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THE EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS OF MALAYSIAN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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Abstract: *Unemployment among Malaysian graduates is not a new phenomenon. In 2010, about 30,000 graduates were not able to be employed within six (6) months upon their graduations. The Star in 2010 had reported that five reasons why graduates not to be employed are due to lack of industrial training, poor English, lack of problem-solving skills, job-hopping and lack of confidence. Taking a cue from this, the Malaysian government had initiated due to efforts to deal with this impediment. To a certain extent, a drastic step had been projected to enhance the English language efficiency and ICT considering lack of skill of our graduates in these two areas. Unfortunately, retraining graduate programs/plans have indeed triggered dismal results and incurred a tremendous cost. Much worse, the Malaysian economy is not booming but expected to perform at a mediocre of 4.6% to 5% from 2011 to 2020. In pursuant to this, it is doubtful that there will be a sufficient number of jobs available for those graduates or whether they have the credibility to compete for jobs that are offered in the private sector. Hence, the purpose of this research is to assess the employability skills of students in Higher Education Institutions in Malaysia in order to measure their work readiness. A total of 300 university graduates from various public and private universities participated in this study. The study found 12 skills that the university students deem as to be very important whereby disciplined to top the list. Furthermore, there is a significant association between graduates' skills and genders such as organization skills, problem-solving, teamwork, and good time management. There is also a significant association between respondents' skills and institutions such as problem-solving skills.*

Keywords: *Graduates, Employability, Skill, Work Readiness*

Introduction

Graduates employability has been an issue decade ago in Malaysia. (Please refer to the table 1 below for the details). It is mentioned that the increase number of public and private universities have contributed to this factor. At the same time, industries could not offer many job positions for degree holders due to limited number of positions available. Thus, there is more supply of

graduates than its demand. This has caused to increasing competition among the graduates. It has been found out that good grades are not necessarily the determinant of graduates' employability. It has been reported that university students have been lacking certain skills such as soft skills especially problem solving and communication skills (Hanapi & Nordin, 2014) and hard skills such as lack of technical knowledge, difficulty in applying knowledge, and lack of English communication skills (Lim, Teck, Ching & Chui, 2016). Hence, various programs have been introduced by the government to upskill the university graduates. However, this could drain the government investment, unless necessary action has been taken on education itself which is the root source of the problem.

Table 1: Rate of Unemployment

Year	Rate of Unemployment
2009	3.2
2010	3.1
2011	3.1
2012	3.7
2013	2.9
2014	2.9
2015	3.1
2016	3.2
2017	3.4

Source: Department of Statistics, 2013-2017; Hanapi & Nordin, 2014; Md Razak et al, 2014

Mismatch of skills is also reported as another cause of unemployability of Malaysian graduates whereby it was reported in 2005 that about 30,000 graduates worked in a field that does not match with their higher educational qualifications (Hanapi & Nordin. 2014). Thus, the impetus of this paper to study on employability skills of university students in order to measure the extent of their work readiness.

Literature Review

Malaysian University

Malaysian Higher Education Institution functions to disseminate education or knowledge, skills, exposure and experience to the students. It aims to expand students' potential and later produce wholly integrated graduates in terms of intellectual, spiritual, emotional and physical through curricular and co-curricular activities. Once graduate, this potential human capital will be knowledgeable, possess good character, responsible and able to produce harmonious family, society and nation (Ismail, 2011).

Public universities in Malaysia have grown from seven in the 1990s to a total of 20 in 2006. A total of 28 private universities have also been increasing till 2011. At the same time, there are more than 500 other institutions, including university colleges, branch campuses of local and overseas institutions, open universities and other institutions with non-university status such as teacher education institutes, polytechnics and community colleges (Ismail, 2011).

Due to the increase number of higher education institutions, the total number of graduates increased from 249,612 graduates in 2012 to 283,627 graduates in 2016 whereby public university graduates increased from 121,799 to 124, 223 while private university graduates increased from 85,669 to 97,333 in 2016 (MOHE, 2016-2012).

Employability

Employability is a term that is often used as a measurement by employers on graduates' marketability (Rahmat, Ahmad, Idris & Zainal, 2011). Meanwhile, Lim (2008) defines employability as graduate's labour market outcomes and number of days unemployed or probability of unemployed. Lim states that on average the graduates are experiencing a total of 138 days of being unemployed which is equivalent of 4.6 months. However, this study conceptualizes employability as the ability of the university students to be employed or to be self-employed.

Employability Skills

Employability skills are also known as job readiness skills. Generally, employability skills are needed by students to prepare themselves to meet the needs of many different occupations upon graduation (Shafie & Nayan, 2010). Salbiah (2006) stated that employability skills can be summarized as vital skills for securing employment, which include basic skills in reading, writing, arithmetic, and thinking and problem-solving skills. According to Hanapi and Nordin (2014), employability skill refers to the quality and personal insight which a graduate should possess. This is to help with the employability of the graduate and to assist the graduate to become a competent and competitive worker. A few researchers mention that employability skills is a set of achievement, understanding, and personal attitudes or qualities that mark the individual as potentially more able to get the desired job and successful in career choice (Nooriyah & Zakiyah, 2015; Md. Shamsuri & Izzaidin, 2014; Morshidi, Chan, Munir, Shukran, Seri Rahayu, Jasyir & Nachatar, 2012; Noor Suhailie, 2013). Lim (2010) also agrees that attitude is as important as the hard and soft skills in order to be employed. Generally, employability skills are those aspects of skills and knowledge students need to have to equip them to fulfil various employment demands in the labour market after they have completed their studies.

In order to be employed, graduates need to possess certain competency or skills. Subramonian (2008) considers both employability skills and competencies as one even though they are defined differently by different authors. These competencies and skills are cut across all industries, businesses, job levels from the entry-level worker to the senior most position (Kaur & Singh, 2008). Shafie and Nayan (2010) categorized employability by competency areas which are personal values, problem-solving and decision-making skills, relations with other people, communication skills, task-related skills, maturity, health and safety habits, and commitment to job. Employers are looking for graduates with basic academic skills, high order thinking skills such as decision making and personal qualities such as responsibility. Meanwhile, Lim, Mansor, Mohamad, Tuan Sulaiman, Hashim, Fadil, Goolamally, Abdol Latif, Muda, Woo and Raghavan (2011) conceptualized employability competencies into three dimensions which are knowledge and understanding, general attributes and generic skills.

Subramonian (2008) defines employability skills as 'generic skills' and 'key competencies'. According to her, competency or skill model is a list of competencies, often organized into a few groupings or clusters, attributable to satisfactory or exceptional employee performance for an occupation or group of titles. There are nine generic skills which are conceptual and analytical, information management, interpersonal skills, adaptability and learning, self-management, oral communication, written communication, problem solving, teamwork and leadership and 52 key competencies. While Ab Malik, Townsend, Mohamad and Md Ramli (2014) state that competence refers to the expected behaviour of new graduates that includes cognitive (knowledge), psychomotor (skill) and affective (attitude) value, which needs to be integrated into the full range of circumstances encountered by the general practitioners.

Skills can be grouped into hard and soft skills. Hard skills are technical skills while soft skills are generic skills. Hard skills refer to the more specific, teachable skills, and are usually related to professional knowledge, tools, or techniques within profession such as technical or administrative procedures related to an organization's core business (Aida, Norailis & Rozaini, 2015). It is said that while graduates are well equipped with technical skills but they are lacking of soft skills which are very important at workplace. Technical skills are like writing skills, programming, system development, entrepreneurship and others (Masura, Kamsuriah, Sufian & Noor Faridatul Ainun, 2011). Soft skills are complementary to hard skills and these attributes include competencies, capabilities, and learning outcome of operational procedures or practical task. Both skills are important in order to be employed (Khairul, Nor Lisa, Mimi & Lai, 2016).

Ministry of Education (KPM) in 2006 emphasized eight types of generic skills which are communication, critical thinking, teamwork, continuous learning, information technology, professional ethics and moral, entrepreneurship and problem solving. Erdina (2006) studied on this and results showed that the respondents' levels of preparation among final year students of Faculty of Education, UTM were at low levels for all types of those generic skills. Generic skills are functional and adaptive skills that enable workers to be effective and productive in any field. In short, generic skills are main and basic skills that need to be possessed by graduates in order to complete their jobs efficiently such as communication, problem solving, managerial, information analysis, ability to adapt to work culture, technology savvy and teamwork skills. Communication skill is a pre-requisite in the working world and it will be tested during the job interview. Meanwhile, other important skills are leadership, time management, basic mathematical and creative and critical thinking skills (Rahimin Affandi, Lazim, Nor Adina & Nor Hayati, 2009).

Lim, Mahat, Rashid, A. Razak and Omar (2016) define soft skills as inter-related such as communication skills, leadership. Meanwhile, Aida, Norailis and Rozaini (2015) define soft skill as a cluster of personal qualities, habits, attitudes and social graces that make someone a good employee and a compatible co-worker. They categorized it into basic (reading, writing, oral communication, listening, mathematics and science), higher order thinking (learning, reasoning, creativity, decision making, problem solving) and personal qualities (team work, punctuality and efficiency, self-directed, good attitude, well groom, cooperative, self-motivated and self-management, responsibility, self-confidence, self-control, social skills, honesty, integrity, adaptability and flexibility). These skills are transferable across workplaces. However, Nurkaliza, Nor 'Adha, Rahmatunnisah, Norziah, Abdul Hadi, Mohd Farok and Seetha (2014) refuted that soft skills are attitude such as positive attitude towards work. Meanwhile, according to Farouk (2009), soft skills is the determinant of personality. Soft skills use more of the right side of the brain while technical skills use the left side of the brain.

Different subject fields conceptualized employability skills differently. Azami, Yuzainee, Azah, Mohd Zaidi, Norhamidi, Ramlee (2010) for example, define engineering employability skills as ability to perform engineering related skills, knowledge and personal attributes to gain employment, maintain employment and succeed in the engineering field. They propose a Malaysian Engineering Employability Skills (MEES) which comprise three components which are personal attributes (communication, teamwork, lifelong learning, professionalism and problem solving skills), personal skills (communication, teamwork, problem solving and decision making, application and practice and specific engineering discipline) and knowledge (lifelong learning, problem solving and decision making, science and engineering, contemporary

issues and engineering system approach). Mohd Shamsuri and Izaidin (2014) too studied on engineering and IT students and their findings revealed that problem-solving, tool handling competency, presentation skills and team working skills are featured as important skills demanded by the employers. Meanwhile, Othman, Musa, Mokhtar, Ya'acob, Abdul Latiff, Hussein, Mohammad and Kaur (2011) found that UKM graduates' employability rate differs based on the faculty from which they graduate. Other than poor command of English language, incompetence to apply the thinking skills needed is very important to enable them to perform well at workplace.

Salbiah (2006) analyse students' understanding of the concept of employability skills and their perceptions on the importance of employability skills to secure employment, to effectively perform in the workplace as well as to retain employment. She found that majority rate highly the importance of the Teamwork Skills, more than Fundamental Skills and Personal Management Skills and majority rate their level of competence in all the three components as moderate; their attitudes appear to be moderately related to their perceptions on the importance of employability skills.

Past studies to compare their results between gender. Ang (2015) for example, through her study found that female students to be generally more informed than male students about the skills which the industry wants. In fact, female students fared relatively better on all skills, except for negotiating, planning, computer literacy, and written communication. Her study found significant mismatch between the industry and student ranking on the set of 20 skills, particularly with respect to six skills that are commercial awareness or knowledge about the business, self-management, computer literacy, information retrieval, planning, and resolving conflict. While Shafie and Nayan (2010) found that female students from science field attributed personal qualities as the most important employability skills. However, Wye et al. found that job readiness is not varied by gender and business majors. They also found that the index is higher in the public universities compared to the private universities.

Khairul, Nor Lisa, Mimi and Lai (2016) through their quantitative research found that soft skills as communication, collaboration, entrepreneurship skills are some of the aspects stressed by the students and instructors at higher education institutions to ensure that graduates will be employable and competent in order to contribute to the nation development. Soft skills are ingrained behavior patterns that are hard to quantify and to teach.

Lim, Teck, Ching and Chui (2016) found that employers value communication skills, analytical skills, and time management skills the most. Employers prefer well-rounded and responsible individuals with positive job attitudes. Meanwhile, Abd Hair, Ishak, Arawati and Zafir (2012) used focus group discussions with employer associations as research methodology. They found that from the employer's perspective, they need self-confident graduates with holistic types of abilities, skills and polite personalities. Overall, a new graduate has adequate fundamental knowledge in their specialization but employers prefer to hire graduate that are trainable and adaptable to their job.

Abdul Hamid, Islam and Abd Manaf (2013) by using Quality Function Deployment method, found that employers seek graduates who can speak fluently, write effectively in English and think critically. They conceptualized employability skills into six dimensions which are interpersonal, computing, enterprise and entrepreneurship, communication, thinking and management skills. Meanwhile, Abdul Hamid and Islam (2014) by using analytic network

process (ANP) show that the ability to speak fluently in English is the most important skill, followed by the ability to write effectively in English and the ability to think critically.

Employers also perceive foreign graduates to be superior in terms of communication skills (verbal and written); confidence/self-image; computer/IT skills; creative/innovative skills; analytical research skills and flexibility/adaptability compared to their local counterparts (LG) and graduates from local twinning programmes (TG) (Quah, Nasurdin, Guok & Ignatius, 2009).

Quite many researches study on the gap between the graduates and employer. Zafir, Ishak and Abd Hair (2015) study findings revealed that the biggest skill gaps of local graduates lay in communication and interpersonal relation wherein the graduates were perceived by employers as falling short of the desired levels in their job performance. These were followed by the soft skills of moral and ethics, thinking, leadership, decision making, problem solving, teamwork, and planning. On the other hand, the smallest gaps were perceived with respect to the graduates' information technology (ICT) skills. Meanwhile, Wye, Lim and Lee (2012) found a slightly higher level of mismatch among the employer and the graduates between the level of importance and development in skills such as critical analysis, planning, problem solving, oral communication, decision making, and negotiating. Noor Suhailie (2013) also found a gap between the employer and graduates on seven soft skills which are problem solving and adaptability, human, English language and literacy, information, communication and technology, personal organization, leadership and communication skills. He defined employability as the potential of obtaining and building a fulfilling career through continuous development of skills that can be applied from one to another and possessing the sets of attributes and skills that match those required by industries. He conceptualizes employability skills as positive attitude, self-management, team working, business and customer awareness, problem solving, communication and literacy, application of numeracy and application of information technology. Most studies that research on the gap of expectation of graduates and employers found that employers' expectation is higher than the graduates such as problem solving and adaptability, human, English language proficiency and literacy, ICT skills, personal organization and time management, leadership and communication skills (Kaur & Singh, 2008). Thus, it shows there is also certain mismatch of expectation of the skills between them.

Even different industries and sectors rank different skills according to their importance. However, Md Saad and Ab. Majid (2014) found from their study, the most important employability skills as perceived by GLCs, MNCs and SMEs are problem identification, apply problem-solving, formulations and solutions, ability to use techniques, skills and modern engineering/ICT tools. On the other hand, Mohamed Noor and Noor Suhailie (2013) found that personal organization and time management top the list among the employers that belong to private sectors. However, the graduates are lacking of these. On the other hand, Selvadurai, Er and Maros (2013) found that information and social interaction, work initiative and ability to work independently are skills that the public sector employers seek from the graduates. While NGOs seek for humanitarian values (honesty, caring, patience) and socially-desirable attitudes (open, curious and confident) as the key characteristics of employability (Morshidi, Chan, Munir, Shukran, Seri Rahayu & Jasvir Kaur, 2012).

Human Capital Theory

Human capital theory originates from Shultz in 1961 and updated by Becker in 1964. The theory argues that education provides human with knowledge, skills and abilities. The more educated

people are, the more they are able to perform in their jobs and thus, their productivity increase (Chai, 2012). This theory is the landscape for this study.

Research Methodology

The research is a cross-sectional study applying a quantitative approach. The research questionnaire was developed based on past studies and was pilot tested to twenty students of a public university. The Cronbach's Alpha was computed and the value of more than 0.8 indicates that the items form a scale that has good internal consistency reliability.

The questionnaire consists of four parts which are demographic and skills. The response scale used in this study is five Likert scale that is 1: strongly disagree to 5: strongly agree. Employability skill in this study was examined based on "soft skill' and "hard skill". Respondents were asked to rate the importance of these skills in finding suitable job. The questionnaire was finalized and distributed to respondents personally at the beginning of their lessons. Prior to completing the research questionnaire, the students are given some introduction of the research and some instructions on completing the questionnaire. Each respondent was given a token of appreciation on the return of the questionnaire.

The population of this study is university students either public or private as this study aims to measure job readiness in terms of employability skills. Thus, three public and three private universities are selected for the samples. Purposive random sampling technique is used for distributing the questionnaires.

Descriptive and inferential analysis were used to analyze the data. Descriptive analysis is conducted for the demographic profile of the respondents and the main variables of the study. Inferential analysis was conducted to find the extent of work readiness in terms of employability skills between gender and type of institutions.

Results

Respondents' Profile

About 300 university students participated in this study. Majority of the respondents consists of 69% are female and 31% are male. A large proportion were sample from public universities (81.7%) and 28.3% among engineering students from private universities Almost 50% are under PTPTN sponsorship, 25.3% are self-funded, 5.4% and 7.1% are MARA and JPA scholars. Please refer to table 2 for the details.

Table 2. Profile of Respondents

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	93	31.0
Female	207	69.0
Total	**300**	**100**
Family Income		
<RM 600	18	6.0
RM 601 - RM 1500	73	24.4
RM 1501 - RM 4000	74	24.7
RM 4001 - RM 8000	74	24.7
RM 8001 >	60	20.1
Total	**299**	**100**
Not Stated	1	
Grand Total	**300**	

Institution		
Public	245	81.7
Private	55	18.3
Total	**300**	**100**
Sponsorship		
JPA	21	7.1
PTPTN	146	49.2
MARA	16	5.4
State Government	15	5.1
Private Sector	18	6.0
Own Funding/Parents	75	25.3
Others	6	2.0
Total	**297**	**100**
Not Stated	3	
Grand Total	**300**	
Year of study		
Year 1	61	20.7
Year 2	69	23.4
Year 3	83	28.1
Year 4	58	19.7
Year 5	24	8.1
Total	**295**	**100**
Not Stated	**5**	
Grand Total	**300**	

Job Skills

Table 3 shows that the most important skill as perceived by the university students is disciplined (63.3%), followed by responsibility (60%), positive attitude (59.3%), time management (58.3%), team work (55.3%), open minded (53.7%), transparent (53%), communication skills (51%), leadership skills (50%), creative and innovative (49.7%), appearance (48.7%) and stress endurance (43.3%).

Table 3: Most Important Skills

No.	Type of Skills	Percentage (100%)
1	Disciplined	63.3
2	Responsibility	60
3	Positivity	59.3
4	Time Management	58.3
5	Team Work	55.3
6	Open minded	53.7
7	Transparency	53
8	Communication	51
9	Leadership Skills	50
10	Creative and Innovative	49.7
11	Appearance	48.7
12	Stress Endurance	43.3

Table 4 presents the association between gender and soft skills. Generally, the percentage of female that rated these skills as important were higher than the male respondents. Significant association exist between gender and organizational skills ($0.015 < 0.05$), problem solving skills ($0.016 < 0.05$) and team-work ($0.003 < 0.05$). Percentage of female respondents on these item was significantly higher than male respondents, 94.2%, 96.6%, 97.6% for females and 87.1%, 89.2% and 89.2% for male, respectively.

Table 4: Gender and Soft Skills

	Gender		Chi-Square (p-value)
	Male (%)	**Female (%)**	
Communication Skill			
Not Important	0.0	0.5	0.129
Neutral	8.6	3.4	
Important	91.4	96.1	
Total	**100.0**	**100.0**	
Organizational Skill			
Not Important	0.0	1.4	0.015*
Neutral	12.9	4.3	
Important	87.1	94.2	
Total	**100.0**	**100.0**	
Problem solving skills			
Not Important	0.0	0.5	0.016*
Neutral	10.8	2.9	
Important	89.2	96.6	
Total	**100.0**	**100.0**	
Decision making skills			
Not Important	0.0	0.5	0.683
Neutral	7.5	5.8	
Important	92.5	93.7	
Total	**100.0**	**100.0**	
Creative and Innovative Thinking			
Not Important	1.1	1.0	0.338
Neutral	11.8	6.8	
Important	87.1	92.3	
Total	**100.0**	**100.0**	
Leadership Qualities			
Not Important	0.0	0.5	0.129
Neutral	12.9	6.3	
Important	87.1	93.2	
Total	**100.0**	**100.0**	
Team Work			
Not Important	0.0	0.5	0.003*
Neutral	10.8	1.9	
Important	89.2	97.6	
Total	**100.0**	**100.0**	

With regards to hard skills, it is interesting to note that, only 47% felt that third language is important and a handful thought it is not important. English language is also felt not important by a small fraction of the respondents. Female respondents rated good time management (97.6%) significantly higher as important in comparison to 89.2% for male students ($p = 0.002 < 0.05$). Please refer to table 5 for the details.

Table 5: Gender and Hard Skills

	Gender		Chi-Square (p-value)
	Male (%)	**Female (%)**	
IT Skills			
Not Important	5.4	9.7	0.142
Neutral	37.6	27.5	
Important	57.0	62.8	
Total	**100.0**	**100.0**	
Fluent in English language			

Not Important	2.2	1.9	0.496
Neutral	22.6	1.9	
Important	75.3	81.2	
Total	**100.0**	**100.0**	
Fluent in third language / other language			
Not Important	12.9	14.0	0.967
Neutral	39.8	39.1	
Important	47.3	46.9	
Total	**100.0**	**100.0**	
Good time management			
Not Important	0.0	0.0	0.002*
Neutral	10.8	2.4	
Important	89.2	97.6	
Total	**100.0**	**100.0**	
Analyzing skill			
Not Important	0.0	2.9	0.236
Neutral	8.6	9.7	
Important	91.4	87.4	
Total	**100.0**	**100.0**	

Significant * 0.05

Table 6 presents results for association analysis of soft skills and types of institutions. There is significant association between institutions and the importance of problem solving skills ($p = 0.003 < 0.05$). Other than team work, generally public university reported higher on the rest of the soft skills.

Table 6: Institutions and Soft Skills

	Institutions		**Chi-Square (p-value)**
	Public Universities (%)	**Private Institutions (%)**	
Communication Skill			
Not Important	0.4	0.0	0.275
Neutral	4.1	9.1	
Important	**95.5**	90.9	
Total	**100.0**	**100.0**	
Organizational Skill			
Not Important	0.8	1.8	0.141
Neutral	5.7	12.7	
Important	**93.5**	85.5	
Total	**100.0**	**100.0**	
Problem solving skills			
Not Important	0.4	0.0	0.003*
Neutral	3.3	14.5	
Important	**96.3**	85.5	
Total	**100.0**	**100.0**	
Decision making skills			
Not Important	0.4	0.0	0.275
Neutral	5.3	10.9	
Important	**94.3**	89.1	
Total	**100.0**	**100.0**	
Creative and Innovative Thinking			
Not Important	0.8	1.8	0.585
Neutral	7.8	10.9	
Important	**91.4**	87.3	
Total	**100.0**	**100.0**	
Leadership Qualities			
Not Important	0.4	0.0	0.873

Neutral	8.2	9.1	
Important	**91.4**	90.9	
Total	**100.0**	**100.0**	
Team Work			
Not Important	0.4	0.0	0.822
Neutral	4.9	3.6	
Important	94.7	96.4	
Total	**100.0**	**100.0**	

Significant at **0.10 and * 0.05

However, in terms of hard skills, more of the students from private institutions reported English proficiency, third language and analytical skill as important job skills that students should possess when looking for work. Please refer to table 7 for the details.

Table 7: Institutions and Hard Skills

	Institutions		**Chi-Square (p-value)**
	Public Universities (%)	**Private Institutions (%)**	
IT Skills			
Not Important	0.0	1.8	0.079
Neutral	9.4	12.7	
Important	90.6	85.5	
Total	**100.0**	**100.0**	
Fluent in English language			
Not Important	2.4	0.0	0.320
Neutral	19.6	14.5	
Important	78.0	**85.5**	
Total	**100.0**	**100.0**	
Fluent in third language / other language			
Not Important	15.1	7.3	0.075
Neutral	40.8	32.7	
Important	44.1	**60.0**	
Total	**100.0**	**100.0**	
Good time management			
Not Important	0.0	0.0	0.123
Neutral	4.1	9.1	
Important	95.9	90.9	
Total	**100.0**	**100.0**	
Analyzing skill			
Not Important	2.0	1.8	0.992
Neutral	9.4	9.1	
Important	88.6	**89.1**	
Total	**100.0**	**100.0**	

Significant at **0.10 and * 0.05

Conclusion and Discussion

The study found 12 skills that the university students deem as to be very important whereby discipline tops the list. Furthermore, there is significant association between graduates' skills and gender such as organization skills, problem solving, team work and good time management. Female university students reported to be higher either on hard or soft skills. This finding concurs with Ang (2015) who found that female students to be generally more informed than male students about the skills which the industry wants. There is also significant association between respondents' skills and institutions such as problem-solving skills. Other than team work, generally public university reported higher on the rest of the soft skills such as communication,

organization, problem solving, decision making, creative and innovative thinking and leadership while more of the students from private institutions reported English proficiency, third language and analytical skills as important job skills that students should possess when looking for work. Thus, it can be concluded that public university students are more equipped with soft skills while private university students are more equipped with hard skills.

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