

# An Analysis of the Factors Affecting the Graduates' Employability In Case Of Rajarata University of Sri Lanka

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**Abstract-** *Most employment opportunities have opened for graduates from certain disciplines while for a considerable proportion of the graduates, finding employment has become a problem. As well as unemployment and underemployment are considerably high among graduates. Therefore, Enhancing the employability of graduates is a challenge faced by the university system of Sri Lanka. The prime focus of this study was to investigate factors affecting graduate employability in the case of the Rajarata University of Sri Lanka. The variables under consideration were the graduate employability as a dependent variable and the variables gender, degree classification; professional qualifications, English proficiency, IT skills, training and experience, and soft skills were the independent variables. The data collected from 120 graduates through a self-administered questionnaire from the four Faculties of Rajarata University using the stratified random sampling technique. For analysis, the linear regression model, correlation analysis, and descriptive analysis used. The findings revealed that gender, professional qualification, English proficiency, training and experience, and soft skills significantly influence on graduate employability while the factor of information technology skills partially influence and degree classification did not reflect a significant impact on graduate employability.*

**Indexed Terms-** *graduates, employability, university*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Education is the main criterion to measure the development of the country. One of the major objectives of education is to generate a talented student for pursuing different careers in a country. Higher education has taken considerable place in

education. University education is the core of higher education and it generates graduates who are most intellectually valued human capital in the world. Higher education is increasingly regarded as a core component of national policies to capture global market shares, and universities are a pool for productive human resources to facilitate national growth. Employability is one of the ultimate results in education. Because employability is important for the development of any country

Employability means that institutions and employers have supported the student knowledge, skills, attributes, reflective disposition and identity that graduates need to succeed in the workforce (Knight & Yorke, 2004) (Holmes, 2013) (Hinchiffe & Jolly, 2011).

In the world context, the graduate employability level is at a considerable level. However, according to research, there is a gap between the number of graduates and employed graduates. Mismatch with graduate skills and employer expectation has affected for this gap. Even though graduate employability is the most helpful factor for the development of the economy, there is a huge gap between several graduates and employed graduates in the world. According to the United States Bureau of labor statistics, the graduate unemployment rate is 5.3% (2017) in the United States while this rising enrollment made employment an issue and a serious challenge for China. Including the graduates who are not employed last year, the number of unemployed graduates may reach 8,100,000. In 2013, it has estimated that at least 600,000, graduates from the prior year had yet to find employment. (Kinash, 2014)

Herpeet (2000) indicated that there is a problem where current university students will not deliver learners

with lifetime learning abilities and technical knowledge to excel in their professions.

The financial recession and economic downturns in the recent few years have exacerbated the increase in job layoffs, but supply-causes also often led to the growing number of unemployed students. There is a need to provide a better picture of the form of competencies needed by graduates to access the jobs market so that higher education organizations may encourage such competencies in their graduates. The relevance of their programmers plays an important part in helping their graduates find employment.

Employability is one of the highly focused areas of the state university system in Sri Lanka where it has noted that graduates who pass out from the state university system in Sri Lanka lack the required skills that expected from a graduate. After a recent survey unemployed rate of the educated is a disturbing 10.2%. According to the University Grants Commission Total graduate (Bachelor Degree) Output is 20,157 29,545 in 2015.

Table I- Graduate Employment by University

University	Employed	Underemployed	Unemployed
South Eastern University	36.1%	10.6%	53.1%
Rajarata University	52.7%	13.1%	34.2%
Wayamba University	81.9%	5.9%	11.8%
Peradeniya University	53.6%	8.9%	37.2%
Moratuwa University	94.3%	0.9%	2.7%
Ruhuna University	61.2%	14.1%	24.6%
Sri Jayawardenapura University	54.2%	12.7%	32.0%
Uwa Wellasa University	66.5%	5.0%	28.6%
Colombo University	66.0%	12.7%	20.9%
Kelaniya University	58.6%	18.7%	19.7%
Sabaragamuwa University	41.8%	12.1%	44.6%
Vavuniya Campus	48.9%	40.5%	10.6%
Jaffna University	51.5%	20.2%	26.1%
Eastern University	43.2%	19.9%	36.6%

(Source: Graduate and Employment Census Report 2012) (According to this report, employed graduate's salary was less than Rs.10, 000 to consider as underemployed.)

An article in Education Times (2014) stated that Sri Lanka's workforce lacks vital, high-demand work-specific skills, undermining sustainable economic development, and when considering the competition for graduate students at the local level and the availability on the job market of local graduates, the issue was whether the public local industry and the private sector universities and education institutions, respectively, are generating graduates with required skills.

According to Devarajan (2017), students spend a minimum of three years completing their undergraduate studies and graduate with high expectations. Unemployment affects their morale, social status, the standard of living and career opportunities, and increases the risk of depression. Education is an investment, and when graduates are unemployed, they are not able to obtain a return on their investment. In turn, this affects a nation's productivity and renders the government's investment in higher education redundant.

Rajarata University is one of the academic institutions playing a prominent role in the process of bequeathing graduates to the society in Sri Lanka. The Rajarata University of Sri Lanka is a non-profit higher education institution placed in the urban area of Anuradhapura in North Central Province. The university comprises five faculties namely: Faculty of Agriculture, Faculty of Applied Sciences, Faculty of Management Studies, Faculty of Medical and Allied Sciences and Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities. Ensuring that its graduate is employable is a central issue for a university. This can achieve only by identifying the critical elements in advance and determining the causes for them. Under the guidance of the Ministry of Higher Education, all universities in Sri Lanka have conducted a study to gain insight into the main factors that have a significant bearing on the employability for graduates of all universities in Sri Lanka. According to the RUSL report, the figure following gives the employment status of the graduate by faculty.

Table II- Employment status of the graduate by faculty

Faculty	Employed	Underemployed	Unemployed
Agriculture	67.9%	1.8%	30.4%
Applied Sciences	63.5%	8.7%	27.9%
Management Studies	56.9%	13.0%	30.1%
Social Sciences and Humanities	39.0%	19.2%	41.8%
All	52.7%	13.1%	34.2%

(Source: Graduand Employment Census Report 2012)

- Research objectives
  - General Objective

The main objective of this study is to investigate factors affecting the graduates' employability in the case of the Rajarata University of Sri Lanka.

- Specific Objective
- To identify the impact of each factor on the graduate employability
- To identify what is the most influential factor that affects graduate employability.

To give recommendations to stakeholders in the higher education system to enhance graduate employability.

## II. PROBLEM STATEMENT

Graduates are considered as the intellectuals of a country. Because they are, acquire more knowledge and experience than the common public in society. As they have a wide array of knowledge, it is a contributing factor for the advancement of the country. If a country has a large educated population, it is uncomplicated to achieve sustainable growth. Because graduate employability is highly affected by the development of the country.

In the international context, most of the leading positions in both government and private sectors are held by graduates and provide immense support for the progress of their countries. As well as there is a considerable gap between graduates and their employability.

In the context of Sri Lanka, there is a huge gap between the number of graduates and employed graduates. It means there are high unemployment and underemployment situations among graduates. It is a critical issue, which, affects a developing country like Sri Lanka.

According to Gunawardane (2017) every year, a considerable amount of students graduate from fifteen state universities and many other graduate institutes in Sri Lanka and the employability of graduates has, therefore, become a key issue. The state university degrees in 2015 alone, around 5000, and the bulk (67%) were women. During the same year, 7,500 postgraduates were given to universities. Besides, after receiving foreign degrees, a fair number of graduates return each year. All these students face an arduous struggle to find appropriate employment in a stagnating market, which provides restricted work in both the state and private sectors. In both instances, several students prefer to take part-time or over-

qualified jobs if they are extremely fortunate to have one. In this case, decent employability and work experience would have a significant role to play in seeking an appropriate job.

As in Sri Lanka, graduates are provided education free of charge in government universities and an enormous amount of countries' GDP has provided to this. However, even after spending a vast amount of expenditure on generating graduates, there is a lack of contribution from them to the economy of the country. There is a lack of studies conducted to investigate this critical issue prevailing in Sri Lanka. Thus this research is conducted to identify "factors affecting the graduate employability in case of the Rajarata University of Sri Lanka".

## III. LITERATURE REVIEW

A graduate can be defined as a person who has completed a course of study or training, especially a person who has been awarded an undergraduate or first academic degree (English Oxford Living Dictionaries, 2017).

Employability is a concept that has been discussed widely, even though many authors have different definitions of what it may be, common ground can be found as to what it is and what it is not. Poropat (2011) describes employability as a major educational goal, even though employability programmes emphasized skill development when employers were said to value the performance instead. There is no doubt that employability has been a major topic among advanced economies for decades.

According to McQuaid & Lindsay (2005) employability is a much more complex phenomenon that reflects individual characteristics, personal circumstances, and external factors, each of which may affect access to jobs. Employability can be described as an enhanced capacity to secure employment, to be familiar with theories on development (Glover, Law, & Youngman, 2002). The word employability implies that you can attain a work and conduct tasks successfully for self-satisfaction and profit, the employer and community as a whole (Perera & Perera, 2009).

Employability for students ensures that higher learning participants are willing to obtain and/or build jobs. Furthermore, employability means that institutions and employers have supported the student knowledge, skills, attributes, reflective disposition and identity that graduates need to succeed in the workforce (Hinchiffe & Jolly, 2011) (Knight & Yorke, 2004) (Holmes, 2013)

Prior researchers have identified several numbers of factors that affect the graduate employability based on their research findings. A study conducted by Weligamage & Siengthai (2003) on Employer Needs and Graduate Skills found six most important expectation factors employers considered when recurring the graduate as communication skills, General knowledge, personality, computer skills, language skills, and practical experience. Following these six considerations, the educational background was regarded. The key reasons causing their insecurity have been the shortage of job experience, professional training and technical capabilities, basic information and unique expertise for unemployed students. Employers do not recognize students' technical or unique skills. Software technology, grammar, personal abilities, and preparation are the key reasons for students to obtain employment for the future from the perspective of scholars.

According to Paddi (2014), most desirable graduates should be competent in teamwork, communication, analytic and critical thinking and computer skill. As cited by Liyanage, Kumara, and Withanawasam (2016) graduates' practical knowledge, analytical ability, dedication to work, communication and IT skills, management skills and positive attitudes are among the highly concerned factors of the employers.

The study conducted by Ambepitiya (2016) at two management education institutes in Sri Lanka observed that academic knowledge, soft, practical and technical skill development are the major factors that prepare an undergraduate for future employment. These results also conclude that providing academic knowledge is not sufficient for the effective employability of graduates.

The employability factors identified by Finch, Hamilton, Riley, and Zehner (2013), was positioned in descending order of priority and includes; listening

skills, interpersonal skills, verbal communication skills, critical thinking skills, professionalism, written communication skills, creative thinking skills, adaptability, professional confidence, job-specific competencies, leadership skills, work experience, job-specific technical skills, academic performance, program reputation, knowledge of software, and institutional reputation

Employers today seek graduates who not only have special skills and knowledge but are also capable of being proactive enough to see issues and react to them. Also, employers now search for well-balanced graduates with good academic performance and 'soft skills,' including communication, problem-solving, interpersonal skills and flexibility. (Nurita, Shaharudin, & Ainon, 2004).

Accordingly, the above literature researcher highlighted some of the exoteric factors that affected to the graduate employability. Those are Gender, Degree classification, Professional qualifications, English proficiency, Information Technology skills, Training and Experience, Soft skills and this study will be based on these factors.

### 3.1 Gender

Gender identity is a specific gender perception. This may correspond or vary entirely from the sex at birth. All cultures include a collection of sex distinctions which may form the base of the creation concerning certain members of the society of a person's social identification.

According to the Department of Census in Sri Lanka, the majority of the graduates were females. It is 60.1% Out of all graduates in Sri Lanka. However, the employability of female graduates is lower than the employability of male graduates.

Table III -Employment by gender.

Gender	Employed (%)	Underemployed (%)	Unemployed (%)
Male	72(%)	12(%)	15(%)
Female	50(%)	14(%)	35(%)

(Source: Graduand Employment Census Report)

From the above figure, it can be seen that a high percentage of male graduates (72%) were employed

compared to female graduates (50%). It should also be noted that the percent underemployed was quite similar irrespective of the gender.

Concerning the impact of gender on employment prospects and employability, some studies are of the view that male graduates are more employable and find a job easier than females (Zhou, 2003). Other studies show that males from well-known institutions have a lower likelihood of employment than females from the same institutions (Connor, Dawson, Tyers, Eccles, & Reg, 2001). There is supporting evidence for the latter. For example, a study by Kong (2011) indicates that six months after graduation female graduates are more likely than male graduates have entered employment or gone for further studies. Though females are recruited in larger proportions than males in many organizations, they are underrepresented at senior levels in organizations (Brooks, 1997) (Fulgence, 2015). These findings can attribute to gender roles, making it difficult for females to balance family concerns and their careers due to long working hours (Ding, Murray, & Stuart, 2006).

### 3.2 Degree classification

An undergraduate degree granted by colleges and universities after achieving three to seven years of study is a bachelor's degree. Most institutions and colleges offer bachelor's degrees both with honor and non-honor.

There are several degree classification systems in the world. The British Bachelor's Grading Scheme is a qualification framework in the UK for bachelor's degrees and master's degrees. The system has been applied (sometimes with significant variations) in other countries and regions, including Australia, Bangladesh, Canada, India, Malaysia and Sri Lanka, etc.

Dissanayake & Benfratello (2010/2011) investigated what are the "Determinants of Unemployment among Sri Lankan University Graduates". That study found that only certain degree types, graduation year, medium significantly affects the employability of the general degree holders. They also found out that the prospects of working post-graduates who received a 'First Class' have dramatically higher than other grades; while employability has been diminished with

Simple," Second lower and ' Second Upper ' passengers. Nonetheless, such a ' college class ' may not have a major effect on general graduates ' employability.

Furthermore, this illustrates that the graduates' employability does not so much dependent upon the class of degree that they obtain. However, unemployment proportion amongst First class degree holders is considerably lower than the unemployment proportion for other categories, while the same of those who with General passes tend to find 'any' employments, whereas Second class holders seems to take an extensive period for searching a job that suits their qualifications.

Simple passes are also quite lower than that of Second class degree holders. The First class degree holders have a better advantage in obtaining employment that correspondence to their studies, while those with general passes tend to find 'any' employments, whereas Second class holders seem to take an extensive period for searching a job that suits their qualifications.

Table IV- Employment by Class

Class received	Nature of employment (%)		
	Employed	Underemployed	Unemployed
First-class	71%	12%	16%
Second upper	57%	14%	28%
Second lower	56%	13%	31%
General pass	63%	13%	28%

(Source: Graduand Employment Census Report 2012) (According to this, report-employed graduate's salary was less than Rs.10, 000; they have considered being underemployed.)

The above figure gives the percentage employment by the class obtained. The graduates with second lower (56%) and second uppers (57%) were less likely to be employed than the others. The percentage employed was the highest (71%) for first-class graduates. Percentage of underemployment was quite similar for all.

### 3.3 Professional Qualifications

Profession qualifications focus on improving a person's ability to succeed in a particular occupation,

which is ideal if they have a clear career objective and want to gain valuable on-the-job experience through vocational training. Awarded by professional bodies within the relevant industry or sector, they often follow on from a degree or equivalent qualification, although this level of previous academic study is not always required. (Mason D, 2016).

Professional qualifications are technical abilities, sometimes requiring an aspect of realistic preparation. They are typically related to a particular sector and are structured to help strengthen and build appropriate competencies for a specific career path.

Professional qualifications are provided by the professional bodies like the chartered institute of purchasing and supply or the Chartered Management Institute. These organizations represent people doing a specific type of work, in much the same way that industry bodies represent a certain type of business. Within this sense, several specialist associations provide their own set of credentials within their industry. (Word press page, 2010).

Graduates from science and technology suggested that their jobs are deficient in expertise or technical credentials as the biggest barrier to seeking a career (Dilrkshi et. Al., 2005). According to Chandrakumara (2015), professional qualifications were identified as an important determinant of employability, since data suggests that undergraduates who followed a professional course like CIMA, Chartered Accountancy, Information Technology, etc. have a higher probability of obtaining a job in the competitive job market. Further suggests that the employability problem can be minimized so far as the students are diverted to more professional courses.

The subject stream undertaken by the graduates seemed to have relatively significant importance in their employability. Moreover, it was found out that graduates' employability does not depend upon the class of their degree although the frequency of unemployed first class holders is relatively lower than that of other categories. Relationship of the professional qualifications and other qualifications to the employability is significant where the professional qualifications tend to be more significant than that of other qualifications. (Weligamage & Siengthai, 2003)

### 3.4 English Proficiency

The ability to speak, read and compose in English is English proficiency. To be fully professional, specialized skills in all three contact areas should be available (Indian Institute of Banking, 2011).

English is the most commonly used language in the corporate world. The knowledge of English is one of the most important employability skills. Knowledge of English much sought after in the corporate world. This includes certain similar skills for a successful conversation, such as the capacity to communicate, to persuade and to bargain, and to use this vocabulary for oral contact (Pandey & Pandey, 2014).

Employers in particular from the private sector find the prerequisite for recruiting to be sufficient skills in English. Since English is the official language of the private sector. Thus, inadequate English language competency becomes an obstacle against the employability of the graduates (Dilrkshi et al., 2005) (Dilrukshi, Wickremasingha, & Seetha, 2007) (Nanayakkara, 2004)

The ability to understand English serves as a significant determinant of work development, higher incomes and other career-seeking advantages (Roshid & Chowdhury, 2013). English is also the key element in higher earnings job prospects (Bleakley, Bleakley, & Chin, 2004) and higher efficiency companies (Tainer, 1988). On the other side, it is difficult to find employment for people with English incompetence, especially well-paying jobs (Carliner, 2000). Lack of fluency in English contributes to defeats (Dustmann & Fabbr, 2003; Leslie & Lindley, 2002). Proficiency in English therefore, is a need for employees to advance in both local and international companies and to improve their technical knowledge and skill.

The English language has generally been seen as one of the important determinants of employment in recent decades in the English-speaking West. It is also argued that the English language has a positive impact on graduate employment and earnings. It is one criterion to get a job (Roshid & Chowdhury, 2013). Shields & Price (2002) stated that occupational success is associated with speaking fluency.

To conclude previous studies, English proficiency has a profound impact on the job market, especially in a world in which English is the host country's principal language. Studies have also shown that English fluency is correlated with a higher wage in a wide variety of environments. Ability to talk English serves as the main driver of a career, receiving better wages and obtaining more opportunities in the labor market. To that extent, English language fluency has considered human capital. (Dustmann & Fabbr, 2003).

Table V- Employment by English proficiency

English proficiency Level	Nature of Employment (%)		
	Employed	Under Employed	Unemployed
Very good	71%	9%	19%
Good	59%	14%	27%
Average	49%	18%	32%
Poor	47%	14%	38%
Very poor	64%	29%	7%

(Source: Graduand Employment Census Report 2012)(According to this report employed graduate's salary was less than Rs.10, 000; they have considered being underemployed.)

The figure above gives the employment by English proficiency of the graduates. The percent employed was the highest (71%) for the graduates. with very good English proficiency. There seems to be a positive relationship between the percent employed and English proficiency except for very poor graduates.

### 3.5 Information Technology Skills

IT applies to anything connected to computer technology, such as networking, equipment, applications, the Internet or people that use this technology. Because we live in the 'digital age' IT has been part of our day-to-day lives. (Tech Terms, 2017). IT skills can be defined as the ability to use computers and software for tasks like word processing, presenting, research, retrieval and storage of information and for communicating. The above definition refers to the basic IT skills which most employers would expect graduates to be competent within certain roles or sectors; they will require more advanced abilities and knowledge (University of Leeds, 2017). Ariyawansa & Perera (2005) said English abilities, IT expertise, etc. are important factors in the employability of graduates in Sri Lankan organizations.

### 3.6 Training and experience

Training can be described as a structured practice to include details or guidance to enhance the success of the student, or to help him or herself achieve the appropriate level of knowledge or ability. Training involves teaching or acquiring certain abilities and expertise relevant to those practical competences, in one's case or another. Training has specific goals for improving one's capability, capability, productivity, and performance. It is the centre of apprenticeships and the foundation of the quality of development institutes. To order to retain, upgrade and improve expertise during working time, to add to the specific preparation needed for technical or skilled jobs, the job market observes acknowledged that more schooling was essential in 2008 outside initial qualifications. This style of preparation would be considered career learning for people of other fields and practitioners. (Wikipedia)

Experience can be described as the knowledge or skill acquired by a period of practical experience of something, especially which gained in a particular position. (English Oxford Living Dictionaries, 2017) Knowledge is the comprehension of an event or subject obtained by witnessing or revealing it. Philosophical words such as "empirical knowledge" or "posterior knowledge" with relation to skills. An expert may gain a reputation from anyone with significant expertise in a specific area. The definition of experience applies to know-how or operational information rather than propositional awareness. (Wikipedia)

Employers highlight the importance of previous work experience as a means for the student to mature and gain real-life experience that only work can provide. (Sleap & Reed, 2006)The integration of experiential learning methods and work-related programs had a significant impact on the development of competencies resulting in more work-ready and a more balanced graduate (Coll & Zegwaard, 2006).

Ariyawansa (2008) cited that training experience is a highly demanded factor in the job market especially, in the private sector. The majority of the studies show a positive and significant difference between students' employability skills and students' work experience, with a few exceptions such as that of Omar et al.

(Omar, et al., 2012)

Summing up the arguments and with the support of empirical studies, graduates with supervised work experience are expected to acquire basic employability skills and thus possess a higher level of employability. Such experience obtained from practical training and other forms of field-related work. However, and based on the views of. Blasko, Brennan, Little, & Shah, (2002).

### 3.7 Soft Skills

Soft skills are personal qualities that enable someone to communicate with other people easily and harmoniously. (English Oxford Living Dictionaries, 2017). Soft competence is a word employers use to define more intangible and non-technical skills that candidates pursue. As well as these are referred to as personal skills. As this phrase means, these credentials are less academic, less grounded, more technical and more compatible with an applicant's general attitude and personality. Some of the important soft skills are communication skills, teamwork and problem solving, leadership, responsibility and flexibility. (wikijob, 2017).

Soft skills are a cluster of stable personality traits and interpersonal skills, such as motivation to achieve, locus of control, communication, language, risk-taking, problem-solving style, team building, innovation and values that characterize a person's relationships with other people (Bischof, 1970). Soft skills cause individuals to behave in certain ways. The combination and interaction of these traits form an individual's unique personality and can be employed to assess competencies (Costa & McCrae, 2008). Soft and hard skills complement each other thus merging the needs of educational providers and various education stakeholders (Baum, 2002).

Communication skills can be identified, the ability to give and receive information - both verbally and in writing - that is clear, well structured, and targeted to the intended audience. Communication skills also include listening and questioning skills as non-verbal communication, such as eye contact, body language and pace and tone of voice (University of Leeds, 2017).

Leadership skills are strengths and capabilities that help supervise operations, direct projects and lead the workers towards reaching their objectives. Those are essential components in positioning executives to make thoughtful decisions about their organization's mission and goals. (SearchCIO, 2017)

Teamwork means that people will try to cooperate, using their skills and providing constructive feedback, despite any conflict between individuals. It is the process of working collaboratively with a group of people to achieve a goal. (Business Dictionary, 2017) The distinctive variation in thought, feeling, and action is defined in the personality. The analysis of personality focuses on two specific areas: one considers various traits of people, such as sociability or irritability. Others recognize how the various pieces of an individual join as a whole. (Kazdin, 2000)

A study conducted by (Weligamage & Siengthai, 2003) on "Employer Needs and Graduate Skills: The Gap between Employer Expectations and Job Expectations of Sri Lankan University Graduates". In this study information was collected from employers, unemployed graduates, employed graduates, and university faculty members. Here, Employers considered skills as the most important for recruiting graduates. The primary emphasis of the modern labor market is on professional and versatile students.

Tech capabilities, verbal ability, organizational knowledge and educational history from the faculty members' point of view are the most critical considerations to guarantee potential jobs for graduates. The largest level (34 %) in British research has shown that the key criteria are communication abilities in selecting students for work (Ariyawansa, 2008). Ariyawansa (2008) who investigated about Employability of Graduates of Sri Lankan Universities cited that teamwork/interpersonal relations are also a considerable factor in the job market. Many highly needed criteria in the current job market include leadership skills, particularly problem solving and analytical capability. Graduates must have additional skills such as leadership qualities; teamwork/interpersonal relations and especially problem solving and analytical ability, which are highly concerned in the job market.

Archer and Division (2008) studied Graduate employability: What do employers think and want? In these study findings revealed, percent of the study's respondents (UK employers) regarded communication skills as the most important, followed by soft skills (70%), and overseas experience (65 %). CBI (2012) found that almost a third of UK employers (30 %) have problems with graduates' generic employability skills, such as teamwork, communication and problem-solving.

IV. METHODOLOGY

This study has conducted to determine the factors affecting the graduate employability in the case of the Rajarata University of Sri Lanka. This study based on seven independent variables and one dependent variable. It has been identifying based on literature. Accordingly, the dependent variable named graduate employability has tested against the seven independent variables, namely, gender, degree classification, professional qualifications, English proficiency, Information Technology skills, Training and Experience, and Soft skills. The hypothesis developed for the study is as follows.

- (H1): There is a significant relationship between gender and graduate employability
- (H2): There is a significant relationship between degree classification and graduate employability
- (H3): There is a significant relationship between professional qualification and graduate employability
- (H4): There is a significant relationship between English proficiency and graduate employability
- (H5): There is a significant relationship between information Technology skills and graduate employability
- (H6): There is a significant relationship between training, experience and graduate employability
- (H7): There is a significant relationship between soft skills and graduate employability

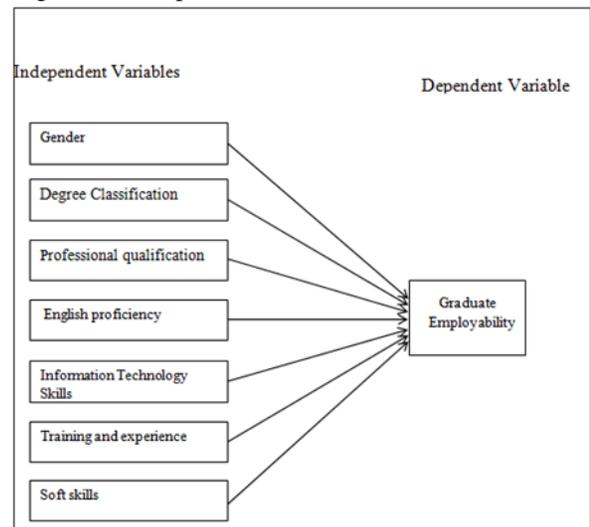
In this study, the researchers try to establish the relationship between gender, degree classification, professional qualifications, English proficiency, IT skills, training and experience, and soft skills, with the employability of the graduates. Therefore, this study is an explanatory study that seeks to explore the

relationship between variables.

This study intends to determine whether there is any relationship between the dependent and independent variables. Therefore, this is an analytical survey. This analytical survey is designed by using a questionnaire. There are 49 questions in this questionnaire, which have filled by graduates of Faculty of Management Studies and Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences of the Rajarata University of Sri Lanka.

The population of this study has consisted of the graduates who had the convocation on 25<sup>th</sup> May 2017 at Rajarata University of Sri Lanka. From various disciplines, 1510 students have graduated at this convocation. Previous literature suggests that Medical Field has a high employability condition. Therefore, the researcher has ignored the Faculty of Medical and Allied Sciences (population of 547 graduates) in this study. Accordingly, the whole population consists of 963 graduates from all the other four faculties. It was not possible to include the whole population in this study because of the time limitation, financial difficulties. Thus 120 respondents have selected to represent the whole population. The sample was stratifying selected equally from four faculties.

Figure 1 Conceptual framework



4.1 Data analysis and presentation

The census of the graduate included four faculties. It could be shown in the table below, the response rates

were fairly high (greater than 65%) for all faculties. Of all the 120 graduates, 90 responded to this census.

Table VI - Number of Respondent by Faculty

Faculty	Questionnaire send	Questionnaire received	Respondent rate
Faculty of Applied Sciences	30	22	73%
Faculty of Agriculture	30	20	66%
Faculty of Management Studies	30	24	80%
Faculty of Social sciences & humanities	30	24	80%
Total	120	90	75%

(Source: Survey data, 2019)

Table VII- Sample description

		Gender		Total
		Female	Male	
Age	Age Below 25	3	1	4
	25-26	12	10	22
	26-28	19	20	39
	Above 28	13	12	25
Faculty	Faculty of Applied science	7	15	22
	Faculty of Agriculture	10	10	20
	Faculty of Management Studies	13	11	24
	Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities	17	7	24

(Source: Survey data, 2019)

The table VII shows the distribution of the sample in terms of gender and faculty. According to the table, there are four faculties. According to the above table, the majority of the graduates are in the third category of age, which is between 26-28 years where the graduates are 39. Sample constitutes of 47 female graduates (52%) and 43 male graduates (48%). The total sample similarly distributed among the four faculties.

#### 4.2 Reliability analysis

This section is examining the internal consistency in terms of reliability and validity of the constructs that were used to measure the key variables of the study before further analysis.

Table VIII- Result of reliability analysis

Variables	Number of items	Conbranch's Alpha
English proficiency	6	0.972
IT Skills	4	0.949
Training and Experience	2	0.931
Soft Skills	10	0.902
Employability	5	0.956

(Source: Survey data, 2019)

According to the reliability tests run for each set of question items used to measure every variable of the study, it was able to come to the conclusion that the questionnaire developed had measured the variables reliably as each variable's Cronbach .alpha is greater than its minimum of 0.700.

#### 4.3 Descriptive statistics

Except for the dependent variable, for all the independent variables mean values are considered average and somewhat deviated among the graduates. The mean value of the dependent variable which is employability is somewhat low (M=2.55, SD=1.49).

Table IX- Descriptive statistics

Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error
English proficiency	2.8648	1.45294	-.021	.254
IT skills	3.0306	1.51158	-.069	.254
Training and experience	2.8778	1.61508	.078	.254
Soft skills	3.1078	1.28712	-.004	.254
Employability	2.5537	1.49326	.243	.254

(Source: Survey data, 2019)

#### 4.4 Hypothesis testing

##### Hypothesis 01

An Independent sample test has performed to evaluate whether there is a significant difference between males and females on employability.

Table X- Result of t-test in gender

Gender	Mean	Std. Deviation	T value	Sig
Female	2.2926	1.49029	0.912	0.038
Male	2.8391	1.46045		

(Source: Survey data, 2019)

According to the above table, both female and male respondents have taken lower mean value respectively (M= 2.29), (M=2.83). The result of the t-test further reveals that there is a significant difference between these two groups on graduate employability where significant value is 0.038 and it is lower than 0.05 (p<0.05), therefore there is a significant relationship between gender and graduate employability. Thus, the result supported the formulated hypothesis. Hence, the first hypothesis is accepted.

##### Hypothesis 02

One-way ANOVA performed to evaluate whether there are significant differences among respondents who received a class on employability.

Table XI- Results of ANOVA

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	13.069	3	4.356	2.021	.117
Within Groups	185.387	86	2.156		
Total	198.456	89			

(Source: Survey data, 2019)

The result of the ANOVA test reveals that graduate employability of the respondents has no difference between at least two groups on their received class (F= 2.021, p>0.05). A significant value is 0.117 and it is higher than 0.05(p>0.05). Because of that, it does not has a significant influence on graduate employability. Through this result, the second hypothesis (H2) of this study is rejected.

Hypothesis 03

According to the following table derived from the Independent Sample T-Test performed, both people who have and have not followed professional courses taken lower mean value respectively (M= 2.62), (M=2.49). The result of the t-test further reveals that there is a significant difference between these two groups on graduate employability. (t= -0.421, p<0.05). A significant value is 0.009 and it is supported to the third hypothesis (H3) of the study thus there is a significant impact of professional qualifications on graduate employability.

Table XII - Results of independent sample t-test

Professional qualification	Mean	Std. Deviation	T-value	sig
No	2.4913	1.48323	-0.421	0.009
Yes	2.6250	1.51944		

(Source: Survey data, 2019)

Hypothesis 04, 05,06 and 07

For testing the hypothesis 04, 05,06 and 07 both correlation and regression analysis information was used and its results are shown as follows. Correlation analyses were performed to identify the relationship between the variables used in the study. According to

the analyses the variables English proficiency, IT skills, Training and experience and soft skills showed a strong positive relationship with the dependent variable of graduate employability and such relationship is significant.

According to the results, all the hypotheses were accepted from both correlation and regression results except for hypothesis no 05. Hypothesis 05 was accepted from correlation results but rejected from regression results.

Table XIII- Hypothesis Testing from Correlation and Regression Analysis

Hypotheses	Correlation Analysis			Regression Analysis			overall
	Pearson correlation	Sig	Hypothesis test	B	Sig	Hypothesis test	
There is a significant relationship between English proficiency and employability (H4)	.940	.000	Accepted	.310	.046	Accepted	Accepted
There is a significant relationship between IT Skills on employability (H5)	.895	.000	Accepted	.082	.348	Rejected	Somewhat Accepted
There is a significant relationship between Training & Experience on employability (H6)	.929	.000	Accepted	.285	.003	Accepted	Accepted
There is a significant relationship between Soft Skills on employability (H7)	.937	.000	Accepted	.326	.050	Accepted	Accepted

(Source: Survey data, 2019)

The regression coefficient of English proficiency, training and experience and soft skills indicate that those variables have a positive impact and significant predictions to influence on graduate employability. The variable IT skills have a positive impact but such impact was not significant ( $\beta = 0.348, p>0.05$ ).

4.5 Regression Analysis

Table XIV- Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.953 <sup>a</sup>	.907	.903	.46484

a. Predictors: (Constant), Soft, It, Training, EP  
(Source: Survey data, 2019)

The value of R<sup>2</sup> is 0.907. That represents four predictor variables that can account for 90% of the variation in employability. It means that 10% of the variation in graduate employability cannot explain by these four-predictor variables alone. Therefore, it

concluded that this regression model reasonably fit the data. However, there should be other variables, which influence graduate employability.

## V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The research has conducted on the purpose of finding the factors affecting the graduate employability of the Rajarata University of Sri Lanka. Seven hypotheses have used in the study to check the effect of independent variables on the dependent variable.

By using the statistical package, it is found that gender, professional qualification, English proficiency, training and experience, and soft skills are the most influencing on graduate employability while factors like degree classification and IT skills are not significantly affecting the graduate employability.

Following recommendations is suggested through the findings of the study.

- The current study, as well as the previous research works emphasize that professional qualification highly influences on graduate employability. Therefore, graduates need to attempt obtain professional qualifications.
- The study reveals that graduates face difficulties to cope with the English language when finding and performing the employment. Their poor English language proficiency affects their employability situation. Thus, the management of the university needs to address this issue by a proper methodology to enhance the skills in handling the English language.
- Training and experience highly affected by graduate employability. Thus, all students should be required to have a structured period of employment experience before graduating. They should learn how to apply the theoretical knowledge they gain and how to act or behave in the organization.
- Research findings indicate that there is a significant relationship between soft skills on graduate employability. Thus management of the university needs to introduce a new program to

improve undergraduate soft skills like communication skills, problem-solving, and analytical skills.

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