

Relationship between self-efficacy, employability and career



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Testing association between emotional self-efficacy, graduate employability, and career satisfaction

Abstract

Graduate employability has had little research as there are numerous complications in defining and measuring graduate employability, resulting in a lack of research looking at its predictors and outcomes. Previous research proposed that being emotional competent improves graduate employability but this study further investigates this idea by looking at the correlation between emotional self-efficacy, self-perceived employability and career satisfaction. Working graduates (N = 60) completed measures of emotional self-efficacy, self-perceived employability and career satisfaction and data was evaluated using a multi-linear regression test. We discovered that Emotional Self-Efficacy and Career Satisfaction are useful predictors of measures of graduate Self-Perceived Employability.

Introduction

Literature suggests that graduate employability is more than just getting a job or accumulating skills and should not be confused with employment rates or be seen as a measure of institutional success or otherwise (Harvey, 2003, 2008). Yorke, (2006) define employability as a set of achievements, skills, personal attribute and understandings which make graduates more likely to gain employment and become successful in their chosen occupations that will benefit not only themselves but the workforce, community and the economy. Employability is also defined as a set of attributes, skills and

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knowledge that all labour market participants possess to ensure that they have the ability to be effective in the workplace which will be beneficial to them, their employer and the wider economy (CBI/NUS Working towards Your Future, 2011). According to Dacre-Pool and Qualter, (2013), graduate employment rates have been used as a measure of graduate employability, however they found using such strategy comes with problems as factors such as economic forces are beyond the control of the individual. Further argument states that getting a job often involves a number of variables that influence employment process itself, including the type of higher education institution attended, the mode and subject of study, age, ethnicity, gender and social class (Harvey, 2001). Accordingly, using employment rates as a measure of employability is faulty (Dacre-Pool & Qualter, 2013). Yorke and Knight, (2006) state that graduate employability resists object measurement just as with many achievements valued by society, thereby making self-evaluation to likely being the most useful way of approaching the task. Current research begun to recognise an emergence of models that attempt to account for the development of graduate employability skills which has led to the development of a number of measures, an example being the research by Rothwell and Arnold (2004; 2009) on internal and external employability skills, particularly self-perceived graduate employability. (Rothwell, Jewell & Hardie, 2009) Research on graduate employability focuses on the skills and abilities that employers consider desirable in their graduate recruits which Bridgstock, (2009) define as generic or transferable employability skills that include self-management, team working , communication and the ability to work under pressure and emotional intelligence (EI) which is considered important as one of the key

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employability related skills. Current study hypothesises that Emotional Self-Efficacy and Career Satisfaction as useful predictors of measures of graduate Self-Perceived Employability, meaning that higher scores of both ESE and Career Satisfaction will be associated with higher measures of Self-Perceived Employability.

Numerous studies examined work-related outcomes in relation to individual emotional intelligence abilities and these outcomes are found likely to impact on graduate employability and involve improved work performance, negotiation skills, effective leadership, successful team working, greater revenue generation and better customer retention in sales professionals. Evidence shows a direct link between undergraduate students with successful interviews and emotional competence. Whether or not, individuals feel confident about and motivated to use their emotional knowledge and skills, however, this has received little experiential investigation as seen in Dacre-Pool and Qualter, (2013) who discovered that individuals who score high on measures of emotional intelligence may not essentially use skills associated with this trait to enhance employability factors but this may be due to other reasons. Petrides and Furnham, (2001), stated that Emotional Self Efficacy (ESE) is an appropriate label for traits in Emotional Intelligence and that both ESE and EI are measuring similar attributes. Conversely, Kirk et al., (2008) proposed that ESE is related to EI, but cannot however be regarded as the same concept. Given example in case of EI, an individual may have the ability to read or detect emotions well in other people or how to measure their own emotions but may decide not to use none of the abilities, possibly because they are not motivated to do so or because they

lack self-efficacy in this domain (Kirk et al., 2008) as the person may not have the confidence to use EI skills. Dacre-Pool and Qualter (2013) researched whether ESE is an important factor in relation to work-related outcomes, particularly graduate employability. They discovered ESE to be associated with self-perceived employability. Rothwell and Arnold, (2007) suggested that career satisfaction relates to an individual's satisfaction with the accumulation of their career-related experiences. Employability and career satisfaction are related perceptions that are viewed by Rothwell and Arnold, (2007) as subjective career success that refers to individual's satisfaction with how well their, either past, present or future career jobs have met a range of criteria important to them.

Method

Design

A multiple linear regression test was used within subjects with criterion variable being the Self-Perceived Employability Scale (Range of scores 16-80) and two predictor variables being the Emotional Self-efficacy Scale (Range scores 28-140) and the Career Success (satisfaction) Scale. (See Appendixes 1-3)

Participants

Mature working graduates from Bournemouth University (N= 60) 28 males, (mean age = 46. 7) and 32 females, (mean age = 53. 3) were asked to complete 3 online questionnaires. (See Appendix 1- 4)

Materials

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Respondents completed the 3 online questionnaires being the Emotional Self-efficacy scale (ESES) developed by Kirk et al., (2008) followed by the Self-perceived Employability scale by Rothwell and Arnold (2004) and the Career Satisfaction Scale (see Appendix 1-3)

Procedure

An email was sent to post graduate Bournemouth University students from a wide range of courses (including computing, psychology, business studies and engineering. Participants were sent an email reminder about partaking in the study 8 days after the initial invite and 10 days prior to their participation. Before participating, participants provided their consent form to take part in the study and were then briefed and after debriefed once they completed the questionnaires. Participants were asked to respond to a Self-Perceived Employability Scale with 16 questions on a 5-point scale with anchors strongly disagree being (1) to strongly agree being (5). Participants were then asked complete an Emotional Self-efficacy scale (ESES) and were lastly asked to respond to each of the items on a 5-point scale for Career satisfaction scale, with anchors strongly disagree being (1) to strongly agree being (5) (see Appendixes 1- 3)

Results

Correlation between the two predictors or variables and Pearsons correlation was high. There may be a problem between the predictors therefore they should be used with caution also the correlation between the dependent and independent variables is strong. A multiple linear regression was undertaken to examine variance in self-perceived employability. Two predictors were

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loaded into the model using the Enter method. The model was able to explain 79 % of the sample outcome variance ($\text{Adj. } R^2 = .798$) which was found to significantly predict outcome, $F(2, 57) = 112.46, p < .001$. Both of the predictor variables significantly contributed to the model. ESES has an unstandardised weight as when the ESES increases, self-perceived employed increased ($\beta = 0.50, t = 4.261, p < .001$). Career satisfaction also had an unstandardised weight as when it increased, self-perceived employed also increased ($\beta = 0.50, t = 5.36, p < .001$). The data we used showed linearity using scatter plots and scatter plots showed data was linear (see Appendixes 5A, 5B and 6)

Discussion

Findings from the current study support the hypothesis that Emotional Self Efficacy and Career Satisfaction are useful predictors of measures of graduate Self-Perceived Employability as it was discovered that as the scores of both ESE and Career Satisfaction were higher the measures of Self-Perceived Employability also became high. This implies that beliefs concerning emotional abilities influence self-perceived employability as individuals who are more confident in their abilities to distinguish, use, understand and manage emotions, consider themselves employable. Contrariwise Kirk, Schutte and Hine, (2011) argue that despite the fact that ESE may be a feature of EI, these two are not identical, supporting evidence being from recent studies who only found small to medium correlations between ESE subscales and EI subscales.

Dacre-Pool and Qualter, (2013) suggested that individuals who score high on measures of emotional intelligence may not essentially use skills associated with this trait to enhance employability factors but this may be due to other reasons such as lack of motivation, as they lack self-efficacy in emotional intelligence (Kirk et al., 2008; Qualter, Barlow, & Stylianou, 2011). However little experiential investigation has been made about this proposal, therefore future studies can further research the significance of this prediction. Current study found ESE to have a direct effect on career satisfaction unlike in Dacre-Pool and Qualter, 2013 study who found ESE operate indirectly via employability therefore suggested that having confidence in your emotional competence does not itself bring career satisfaction but our results controversially suggest that it does in fact bring career satisfaction and cause individuals self-perceive having high scores of employable traits. However future research could further investigate these predictions as well as Dacre-Pool and Qualter's, (2013) argument that having emotional competence does not bring career satisfaction but instead it results in having better communication and social skills in workplaces and that increases feelings of perceived employability which leads to a satisfying career

In conclusion, we discovered that emotional self-efficacy is important for graduate employability and career satisfaction. This study adds to the supporting literature on graduate employability by providing evidence of predictors and outcomes that support having activities on emotional competence within the educational curriculum as improved emotional competence will enhance graduate employability, ensuring that graduates

have a better chance of securing and retaining occupations in which they can experience satisfaction and success.

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