

FACTORS ASSOCIATED TO FRESH GRADUATES' EMPLOYABILITY IN THE HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY

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Abstract

About half a million students will graduate from more than 2,000 colleges and universities in the Philippines. That would have been a source of joy for many people, except that based on statistics, only about 30 to 40 percent of them would find any kind of employment, and only about 5 to 10 percent would be employed in jobs that match their course, while close to 60 percent would join the growing ranks of the unemployed, (Abelgas, 2013). The study aimed to determine the factors associated to fresh graduates' employability in the hospitality industry, more specifically, to assess the factors being considered by the Human Resource managers, Human Resource specialists, and recruitment staff with regard to applicants' profile, soft competencies, work experience, physical appearance, and the level of education attained. This study used descriptive method and self-made questionnaire to answer the objectives. It involved 33 respondents from the total population of Palaestra Consortio's tied up Human Resource professionals. The study concluded that the factors associated to fresh graduates' employability are the physical appearance, soft competencies, work experience, and level of education attained in order to secure the positions in hospitality industry. The research recommends that the fresh graduates must give focus to their physical appearance specifically the hygiene and grooming and to their soft competencies, namely: leadership program, social awareness program, and communication skills. Fresh graduates and the incoming graduates should also invest to the industry-related internships to further give them the advantage to get the positions.

Keywords: *human resource perceptions; fresh graduates' employability; associated factors*

INTRODUCTION

Entering labor market is a major change and breakthrough in graduates' professional as well as personal lives. Trespassing from the field of education into work environment is not only a simple shift to the real sector, it brings about also the integration into companies' culture, utilization of individual' potentials, career development, new social networks, and independence. These events are milestones in young people's life-cycles (Rok, 2013).

Why fresh graduates get rejected? How do Human Resource Professionals hire an employee? Fresh graduates want to know the answers to these questions. Once they have the answers, much better chances of getting employed that could result to pride to their educations, achievements, and sacrifices and could elevate their confidence in work and in life. That is what the study of factors associated to fresh graduates' employability in the hospitality industry is all about.

At the end of the study, the researchers have identified the factors that significantly affect the fresh graduates' employability. Fresh graduates can also have better knowledge to prepare themselves and to give the human resource professionals or recruitment officer what they need and what they want to see. This study will also help the CITHM department to enhance their program and develop the learning, skills and values that most employers are looking for today.

Review of Literature and Studies

Factors Affecting Fresh Graduates' Employability

With the growing number of aspiring applicants, fresh graduates today are undoubtedly facing severe competitions and obstacles to get a new job. To secure a job after being graduated, the following are the factors to be considered:

First is the demographic profile of the applicants. Age and gender play a vital role and give big impacts to the employability status of fresh graduates, as some of the graduates are underage for labor while some are facing gender discrimination in the workplace.

According to DOLE (2010), the minimum age of employment is 18 years for hazardous jobs, and 15 years for non-hazardous jobs. But a child below 15 maybe employed by parents or guardians in a non-hazardous job if the employment does not interfere with the child's schooling.

The second factor is physical appearance. According to Kokemuller (2010), hiring managers form first impressions about them in a matter of seconds. Their dress, grooming, facial expression, the way they enter the room and their handshake that contribute to this impression. In addition to this, he also stated that appearance should support the overall impression as a capable and competent professional.

Physical appearance can also affect one's job prospects, promotion opportunities, and relative income. The effects of the beauty bias start working even before the employee does: the rise of the video or photo résumé gives recruiters a perception that's worth a thousand resume words; and is a subconscious filter that can make or break a candidate's chances.

Physical and social attractiveness deliver substantial benefits in all social interaction, making a person more persuasive, able to secure the co-operation of colleagues, attract customers and sell products." (Miller, 2011)

The third factor is soft competency. As stated by Prising (2011) the main problem for college graduates is not that they do not have skills, it is that they do not have enough skills. "Being a college graduate doesn't mean you're work-ready," he says. He also noted that the solution is a better education system that informs students early about the jobs the workforce really needs. And flexible companies that are more willing to hire graduates with basic skills and then train them to fit the company's needs before putting them on the job.

Based on a research conducted by Fay and Frese (2013), initiative has become increasingly important in today's workplace. Organizations want employees who can think on their feet and take action without waiting for someone to tell them what to do. After all, this type of flexibility and courage is what pushes teams and organizations to innovate, and to overcome competition.

The fourth factor is working experience. According to Hotel Business Magazine (2013), for those entering the industry, internships can prove essential in opening up opportunities. Employers often demonstrate a preference towards those who have real life experience over those who do not have. They are keen on recruiting people already operational, as this also fast tracks the training process.

In a study conducted by Weligamage (2009), he concluded that practical experience, not only the skills, is one thing that emphasizes the importance of education for employability in the current changing business environment. Students need to develop employability skills in addition to the

acquisition of subject-specific knowledge in order to enhance competitive advantage for graduate employment.

The fifth is education. In a recent study of Macatangay (2013), school-related factors, particularly curriculum and instruction, and work related values such as love of God, honesty, love for truth and obedience to the superior contribute much to employment.

Education can hold a key role not only finding a job, but also landing one that offers both financial and intrinsic rewards. The level of education can affect both the breadth and depth of jobs available to you. You typically can apply for a broader range of jobs with more education, and the jobs you can get are usually yield greater pay and chances for upward mobility as stated by Kokemuller (2010).

Conceptual Framework

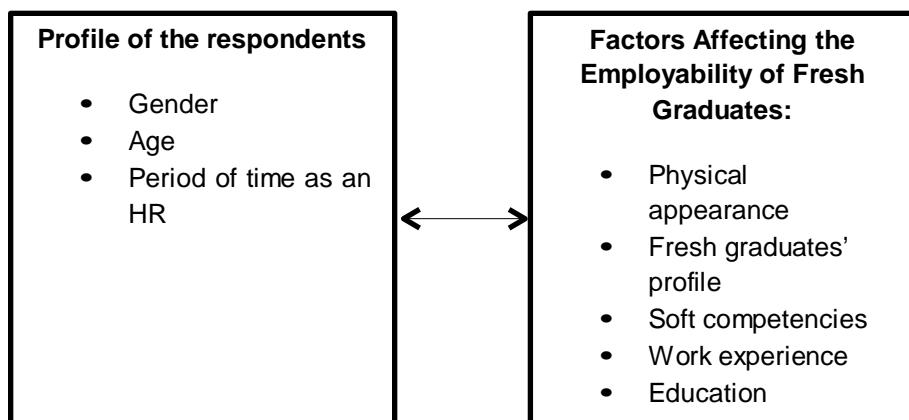


Figure 1: Factors Associated to Fresh Graduates' Employability

The researchers identified the factors that affect the fresh graduates' employability: these are the physical appearance, fresh graduates' profile, soft competencies, work experience and education. These factors are

influenced by the profile of the respondents. At the end of the study, the researchers verified the factors associated with fresh graduates' employability in the hospitality industry.

Fresh graduates' profile plays a vital role as some of the industries are looking by age and gender.

Physical appearance comprises height, weight, and skin complexion, good set of teeth, grooming and hygiene.

Soft competencies are necessary to adapt in this fast phasing industry on which the candidate must have competitive skills.

Working experience is a factor that creates a big impact in molding a candidate showing preparedness and the level of their ability.

The significance of education factors in accepting fresh graduates is particularly pertinent as it gives the graduates the advantage to do more among the other candidates if they are bachelor's degree graduate, vocational courses graduate, received industry-related awards and recognition and showing pride to their grades.

Objectives of the Study

In general, this study aims to find out the factors associated to fresh graduates' employability. Specifically, it aims to describe the demographic profile of the respondents. Next is to assess the factors that affect the employment of fresh graduates in the hospitality industry based on: profile of the applicants, physical appearance, soft competencies, working experience and education. Last is to determine the significant relationship between the demographic profile of the respondents and the factors affecting employability.

METHODS

Research Design

This study used the descriptive survey method to find out factors associated to fresh graduates' employability in hospitality industry.

Respondents of the Study

Out of the 100 partner companies of Palaestra Consortio, the researchers chose 11 partner-hotel companies of the Hospitality Industry as their respondents, specifically their Human Resource managers, Human Resource specialists and recruitment staff. Using convenience sampling method, 33 respondents were surveyed; respondents came from the field of hospitality industry as for the benefit of the College of International Tourism and Hospitality Management.

Data Gathering Tool

The researchers formulated a survey questionnaire as a main tool for gathering data. The questionnaire consists of two (2) parts. The first part was about the demographic profile of the respondents. The second part was about determining the factors that affect the employment of fresh graduates in the hospitality industry.

Data Gathering Procedure

In order to arrive at this research, the researchers gathered data in the Palaestra Consortio's office, library and on the internet and chose the most important information to put in the research. The data for this research were collected using a survey questionnaire. To gather the information needed for this study, the researchers distributed the survey questionnaire

personally and through electronic mail, for these were the most convenient ways to reach the respondents. Data were then gathered and analyzed through the help of statistical data and the research statistician.

Data Analysis

The statistical techniques were used to further understand the data of the study include: frequency, percentage, weighted mean and chi-square. The data gathered were tabulated systematically by the researchers and obtained accurate results. All the data were based from the respondents' feedback from the questionnaire.

Statistical Treatment

The results of the survey were treated using the following statistical treatment:

To interpret the demographic profile of the respondents, the researchers used frequency and percentage. To determine the factors that affect the employment of fresh graduates in the hospitality industry, the researchers used weighted mean. To determine the significant relationship between the demographic profile of the respondents and the factors affecting employability, the researchers used chi-square.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Table 1. Frequency Distribution of Respondents According to their Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Male	5	15
Female	28	85
Total	33	100

There were a total of thirty-three (33) respondents. It can be seen that eighty-five percent (85%) of the respondents were female and fifteen percent (15%) of the respondents comprised by male. It was found out that female covered the biggest part of the total population.

Table 2. Frequency Distribution of Respondents According to their Age

Age	Frequency	Percent
19-24 years old	12	36
25-30 years old	14	43
31-36 years old	6	18
37-42 years old	1	3
43-58 years old	0	0
58 and up	0	0
Total	33	100

Table 2 shows that forty-three percent (43%) of the total population were ages twenty-five to thirty (25-30) years old which ranked the highest. Ages thirty-seven to forty-two (37-42) years old ranked the least.

Table 3. Frequency Distribution of Respondents According to their time Period as a Human Resource Staff

Time Period as an HR	Frequency	Percent
1-4 years	30	91
5-8 years	2	6
9-12 years	1	3
13-16 years	0	0
17-20 years	0	0
Total	33	100

Table 3 shows that ninety-one percent (91%) of the total population were working one to four (1-4) years as Human Resource staff. Three percent (3%) of the total population were working nine to twelve (9-12) years as Human Resource staff.

Factors Affecting Fresh Graduates Employability

Table 4. Factors Affecting Fresh Graduates' Employability in Terms of their Profile

Items	Weighted mean	Verbal Interpretation
1. Age is an important factor in hiring fresh graduates.	1.18	Strongly Disagree
2. Gender affects employability.	1.09	Strongly Disagree
3. Religion impacts fresh graduates' employability.	1.03	Strongly Disagree
Composite mean	1.1	Strongly Disagree

Legend: 3.50 – 4.00 = Strongly Agree; 2.50 – 3.49 = Agree;
 1.50 – 2.49 = Disagree; 1.00 – 1.49 = Strongly Disagree

As seen from the obtained data, all were assessed as Strongly Disagree in terms of the profile of the fresh graduates with the total value of 1.1. Religion's impact on fresh graduates' employability ranked the least with the mean value of 1.03. In terms of age as an important factor in hiring fresh graduates ranked on top with a value of 1. 18.

According to a new report by the SHRM Foundation and the Economist Intelligence Unit entitled Shaping the Future of HR, there are a number of emerging and consolidating demographic trends that are likely to transform the profile of the average worker over the next 20 years.

Table 5. Factors Affecting Fresh Graduates' Employability in Terms of Physical Appearance

Items	Weighted mean	Verbal Interpretation
1. Good grooming plays an important role in employment.	4.00	Strongly Agree
2. Good hygiene is a significant factor in employment.	3.91	Strongly Agree
3. Fresh graduates with a good set of teeth are preferred.	3.12	Agree
4. Height is an advantage for fresh graduates.	2.06	Disagree
5. We prefer applicants with good complexion.	1.97	Disagree
6. Weight affects our preference in hiring.	1.27	Strongly Disagree
Composite mean	2.72	Agree

Legend: 3.50 – 4.00 = Strongly Agree; 2.50 – 3.49 = Agree;
1.50 – 2.49 = Disagree; 1.00 – 1.49 = Strongly Disagree

Table 5 presents the factors of fresh graduates' employability in terms of physical appearance. It was found out that the overall assessment was 2.72 and rated Agree.

Good grooming plays an important role in employment ranked the highest with a mean value of 4.00 rated as strongly agree. In the Philippines, an uptrend of enrollment in personality development schools has been observed, signifying an increase in awareness of the advantages of having good grooming and pleasant behavior. Filipinos are starting to build up on their looks by taking care of themselves with proper hygiene and to also build on their personality, apart from their resumes, in an effort to get noticed by employers (Geneta, 2014).

Table 6. Factors Affecting Fresh Graduates' Employability in Terms of Soft Competencies

Items	Weighted mean	Verbal Interpretation
1. Initiative to do work	4.00	Strongly Agree
2. Effective communication skills	4.00	Strongly Agree
3. Positive attitude to the work	3.97	Strongly Agree
4. Accurate listening skills	3.94	Strongly Agree
5. Leadership skills	3.91	Strongly Agree
6. Attention to details	3.82	Strongly Agree
7. Critical thinking which involves planning and organizing	3.82	Strongly Agree
8. Ability to handle conflicts very well	3.79	Strongly Agree
Composite mean	3.91	Strongly Agree

Legend: 3.50 – 4.00 = Strongly Agree; 2.50 – 3.49 = Agree;
1.50 – 2.49 = Disagree; 1.00 – 1.49 = Strongly Disagree

Table 6 presents the factors of fresh graduates' employability in terms of soft competencies. It can be gleaned from the table that the overall assessment was 3. 91 and rated as Strongly Agree. As stated in the study conducted by Lowden, et al. (2011), employers expect graduates to be

disciplined and have technical competences from their degree. There are characteristics, skills, attributes and knowledge that are valued by employers.

Initiative to do work and effective communication skills were the most observable with the mean value of 4.00 and rated as Strongly Agree. Based on a research conducted by Fay and Frese (2013), initiative has become increasingly important in today's workplace. Organizations want employees who can think on their feet and take action without waiting for someone to tell them what to do. After all, this type of flexibility and courage is what pushes teams and organizations to innovate, and to overcome competition. It can be seen from Table 6 that the ability to handle conflicts very well ranked the least and rated as Strongly Agree.

Table 7. Factors Affecting Fresh Graduates' Employability in Terms of Work Experience

Items	Weighted mean	Verbal Interpretation
1. On-the job trainings in related fields	3.91	Strongly Agree
2. Workshops in related field	3.88	Strongly Agree
3. Participated in social awareness	3.88	Strongly Agree
4. Industry related seminar	3.27	Agree
Composite mean	3.72	Strongly Agree

Legend: 3.50 – 4.00 = Strongly Agree; 2.50 – 3.49 = Agree;
1.50 – 2.49 = Disagree; 1.00 – 1.49 = Strongly Disagree

As observed by the researchers, having a work related-experience in any hospitality industry is a big advantage to the employability of fresh graduates as it gives them a leap to job-well-done and could easily respond to the working environment and changes as strongly agreed by the participants and having a composite mean of 3.72.

According to Hotel Business Magazine (2013), for those entering the industry, internships can prove essential in opening up opportunities. Employers often demonstrate a preference towards those who have real life experience over those who do not. They are keen on recruiting people already operational, as this also fast tracks the training process.

Table 8. Factors Affecting Fresh Graduates' Employability in Terms of Education

Items	Weighted mean	Verbal Interpretation
1. Industry-related awards and recognitions are important.	3.94	Strongly Agree
2. Fresh graduates' degree of education has an impact in their employability.	3.82	Strongly Agree
3. Fresh graduates with good grades are preferred.	2.85	Agree
4. Institution graduated is a factor when applying for a job.	1.36	Strongly Disagree
Composite mean	2.99	Agree

Legend: 3.50 – 4.00 = Strongly Agree; 2.50 – 3.49 = Agree; 1.50 – 2.49 = Disagree; 1.00 – 1.49 = Strongly Disagree

It can be gleaned from Table 8 that factors of fresh graduates' employability in terms of education were rated as Agree with the total mean value of 2.99. Industry-related awards and recognitions are important was the most visible as revealed with the mean value of 3.94 and rated as Strongly Agreed. Being part or awarded with hospitality awards and recognition is an additional bonus to the fresh graduates' rate chances of getting employed as it gives the company a view to applicants' capability to do more.

Table 9. Relationship between Gender and the Factors Affecting Fresh Graduates' Employability

Variables	Chi-square Value	Asymp Sig	Interpretation
Profile of the Applicants	0.184	0.668	Not Significant
Physical Appearance	0.682	0.409	Not Significant
Gender vs. Soft competencies	0.184	0.668	Not Significant
Work Experience	9.975	0.002	Significant
Education	0.296	0.586	Not Significant

If (Asymp. Sig) p-value is less than 0.05, then there is significant relationship between variables. If (Asymp. Sig) p-value is greater than 0.05, then there is no significant relationship between variables.

Table 9 presents the relationship between the demographic profile of the respondents in terms of gender and the factors affecting fresh graduates' employability. It was found out that there is a significant relationship between the demographic profile of the respondents in terms of gender and the factors affecting fresh graduates' employability in terms of work experience with an asymp sig of .002. It can be gleaned from the table that there is no significant relationship between the demographic profile of the respondents in terms of gender and the factors affecting fresh graduates' employability in terms of profile of the respondents, physical appearance, soft competencies and education.

Gender differences have no significant relationship on fresh graduates' employability. The industry does not glean to much on the gender of the applicants as they believed that skills and ability to withstand pressure is more necessary. (Bardi, 2009)

Table 10. Relationship between Age and the Factors Affecting Fresh Graduates' Employability

Variables	Chi-square Value	Asymp Sig	Interpretation
Age vs.	Profile of the Applicants	1.805	.614 Not Significant
	Physical Appearance	1.104	.776 Not Significant
	Soft competencies	1.805	.614 Not Significant
	Work Experience	3.830	.280 Not Significant
	Education	5.944	.114 Not Significant

If (Asymp. Sig) p-value is less than 0.05, then there is significant relationship between variables. If (Asymp. Sig) p-value is greater than 0.05, then there is no significant relationship between variables.

Table 10 shows the relationship between the demographic profile of the respondents in terms of age and the factors affecting fresh graduates' employability. The overall assessment was found out that there is no significant relationship between the demographic profiles of the respondents in terms of age and the factors affecting fresh graduates' employability.

Age discrimination has been the barriers for some applicants in the hospitality industry. While majority of the hotel firms are not after the age of the applicant, the innate ability to comprehend tasks well and can communicate well takes a verge over age. (Mmaw, 2012)

Table 11. Relationship between Time Period as a Human Resource Officer and the Factors Affecting Fresh Graduates' Employability

	Variables	Chi-square Value	Asymp Sig	Interpretation
Time Period	Profile of the Applicants	.103	.950	Not Significant
	Physical Appearance	1.886	.390	Not Significant
as an Human Resource officer vs.	Soft competencies	.103	.950	Not Significant
	Work Experience	1.056	.590	Not Significant
	Education	3.171	.205	Not Significant

If (Asymp. Sig) p-value is less than 0.05, then there is significant relationship between variables. If (Asymp. Sig) p-value is greater than 0.05, then there is no significant relationship between variables.

As shown from table 11, there is no significant relationship between the demographic profile of the respondents in terms of time period as a Human Resource officer and the factors affecting fresh graduates' employability.

Sweeping demographic changes across both the developed and developing world will place greater pressure on both the government and private sector to initiate and implement creative solutions to educate, integrate and retain a rapidly changing and diverse working population.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Conclusion

Most of the Human Resource officers in the hospitality industry do not give intensive eyeing to the demographic profile of the applicants such as

age, gender and religion as it does not affect the applicant's capability to do work well in the industry. In terms of physical appearance, the researchers found out that good grooming and hygiene play an important factor as they are the integral part of the property. Other important factors are soft competencies indicated in this study as they give the positive impact to the applicants and also benefit the hospitality firms. Work experience is a very important hiring factor for the Human Resource officers as it gives them the bird's eye-view of the applicants' capabilities to do a job well done. There is a significant relationship between the respondents' gender and the applicant's work experience. There is no significant relationship between the other profile respondents and the factors affecting fresh graduate's employability.

Recommendation

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study on the factors associated to fresh graduates' employability in the hospitality industry, the researchers recommend the following:

The researchers recommend that the Lyceum of the Philippines University-Laguna to focus on the enhancement and improvement of the curriculum so the students can improve their professional appearance specifically in terms of good hygiene and good grooming. The school must do also create interactive hands-on seminars that would improve the soft competencies through involving the students to leadership trainings and industry-related organizations to improve and elevate the students' self-confidence. Students' involvement to corporate social activities must also be noticed.

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