

**IMPACT OF SOFT SKILLS ON EMPLOYABILITY OF GRADUATES: SPECIAL
REFERENCE TO MANAGEMENT GRADUATES OF RAJARATA UNIVERSITY
OF SRI LANKA**

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ABSTRACT

The employability of graduates has become a critical concern in the modern job market, in which technical proficiency alone no longer ensures successful employment. Soft skills, such as communication, teamwork, problem-solving, and critical thinking, are increasingly recognized as essential competencies that complement technical knowledge and enhance job readiness. However, there is limited research on how these soft skills specifically impact management graduates' employability. This study explores the effect of soft skills on the employability of management graduates from Rajarata University of Sri Lanka, aiming to identify the competencies most valued by employers and assess graduate preparedness in these areas. A quantitative approach was used with data collected through a structured questionnaire distributed via Google Forms to 200 management graduates from various pass-out years. The sample was selected using convenience sampling. SPSS was used for the data analysis, incorporating both primary and secondary sources. The results reveal a significant positive correlation between soft skills and employability. Core skills, such as communication, teamwork, problem-solving, and critical thinking, were identified as crucial for securing employment, with graduates demonstrating advanced competencies in these areas achieving higher employment rates. Employers have also highlighted the importance of adaptability and emotional intelligence, particularly in dynamic work environments. This study identified gaps in Rajarata University's current curriculum and extracurricular activities, suggesting areas for improvement in developing these essential skills. Recommendations include integrating soft skill development into the academic curriculum, strengthening industry-academic partnerships, and offering targeted training workshops. This study emphasizes the pivotal role of soft skills in enhancing employability and offers actionable insights for educational institutions, policymakers, and employers to better prepare graduates for the evolving job market.

Keywords: Competencies, graduate employability, soft skills, state universities