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# DECODING EMPLOYABILITY IN THE 21ST CENTURY: A BIBLIOMETRIC ANALYSIS OF SKILLS, ADAPTABILITY, AND INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE

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## ABSTRACT

*This bibliometric analysis will examine contemporary research trends on employability, primarily on the role of higher education in preparing graduates for a globalized and dynamic environment. Recent studies show how employability is becoming crucial, relevant, and significant. This essentially indicates that a set of skills is required which is not merely technical. This also includes soft skills and intercultural skills and the ability to be adaptable. Educational institutions have been identified as helping students cultivate these traits to ensure effective navigation of professional complexities. Employers also consider communications and critical thinking to be one of the key attributes and the curriculum should be designed according to the demands. A third emerging theme, intercultural competence, was identified as essential for collaborative work in a globalized workplace. Important findings of the study demonstrate intercultural skills can improve employability, particularly in MNCs, and enhance graduates' readiness for differences. Furthermore, creative efforts in experiential learning emphasize the significance of implementing real-time projects in education. These various studies show that practical learning brings about a better understanding of the workplace, thus enhancing student employability. This analysis explains the need of the employability research undertaken. It also highlights strategic importance of education for skills to bring academia and industry to a common platform. Analysis of the citation and the keyword trend in the study shows that there is a shift towards education which does not focus merely on job-oriented skills but also on soft and applicable skills.*

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**KEYWORDS:** Employability, Skills.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

A notable increase in attention by scholars in recent years has been on activity and prospects of employability. Particularly, bibliometric studies which works on examining patterns and finding trends within academic publications have been opted increasingly often by researchers. Further, this bibliometric study article looks at employing employability from 2010 to 2020 in the Scopus database. The notion of employability includes those skillsets and qualities along with competencies that make such graduates desirable in the job market. As the world has become globalized over the years along with the industry 4.0 a lot more focus is being given to the educational institutions for preparing their graduates for the world of work. Employability studies prove beneficial in discussing how higher education prepares one for the job. This point has been well established by Gafni et al. (2023) and Makame & Fulgence (2024) who talk about universities improving relevant competencies for a job.

The bibliometric analysis of employability research, in one of its key focus areas, tries to learn skillsets required by employer. Recent studies including McAleer et al. (2024) indicate that graduates' soft skills - Arlett et al. and others - including communication, adaptability and critical thinking, are mentioned in the literature as essential to employability. Like the first paper, Gafni et al. (2023) also suggest that technical and interpersonal skills must be integrated in the higher education programs. Through bibliometric data, we can trace back how much these soft skills have evolved as critical themes in employability research, showing how academia keeps pace with employer needs and demand.

The literature on employability discusses one more issue, namely intercultural competence (Kailas and Bhatt 2024, ). As workplaces continue to witness enhanced diversity and interconnectedness, the bibliometric trends in employability research suggests that intercultural skills are still undervalued as an important element for effective collaboration in a global environment. Following the citations and keyword frequencies on this topic helps one to see the academic emphasis on intercultural readiness for the graduate employability in multinational environments.

Bibliometric analysis also shows the focus shifting towards experiential learning and customized training programs as strategies for enhancing employability. Koris et al. (2024) and Makame & Fulgence (2024) have made notable contributions in

this regard. The evidence presented indicates that curriculum reforms and better exposure to actual experiences matter much more to prepare students for the roles they will take on. Researchers can assess the significance of experiential learning on employability research through examining citation networks and co-authorship patterns, and the alignment of various industry requirements as well.

This analysis undertakes a bibliometric analysis to give us a broad picture of employability research scenario. It seeks to find the underlying trends in the valued skills as well as educational strategies over time. Through an analysis of citation data, publication trends and co-citation relations, the study will throw much needed light on the evolution of employability as a research domain and will shed more light on its relevance to education.

### 1.1 Defining Employability Skills

A whole set of things and knowing which can help you to get and sustain a job is known as employability skills (Harvey, 2001). According to Harvey (2001) in his review of employer expectations, as the workforce changes they value more adaptability and problem-solving, critical thinking will be valued more by employers.

### 1.2 Importance of Education and Training

Education systems have started to play a key role in developing employability skills. For instance, according to Bottino & Cutugno (2001) base skills which can be achieved through technology are considered essential to be employed. Similarly, Zulauf (2006) elaborated on higher teaching practices which directly related to employability and an important consideration for employability to enhance the readiness of students for workforce demand.

### 1.3 Integration of Employability Skills in Higher Education

It is a common practice in higher education institutions to embed skills useful for employment in programmes which relate to disciplines such as engineering and accounting. Masters (2006) recommended the introduction of an Australian Certificate of Education to fill existing skill gaps between graduates. Furthermore, Markes (2006) examines the importance of employability skills being used in engineering, which are highlighted as critical and worth learning to improve job readiness. Jackson (2013) emphasized also in embedding employability skills in the accounting curricula to better equip students for the same.

### **1.4 Experiential Learning as a Tool for Skill Development**

Experiential learning is identified as one of the key factors for enhancing employability skills. According to Tymon (2013), soft skills such as communication and teamwork are better learned in practical settings rather than through textbooks. Equally, we see that Gbadamosi et al (2015) also opined that career readiness of business graduates is quite reliant on experiential learning as well as field experiences. This allows students to apply theoretical knowledge in real-world settings and excel in their task.

### **1.5 Global Perspectives and Policy Implications**

The requirement of the employability skills are beyond national boundaries. International exposure usually enhances the capabilities of the graduates (Garg & Punjani, 2025). According to Crossman and Clarke (2009), international experience boosts employability. It is claimed that the valuable skills gained from overseas students help to make their skill set more competitive. In addition, Lin, Sweet, & Anisef (2003) investigated the idea that higher education policies can influence the employability of graduates. They believed that when initiatives are driven by policy, there is a much greater chance of acquiring skills by students.

### **1.6. Work-Integrated Learning and Career Readiness**

Work-integrated learning (WIL) has become part of one's employability and a pathway for students to learn skills that are relevant to the workplace. According to Clarke (2018) WIL is an important approach which helps in career readiness and the learning approach bridges the gap found in classroom and employment. In similar vein Bridgstock (2009) suggests that long-term employability is enhanced by skills that allow individuals to manage their careers; this indicates the practical value of skills development in the workplace.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

According to a study done by Andrews and Higson (2008), graduate employability across several EU countries varies because of the different demands and priorities of employers. The study duly noted that colleges and universities must align graduate skills with regional economic needs more to enhance employability of graduates. Moreover, according to the authors, cultural, economic and sectoral

differences should be accounted for in establishing employability standards for students across regions. Moreover, harmonizing outcomes of graduates is a challenge.

Asonitou (2015) examined the acquisition of skills in accounting education concerning the role of practical experiential learning. According to Asonitou, the integration of practical activities in the curriculum increases students' employability, which has proven to be quite successful. The study recommend the production of theoretical knowledge as best as possible, so as integrate them into real-life practice. This should be a must, as thing help to prepare students for the long-term vision.

Bhattacharjee et al. (2024) employed a fuzzy AHP-TOPSIS model for measuring employability from the stakeholder perspectives. It gave a full picture of both employer and student institutional expectations. According to the study, it is difficult to bring together all these different stakeholders, which is why collaborative approaches for enhancing employability outcomes must be stressed.

Who wrote in 2001 Bottino Cutugno? about technology for the development of basic skills for workability (p.14). The authors stated that the implementation of digital technologies in education enhances the foundational competencies the ability to solve problems and adaptability. This research paved the way for further explorations of technology and skills modernisation.

Bridgstock (2009) emphasizes that career management skills are essential for ongoing employability and thus, career success. Bridgstock advocated for a scheme for embedding these skills in higher education that included self-reflection, networking and adaptability. The report underscored the need for continuous learning in a changing job marketplace.

As Clarke (2018) argues, work-integrated learning (WIL) has played an important role in the conceptualisation of graduate employability. According to research, practical experience during education like internships and placements were found to be essential for absorbing academic knowledge and industry demands. It urged for more structured WIL programs.

Crossman and Clarke (2009) conducted a study on foreign experiences and graduate employability. The research showed that students who study or work abroad become aware of and adapt to cultures. On the globalized sectors of economy this raised employability in particular.

Fernández-March (2006) discussed engineering curriculum design and pitched an approach to

embedding employability skills. Research suggests that aligning technical education to industrial needs enhances the employability of the students. The curriculum must be updated regularly also so that it does not become outdated.

Finch et al. (2013) studied what employers expect from their employees in a variety of occupations. Communication and teamwork were found to be universal employability skills across all sectors. The authors highlighted the importance of integrating competencies into higher education curricula. According to this study, the skills of graduates do not match with the job requirement.

Gafni et al. (2023) studied Information Systems capstone projects as means for acquiring employability skills. Hands-on engagement such as solving real-life problems was found essential for skill development. According to the study, experiential learning is helpful to bridge the gap between theory and practice.

Gbadamosi et al. (2015) emphasise the link between the employability of business graduates' career and experiential learning opportunities. The authors emphasized how internships, case studies, and live projects help develop the necessary skills as required by employers. The findings showed these practises improved students' transition into the labour market.

Harvey remarked in 2001 that there is a mismatch between employer expectations and graduate attributes. Harvey said, there has been a shift in many sectors that is favouring soft skills more. The research paper urged for improved alignment of colleges and jobs in the workplace.

The paper by Hinchcliffe and Jolly (2011) discusses the graduate identity and employability outcomes. The authors argued that self-awareness in terms of knowing one's strengths and weakness was an important factor for getting hired. Integrating identity-building activities into education was their argument.

According to a study by Jackson in 2013 on accounting graduates, employability skill should be imbibed in the curriculum. Jackson explained that communication, teamwork and doing what is right matter. According to the findings, the accounting education must have a holistic approach with human skills.

Kailas & Bhatt (2024) examined intercultural competence and task-based learning as an employability enhancer among technical students. The research showed that participation in culturally diverse task-oriented projects helps enhance collaboration and problem-solving skills that are

valued in a globalized world.

Koris et al. (2024) explored the potential of transnational online collaboration to develop employability skills. When students engage in cross-border teamwork in a virtual context, they enhance their adaptability, communication, and technological skills. The research indicated the essentialness of said skills in contemporary workplaces.

Lin and others, in 2003, studied the effect of higher education policy on the employability of graduates. Authors found policies driven initiatives disparity into skill development with some sectors being focused on more than the others. They urged for more balanced and inclusive educational policies.

Makame & Fulgence (2023) investigated the means to improve employability in Tanzanian vocational training institutions. Leveraging targeted practices, such as competency-based education and partnerships, is critical to improve graduate outcomes, the research shows. The training reflects the need of the local labor market, it stated.

Research on engineering education - Markes (2006): This study highlights the essentialness of employability skills such as problem solving and teamwork. Marks contended that such skills should be integrated into the technical curriculum. The findings showed this approach improved graduate skills for work.

Masters (2006) proposed a certificate of education for Australia in order to redress skill shortages in the workforce. The masters stressed the need for standardizing the employability skills across the educational system. A holistic approach can help develop a common framework which integrates education and employment.

McAleer et al. (2024) explored job ads targeting early-career physiotherapists in the English-speaking world to find out the skills that employers value. The study recommended the harmonization of physiotherapy curricula with these expectations on employability.

Nidogon and colleagues (2024) investigated how student work relates to academic performance. As stated in the findings, work experience in this area helps learning and placements. The authors with work-study programs, effortlessly integrated value.

This study conducted by Oppong & Segbenya (2024) assessed managerial skill needs in Ghana through group brainstorming techniques. Sector-specific competencies, such as strategic planning and decision making, have been identified by the authors as employability-related competencies. The study recommended customized training programs to tackle these challenges.

According to Petersen et al. (2024), their study introduces the GES app for bridging the employability skill gap between students, staff and employers. The app provided suggestions and skills and catered to different stakeholders. The authors strongly highlighted its scalability as a solution for employability problems.

Podder et al. (2024) proposed a conceptual framework for analysing the impact of blended education on employability. The results underlined the adaptability and relevance of hybrid learning methods in promoting skills that are sought in workplace contexts. Blended education should widely be adapted, the study said.

Saunders & Zuzel (2010) analysed engineering employers' expectations, revealing a gap between the skill of graduates and the industry. The authors brought up that industry partnerships and internships could help close this gap by making curriculum grounded.

Tomlinson (2017) emphasized the importance of social capital in employability, stressing that your network is your net worth. Tomlinson discovered that graduates who had strong networks were more successful in getting and progressing in jobs. The importance of networking skills development of students\* in education has been highlighted in the study.

In this study, Tymon (2013) reviewed employability skill development in higher education and found that soft skills such as communication, teamwork, and so on were critical for graduates to be successful. Tymon recommended that these skills be embedded within both the curriculum and co-curricular activities.

Yorke (2006) centers on self-efficacy and employability. The results indicated that confident graduates, who believed in their abilities, achieved better job placement results. The research recommended measures that promote student confidence.

Zulauf (2006) in his study of higher education teaching techniques highlighted the need for skills development for employability. Zulauf states that teachers must engage in problem solving tasks, employ project-based learning and adjustable learning to prepare graduate students for work.

### 2.1. Research Gap

The current available literature details employability skills in very broad strokes. It does not specify how a particular skill has grown across disciplines, regions, and industries. The studies

mainly discover patterns but do not depict the changes in specific skills (like digital literacy, critical thinking, etc.) and the swings in technical and soft skills due to technology.

Moreover, even though a set of essential skills needed for job readiness is already identified, limited understanding exists with respect to the priority of these skills across sectors and geographies. The existing literature on 'career readiness' is employer-oriented and misses out on the perspectives of graduates and educators, which could provide a more holistic view. There is little research on how effective specific teaching methods are in higher education. For instance, do project-based learning or internships help develop employability skills such as teamwork or problem-solving or are they ineffective? Finally, although experiential learning is recognized as valuable for skill acquisition, one major gap in the research is the lack of quantitative data on the impact of experiential learning on skills and long-term career-related outcomes, such as staying in the same job and using the new skills.

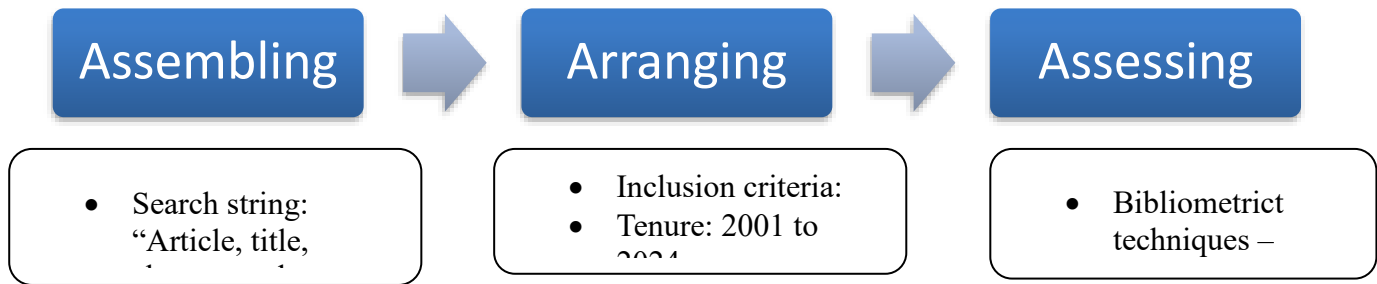
## 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study's research methodology is to examine trends, research patterns, and significant contributions in the domain of employability skills. A bibliometric technique was used to facilitate a quantitative study of the current literature. Bibliometrics give significant insights into the progression and transformation of employability skills research, highlighting key topics, important authors, and extensively referenced works that have influenced this domain. Information was gleaned from the Scopus database during the course of this inquiry. Scopus is the most significant database for compiling citations and other forms of scientific data. It provides a helpful benefit in investigations that include a sizable amount of data. Additionally, it may be applied as a research strategy to generate a large variety of unique scientific assignments covering a number of various fields of expertise.

### 3.1. Objectives of the study:

- To analyse the trends in research publications related to employability skills over recent decades.
- To identify key employability skills highlighted in contemporary research as critical for career readiness.
- To examine the role of higher education in developing employability skills among graduates.
- To evaluate the impact of experiential learning on the acquisition of employability skills.

Figure 1: Three stage review procedure for bibliometric analysis



#### 4. DATA COLLECTION

- Database Selection: For complete and quality bibliometric data, Scopus and other similar databases are chosen. The databases contain comprehensive peer-reviewed literature to analyze employability skills research. Google Scholar will be referenced in case extra articles are needed.

- Keywords: Relevant keywords such as "Employability Skills," "Employment Skills," "Workplace Competencies," and "Job Skills" will be used.

- Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria: Articles published from 2001 to 2024 will be included, with a focus on peer-reviewed journal articles, reviews, and conference proceedings. Papers written in other languages and non-academic articles (e.g. opinion pieces, editorials) will be excluded. To avoid confusion, I will exclude any non-scholarly source and any book and publication outside employability skills.

#### 4.1. Data Analysis and Synthesis.

- Bibliometric Analysis: Bibliometric Indicators: The publication, citation and h-index of authors are some key indicators that are used to determine the academic impact of publication, journal, author and institutions.

- Mapping Techniques:

Co-Occurrence Analysis: This identifies keywords and concepts that co-occur often, which indicates what themes or trends are prominent.

Co-Citation Analysis: Examination of how often authors/papers are cited together. Highlights foundational works and core conversations in the field.

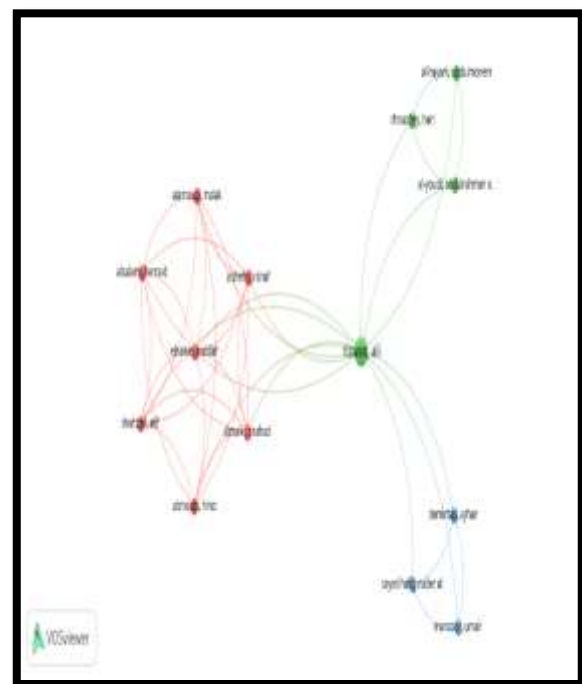
Collaboration Network Analysis: The process called Collaboration Network Analysis identifies co-authorship patterns. It depicts networks of collaboration among scholars, institutions, and countries. Also, it highlights global contributions to research papers.

#### 4.2. Tools & Techniques

Softwares like VOSviewer are used to create visual representations of the data. These tools allow for the mapping of co-authorship, co-citation, and network of keywords co-occurrences insights into knowledge clusters and research fronts.

#### 4.3. Bibliometric analysis

Figure 2: Co- Authorship of authors.



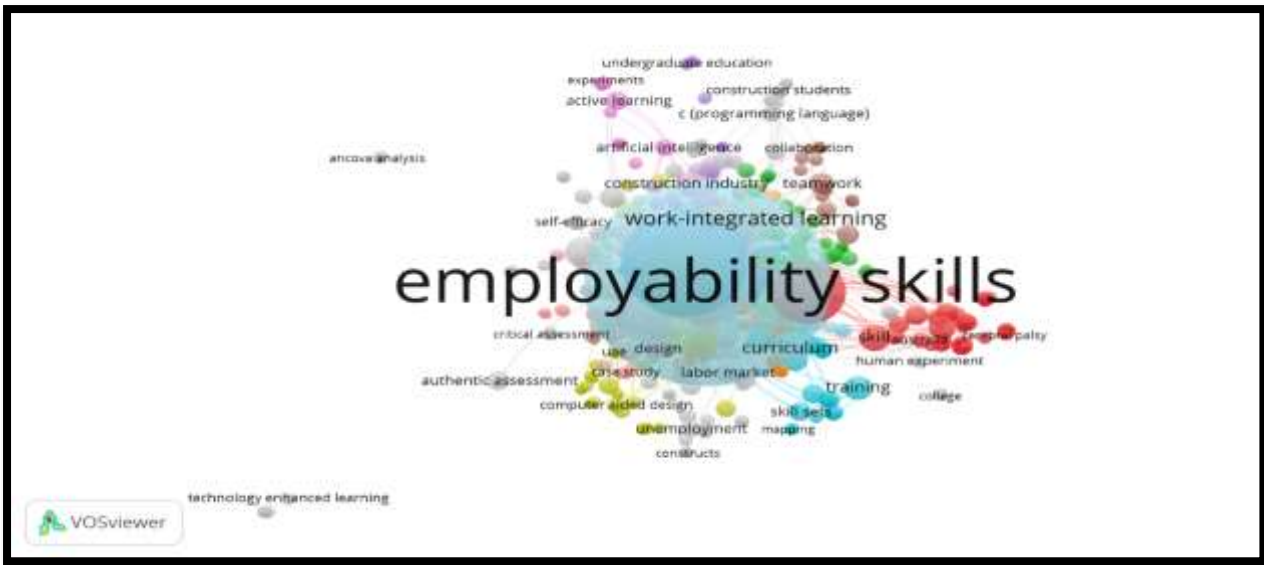
This co-authorship network map, produced with VOSviewer, displays the links between diverse writers in the bibliometric analysis. We observe three separate author clusters which suggest the existence of research communities or groups.

Cluster 1 (Red) consists of writers that are strongly related to one another. For example, Alamoudi, Malak, Alshehri, Rahaf and Elnahas, Nabilah. The close connection between members in this group suggests this set of scholars work together in a specific field or study.



throughout the research environment.

Figure 5: Co- Occurrence of all keywords



The Network Map of Bibliometric, created with VOSviewer, outlines the relationships between words associated with the phrase employability skills. The bigger node size of the core focus on "employability skills" indicates its growing significance in the research arena. Terms such as "Work-integrated learning" all the way to "Skill-sets" are closely connected to one another. Smaller

nodes, such as 'active learning', 'critical assessment' and 'labour market', mark other themes that enrich the employability conversation. The visualization helps to recognize the basic themes and emerging trends in the area of goal. It depicts a mix of approaches for understanding and enhancing employability skills through methods which include education and training.

Figure 6: Co- occurrence of Author keywords.

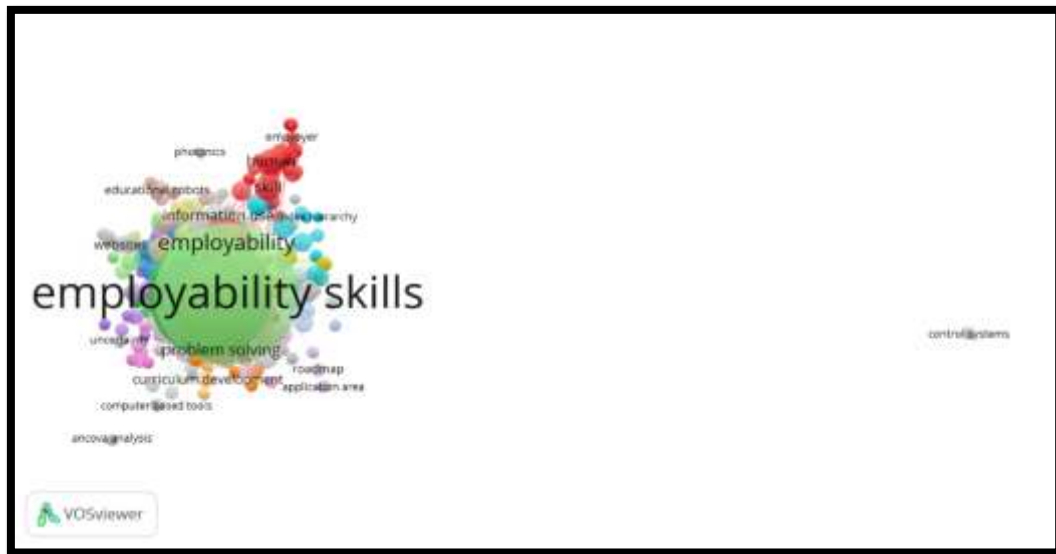


The subject of 'Employability Skills' is depicted in bibliometric mapping using VOSviewer Network Map. The map displays a range of interconnected themes and terms related to employable skills, such as "industrial revolution 4.0", "training", "self-efficacy", and "employee performance", which show the complex nature of the topic. Phrases like

"economic sustainability" and "blended learning," along with "ai-based decision support system," show new areas of interest. They highlight the bigger picture and meaning of employable skills in today's schools and jobs. We need to flexible, technically skilled, and develop worthy individual to meet the requirements of the modern workplace suggests the

study.

*Figure 7: Co- Occurrence of Index keywords*



This study is a bibliometric analysis displayed with VOS-viewer on “employability skills” and other common themes associated with it include problem solving, human skills, curriculum developments, and computer-based tools. Further, the map also displays word clusters which show the various skills and competences required for employability in present time and stresses the importance of both technical and interpersonal qualities in present-day job markets. An increase in phrases like “control systems” and “educational robots” indicates more focus on new technology inventions and more skill development. This Analytical study underscored the importance of a mix of technology and human-centered capabilities in adjusting to the demands of the fast-paced workplace in the present period.

Through the use of the VOSviewer tool, this bibliometric study visually illustrates the key authors and publications on the subject. The "Mason (2009)" study is a very important study with a high degree of importance and frequency in citations within this study. Other important authors, such as Ornellas (2019) and Riebe (2013) with great number of connections in this network implying their importance in producing quality or highly referenced work. New publications like Musleh Al-Sartawi of 2020 and Macaleer of 2024 are becoming popular among the researchers. This approach emphasizes on the key and emergent academic contributions that define the landscape of this field, with clusters showing thematic or temporal groupings of pertinent research undertaken.



## 5. CONCLUSION

The research landscape on the theme of employability skills: A bibliometric analysis will help identify the various trends underlying this theme and the important contributors and themes associated with employability. A citation and co-authorship analysis revealed that this field has started to recognize the importance of technical and soft/practical skills for the developments and readiness for the career progression. The skills of adaptability, communication and critical thinking which Harvey (2001) and Clarke (2018) identifies are now defining. Employers are looking for a whole range of skills that prepare graduates for a wide variety of modern and developing workplaces.

The research, too, indicates improved employability in a slew of new-age capabilities and attributes, such as creativity, critical thinking and problem-solving, soft skills and emotional

intelligence, conscientiousness and character and adaptability and resilience, as offered by Brown et al. (2011). In addition, as seen by Gafni, Leiba, & Sherman and Bridgstock (2009), educational organisations have been introducing these skills within their curriculum to bridge the gap between academic learning and industrial requirements and thus bringing the balance between textbook learning and practicals needs of the field.

The study highlights the importance of personalized, skill-based education and recommends that theoretical and practical knowledge is essential for modern employability as we move full steam into the new age. According to this bibliometric analysis of a record of 2,953 publications from the year 2000 to 2023, demonstrates that intra-organisational and institution-industry collaborations could be empowered for effectively helping the graduates' career success and long-term human development.

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