

Impact of Leadership & Motivational Skills, Teamwork & Problem-Solving Skills, and Communication Skills on Graduate Employability: Evidence from Universities of Sindh, Pakistan

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ABSTRACT

The current study aims to examine the role of three important skills, such as Leadership and Motivation Skills, Teamwork and Problem-Solving Skills, and Communication Skills, in graduates' employability in the service sector of Sindh, Pakistan. A survey approach was adopted, and a questionnaire was distributed among the service sector employees of Sindh, Pakistan, among those who are part of the hiring process in their respective firms. In order to test the hypothesis, Smart PLS (version 3) is used, and structural equation modeling (SEM) is tested. The findings of this study revealed that all three skills included in this study were found to have positive and significant impacts, such as Leadership and Motivations Skills, Teamwork and Problem-Solving Skills, and Communication Skills, on graduate employability in the service sector in Sindh, Pakistan. However, Communication Skills were considered with a higher beta value as compared to other skills may be due to customer dealing in the service sector. This study directed to the top management of Sindh's Universities that these skills should be developed among their graduates within the classroom and by designing additional curricular activities on the campus. Additionally, the findings of this study confirmed the existing literature review that these skills are important and cannot be ignored, especially in Universities.

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INTRODUCTION

The graduate's employability can be easily understood as the employability of the recent graduating students in order to find jobs in vacant positions (de Lange et al., 2022; Jackson & Tomlinson, 2020). Many factors could impact the employability of recent graduates, such as training, quality of education and skills that they have gained during their studies in the respective university or college tenure (Abelha et al., 2020; Cheng et al., 2022). Most people believe, in general, that it is not guaranteed that afterward having sought a degree, the candidate will get the job, but the fact is that the HR department considers various factors before hiring the employee in their firm, which certainly includes the experience, knowledge, and skills, the candidates have acquired at the time of hiring (Sarkar et al., 2020; Bovill & Woolmer, 2019).

The universities or colleges should provide opportunities to respective students through various ways to enhance their skillfulness before passing out; these skills include internships, professional network building, and the ability to resolve the key issues students might face within the firm in the future (Jackson & Bridgstock, 2021). This is how universities can play their role in order to help their students for better career-building and make them competent to get a good job in the job market (Mtawa et al., 2021; Behle, 2020). The role of higher education in the employment market cannot be ignored. It is practically observed that people with higher education can find better jobs than those with lower-level qualifications (Wachter, 2020).

Several factors are responsible for jobless situations within the economy of the country. However, two main factors cannot be ignored: the recession and the recent pandemic created conditions in developed and developing countries (Bufquin et al., 2021). These two main reasons have increased the unemployment rate within the country's premises in both sectors, the manufacturing and service sectors (Lund et al., 2020). Now many firms are looking for candidates who are well-equipped with technological skills and can work and prove more productive than manually working employees (Rahaman et al., 2022). Therefore, various skills ranging from leadership, team and communication are important to perform the job better (Sehnbruch et al., 2020).

In the present study, various gaps are filled. First, in past studies, many researchers explored the three skills, including 'Leadership and Motivational Skills, Teamwork and Problem-Solving Skills, and Communication Skills', on graduate employability in the manufacturing sector. However, in the present study, private universities in the service sector of Sindh are considered. Secondly, work on these variables has been performed in developed countries in past studies. Therefore, in order to address this gap, developing countries like Pakistan's Sindh province are targeted. Lastly, inside from people involved in the hiring process are taken as the population of study rather than general as in the past studies.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

Leadership & Motivational Skills and Graduate Employability

A past study revealed that 'Leadership and Motivational Skills' positively and significantly impact graduate employability (Fadhil et al., 2021). In general, many employees look at others and have got the motivation to manage day-to-day work more effectively (Contreras et al., 2020). In the current situation, people with 'Leadership and Motivational Skills' get better job opportunities and, in the future, can reach higher positions (Majid et al., 2019; Baird & Parayitam, 2019; Parveen et al., 2022). Many areas reflect the leadership skills, such as managing conflicts, making decisions, and inspiring others to become more productive within the firm (Tanjung et al., 2021). The universities and firms together sharpen their employees 'Leadership and Motivational Skills' through various programs, including building leadership skills training and developing curriculum with the flavor of motivation-related topics and so on (Cahyono et al., 2023). Thus, the following hypothesis is to be tested:

H1: Leadership & Motivational Skills positively related to graduate employability.

Teamwork & Problem-Solving Skills and Graduate Employability

The firms always appreciate employees who can resolve the firm's issues with a collaborative approach and come up with solutions (Vermicelli et al., 2021). Students with problem-solving skills usually get jobs more easily within the competitive market. This is how they bring positive outcomes within the firm, ensuring its growth and a better position in the existing respective industry (Noor, 2023). It can be easy to understand that problem-solving skills help employees look at a situation and develop solutions within limited available resources (Steeb et al., 2021). Therefore, it is suggested that higher education institutes should play a vital role in the order of creating more job opportunities for recent graduates (Szabo et al., 2020). This is achievable through the time-based assignment on the individual level and activities to be conducted within a class for better learning (Klegeris, 2021). Thus, the following hypothesis is to be tested:

H2: Teamwork & Problem-Solving Skills positively related to graduate employability.

2.3 Communication Skills and Graduate Employability

It has been practically observed that firms also used to hire candidates that are good at effective communication within the firm, from colleagues to customers (Aichner et al., 2021). They can use these skills in various aspects of job performance, such as dealing with end-user customers or presenting reports in front of top officials of the organization (Robert & Meenakshi, 2022). Many of the aspects necessary for organization are covered through the help of 'Communication Skills', including listening actively, writing clearly, which can be understood by others easily and speaking with others persuasively. The universities sharpen the skills of individuals through regular presentations within class and group discussions. Public speaking events are familiar and the major part of activities in most universities, and organized debate programs for students individually (Jean-Pierre et al., 2021). Thus, the following hypothesis is to be tested:

H3: Communication Skills positively related to Graduate Employability.

METHODOLOGY

Procedure and Data

In order to investigate the role of 'Leadership & Motivational Skills, Teamwork & Problem-Solving Skills, and Communication Skills' on graduate employability, a survey is conducted through an adopted questionnaire from past studies. The sample drawn from a population is of 260 cases, and they were involved directly or indirectly in various universities in Sindh, Pakistan. The name of the universities is disclosed. The questionnaire is converted into a Google Form, and a link is shared with the HR departments of the universities of concern in order to fill out the provided questionnaire. It took one month to get responses from the said respondents. The questionnaire was Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

Measurement of adopted instrument

'Leadership & Motivational Skills' items taken from the study (Hosain et al. 2021). Research items included "Only a good leader can motivate followers working under their supervision, we strongly seek candidates acquired with leadership and motivational skills and the last item is my organization is one of the best places to develop leadership and motivational skills".

'Teamwork & Problem-Solving Skills' is also adopted from the study (Hosain et al., 2021). Items include: "Teamwork is an essential quality in candidates to be hired for services, we strongly seek for the candidates having acquired with better teamwork capabilities, Candidates with sound technical skills are better sought".

'Communication Skills' is taken from the research of (Hosain et al. 2021). Research items are "Candidates must have sound communication skills along with other requirements, candidates with better networking capabilities are highly valued and Better communication skills make a candidate confident".

'Graduate Employability' is adopted from the study of (Hosain et al. 2021). Items are "Only the best candidates are employed at my organization, my organization provides a better chance to the fresh graduates and before hiring, all the selected candidates go through strict and detailed selection tests".

Software tool

Researchers recommend Smart PLS (version 3) for researchers seeking to test the proposed hypotheses with the help of the Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) technique (Memon et al., 2021; Vinodh, 2020). Therefore, the present study checks the impact of Leadership & Motivational Skills, Teamwork & Problem-Solving Skills, and Communication Skills on graduate employability in private universities of Sindh, Pakistan.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Reliability analysis

The reliability analysis tool is suggested in order to check the internal consistency of gathered data before testing the proposed hypothesis (Sürücü & Maslakci, 2020). This is how an individual researcher can identify the item contribution for a variable or construct (Barbera et al., 2020). The decision criteria for the reliability analysis are the value of Cronbach's alpha, which has been used in social sciences, including education and business. After this analysis, anyone can say the reliability and accuracy of the scale, which are adopted from past studies. Many researchers have suggested that the value of Cronbach alpha, the same value, should be equal to or greater than 0.70 in order to qualify the internal consistency (Purwanto & Sudargini, 2021). It can be noticed that all independent variables and dependent variables have Cronbach alpha value greater than the suggested value of 0.70. The value in this study ranges from its lower extent of 0.770 to 0.842, respectively.

Table 1: Reliability Analysis

Variable name	Items	Cronbach's alpha value	Remarks
Leadership & Motivational Skills	03	0.828	Data is Reliable
Teamwork & Problem-Solving Skills	03	0.770	Data is Reliable
Communication Skills	03	0.838	Data is Reliable
Graduate Employability	03	0.842	Data is Reliable

Hypothesis Testing and Discussion

The authors usually propose the hypothesis based on previous studies, and these hypotheses are tested with the help of statistical testing methods for independent and dependent variables (Assel et al., 2019). For the present study, Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) is used in Smart PLS 3 software. In this testing process, three tests have their own importance, and their value must be checked. These values include the coefficient value, p-value and VIF value.

The coefficient value determines the relationship between the independent and dependent variables (Flatt & Jacobs, 2019). The relationship is either positive or negative, depending on the value of the coefficient. Additionally, the p-value determines the impact of the independent variable on the dependent variable. In the field of social sciences, it is highly recommended that the p-value should be less than 0.05 (Lakens, 2021). When scholar uses more than one independent variable, it is suggested that the VIF (variance inflation factor) should be checked for multi-collinearity issue in the regression model. If not checked, then the results would be considered misleading (Cheng et al., 2022). The value of VIF should be less than 10 (Senaviratna & Cooray, 2019). The three values, including the coefficient value, the p-value, and the VIF value, are shown in Table 2.

In the present study, the independent variable 'Leadership & Motivational Skills' positively and significantly impacted graduate employability. The beta, p-value and VIF value are 0.201, 0.000 and 1.154, respectively. Therefore, it can be concluded that H1 is supported, and there is a positive and significant impact of 'Leadership & Motivational Skills' on graduate employability in the service sector of Sindh, Pakistan. This study's findings align with previous studies (Nadarajah, 2021; Al Asefer & Zainal Abidin, 2021). They also concluded that the role of 'Leadership & Motivational Skills' among graduate employability in their respective countries. 'Leadership & Motivational Skills' improve an

individual's overall personality and help them get a job easily in the corporate sector (Werdhiastutie et al., 2020; Mansaray, 2019).

In the present study, the independent variable 'Teamwork and Problem-Solving Skills' revealed a positive and significant impact on graduate employability. The beta, p-value and VIF values are 0.180, 0.008 and 1.589, respectively. Therefore, it can be concluded that the H2 is also supported. There is a positive and significant impact of 'Teamwork and Problem-Solving Skills' on graduates' employability in the service sector of Sindh, Pakistan. The results of this study are the same as in past studies, such as the recent study by Jamaludin et al., (2019) concluded that the employer always look for 'Teamwork and Problem-Solving Skills' among candidates at the time of hiring. Similarly, a study concluded that candidates who have already developed 'Teamwork and Problem-Solving Skills' can provide a unique solution in the firm, leading to positive outcomes (Huang et al., 2020).

In the present study, the independent variable 'Communication Skills' positively and significantly impacted graduate employability. The beta, p-value and VIF values are 0.495, 0.000 and 1.425, respectively. Therefore, it can be concluded that the H3 is also supported, and 'Communication Skills' positively and significantly impact graduate employability in the Sindh, Pakistan service sector. The findings of this study are the same as a study conducted by Succi & Canovi (2020); they said that effective 'Communication Skills' are important to perform the job in the service sector. With effective 'Communication Skills', employees can confidently communicate with colleagues and as well as with customers, and this is how a positive open communication system is being developed within the firm (Tang, 2019). Lastly, good communication skills develop good relations among individuals within a firm (Ornellas et al., 2019).

Table 2: Hypothesis Testing

Independent variables	Value of Beta	p-value	VIF Value	Remarks
Leadership & Motivational Skills	0.201	0.000	1.154	Accepted
Teamwork & Problem-Solving Skills	0.180	0.008	1.589	Accepted
Communication Skills	0.495	0.000	1.425	Accepted

Dependent variable: Graduate employability

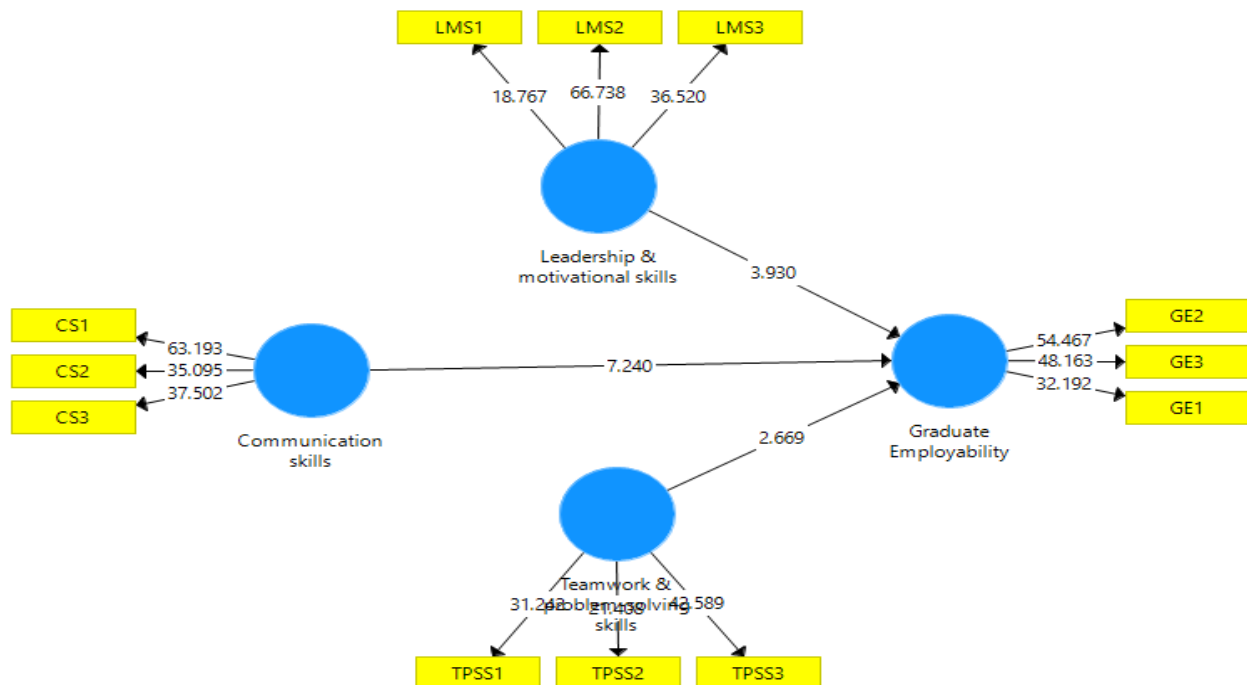


Figure 1: Structural Equation Modelling

CONCLUSION AND PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

The findings of this study are concluded with statistical tools; SEM is conducted in Smart PLS (version 3). The gathered data is tested, and results revealed that all three skills, i.e., 'Leadership and Motivational Skills', 'Teamwork and Problem-Solving Skills' and 'Communication Skills', positively and significantly impact graduate employability. Candidates who developed these skills while studying can get jobs easily in a competitive market. This study directed to the top management of Sindh Universities, Pakistan, that these skills should be developed among their graduates within the classroom and by designing additional curricular activities on the campus. Additionally, the findings of this study confirmed the existing literature review that these skills are important and cannot be ignored.

FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

There is a contribution of this current study but with certain limitations. First, this study is limited to Sindh, Pakistan, only. Therefore, in the future other developing countries of the world and other cities and provinces of Pakistan can be explored to verify this study's findings. Second, only three skills are studied in this study. However, other skills, such as 'Technical Skills' can be included as variables in the existing model. Third, a cross-sectional study is carried but in the future longitudinal study can be conducted. Lastly, the qualitative approach can be adopted because this study is limited to a quantitative approach only.

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