *Higher Education Evaluation and Development*, vol. 16, no. 1, pp. 16–31, 2022.
- [2] M. S. Hosain, M. A. A. Mustafi and T. Parvin, "Factors affecting the employability of private university graduates: an exploratory study on Bangladeshi employers," *PSU Research Review* 7, no. 3, pp. 163–183, 2023.
- [3] Y. Chen, "Chen, Yong. "Graduate employability: The perspective of social network learning," *Eurasia Journal of Mathematics, Science and Technology Education*, vol. 13, no. 6, pp. 2567-2580, 2017.
- [4] A. M. Baird and S. Parayitam, "Employers' ratings of importance of skills and competencies college graduates need to get hired: Evidence from the New England region of USA," *Education+ Training*, vol. 61, no. 5, pp. 622-634, 2019.
- [5] K. T. Joutei, F. Z. Belhadj, A. Chraibi, Y. Chtouki and N. Benamar, "Meta-Interpreting the Correlation Between the Grade Point Average and Employability: a case study," in *2021 International Conference on Data Analytics for Business and Industry (ICDABI)*. IEEE, 2021.
- [6] J. J. Soon, A. S. H. Lee, H. E. Lim, I. Idris and W. Y. Eng, "Cubicles or corner offices? Effects of academic performance on university graduates' employment likelihood and salary," *Studies in Higher Education*, vol. 45, no. 6, pp. 1233-1248, 2020.
- [7] S. S, "Developing e-skills for competitiveness, growth and employment in the 21st century: The European perspective," *International Journal of Development Issues*, vol. 11, no. 7, pp. 37-59, 2012.
- [8] Z. Ismail, A. S. Ahmad and A. Ahmi, "Perceived Employability Skills of Accounting Graduates: The Insights from Employers," *Elementary Education Online*, vol. 19, no. 4, pp. 36-41, 2020.
- [9] K. Mwita, The role of soft skills, technical skills, and academic performance on graduate employability. *Technical Skills and Academic Performance on Graduate Employability*, January 30, 2024.
- [10] P. Gupta and R. Mahajan, "Investigating stakeholder perceptions of graduate employability," *Higher Education, Skills and Work-Based Learning*, vol. 14, no. 1, pp. 109-129, 2024.
- [11] M. Sanmas, A. Qadir, N. Nahria and I. Laili, *The Role of Interpersonal Communication in Enhancing Teamwork Effectiveness in the Digital Era.*, 2023.
- [12] M. A. Nazron, B. Lim and J. L. Nga, "Soft skills attributes and graduate employability: A case in Universiti Malaysia Sabah," *Malaysian Journal of Business and Economics (MJBE)*, 2017.
- [13] S. Majid, C. M. Eapen and K. T. Oo, "The Importance of Soft Skills for Employability and Career Development: Students and Employers' Perspectives," *IUP Journal of Soft Skills*, vol. 13, no. 4, 2019.
- [14] C. Priyadarshini, S. Singh, R. David and O. Bin Sayeed, "Effect of Student Leadership on Academic Performance and Perceived Employability: A Longitudinal Study on Scale Development and Validation in the Indian Context," *South Asian Journal of Management*, vol. 26, no. 2, 2019.
- [15] A. A. Alrifai and V. Raju, "The employability skills of higher education graduates: A review of literature," *International Advanced Research Journal in Science, Engineering and Technology*, vol. 6, no. 3, 2019.
- [16] W. Wang, M. Hussin and M. Z. A. Majid, "Employment Skills in Tertiary Work-Based Learning: A Multiple-Stakeholder Investigation into China's "3+ 1" Programs," *International Journal of Learning, Teaching and Educational Research*, vol. 23, no. 9, pp. 198-219, 2024.
- [17] K. Bariyyah, "Problem solving skills: essential skills challenges for the 21st century graduates," *Jurnal EDUCATIO: Jurnal Pendidikan Indonesia*, vol. 7, no. 1, pp. 71-80, 2021.