

# Chapter 8

## Individual Differences as Determinants of Graduate Employability in Brunei Darussalam

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### ABSTRACT

*Increasing interests on the notion of graduate employability has led to various predictors that would increase chances of employment for job seeking graduates. However, very little is known about the influence of individual determinants that may play a crucial role in enhancing their employability. Therefore, the present study aimed to explore the influence of gender, age and education on graduate employability. A cross-sectional, quantitative methodological approach was undertaken to examine the relationship between demographic factors and graduate employability. Data were collected from a sample of 324 graduates in Brunei that are registered in JobCentre Brunei. This study used parametric technique (i.e., ANOVA) to analyse the data collected. The findings indicated that there was a significant positive relationship between education and graduate employability. Meanwhile, no significant link was found for the effect of gender and age on employability among graduates. These data support existing studies that found significant role of education on graduate employability; the higher educational background obtained, the stronger employability belief one has, which would have a possible ripple effect on their job*

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*search behaviour. Furthermore, the contradicting findings found for effect of gender and age also provide a novel contribution to existing literature. Specifically, this result might be due to the contextual settings of which this study is conducted. The findings reflect a labour market in which job searchers believe their employability is determined by their competences and capabilities, rather than their gender or age.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

The term graduate employability (GE) refers to accomplishments of intelligence, skills, and personality, which would likely increase chances of job acquisition and have a successful career - subsequently benefiting the graduate, the organisation, society, and the economy (Yorke & Knight, 2006). The notion of GE has been gaining popularity attributable to the improved accessibility into higher education across the globe (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2018). A similar trend occurred in Brunei as the rate of local graduates twofold over the past ten years (1,803 graduates in 2010 to 3,625 graduates in 2019). Albeit the expansion of graduates possessing university education implies highly educated and accomplished individuals, it depreciated the value advantage of a university qualification (Tavares, 2016) and increased competition for graduate-level jobs in the labour market. Based on the report of labour force survey in 2023, the competitiveness of the Brunei labour market is relatively high, with 67.2% labour force participation rate recorded (Ministry of Finance and Economy [MOFE], 2024). The challenging socio-economic environment in Brunei, including a high unemployment rate and employment saturation, has further highlighted the importance of maintaining employability.

The recent years have witnessed the rapid changes in technology advancement, which have played a prominent role in shifting the labour market in ways that certain skills and occupations have become obsolete while new ones have emerged. This is especially noticeable in cloud computing, data analytics, cyber security and online video streaming industries, all of which have experienced phenomenal growth in the era after the COVID-19 pandemic (Garcia-Murillo et al., 2018; World Economic Forum, 2018). This rapid growth of technology development such as the increasing use of artificial intelligence (AI) or automation means that human capital is more productive. However, fears of technological unemployment emerge as AI continues to modernise the work place and may render people redundant (Bonsay et al., 2021). As a result, it has become paramount for the graduates to find means of positioning themselves in the job market for the niche given the skills they possess. In this sense, more especially in the competitive job market, graduates must readily and tactically adapt to the current and future contours of jobs, so as to enhance the chances of employment.

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