

# Three Factors that Impact Business Studies Graduates Employability: A Case Study of Gauteng Province South Africa

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The concept of employability is steadily changing the higher education landscape though it has not been sharply defined. Inability by higher education to address graduates' employability makes it extremely impossible to engage meaningfully in comparing empirical studies to determine quality of the educational system. This paper is designed to address three gaps relating to graduates' employability namely functional, behavioural, and work experience competencies. Through closed-ended questionnaires primary data was collected from 124 business studies graduates from Gauteng, South Africa. Primary data was analysed using Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) through the Microsoft Excel software. The main results indicated that work experience has a positive but does not statistically influence graduates' employability. These results imply that work experience alone is not enough in making graduates employable. There are other aspects including skill sets such as behavioural skills, technical skills, strategic skills, and functional competence that have significant effects on the employability of graduates.

**Key words:** *Employability, business studies graduates, work experience, functional competences*

## Introduction

The growing crises of unemployment has become one of the biggest impediments in South Africa with the present graduate unemployment rate currently stand over 30%. Several reasons including lack of work experience, behavioural skills and functional competence have been cited as one of the primary reasons. Despite availability of relevant literature still there is inadequate evidence to support the sentiments that work experience stimulates the overarching

criterion for recruitment. Previous research has showed that recruiters make recruiting recommendations based on candidates' work experience while overlook other factors. There are many major challenges facing South Africa now which are unemployment, poverty and inequality Deghaye and McKenzie (2012). According to Statistics South Africa, the unemployment rate in South Africa was 25% in the third quarter of 2018; however, youth unemployment was nearly 40%, indicating that youth unemployment had reached a tipping point. Over half of unemployed people had less than a matric qualification, followed by those with a matric qualification at 35%. Two graduates were among every hundred unemployed. The table below depicts a steady growth in the level of unemployment in Gauteng province of Johannesburg from 2001 to 2018.

**Table 1:** Unemployment rate by province, from March 2001, to and Sep 2018

Province	Mar 2001	Mar 2003	Mar 2008	Mar 2010	Mar 2013	Sep 2018
Western Cape	20.9	22.0	18.1	21.8	23.3	20.4
Eastern Cape	30.6	33.3	28.1	27.9	30.2	35.6
Northern Cape	21.7	25.0	24.8	29.9	29.6	27.0
Free State	24.0	27.5	25.0	27.8	31.6	36.3
KwaZulu-Natal	19.6	28.2	22.7	20.9	21.1	23.0
Northwest	22.7	26.8	22.3	27.9	26.5	28.0
Gauteng	27.9	31.2	22.7	26.9	25.2	29.6
Mpumalanga	19.1	23.3	23.7	27.7	29.4	32.5
Limpopo	30.7	42.3	31.7	22.4	20.3	18.9
RSA average	24.6	29.3	23.5	25.2	25.2	27.5

**Sources:** StatsSA, 2010; 2018.

South Africa's 2017 statistics on post-school education and training stated that 168 356 students enrolled for the first time in higher learning institutions in 2014, while only 93 915 graduated in 2016. The unemployment rate by education level is shown in Table 2 below, based on figures given by Statistics South Africa in the first quarter of 2019. Between 15 and 24 years of age, the unemployment rate for graduates and other university qualification holders was over 30%. This is the period immediately following the completion of students' tertiary qualifications.

Higher education institutions endeavour to prepare students for a variety of job positions. After graduation, these students will commence searching for and applying for jobs that are a match for their educational background but will be ineffective (Niemela, 2016). A degree or diploma symbolizes the conclusion of formal education and training, and the assumption is that graduates would immediately enter the workforce upon graduation (Griesel and Parker, 2009). As a result, the labour market is challenged with the issue of attracting experienced workers in an environment characterized by an oversupply of inexperienced graduates looking for jobs.



Helbling and Sacchi (2014), as well as Lowden, Hall, Elliot, and Lewins (2011), suggest that in today's labour market, where long-term work is uncommon, it is individuals' opinions of their employability that will regulate how they may retain and improve their labour market attractiveness. Certain businesses have strong hesitations about recruiting recent graduates, casting doubt on their readiness for work, basic abilities, and attitudes (Wolf, 2011). Employable graduates, according to Crossman and Clarke (2009) and the World Bank Group (2012), are individuals who hold crucial subject-specific knowledge, skills, and transferable knowledge and characteristics required by 21st-century industries and organizations. Graduates are anticipated to use their advanced learning skills to continue learning and adapting to the demands of their jobs (Quintini, 2011). According to a study by Makki, Salleh, Mennon, and Harun (2015), graduates lack the essential skills and self-confidence in the workplace. As a result, the majority of employers place a demand on prior relevant work experience, which tends to discard graduates who could be beneficial to firms (Hasluck, 2012).

Despite the relevance of work experience, Buchmann and Muller (2016) assert that there is inadequate evidence to support its use as the main criterion for recruitment. Applicable or required work experience refers to occurrences that an individual encounters while doing a job. This is some of the most critical résumé information that recruiters use to determine whether an applicant is qualified for a position (Tsai, Chi, Huang and Hsu, 2011). Indeed, the majority of work experience is quantified in terms of time, or the duration of the applicant's employment at that particular employer. The Commission for Employment and Skills in the United Kingdom (UK) (2012) defines an experience trap as the demand for prior work experience to obtain employment.

The use of job experience as a precondition has not been thoroughly examined, although the labour market appears to use it as a significant selection technique. It is worrying that most applicants, including skilled graduates, will be unable to secure job opportunities due to a lack of relevant work experience. Caballero, Walker and Fuller-Tyszkiewicz, (2011) define work-ready as the degree to which graduates should possess the attitudes and characteristics necessary for success in the workplace. According to Abdullah, Kamal, and Muna (2014), the process of graduate recruitment and selection is becoming increasingly person-oriented rather than job-oriented, as many employers are more interested in applicants' attitudes, personalities, and transferable skills than in their type or level of qualification.

This paper examines the association between employment experience and employability. Previous empirical research has showed that recruiters make recruiting recommendations based on candidates' work experience and overlook significant events that occur throughout a career, such as opportunities to complete tasks or assignments (Huang and Chen Lai, 2013). Many recent business graduates anticipate making a significant contribution to the labour market if given the chance.



## Methodology

The study was designed to collect cross-sectional quantitative data using a 5-point Likert-scale questionnaire relevant constructs relating to stated objectives. This meant that the primary dataset mirrored the views of the participants during the survey (Burns et al., 2016; Leedy and Ormond, 2014). Due to the large population size of Johannesburg metropolis, the authors applied stratified random sampling to determine a sample size that ensured 95% confidence including wider representation of the population (Hair et al., 2010; Norman, 2010). For an estimated target population of 3,559,170 a minimum sample size of 265 was adequate (Statistics South Africa, 2011; World Population Review, 2016). The authors utilised a database to access information of the business studies graduates from the South African Council of Graduates (SACG). To ensure maximum representation, the authors carefully chosen 120 graduates who acquired national diplomas, 50 B-Tech degrees graduates, 50 graduates who obtained bachelor's degrees, 25 with honours degrees and 10 graduates with master's degrees. A pilot study was conducted with 30 participants who did not form part of the actual study for feasibility verification.

Structural equation modelling (SEM) was applied because of the multivariate nature of data analysis. SEM is mostly used in the academic climate not only as a multivariate analysis technique but also for its strength to quantify complex conceptual information that utilised multiple latent variables in addition to factor analysis and multiple regressions (Kline, 2011; Nusair and Hua, 2010). Through the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS), the authors employed inferential statistics via SEM as well as the descriptive statistics. Discussions and conclusions about the achievements of empirical objectives, as well as contributions of the study, were based on the results of the study.

## Research Findings

A total of 124 respondents were sourced to gather empirical dataset for the study. The authors applied demographics questions to gain insights into participants' gender, age group as well as educational achievements. Representations of the male participants were 33% in contrast to 66% of the overall female participants. The fact that most respondents were females implies that the final outcomes should be limited to female participants. Age group of participants ranged from 30-35 years were 57 participants, age 25-29 were 50 and age 20-24 were 17 respectively. Most participants 41, obtained the National Diploma, Bachelor's Degree were 33, B- Tech degrees were 27, Honors degree 18 participants while 5 participants obtained master's degree. Regarding the findings on unemployment, 39 participants were unemployed for less than 6 months. 27 participants for 2 years, 26 participants were unemployed between 13-18 months while 18 and 14 participants were without employment opportunities for 7-12 months and 19-24 months respectively. On average, the bracket with the longest duration is 12 months to 2 years and over.

Construct distributions as shown in the tables below were the mean and the standard deviations that gives an idea of how close the entire data is to the average value. Primary data with a small standard deviation have tightly grouped precise data while data sets with large standard deviations have data spread out over a wide range of values.

### Graduate Functional Competence

Participants were required to indicate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with the statements ranging from a scale of 1 to 5. 1 representing Not at all important, 2- Low importance, 3-Neutral, 4-Important and 5- Very Important.

**Table 2.** Graduate functional competence

		Mean	SD	NI%	I%	VI%
FC1	Decision making	4.68	0.524	0%	26.8%	70.5%
FC2	Problem Solving	4.72	0.489	0%	24.3%	73.9%
FC3	Strategic thinking	4.73	0.466	0%	25.2%	73.9%
FC4	Continuous learning	4.75	0.493	0%	22.3%	76.8%
FC5	Adaptability	4.72	0.575	0%	17.4%	78.0%
FC6	Leadership	4.54	0.670	0%	32.1%	61.6%
FC7	Self-management	4.72	0.573	0%	22.3%	75.9%

**SD** =Standard deviation; **NI**= Not important; **I** = Important; **VI** = Very important

Regarding decision making, the respondents indicated that the majority agree with decision making as an important functional competency with a mean of 4.6 and a standard deviation of 0.5. The respondents indicated that the majority agree with problem-solving as an important functional competency with a mean of 4.7 and a standard deviation of 0.4. The respondents also indicated that the majority agree with strategic thinking as an important functional competency with a mean of 4.7 and a standard deviation of 0.4. The respondents indicated strategic thinking as important at 25.2% and other respondents at 73.9% as a very important functional competency. Other elements such as Continuous learning, respondents indicated continuous learning was important with 22.3% and 76.8% as a very important functional competency. The adaptability was as important at 17.4% and other respondents at 78.0% as a very important functional competency, Leadership was important at 32.1% and 61.6% as a very important functional competency and Self-management was important at 22.3% and 75.9% as a very important functional competency

### Graduate behavioral competence

Participants were required to indicate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with the statements ranging from a scale of 1 to 5. 1 representing Not at all important,

**Table 3.** Graduate behavioral competence

		Mean	SD	NI	I	VI
BC1	Communication	4.87	.342	0%	13.4%	86.6%
BC2	Innovation	4.46	.600	0%	43.2%	51.4%
BC3	Interpersonal skills	4.56	.550	0%	38.4%	58.9%
BC4	Teamwork	4.71	.510	0%	23.2%	74.1%
BC5	Ethical responsibility	4.64	.585	0%	27.9%	68.5%

SD = Standard deviation; NI=Not important; I = Important; VI = Very important

Concerning Graduate Behavioral Competence, the finding shows that communication is an important behavioural competence with a mean of 4.8 and a standard deviation of 0.3. The respondents indicated communication as important at 13.4% and other respondents at 86.6% as a very important behavioural competency. Secondly, innovation was seen as an important behavioural competence with a mean of 4.4 and a standard deviation of 0.6. The respondents indicated innovation as important at 43.2% and other respondents at 51.4% as a very important behavioural competency. The other aspect of interpersonal skills was considered as an important behavioural competence, with a mean of 4.5 and a standard deviation of 0.5. The respondents indicated interpersonal skill as important at 38.4% and other respondents at 58.9% as a very important behavioural competency, whereas teamwork as an important behavioural competence with a mean of 4.7 and standard deviation of 0.5 with at 23.2% of importance and 74.1% as a very important behavioural competency. Finally, respondents agree with ethical responsibility as an important behavioural competence, with a mean of 4.6 and a standard deviation of 0.5. The respondents showed ethical responsibility as important at 27.9% and other respondents at 68.5% as a very important behavioural competency.

### **Graduate and work experience**

Participants were required to indicate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with the statements ranging from a scale of 1 to 5. 1 representing Strongly Disagree, 2- Disagree, 3 Neither Disagree nor Agree, 4-Agree and 5- Strongly Agree.

**Table 4.** Graduate and work experience

		Mean	SD	SDA	A	SA
WE1	Work experience is an important requirement to access employment.	3.87	1.231	6.3%	30.4%	40.2%
WE2	Work experience improves your chances to access employment.	4.31	.940	2.7%	37.5%	51.8%
WE3	Work experience helps graduates gain valuable experience to prove their suitability.	3.69	1.340	9.9%	35.1%	34.2%
WE4	Work experience enhances working skills.	4.25	.844	1.8%	45.5%	42.9%
WE5	Work experience enhances your competency.	4.15	.961	3.6%	48.2%	39.3%
WE6	Work experience is an important aspect of any strong tertiary education applicant	3.76	1.162	1.8%	28.8%	34.2%

SD=Standard deviation; SDA=Strongly disagree; A = Agree; SA= Strongly agree

The study shows that work experience is an important requirement to access employment. The statement reflects the mean of 3.8 with a standard deviation of 1.2 which shows that most respondents agreed. Most respondents agreed that work experience is an important requirement to access employment (Agreed as 30.4%, 40.2% as strong agreement whereas 6.3% disagree). It was also realized that work experience improves chances to access employment with a mean of 4.3 with a standard deviation of 0.9 which shows that most respondents agreed. The percentage in the agreement was 37.5% with 51.8% in strong agreement whereas 2.7% disagreed.

Yet again, work experience helps graduates gain valuable experience to prove their suitability with a mean of 3.6 with a standard deviation of 1.3 which shows that most respondents agreed. The percentage in the agreement was 35.1% with 34.2% in strong agreement whereas 9.9% disagreed. Similarly, work experience enhances working skills with a mean of 4.2 with a standard deviation of 0.8 which shows that the majority of respondents agreed. The percentage in the agreement was 45.5% with 42.9% in strong agreement whereas 1.8% disagreed. This work experience was also considered enhancing competency. The statement reflects the mean of 4.5 with a standard deviation of 0.9 which indicates that most respondents agreed. The percentage in the agreement was 42.2% with 39.3% in strong agreement whereas 3.6% disagreed. Last, work experience is an important aspect of any strong tertiary education applicant, and this statement reflects the mean of 3.7 with a standard deviation of 1.1. This implies that most participants have agreed to the statement.

## Graduate employability

Participants were required to determine the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with the statements ranging from 1 to 5. Statement “1” representing Strongly Disagree, “2” Disagree “3” neither disagree nor agree, “4” agree and “5” strongly agree respectively.

**Table 5.** Graduate employability

		Mean	SD	SDA%	A%	SA%
E1	It was easy for me to find employment.	2.21	1.308	36.9%	33.3%	11.7%
E2	It is easy for me to grow in my chosen career.	3.03	1.255	14.3%	33.0%	10.7%
E3	Employability is about being capable of getting and keeping fulfilling work.	3.86	.899	2.7%	55.4%	20.5%
E4	Employability is the ability to gain initial employment, maintain and obtain new employment if required.	3.80	.957	3.6%	55.4%	19.6%
E5	Employability is having a set of skills, knowledge, understanding and appropriate personal attributes	4.01	.704	0.9%	63.4%	20.5%
E6	Employability is the acquisition of attributes that makes graduates more successful in their chosen occupation.	3.52	1.107	5.4%	46.4%	16.1%

SD = Standard deviation SDA=Strongly disagree A = Agree SA= Strongly agree

From the table above, the respondents disagreed with the statement that it was easy for them to find employment. The percentage in strong disagreement was 36.9.8% with 33.3% disagreement, whereas 11.7% agreed. Similarly, regarding the ease of growth in a chosen career, it reflects the mean of 3.0 with a standard deviation of 1.2 which shows that most respondents agreed. Though respondents agreed it is easy for them to grow in their chosen career, there was also a considerable number that disagreed. The percentage in the agreement was 33.4% with 10.5% in strong agreement whereas 23% disagreed and 14% strong disagreement. The above statement had very split views.

With the view that employability is about being capable of getting and keeping fulfilling work, the statement reflects the mean of 3.8 with a standard deviation of 0.8 which indicates that the majority of respondents agreed it is about being capable of getting and keeping fulfilling work.

The percentage in the agreement was 55.4% with 20.5% in strong agreement whereas 2.7% disagreed. Similarly, whether employability is the ability to gain initial employment, maintain and obtain new employment if required, this statement reflects the mean of 3.8 with a standard deviation of 0.9 which indicates that the majority of respondents agreed. The respondents agreed that employability is the ability to gain initial employment, maintain and obtain new employment if required. The percentage in the agreement was 55.4% with 19.6% in strong agreement whereas 3.6% disagreed.

The statement of employability as having a set of skills, knowledge, understanding and appropriate personal attributes reflects the mean of 4.0 with a standard deviation of 0.7 which indicates that the majority of respondents agreed. The respondents agreed that employability is having a set of skills, knowledge, understanding, and appropriate personal attributes. The percentage in the agreement was 63.4% with 20.5% in strong agreement whereas 0.9% disagreed.

Yet again, employability as the acquisition of attributes that makes graduates more successful in their chosen occupation reflects the mean of 3.5 with a standard deviation of 1.1 which indicates that the majority of respondents agreed. The respondents agreed that employability is the acquisition of attributes that make graduates more successful in their chosen occupation. The percentage in the agreement was 46.4% with 16.1% in strong agreement whereas 5.4% disagreed.

### Reliability and validity

**Table 6.** Reliability and convergent validity test

	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Behavioural Competence	0.739	0.742	0.829	0.497
Functional Competence	0.809	0.827	0.858	0.469
Employability	0.675	0.677	0.792	0.436
Work Experience	0.798	0.808	0.853	0.495

Results as stated in the table 6 above is an illustration that academic knowledge, behavioural competence, functional competence, and work experience scored Cronbach Alpha, rho\_A, composite reliability of 0.7 and above. This is a representation that the empirical data gathered by the authors have attained high reliability. However, the employability construct achieved Cronbach alpha of 0.675, rho\_A of 0.677 and composite reliability of 0.792 which shows a marginal underscore to reach acceptable reliability levels. According to Vaske, Beaman and Sponarski (2017), a Cronbach Alpha value of 0.6 is acceptable and therefore deemed reliable.

The AVE results measure convergent validity and are mostly used as decision criteria of convergent validity is that when AVE of above 0.5, it is acceptable as a pass for convergent validity (Hair et al., 2014); however, values less than 0.5 are acceptable when composite reliability of related to the construct is above 0.6 (Huang, Wang, Wu & Wang; 2013; Tarhini et al., 2016). The constructs of employability, functional competence, behavioural competence scored AVE values which are less than 0.5 however, their composite scores are above 0.6 thus achieved convergent validity using Tarhini et al. (2016) recommendations. The model constructs have so far passed the reliability and convergent validity tests. Thus, the constructs still require discriminant validity tests to pass the measurement model assessment.

Given the result of the Cronbach alpha, *the behavioral Competence* shows reliability because it measures Cronbach's alpha at 0.739 and measure the convergent validity at 0.497 and this value is acceptable; *the behavioral competence* has passed the validity and reliability test; the *Functional Competence* shows reliability because it measures Cronbach's alpha at 0.809 and measures the convergent validity at 0.469 and this value is acceptable and passed the validity and reliability test; the *Employability* shows reliability because it measures Cronbach's alpha at 0.675 and measure the convergent validity at 0.436 and this value is acceptable and passes the validity and reliability test; and finally *the Work Experience* shows reliability because it measures Cronbach's alpha at 0.798 and measure the convergent validity at 0.495 and this value is acceptable.

### Testing Hypotheses

In hypothesis testing, hypotheses are either confirmed or refuted based on the significance of the relationships. Significance determines the probability that the path estimate is due to chance using the computed probability value (*p-value*) or a test statistic (*t-value*). Although the *p-value* and t-statistic operate on different scales, either can be used to conclude whether results are due to chance and therefore not accept or have an underlying logic and therefore acceptable. Therefore, using Hair et al. (2020) guidelines, path coefficient is regarded as significant at the 5% probability of error level if zero does not fall into the 95% bias-corrected and accelerated confidence interval. During the hypothesis testing, the various hypotheses were either confirmed or refuted based on the significance of the relationships. Significance determines the probability that the path estimate is due to chance and denoted by a probability value (*p-value*) or a test statistic (*t-value*). They also imply the level of confidence in the results obtained. Although the p-value and t-statistic operate on different scales, either can be used to conclude whether results are due to chance and therefore not acceptable or have an underlying logic and therefore acceptable.

**Table 7.** Hypotheses testing results

H	Relationships	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	(STDEV)	T Statistics	P Values	Comment
H	Academic Knowledge -> Functional Competence	0.241	0.260	0.088	2.748	0.006	Supported
H	Behavioural Competence -> Employability	0.286	0.293	0.143	2.005	0.045	Supported
H	Behavioural Competence -> Work Experience	-0.009	0.012	0.179	0.052	0.958	Not Supported
H	Functional Competence -> Employability	0.044	0.065	0.125	0.351	0.726	Not Supported
H	Functional Competence -> Work Experience	-0.007	-0.005	0.173	0.040	0.968	Not Supported
H	Work Experience -> Employability	0.201	0.228	0.125	1.610	0.107	

**H<sub>1</sub>:** Academic knowledge **positively influences** behavioural competence of graduates in South Africa.

For **H<sub>1</sub>**, Beta is 0.272 with T statistic value of 3.054 which is greater than 1.96 and P-value of 0.002 is smaller than 0.5. **The statistics support H<sub>1</sub> that academic knowledge positively influences behavioural competence in the South African context.** This implies that academic knowledge can be utilized to affect behavioural competence among South African graduates. This hypothesis affirms Pool and Sewell (2007) model that emphasised subject knowledge as a factor of graduate competence.

**H<sub>1</sub>:** Academic knowledge positively influences functional competence of graduates in South Africa.

Table 7 depicts that **H<sub>1</sub>** has Beta of 0.241 and t-test statistic with a value of 2.748. The acceptance criteria for the hypothesis is that Beta value should be greater than 0.05 and t-test statistic should be more than 1.96. **Based on the outcomes of the statistics H<sub>1</sub> above is accepted.** This implies that academic knowledge impacts functional competence of South African graduates in the public sector.

**H<sub>2</sub>:** Behavioural competence positively influences employability of graduates in South Africa.

For **H<sub>2</sub>**, Beta is 0.286, t-statistic is 2,005 and p-value is 0,045. **These results show H<sub>2</sub> is supported.** The hypothesis alludes that in terms of graduate employability, behavioural competence plays crucial role in graduates selection process for employment opportunities in the job market. This again implies that graduates need to display good attitude and demonstrates trait of “*ubuntu*” to fit in the working environment and the job market. This

finding is in line with recent study by Bezuidenhout (2011) in which cultural competence is identified as primary contributor to employability.

**H<sub>3</sub>:** Behavioural competence positively influences the work experience of graduates in South Africa.

Given the results in table 7, behavioural competence represents insignificant impact on work experience (B=-0.009, P=0.958). This result contrasts with previous findings by Fugate and Kinicki (2008) which revealed positive and significant relationship between behavioural competence with the graduate ability to achieve work experience.

**H<sub>4</sub>:** Functional competence positively influences employability of graduates in South Africa.

Results revealed that beta is 0.044 and p-value is 0.726. As a result, **H<sub>4</sub> was not supported**. This implies that functional competence had no impact on graduate's employability in the South African job market. These results sound a negative connotation on the ability of functional competence to impact employability in a growing flattening job market due to growing rate of employment.

**H<sub>5</sub>:** Functional competence positively influences the work experience of graduates in South Africa.

For H<sub>8</sub> Beta is -0.007, p-value is 0.968 this demonstrates that **H<sub>5</sub> was not supported**. The findings show that functional competence represents as a traditional factor of work experience revealed insignificant impact on work experience of graduates in South Africa. The findings display negative idea on the ability of functional competence to influence graduates' work experience in the South Africa employment market.

**H<sub>6</sub>:** Work experience positively influences employability of graduates in South Africa's public sector.

Given the result based on H<sub>13</sub>, beta is equal to 0.201 with t-test value of 1.610 is smaller than 1.96 and p-value of 0.107 is greater than 0.05. Based on the result, **H<sub>6</sub> is refuted**. The results showed that work experience does not have significant influence on employability of graduates in the public sector. The results contrast with the conventional research outcomes by Fugate and Kinicki (2008), Bezuidenhout findings (2011) that managed to achieve significant results on the relationship between work experience and employability.

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## Conclusion

This empirical study contributes immensely to existing employability literature as the concepts are defined and conceptualized. Behavioural competence has emerged as the key driver of employability. This implies that in the contemporary world, employee's daily behaviour in general bear linkages on employability. This revelation surpasses the general perception that skills and functional competence scores better in contrast to employability.

Graduates' employability has long been an issue. A trend that is likely to be influenced in part because of existing economic constraints, the outcome of a rising realization that final-year students should be job ready. It was reassuring to unearth a strong correlation between final-year students' perception and companies usher in the significance of employability skills. Notably, final-year students valued leadership, decisiveness, creativity, and written communication more than employers did.

Although categorization of employability differs, there was significant agreement on the qualities, characteristics, talents, and knowledge that define employability in general for final-year students. Employers want graduates to have technical and discipline-specific capabilities, but they also expect graduates to have a variety of broader skills and attributes, such as teamwork, communication, leadership, critical thinking, problem-solving, and, in many cases, managerial abilities. Findings that emerged underlines the significance of placements, internships, and work-based learning experiences in providing graduates with suitable employment skills, knowledge, and an awareness of corporate culture.

The results demonstrated that work experience has no statistically significant influence on the employability of graduates in the public sector. These results suggest that work experience alone is not enough in making a graduate employable. There are other aspects and skill sets such as behavioural skills, technical skills, strategic skills, and functional competence that have a statistically significant effect on the employability of graduates.

## Recommendations

Given the emerging outcomes of this study, the authors recommend that the higher education sector adopts a strategic approach to address the gaps. Capacitating graduates using practical programs. Besides, the higher education sector needs to institute and foster partnership initiatives across different industries and related networks to

- **Increase the existing levels of work experience among graduates. An extended syllabus is required.**

The present work experience in various public and private organisations need some level of extension and robust training. Inclusive levels of agreement between employers and stakeholders across learning institutions to agree on a planning framework that considers the



needs of employers. It is critical to include practical assessment of graduates after the term of period. The planning should include robust evaluation processes of all the graduate for remedial action for unsuccessful graduates. Finally, the present syllabus of higher learning institutions should be extended to include more period of skills building and training from industries.



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