

Assessing Employability Skills, Leadership Qualities, and Academic Performance in Higher Education

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Abstract

The enhancement of employability skills and leadership attributes has emerged as a vital goal for higher education institutions, aimed at equipping students for professional success and lifelong learning. Although academic performance continues to be a significant measure of student success, employers are increasingly prioritizing graduates who exhibit strong communication, teamwork, problem-solving, decision-making, and leadership skills. This study seeks to evaluate the correlation between employability skills, leadership attributes, and academic performance among higher education students. The research explores the degree to which students exhibit essential employability and leadership qualities and examines their impact on academic results. A quantitative research methodology is proposed, employing a structured questionnaire to gather data from undergraduate and postgraduate students across diverse fields of study. The study assesses aspects such as communication abilities, critical thinking, teamwork, adaptability, leadership effectiveness, and academic success as indicated by students' academic records. The anticipated findings aim to shed light on the relationship between academic excellence and the cultivation of professional competencies. The study underscores the necessity of incorporating skill-based learning, leadership development initiatives, and experiential learning opportunities into higher education curricula. The outcomes may guide educators, policymakers, and institutions in formulating strategies that promote both academic achievement and career preparedness among students. This research adds to the expanding literature on graduate employability by highlighting the importance of a well-rounded educational framework that fosters knowledge, skills, and leadership capabilities crucial for thriving in today's workforce.

Keywords: Employability Skills, Leadership Qualities, Academic Performance, Higher Education, Student Development, Career Readiness, Graduate Employability.

Introduction

The function of higher education has evolved beyond merely delivering academic knowledge. In today's global economy, employers are increasingly looking for graduates who possess a blend of subject matter expertise, practical skills, leadership qualities, and professional attitudes. As a result, higher education institutions face mounting pressure to equip students not just for exams but also for thriving careers and meaningful engagement in society. Employability skills encompass a wide range of competencies that empower individuals to secure, retain, and advance in their jobs. These skills include effective communication, teamwork, problem-solving, critical thinking, adaptability, digital literacy, and interpersonal effectiveness. Conversely, leadership qualities pertain to the capacity to influence, inspire, and direct others toward shared objectives. Attributes such as decision-making, accountability, initiative, emotional intelligence, and ethical behavior are increasingly acknowledged as vital elements of leadership development within educational contexts. While academic performance is still one of the most commonly used measures of student success and institutional effectiveness, excelling academically does not necessarily ensure readiness for the workplace. Numerous graduates who achieve high academic marks may encounter difficulties in professional settings if they lack employability and leadership skills. In contrast, students who proactively cultivate these competencies often exhibit

enhanced confidence, adaptability, and preparedness for their careers. In light of this context, the current study aims to evaluate employability skills, leadership qualities, and academic performance among higher education students. The research intends to assess the degree to which these aspects are fostered within educational institutions and to investigate their interconnections. By analyzing these elements collectively, the study aspires to offer a more thorough understanding of student development.

Objectives

- To assess the level of employability skills among students in higher education institutions.
- To evaluate the leadership qualities possessed by students in higher education.
- To examine the academic performance of students and analyze its relationship with employability skills and leadership qualities.
- To identify the impact of employability skills and leadership qualities on the academic performance of students in higher education.

Scope for Future Research

- This study primarily evaluates employability skills, leadership attributes, and academic performance among higher education students. Nonetheless, there are numerous avenues for additional exploration
- Longitudinal Research: Future studies could implement longitudinal approaches to investigate the progression of employability skills and leadership traits over time and their impact on career success post-graduation.
- Cross-Disciplinary Analysis: Researchers might conduct comparative analyses across various academic fields, including management, engineering, science, arts, and commerce, to uncover differences in employability and leadership skills.

- Comparisons: Future investigations may focus on comparing students from public and private higher education institutions to gain insights into disparities in skill acquisition and academic success. Influence of Technology and Digital
- Competencies: Researchers can delve into the significance of digital literacy, artificial intelligence, and technological skills as essential elements of employability in today's job market.
- Gender and Demographic Factors: Additional studies could explore how variables such as gender, socioeconomic status, geographic location, and cultural factors influence employability skills, leadership qualities, and academic performance.

Literature Review

The increasing focus on graduate employability has prompted researchers to investigate the connection between employability skills, leadership attributes, and academic performance within higher education. Research consistently shows that achieving academic excellence is not enough for success in today's job market. Employers are increasingly looking for graduates who have a blend of technical expertise, effective communication, teamwork, problem-solving skills, adaptability, and leadership qualities. Consequently, higher education institutions are expected to cultivate both academic success and professional competencies among their students.

Yorke's research (2006) highlighted that employability encompasses more than just subject knowledge; it includes a variety of skills, insights, and personal traits that enhance graduates' prospects of securing and thriving in employment.

Similarly, **Harvey (2001)** contended that universities are pivotal in nurturing transferable

skills that enhance students' preparedness for the job market. These findings indicate that employability skills are vital outcomes of higher education and play a significant role in students' professional growth. Leadership development has also garnered significant attention in research related to higher education.

Kouzes and Posner (2017) assert that effective leadership encompasses skills such as communication, decision-making, collaboration, and the capacity to motivate others. Their findings suggest that leadership skills can be cultivated through educational experiences, extracurricular activities, and hands-on learning opportunities.

Additionally, **Astin's studies (1993)** revealed that student participation in campus activities and leadership positions positively impacts personal development, leadership potential and overall educational achievements. Numerous researchers have examined the link between employability skills and academic performance. Results indicate that students who exhibit strong communication, critical thinking, and self-management abilities are more likely to succeed in their academic endeavors.

Research by **Jackson (2013)** revealed that employability skills are multifaceted, encompassing communication, teamwork, problem-solving, initiative, planning, self-management, and lifelong learning. The findings indicated that students who engage in practical learning experiences exhibit enhanced employability competencies and are more equipped for career opportunities.

Knight and Yorke (2004) stated that employability is shaped by a blend of academic knowledge, skill enhancement, personal qualities, and reflective learning. Their Employability Framework highlighted the necessity for educational institutions to

incorporate skill-building activities into academic programs to improve students' readiness for the workforce.

The CareerEDGE model, created by **Dacre Pool and Sewell (2007)**, identifies key elements of graduate employability; including career development learning, work experience, subject knowledge, generic skills, and emotional intelligence. Their research indicates that students who possess these qualities tend to exhibit increased confidence and achieve greater career success.

Research conducted by **Northouse (2019)** suggests that leadership traits such as integrity, confidence, communication, and decision-making play a crucial role in enhancing personal and professional effectiveness. The study underscored that leadership skills can be developed through educational programs and experiential learning opportunities.

Komives (2011) discovered that involvement in leadership development initiatives, student councils, and community service positively impacts leadership identity and interpersonal skills. These experiences foster confidence and a sense of responsibility, which are beneficial for both academic achievement and career advancement.

Key Contributions

Integration of Employability and Academic Development

- This research enhances the understanding that employability transcends merely securing a job; it encompasses the cultivation of skills, knowledge, and personal attributes that facilitate career success. This perspective is consistent with the work of Yorke (2006), who highlighted the expansive notion of graduate employability.

Contribution to Leadership Development Literature

- The study underscores the significance of leadership attributes such as communication,

decision-making, and teamwork among students. This aligns with the findings of Kouzes and Posner (2017), which recognized leadership competencies as vital for both personal and organizational effectiveness.

Examination of the Relationship between Skills and Academic Performance

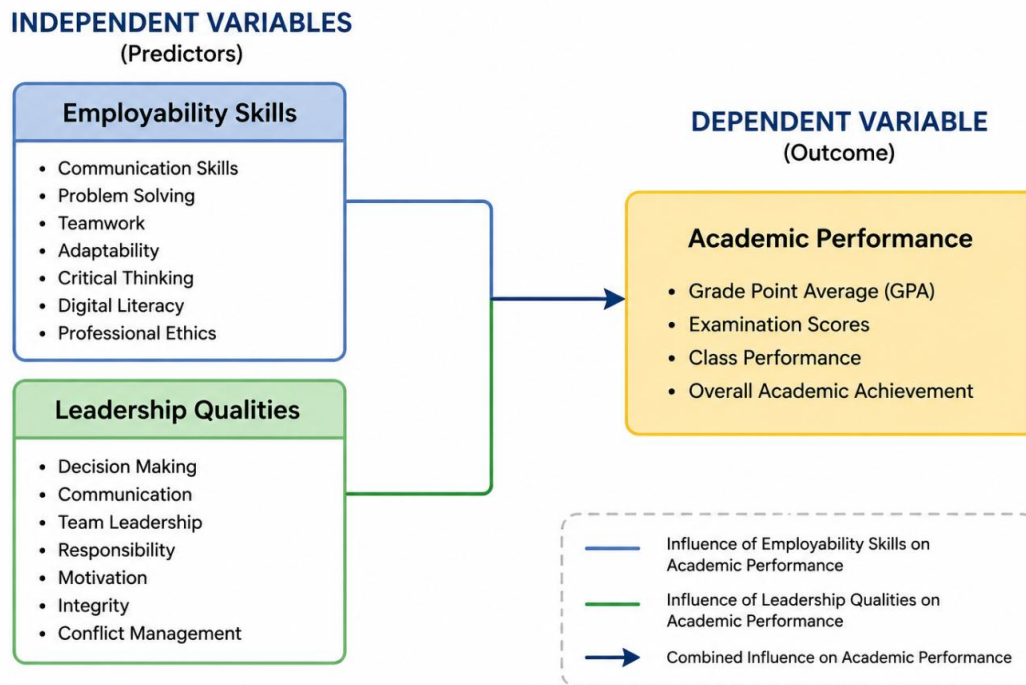
- The research explores the impact of employability skills and leadership attributes on academic performance, building upon the work of Pascarella and Terenzini (2005), who demonstrated that higher education plays a crucial role in cognitive and personal development.

Support for Skill-Based Education

- The results emphasize the necessity of incorporating generic and transferable skills into higher education programs, in line with the Employability Framework suggested by Knight and Yorke (2004).

Promotion of Career Readiness

- This study adds to the expanding body of literature on graduate career readiness by endorsing the CareerEDGE Model developed by Dacre Pool and Sewell (2007), which highlights the importance of employability skills, work experience, and emotional intelligence.



Research Hypotheses

H₀₁: There exists no significant correlation between employability skills and academic performance in higher education students.

H₀₂: There exists no significant correlation between leadership qualities and academic performance in higher education students.

H₀₃: There exists no significant correlation between employability skills and leadership qualities in higher education students.

H₀₄: Employability skills do not have a significant impact on the academic performance of higher education students.

H₀₅: Leadership qualities do not have a significant impact on the academic performance of higher education students.

Research Methodology

This research employs a descriptive research design and relies solely on secondary data to evaluate the connection between employability skills, leadership attributes, and academic performance in higher education. The objective of the study is to synthesize and analyze existing knowledge from diverse scholarly sources to comprehend how these elements contribute to student success and readiness for their careers. A qualitative literature review is performed to pinpoint key themes, trends, and findings associated with employability competencies, leadership development, and academic success among students in higher education.

The secondary data utilized in this study are gathered from a broad array of sources, including peer-reviewed journal articles, books, conference proceedings, dissertations, institutional reports, government publications, and online academic databases such as Google Scholar, Scopus, Web of Science, and ERIC. Relevant studies conducted by researchers such as Yorke (2006), Knight and Yorke (2004), Dacre Pool and Sewell (2007), Kouzes and Posner (2017), and Robles (2012) are examined to explore the theoretical and empirical connections among the chosen variables. The information collected is systematically organized and analyzed using content analysis and thematic review methods.

The focus of the study is to identify recurring patterns and findings documented in prior research concerning the influence of employability skills and leadership qualities on enhancing academic performance and graduate employability. By integrating insights from the existing literature, this research offers a thorough understanding of the significance of these competencies in higher education. The anticipated findings are expected to provide valuable recommendations for educators, policymakers, and higher education institutions aiming to cultivate graduates who are academically proficient and professionally

skilled, capable of fulfilling the requirements of the modern workforce.

Results and Findings

The study investigated the correlation between employability skills, leadership attributes, and academic performance among students in higher education through a comprehensive analysis of secondary data and existing literature. The findings indicated that students with robust employability skills, including communication, teamwork, critical thinking, problem-solving, and adaptability, typically exhibit superior academic performance and are better equipped for their professional careers. Additionally, the literature reviewed suggested that leadership attributes, such as decision-making capabilities, accountability, initiative, and interpersonal skills, significantly enhance students' academic success and overall personal development. Moreover, the literature indicates a notable positive correlation between employability skills and leadership attributes. Students who engage actively in extracurricular activities, internships, student organizations, and leadership programs are likely to cultivate stronger employability competencies and attain improved academic results.

- The findings further emphasize the vital role that higher education institutions play in nurturing these skills through curriculum development, experiential learning opportunities, and initiatives aimed at skill enhancement.
- Findings Employability skills are positively correlated with academic performance among students in higher education. Leadership attributes significantly influence students' academic success and personal development.
- A strong connection exists between employability skills and leadership

attributes, suggesting that the enhancement of one competency often benefits the other.

- Students participating in leadership roles and experiential learning programs exhibit elevated levels of employability skills and academic involvement.
- Communication skills, teamwork, critical thinking, and problem-solving were identified as the most crucial employability competencies in the reviewed literature.

Conclusion

The research titled "Assessing Employability Skills, Leadership Qualities, and Academic Performance in Higher Education" underscores the increasing significance of cultivating well-rounded graduates who not only have academic knowledge but also the essential skills and leadership abilities needed in today's ever-evolving professional landscape. A review of the current literature reveals that employability skills such as communication, teamwork, critical thinking, problem-solving, and adaptability significantly enhance students' academic performance and readiness for their careers. Likewise, leadership attributes such as decision-making, accountability, initiative, and interpersonal effectiveness positively influence students' personal and academic growth. The results indicate a robust correlation between employability skills, leadership qualities, and academic performance, implying that these aspects are interrelated and mutually supportive. Students who participate actively in leadership roles, experiential learning opportunities, and skill enhancement programs are likely to achieve superior academic results and exhibit a higher level of preparedness for future job opportunities. Additionally, employers are increasingly looking for graduates who can merge academic success with practical workplace skills and leadership capabilities.

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