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A Sex-Disaggregated Analysis of Competency Alignment between Employers and BS Entrepreneurship Graduates of Mariano Marcos State University

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ABSTRACT

In the ever-changing job market, aligning graduates' competencies with employers' expectations is crucial for universities to ensure their curriculum and teaching methods effectively prepare students for the workplace. This study assesses the gap between the importance of competencies and the actual performance of BS Entrepreneurship graduates as perceived by both graduates and employers. Utilizing descriptive research design, data were gathered from the employers and BS Entrepreneurship graduates. Gap analysis revealed that while there is generally good alignment between perceived importance and performance in areas such as business management, personal entrepreneurial competencies, and personal qualities/attitudes, discrepancies still exist. Notably, there is a minor misalignment in business/management competencies, where employers rate graduates' performance as meeting expectations to the optimum, while graduates self-assess their performance as exceeding expectations. The sex-disaggregated data analysis reveals that male graduates tend to overestimate their competencies, particularly in technical areas, leading to a disconnect between their self-assessment and employer expectations. In contrast, female graduates demonstrate a stronger alignment with employer perceptions, although they still have opportunities for improvement in technical skills, particularly in computer applications. These findings highlight the need for continuous curriculum and instructional improvements to better prepare graduates for the job demands.

INTRODUCTION

In the ever-evolving job market, the alignment between graduates' competencies and employers' expectations plays a central role in ensuring the university's curriculum and instructional approaches effectively prepare students with the competencies needed in the workplace.

Tran (2015) argued that the outdated and irrelevant curriculum in the higher education system has led to the ill-preparation of university graduates. Teaching methods and the absence of better career guidance in universities have caused great debate over employability, as graduates do not satisfy the needs of employers. Tran (2015) proposes that all stakeholders, including universities, graduates, employers and educational policymakers, should work together to make an effort to create mutual understanding, to collaborate and to enhance the development of graduate employability. Differences between the perceived importance of certain competencies and graduates' actual performance can lead to significant gaps, undermining the effectiveness of educational programs in preparing students for job market demands.

The research of Smith *et al.* (2019) highlights the differing priorities between graduates and employers regarding employability competencies and attributes. It also pointed out that universities should consider these differences when designing courses to better prepare graduates for the workforce.

In a study by Hodges and Burchell (2003), New Zealand employers were asked to rate the importance of various

graduate competencies. Simultaneously, they assessed the performance of new graduates in these competencies. The findings revealed a "competency gap" between perceived importance and actual performance. This gap underscores the need for cooperative education programs to align business graduate education with corporate requirements, ensuring that graduates possess the necessary skills. Specifically, employers emphasized "soft" skills, such as the ability and willingness to learn, as crucial for success in the workplace. Martinovic (2013) further emphasizes the importance of equipping business graduates with a competent skill set

This study aimed to determine the gap scores on the importance of competencies and performance of graduates as assessed by both employers and graduates along business management competencies, Personal Entrepreneurial Competencies (PECs), and personal qualities/attitudes. It also aimed to conduct a sex-disaggregated analysis of the importance of competencies and performance of male and female BS Entrepreneurship graduates as perceived by the employers and the graduates. Moreover, it aimed to determine the difference in the perception of employers and graduates on the importance of the competencies and the performance of graduates on these competencies. Lastly, it aimed to assess the implications of the sex-disaggregated data analysis for the development of targeted programs that address the unique needs and competencies of male and female graduates

The study is significant to Mariano Marcos State

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University (MMSU) as it provides a comprehensive analysis of the alignment between the competencies of BS Entrepreneurship graduates and the expectations of employers. This research serves several key purposes: to enhance educational quality: By identifying gaps in competencies, the study enables MMSU to enhance the quality of its educational programs, ensuring that they are relevant and effective in preparing students for the workforce; to strengthening industry partnerships. The findings can foster stronger relationships between MMSU and local businesses, facilitating collaboration that benefits both students and employers through internships, mentorships, and feedback mechanisms, for informed decision-making. The data-driven insights from the study will assist university administrators and faculty in making informed decisions regarding curriculum development, instructional methods, and resource allocation; and improve graduate employability. By addressing the identified gaps, MMSU can improve the employability of its graduates, thereby enhancing the university's reputation and attractiveness to prospective students.

LITERATURE REVIEW

University students lack a thorough understanding of which skills are most valued by employers (Agus *et al.*, 2011; Klibi & Oussii, 2013; Lisá *et al.*, 2019; Succi & Canovi, 2019; Thompson *et al.*, 2021; Wickramasinghe & Perera, 2010). According to Thompson *et al.* (2021), higher education institutions worldwide need to make more concerted efforts to foster relationships between students, employers, and the institutions themselves to better prepare the next generation of workers for the demands of the labor market.

Jaoko (2014) conducted a study to investigate the perceived relationship between employee academic qualifications and job performance in the Mukuru Slums Development Projects in Nairobi County. The study found that academic qualifications were perceived to have a positive relationship with job performance, concluding that academic qualifications positively correlate with employee performance.

Similarly, Sukrapi *et al.* (2014) explored the relationship between professional competence and work motivation in elementary school teacher performance. Their results indicated a significant positive relationship between professional competence and teacher performance, as well as a significant positive relationship between teachers' professional competence, work motivation, and overall performance.

The survey findings of Agus *et al.* (2011) indicate that, on average, graduates possess strong ICT skills, ethical values, and teamwork abilities. However, the gap analysis reveals that Malaysian employers still perceive graduate work skills as falling short of their expectations. Notable gaps were found in crucial skills such as decision making and problem solving, communication and interpersonal skills, thinking skills, ethical values, and work planning. Enhancing these skills is essential to improve employers'

perceptions of graduates' abilities and overall quality, thereby increasing their marketability.

The study by Sedlan Konig *et al.* (2018) underscores the disparity between employers' expectations and graduates' perceptions of factors that enhance employability. Efforts are needed to bridge this gap. Graduates should be educated about employers' expectations regarding lifelong skills rather than just immediate job readiness, as well as the importance of high-quality work placements. Universities can enhance employability through various approaches, such as revising curricula, altering pedagogical methods, developing reliable assessments of student employability at graduation, and ensuring that qualification and assessment frameworks encompass diverse and relevant learning outcomes. Recommendations from employer interviews include prioritizing employability in university strategic planning, expanding access to work placements to bolster graduates' employability competencies, and fostering genuine partnerships between universities and employers to implement initiatives that enhance graduate employability.

According to Weligamage and Siengthai (2003), there exists a disparity between the job expectations of graduates and the expectations of employers. This gap primarily arises due to deficiencies in training graduates in crucial skills such as communication, leadership, decision-making, collaboration, arbitration, and problem-solving. Moreover, there are opportunities for enhancement in areas such as motivation, learning, organization, scheduling, and understanding. The main factors contributing to this gap can be attributed to inflexibility and reluctance.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Design

This study utilized the descriptive research design to describe and compare the perceptions of graduates and employers on the level of importance of competencies and the extent of performance of BS Entrepreneurship graduates along business management, personal entrepreneurial competencies, and personal qualities/attitudes.

Data Gathering Method

Ethical protocols were strictly observed, beginning with formal approval from the University Research Ethics Review Board (URERB). Data were gathered from BS Entrepreneurship graduates and their respective employers.

Data Gathering Method

Data was collected using the structured questionnaire. The instrument measured the self-assessment of graduates and the evaluation of employers regarding the perceived importance and the performance of graduates across the four competencies using a Likert scale.

Sampling

Using purposive sampling, the study included 30

BS Entrepreneurship graduates and 30 immediate supervisors or senior-level staff who evaluated their performance, resulting in a total of 60 respondents.

Data Analysis

Mean scores were calculated to determine the level of importance and performance. A gap score was computed for each competency by subtracting the performance score from the importance score. The gap scores were interpreted using the scale adopted from Noel-Levits (2008):

Gap Score & Interpretation

1.00 and above-Performance does not meet expectations (PDE)
 0.51 – 0.99-Performance slightly meets expectations (PSE)

0.50 – 0-Performance meets expectations to the optimum (PE)
 Negative score-Performance exceeds expectations (PEE)
 All analyses were conducted with sex-disaggregated data to identify gender-specific trends. A t-test was used to determine if differences between employer and graduate perceptions were statistically significant ($p < 0.05$).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section may be divided into subheadings or may be combined. A combined Results and Discussion section is often appropriate. This should explore the significance of the results of the work, don't repeat them. Avoid extensive citations and discussion of published literature only; instead discuss recent literature for comparing your work to highlight the novelty of the work in view of recent development and challenges in the field.

Table 1: Gap scores on the Importance of Competencies and Performance of Graduates between Employers and Graduates along business management competencies.

Indicators	Sex	Employers				Graduates			
		I	P	GS	DI	I	P	GS	DI
Business management skills	Male	4.50	4.13	0.38	PE	4.38	4.38	0.00	PE
	Female	4.44	4.25	0.19	PE	4.44	4.31	0.13	PE
	Total	4.46	4.21	0.25	PE	4.42	4.33	0.08	PE
Teamwork and leadership skills	Male	4.25	4.25	0.00	PE	4.50	4.38	0.13	PE
	Female	4.50	4.31	0.19	PE	4.44	4.31	0.13	PE
	Total	4.42	4.29	0.13	PE	4.46	4.33	0.13	PE
Communication and listening	Male	4.63	4.63	0.00	PE	4.50	4.38	0.13	PE
	Female	4.50	4.31	0.19	PE	4.50	4.31	0.19	PE
	Total	4.54	4.42	0.13	PE	4.50	4.33	0.17	PE
Customer service skills	Male	4.75	4.63	0.13	PE	4.38	4.38	0.00	PE
	Female	4.31	4.13	0.19	PE	4.50	4.25	0.25	PE
	Total	4.46	4.29	0.17	PE	4.46	4.29	0.17	PE
Financial skills	Male	4.25	4.13	0.13	PE	4.38	4.38	0.00	PE
	Female	4.38	4.25	0.13	PE	4.44	4.25	0.19	PE
	Total	4.33	4.21	0.13	PE	4.42	4.29	0.13	PE
Analytical and problem-solving skills	Male	4.38	4.25	0.13	PE	4.38	4.38	0.00	PE
	Female	4.44	4.25	0.19	PE	4.44	4.31	0.13	PE
	Total	4.42	4.25	0.17	PE	4.42	4.33	0.08	PE
Strategic thinking and planning skill	Male	4.50	4.38	0.13	PE	4.38	4.50	-0.13	PEE
	Female	4.50	4.31	0.19	PE	4.44	4.31	0.13	PE
	Total	4.50	4.33	0.17	PE	4.42	4.38	0.04	PE
Technical skills	Male	4.50	4.38	0.13	PE	4.38	4.50	-0.13	PEE
	Female	4.38	4.25	0.13	PE	4.44	4.31	0.13	PE
	Total	4.42	4.29	0.13	PE	4.42	4.38	0.04	PE
Time management skills	Male	4.50	4.38	0.13	PE	4.38	4.50	-0.13	PEE
	Female	4.50	4.38	0.13	PE	4.44	4.31	0.13	PE
	Total	4.50	4.38	0.13	PE	4.42	4.38	0.04	PE
Organizational skills	Male	4.75	4.50	0.25	PE	4.38	4.50	-0.13	PEE
	Female	4.63	4.31	0.31	PE	4.50	4.38	0.13	PE
	Total	4.67	4.38	0.29	PE	4.46	4.42	0.04	PE

Branding, marketing and networking skills	Male	4.50	4.25	0.25	PE	4.25	4.50	-0.25	PEE
	Female	4.38	4.13	0.25	PE	4.50	4.31	0.19	PE
	Total	4.42	4.17	0.25	PE	4.42	4.38	0.04	PE
Overall Mean/Gap Scores	Male	4.50	4.35	0.15	PE	4.39	4.43	-0.05	PEE
	Female	4.45	4.26	0.19	PE	4.46	4.31	0.15	PE
	Total	4.47	4.29	0.17	PE	4.44	4.35	0.09	PE

The gap scores on the importance of competencies and performance of graduates by the graduates and employers in terms of business management competencies are shown in Table 1.

Under employers, the overall gap score of 0.17 indicates that performance meets the expectation to the optimum. This suggests that employers find the competencies possessed by graduates to be in line with what is required for successful performance in the workplace.

Under the graduates, the overall gap score of 0.09 indicates that their performance meets the expectations to the optimum. This suggests that graduates recognize the importance of these competencies in the workplace and perform well to meet the expectations set by employers. This implies that the business management competencies the graduates possess are aligned with the current industry requirements and trends.

Both the employers and graduates have positive total gap scores described as performance meets the expectations to the optimum. This implies that employers recognize that graduates are performing at a level that aligns well with the expected competencies and the graduates are effectively utilizing their skills and knowledge in the workplace.

As to the Sex-disaggregated data, male graduates have an overall gap score of 0.15 under employers indicating that performance meets the expectations to the optimum. There is a negative gap score of -0.05 under the graduates which is interpreted as performance exceeds the expectations. The discrepancy between the perceptions of male graduates and employers suggests a misalignment in how competencies are perceived. The

discrepancy may be due to differing perspectives on skill proficiency and self-assessment. The positive gap score from employers indicates that employers believe male graduates are meeting the expectations in business management competencies while the negative gap score from male graduates suggests that they perceive their own performance in these competencies to be higher than the expectations.

Specifically, under employers, all male graduates have positive gap scores which is interpreted as performance meets the expectations to the optimum. On the other hand, self-assessment of male graduates resulted in five out of eleven indicators being higher in performance than importance. These resulted to negative gap scores which are described as performance exceeds the expectations. These items are “Strategic thinking and planning skills”, “Technical skills”, “Time management skills”, “Organizational skills”, and “Branding, marketing and networking skills”.

For the female graduates, the overall gap scores of 0.19 (employers) and 0.15 (graduates) are described as performance meets the expectations to the optimum. This indicates the alignment of importance of competencies and the actual performance of graduates in these competencies.

Specifically, all the indicators y=under both employers and graduates have positive gap scores which indicates that performance meets expectations to the optimum. This means that there is alignment of the importance of the competencies and performance of female graduates by both employers and graduates.

Table 2 presents the gap scores on the importance

Table 2: Gap Scores on the Importance of Competencies and Performance of Graduates between Employers and Graduates along Personal Entrepreneurial Competencies (PECs)

Indicators	Sex	Employers				Graduates			
		I	P	GS	DI	I	P	GS	DI
Opportunity seeking	Male	4.50	4.50	0.00	PE	4.13	4.25	-0.13	PEE
	Female	4.19	3.88	0.31	PE	4.50	4.31	0.19	PE
	Total	4.29	4.08	0.21	PE	4.38	4.29	0.08	PE
Commitment to the work contract	Male	4.50	4.75	-0.25	PEE	4.13	4.25	-0.13	PEE
	Female	4.69	4.38	0.31	PE	4.56	4.38	0.19	PE
	Total	4.63	4.50	0.13	PE	4.42	4.33	0.08	PE
Persistence	Male	4.63	4.75	-0.13	PEE	4.13	4.13	0.00	PE
	Female	4.44	4.31	0.13	PE	4.56	4.38	0.19	PE
	Total	4.50	4.46	0.04	PE	4.42	4.29	0.13	PE

Risk taking	Male	4.75	4.88	-0.13	PEE	4.13	4.13	0.00	PE
	Female	4.25	4.06	0.19	PE	4.56	4.31	0.25	PE
	Total	4.42	4.33	0.08	PE	4.42	4.25	0.17	PE
Demand for efficiency and quality	Male	4.63	4.63	0.00	PE	4.13	4.25	-0.13	PEE
	Female	4.50	4.25	0.25	PE	4.56	4.31	0.25	PE
	Total	4.54	4.38	0.17	PE	4.42	4.29	0.13	PE
Goal setting	Male	4.63	4.50	0.13	PE	4.25	4.13	0.13	PE
	Female	4.50	4.25	0.25	PE	4.56	4.31	0.25	PE
	Total	4.54	4.33	0.21	PE	4.46	4.25	0.21	PE
Information seeking	Male	4.63	4.63	0.00	PE	4.13	4.25	-0.13	PEE
	Female	4.31	4.06	0.25	PE	4.56	4.31	0.25	PE
	Total	4.42	4.25	0.17	PE	4.42	4.29	0.13	PE
Systematic planning and monitoring	Male	4.38	4.38	0.00	PE	4.13	4.13	0.00	PE
	Female	4.44	4.19	0.25	PE	4.56	4.31	0.25	PE
	Total	4.42	4.25	0.17	PE	4.42	4.25	0.17	PE
Persuasion and networking	Male	4.63	4.88	-0.25	PEE	4.13	4.25	-0.13	PEE
	Female	4.19	3.94	0.25	PE	4.56	4.38	0.19	PE
	Total	4.33	4.25	0.08	PE	4.42	4.33	0.08	PE
Self-confidence	Male	4.75	4.63	0.13	PE	4.25	4.38	-0.13	PEE
	Female	4.50	4.19	0.31	PE	4.56	4.31	0.25	PE
	Total	4.58	4.33	0.25	PE	4.46	4.33	0.13	PE
Overall Mean/Gap Scores	Male	4.60	4.65	-0.05	PEE	4.15	4.21	-0.06	PEE
	Female	4.40	4.15	0.25	PE	4.56	4.33	0.23	PE
	Total	4.47	4.32	0.15	PE	4.42	4.29	0.13	PE

of competencies and performance of graduates as perceived by the graduates and employers along Personal Entrepreneurial Competencies (PECs).

The overall gap score of 0.15 indicates that employers perceive the performance of graduates as meeting their expectations to the optimum level. This suggests that employers find the competencies possessed by graduates to be in line with what is required for successful performance in the workplace.

The overall gap score of 0.13 suggests that graduates perceive their own performance as meeting the expectations to the optimum level. Graduates are aware of the importance of the competencies required in the workplace and are actively working towards meeting the expectations set by employers.

The total gap scores on both employers and graduates in all the indicators fall under the category performance meets expectations to the optimum. This indicates a high level of alignment in understanding the importance of competencies and the actual performance outcomes.

As to the sex-disaggregated data, male graduates have a negative overall gap score of -0.05 (employers) and -0.06 (graduates) which indicates that performance exceeds expectations along PECs. This suggests that male graduates possess entrepreneurial skills that align well with employers.

Specifically, under employers, two out of ten indicators which are “persistence” and “Risk-taking” have negative

gap scores which are described as performance exceeds the expectations. While under graduates, four out of ten indicators, “opportunity seeking”, “Demand for efficiency and quality”, “information seeking”, and “Self-confidence”, have negative gap scores which is described as performance exceeds the expectations.

Employers’ gap scores perceive performance as meeting expectations, while male graduates perceive their performance as exceeding expectations for four indicators. These are “Opportunity Seeking”, “Demand for efficiency and quality”, “Information seeking” and “Self-confidence”. There is a discrepancy in the perception between male graduates and employers, with male graduates having higher self-perception. This difference may indicate a need for male graduates to align their self-perception with employer expectations. With two indicators “persistence” and “risk-taking”, employers perceive performance as exceeding expectations, while male graduates perceive their performance as meeting expectations to the optimum.

The female graduates gap scores are consistent with that of the employers’ where all the indicators are described as performance meets the expectations to the optimum. This indicates that female graduates perception of the importance and their performance on these competencies are more aligned with employer perceptions.

The overall gap between male and female graduates indicates a difference in how their performance is

Table 3: Gap scores on the importance of competencies and performance of graduates between Employers and Graduates along personal qualities/attitudes.

Indicators	Sex	Employers				Graduates			
		I	P	GS	DI	I	P	GS	DI
Flexibility and adaptability	Male	4.63	4.75	-0.13	PEE	4.25	4.25	0.00	PE
	Female	4.38	4.13	0.25	PE	4.56	4.50	0.06	PE
	Total	4.46	4.33	0.13	PE	4.46	4.42	0.04	PE
Creativity	Male	4.25	4.38	-0.13	PEE	4.13	4.25	-0.13	PEE
	Female	4.50	4.19	0.31	PE	4.56	4.38	0.19	PE
	Total	4.42	4.25	0.17	PE	4.42	4.33	0.08	PE
Empathy, Prudence and Temperance	Male	4.63	4.50	0.13	PE	4.13	4.25	-0.13	PEE
	Female	4.56	4.13	0.44	PE	4.56	4.56	0.00	PE
	Total	4.58	4.25	0.33	PE	4.42	4.46	-0.04	PEE
Reliability	Male	4.63	4.50	0.13	PE	4.13	4.25	-0.13	PEE
	Female	4.56	4.19	0.38	PE	4.63	4.44	0.19	PE
	Total	4.58	4.29	0.29	PE	4.46	4.38	0.08	PE
Integrity	Male	4.50	4.88	-0.38	PEE	4.13	4.25	-0.13	PEE
	Female	4.56	4.19	0.38	PE	4.63	4.50	0.13	PE
	Total	4.54	4.42	0.13	PE	4.46	4.42	0.04	PE
Self-discipline	Male	4.75	4.88	-0.13	PEE	4.13	4.25	-0.13	PEE
	Female	4.56	4.31	0.25	PE	4.63	4.56	0.06	PE
	Total	4.63	4.50	0.13	PE	4.46	4.46	0.00	PE
Optimism towards work	Male	4.63	4.50	0.13	PE	4.13	4.25	-0.13	PEE
	Female	4.56	4.25	0.31	PE	4.63	4.56	0.06	PE
	Total	4.58	4.33	0.25	PE	4.46	4.46	0.00	PE
Pro-activeness	Male	4.75	4.50	0.25	PE	4.13	4.25	-0.13	PEE
	Female	4.44	4.19	0.25	PE	4.50	4.38	0.13	PE
	Total	4.54	4.29	0.25	PE	4.38	4.33	0.04	PE
Productivity	Male	4.50	4.63	-0.13	PEE	4.13	4.25	-0.13	PEE
	Female	4.56	4.19	0.38	PE	4.56	4.56	0.00	PE
	Total	4.54	4.33	0.21	PE	4.42	4.46	-0.04	PEE
Initiative	Male	4.75	4.63	0.13	PE	4.13	4.25	-0.13	PEE
	Female	4.56	4.13	0.44	PE	4.56	4.50	0.06	PE
	Total	4.63	4.29	0.33	PE	4.42	4.42	0.00	PE
Accountability	Male	4.50	4.63	-0.13	PEE	4.13	4.25	-0.13	PEE
	Female	4.50	4.19	0.31	PE	4.63	4.50	0.13	PE
	Total	4.50	4.33	0.17	PE	4.46	4.42	0.04	PE
Leadership	Male	4.50	4.50	0.00	PE	4.13	4.25	-0.13	PEE
	Female	4.50	4.19	0.31	PE	4.56	4.44	0.13	PE
	Total	4.50	4.29	0.21	PE	4.42	4.38	0.04	PE
Professionalism	Male	4.63	4.75	-0.13	PEE	4.13	4.25	-0.13	PEE
	Female	4.56	4.38	0.19	PE	4.63	4.56	0.06	PE
	Total	4.58	4.50	0.08	PE	4.46	4.46	0.00	PE
Civic Responsibility	Male	4.63	4.63	0.00	PE	4.13	4.25	-0.13	PEE
	Female	4.44	4.19	0.25	PE	4.56	4.50	0.06	PE
	Total	4.50	4.33	0.17	PE	4.42	4.42	0.00	PE

Environmental and Global Awareness	Male	4.38	4.75	-0.38	PEE	4.13	4.25	-0.13	PEE
	Female	4.38	4.06	0.31	PE	4.63	4.56	0.06	PE
	Total	4.38	4.29	0.08	PE	4.46	4.46	0.00	PE
Professional Skepticism	Male	4.75	4.50	0.25	PE	4.13	4.25	-0.13	PEE
	Female	4.56	4.19	0.38	PE	4.63	4.50	0.13	PE
	Total	4.63	4.29	0.33	PE	4.46	4.42	0.04	PE
Risk Orientation Mindset	Male	4.75	4.63	0.13	PE	4.13	4.25	-0.13	PEE
	Female	4.44	4.19	0.25	PE	4.63	4.50	0.13	PE
	Total	4.54	4.33	0.21	PE	4.46	4.42	0.04	PE
Resilience	Male	4.63	4.63	0.00	PE	4.13	4.25	-0.13	PEE
	Female	4.56	4.25	0.31	PE	4.63	4.56	0.06	PE
	Total	4.58	4.38	0.21	PE	4.46	4.46	0.00	PE
Overall Mean/Gap Scores	Male	4.60	4.62	-0.02	PEE	4.13	4.25	-0.12	PEE
	Female	4.51	4.19	0.32	PE	4.59	4.50	0.09	PE
	Total	4.54	4.34	0.20	PE	4.44	4.42	0.02	PE

perceived in the assessed competencies. The discrepancy in overall gap scores between male and female graduates may reflect gender-based differences in the demonstration of the PECs.

Table 3 shows the Gap scores on the importance of competencies and performance of graduates between Employers and Graduates along personal qualities/attitudes.

The gap score of 0.20 under employers suggests that graduates performance meets the expectations. The alignment of employer expectations with the perceived performance of graduates indicates a positive outcome where graduates are meeting the desired standards set by employers.

A gap score of 0.02 under graduates suggests that they perceive their performance in personal qualities/attitudes meets the expectations of employers. This indicates that graduates believe they are performing at a level that aligns well with what employers expect from them.

The total gap scores on both employers and graduates in the indicators fall under the category performance meets expectations to the optimum except for two indicators “Empathy, Prudence and Temperance” and “Productivity”. This indicates differing perspectives on the importance and performance of these competencies. As to the sex-disaggregated data, male graduates have a negative overall gap score of -0.02 (employers) and -0.12 (graduates) which indicates that performance exceeds expectations along personal quality/attitudes. This suggests that male graduates possess personal qualities/attitudes that align well with employers.

Specifically, male graduates’ gap score of the indicator “flexibility and adaptability” is interpreted as performance exceeds the expectations by the employers while the male graduate’s self-perception is performance meets expectations to the optimum. On the other hand, eleven out of 18 indicators male graduates perceive their skills and competencies to be higher than what employers

Table 4: Summary of ratings of the gap scores between employers and graduates

Indicators	Sex	Employers				Graduates			
		I	P	GS	DI	I	P	GS	DI
Business/Management	Male	4.50	4.35	0.15	PE	4.39	4.43	-0.05	PEE
	Female	4.45	4.26	0.19	PE	4.46	4.31	0.15	PE
	Total	4.47	4.29	0.17	PE	4.44	4.35	0.09	PE
Personal Entrepreneurial Competencies (PECs)	Male	4.60	4.65	-0.05	PEE	4.15	4.21	-0.06	PEE
	Female	4.40	4.15	0.25	PE	4.56	4.33	0.23	PE
	Total	4.47	4.32	0.15	PE	4.42	4.29	0.13	PE
Personal Qualities/Attitudes	Male	4.60	4.62	-0.02	PEE	4.13	4.25	-0.12	PEE
	Female	4.51	4.19	0.32	PE	4.59	4.50	0.09	PE
	Total	4.54	4.34	0.20	PE	4.44	4.42	0.02	PE
Overall Mean/Gap Scores	Male	4.57	4.54	0.03	PE	4.22	4.30	-0.07	PEE
	Female	4.45	4.20	0.25	PE	4.54	4.38	0.16	PE
	Total	4.50	4.35	0.15	PE	4.39	4.33	0.06	PE

perceive, there is a risk of overestimation of their abilities. Male graduates may believe they are more proficient in certain areas than they actually are, which can lead to potential gaps in performance and meeting employer expectations.

Female graduates' positive gap scores of 0.32 (employers) and 0.09 (graduates) described as performance meets the expectations to the optimum. This suggests that female graduates possess personal qualities/attitudes that align well with employers.

The female graduates' gap scores are consistent with that of the employers' where all the indicators are described as performance meets the expectations to the optimum. This indicates that female graduates' perception of the importance and their performance on these competencies are more aligned with employer perceptions.

Under employers, the gap score of 0.15 suggests that the performance of graduates aligns closely with the expectations of employers. This indicates that graduates are meeting the required competencies and skills as perceived by employers.

Under the graduates, the gap score of 0.06 suggests that graduates' performance aligns closely with the expectations set by employers. This indicates that graduates are meeting the required standards and competencies as perceived by employers.

The total gap scores on both employers and graduates in all the indicators fall under the category performance meets expectations to the optimum. This indicates a high level of alignment in understanding the importance of the competencies and the actual performance outcomes. As to the sex-disaggregated data, the total gap scores

of the male graduates are 0.03 (employers) and -0.07 (graduates). The differing gap scores highlight a misalignment in perception between employers and male graduates regarding performance levels.

Specifically, two out of three indicators have negative gap scores from the employer's perspective which is described as performance exceeding expectations. These indicators are "Personal Entrepreneurial Competencies" and "Personal qualities/attitudes". It indicates a good level of alignment between the perceived importance of competencies and the actual performance of graduates. This suggests that graduates are meeting the expectations set by employers in terms of the identified indicators.

Moreover, there is a discrepancy in the indicator Business/Management in which the gap score under employers is 0.15 described as performance meets expectations to the optimum while the negative gap score of -0.05 under graduates which is described as performance exceeds expectations. This misalignment could suggest that male graduates may have a higher self-assessment of their performance compared to what employers perceive.

For female graduates, the total gap scores of 0.25 (employers) and 0.16 (graduates) fall under the category of performance meets the expectations to the optimum. This suggests that female graduates possess competencies that align well with employers.

The female graduates' gap scores are consistent with that of the employers' where all the indicators are described as performance meets the expectations to the optimum. This indicates that female graduates' perception of the importance and their performance on these competencies are more aligned with employer perceptions.

Table 5: Difference in the perception of employers and graduates on the importance of competencies and performance of graduates.

Competencies	Factors	p-value
Specialized Skills	Importance	0.964
	Performance	0.886
PECs	Importance	0.527
	Performance	0.563
Personal Qualities/Attitudes	Importance	0.741
	Performance	0.312

* $p < 0.05$ - significant

Analysis of the difference between employers and graduates in terms of the importance of the competencies and the performance of graduates on these competencies showed no statistically significant difference. This implies that there is a strong alignment between employer and graduate perceptions. This alignment is crucial for ensuring that educational programs effectively prepare graduates for the demands of the job market

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions are drawn:

Both male and female graduates perceive their skills and competencies to meet or exceed employer expectations. This alignment indicates that graduates possess the competencies required for successful performance in the workplace.

The study explicitly identifies gaps in certain competencies, particularly in business management and PECs, where the performance of graduates does not fully align with employer expectations.

Male graduates tend to overestimate their skills compared to employer perceptions, which may lead to gaps in performance. In contrast, female graduates' perceptions

align well with employer expectations, indicating a better understanding of required competencies.

Female graduates consistently perceive the importance of competencies in line with employers, suggesting a strong alignment in understanding the required skills for successful performance.

Both employers and graduates, especially female graduates, show positive gap scores across various competencies, indicating that performance meets expectations to the optimum level.

There is alignment between employers' and graduates perceptions regarding the importance of competencies and the performance of graduates.

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