

# Determinants of Factors Causing Employability among the Higher National Diploma Holders in Hambantota District

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## ABSTRACT

The employ ability of the workforce of a country is a critical indicator of the economic development of any country. It is considered one of the golden fruits of education. Academics have defined and described employ ability in a variety of ways. Employ ability of any HND Higher National Diploma holder is not guaranteed since the employ ability is affected by many factors such as economic stability of the country, level of skills and attitude of qualified personnel. Due to the turbulent economic situation, it is a crucial task to ascertain how to compete with other candidates for a vacant position. The present research reviews the existing literature on “employ ability” and understands the causes for employment and their impact on the employment of the students in the Higher National Diploma holders with special reference to the Hambantota district. The stratified random sample method was used to select 127 respondents from a population of 225 Higher National Diploma holders in the Hambantota district. The results suggested that there was a significant positive relationship between career development learning, experience, diploma subject knowledge, understanding & skills, generic skills, and emotional intelligence, and employ ability behavior at 0.01 significance level (2-tailed). The findings of the research revealed that among the determinants of career development learning and experience were having a strong positive association and generic skills and emotional intelligence were moderately positive with association employ ability of the Higher National Diploma holders in Hambantota district.

**Keywords:** Employ ability, Higher National Diploma Holders, Hambantota district, Higher National Institutes.

## INTRODUCTION

Sri Lanka has one of the highest enrollment rates in Asia for General Education in [18]. At the same time, the Sri Lankan labour market is rapidly changing with the post-war economic development and the current economic crisis. As a result, with emerging industries, the nature of work and the perception of the workplace have shifted.

Since the rate of employability is critical to a country like Sri Lanka to transfer from a lower middle-income to a high-income economy, the education system must work hand-in-hand with the work force requirement of the country. As a result of this and the recent technical and industrial advancements, the higher education sector has received more attention from employers looking for qualified employees.

International Labour Organization in [18] identified that there is a mismatch between the skills provided by

the HEI and the skills demanded by industry and the services sector. It has been found that there is 4.2 % unemployability in Sri Lanka while 5.7 % is represented by the Hambantota district in [19]. Thus, the rate of employability is a crucial factor in the Hambantota district as a social and economic indicator.

Only 3.27% of students get an opportunity to enter state universities from the Hambantota district shown in [21] and the remaining school leavers are following other courses such as Diplomas for seeking employment. Hence, there is a wide opportunity for Higher National Diplomas (HND) to contribute to employability in Hambantota district.

In Sri Lanka, several studies have been conducted to assess the employability of public and private university graduates to enhance their employability and performance, but the employability of Higher National Diploma Holders has been underestimated. As a result, researchers have found a growing interest in identifying factors influencing the employability of Higher National Diploma holders who can make a significant contribution to sustainable development in Sri Lanka. As a result, this research study on “Determinants of factors causing employability among the Higher National Diploma holders in Hambantota district”

### **Research Objectives**

1. To examine factors that stimulate the employability of HND holders in the Hambantota district.
2. To evaluate how these factors will influence the employability of HND holders in the Hambantota district.
3. To determine the impact of the selected factors on the employability of HND holders in the Hambantota District.
4. To provide recommendations to the managers and policymakers to improve the quality and relevance of skills training programmes to ensure employability.

### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

Employability is a collection of achievements, understanding, and personal characteristics that increase an individual's chances of finding a job and succeeding in a career choice in [13]. Reference [03] shows that it relates to a person's perception of being able to obtain new, equal, or better jobs. Furthermore, reference [15] defined employability as an individual's ability to find work, sustain it, shift jobs within the same organization, find a new job when needed, and complete work adequately and satisfactorily. Employability is a process of learning rather than a product, as it is based on a variety of experiences and traits gained via higher-level learning in [11].

#### **A. Factors that influence employability.**

Reference [1], suggests that motivation and enthusiasm, interpersonal skills, teamwork, flexibility and adaptability, initiative, productivity, problem-solving, planning and organization, managing own development, oral communication, and written communication are the key factors causing employability. The ability to learn, intelligence, ideas and imagination, and communication skills are the most perceived graduate qualities in [23]. Furthermore, in [04] noted that employers want employees who are effective communicators, problem solvers, and critical thinkers, and can work well within a team.

Skill development is a critical component in increasing workforce employability and potential productivity in [19]. Reference [06] identified four key skills: communication, numeracy, information technology, and the ability to learn how to learn. Reference [25] has further stated that employability is influenced by students' self-efficacy beliefs, student's self-theories, and personal qualities. Reference [24] recognized the

acquisition of subject understanding to this list.

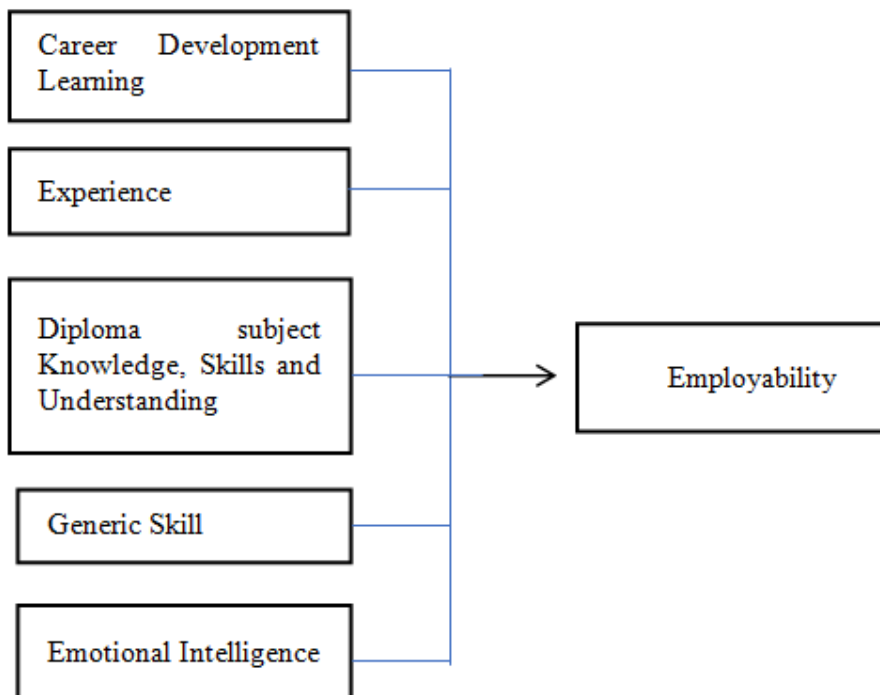
The National Human Resources and Employment Policy of Sri Lanka noted that employability has two components i.e. the eligibility in terms of schemes and procedures of recruitment and the suitability for employment from the point of view of soft skills and attitudes in [18].

It has identified 10 core skills it sees as being critical for workers including complex problem-solving, critical thinking, creativity, people management, coordinating with others, emotional intelligence, judgment and decision-making, service orientation, negotiation, and cognitive flexibility in [08]

Reference [05] identified five essential elements that aid students' employability:

- *Career Development Learning (CDL)*: It is concerned with assisting students in acquiring knowledge, concepts, skills, and attitudes that will enable them to manage their careers in [22]. Students' support and guidance will enable them to develop their self-awareness, and future projection and to seek job opportunities.
- *Experience*: Experience includes work experience as well as life experiences. Work and life experiences help students develop a broader range of skills and are attractive to prospective employers. Reference [10] contends that younger full-time students may have a very low level of knowledge of the nature and culture of the workplace and consequently can find it difficult to adjust. Graduates with work experience are more likely to gain employment than those without work experience in [02]. Internships or industrial training will not only allow them to develop professional skills but also allow them to relate the theories and subject knowledge into practice. Furthermore, they will also be able to incorporate real-life experiences into their studies.
- *Diploma subject knowledge, skills, and understanding (KSU)*: Students come to HEI to learn about a particular subject to gain work in a specific field or an area they are passionate about. It has been found that better-qualified and knowledgeable candidates have far greater employment opportunities in [12]. Thus, employers seek diploma holders not only with sufficient knowledge but also with good understanding and skills.
- *Generic Skills (GS)*: Although it has been argued that the skills approach alone is insufficient to do justice to the much broader concept of graduate employability in [20], employers require a certain level of specific skills from the diploma holders. Many of the generic skills listed by employers as vital in recruits, such as communication, teamwork, problem-solving, digital literacy, and many more, including those sometimes classified as 'enterprise skills such as creativity and innovation, are also skills that will help students to make the most of their academic studies. This way students can see how they are developing the skills and competencies employers are looking for and will be able to offer evidence of these when applying for work experience opportunities and/or graduate jobs.
- *Emotional Intelligence (EI)*: Emotional Intelligence ability is something that has a significant effect on relationships and well-being in [14] and as such deserves a place within any model of employability. It is the ability of people to perceive, understand, and manage emotions. A diploma holder who is unable to pay attention to their own and others' feelings, understand those feelings, and manage them effectively is likely to experience difficulties in their personal relationships and professional relationships. As a result, this is especially important in recruiting and developing effective working relationships. Any activities that encourage students to work together, communicate effectively, negotiate with each other, and reflect on their learning experiences, can be used to develop EI ability.

## Conceptual Model of the Research



## METHODOLOGY

### A. Population & sample

The population consisted of the HEI who offered a Higher National Diploma in the Hambantota district. HEI consisted of Advanced Technological Institute-Tangalle, Esoft metro campus, and Open University. To achieve the research objectives, stratified random sampling was used in this study. According to reference [17], Higher National Diploma holders from the last three years were selected as the sample 150 diploma holders in the sample. Data was collected by using an online questionnaire and one hundred and twenty-seven questionnaires were collected and considered to yield a response rate of above 84.6%.

### B. Measurement of Variables

The questionnaire consists of three parts;

Section- A to collect the demographic characteristics of the respondents. The participants were asked to provide information regarding their age, gender, civil status, occupational level, tenure, and level of education.

Section- B is used to measure the employability level of the Higher National Diploma holders based on the Career EDGE model of Graduate Employability in [07].

- Career development learning factors are identified via critical and reflective analysis, planning and organization, adapting to new situations, and continuous learning.
- Experience ascertained by creativity and innovation, autonomous learning, and information management.
- Diploma subject knowledge, skills and understanding, generic skills measured through cognitive flexibility, specific knowledge, people management, service orientation, and negotiation.
- Generic skills identified via communication skills, general knowledge, teamwork, and digital literacy.
- Emotional intelligence ascertained by initiative and entrepreneurship, leadership, and decision-making.

Section- C is used to provide suggestions.

**C. Reliability and validity**

The Cronbach alpha test was carried out to assess the reliability of the measurement items of the variables. The test yielded a record of 0.810 for CDL, 0.725 for experience, 0.762 for KSU, 0.764 for GS, and 0.745 for EI which is far above the cut-off line of reliability in [07]. The validity of the variables was tested by using Confirmatory Factor Analysis. Factor loading is 0.818 which is far above the cut-off line of reliability in [09].

**D. Mode of Analysis**

Descriptive statistics are used to measure the central tendency of the data. Correlations were used to ascertain the connection between determinant factors of employ ability and Employ ability. Multiple linear regression was then executed to estimate the value of the dependent variables based on the independent variables. Model assumptions were checked for accuracy.

**E. Profile Respondents**

31.5% of respondents were males and 68.5% were females of the total respondents. 3.2 % of students were married and 96.8 % were unmarried. 13.4% of the sample live in urban areas, 51.2% live in semi-urban areas, and 35.4% live in rural areas. From the sample, 96 % of HND holders represent the Sinhala community while 4 % of them represent the Muslim community. Further majority of the respondents, 79.3% had followed HND in Accountancy, 8.7% of respondents had followed HND in English and 15% had followed HND in Information Technology.

**RESULTS & ANALYSIS**

Table I. Descriptive Statistics and Correlation Matrix

	Mean	Standard Deviations	Career Development Learning	Experience	Diploma subject Knowledge, Skills, and Understanding	Generic Skills	Emotional intelligence
Career Development	3.74	.369					
Experience	3.75	.364	.783**				
Diploma subject Knowledge, Skills, and Understanding	3.60	.291	.428**	.355**			
Generic Skills	2.98	.303	.591**	.550**	.262**		
Emotional intelligence	4.03	.303	.770**	.741**	.339**	.546**	
Employ ability	3.56	.280	.912**	.877**	.586**	.736**	.855**

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Table I depicts the descriptive statistics of the CDL, Experience, KSU, GS, EI, and employ ability of the

HND holders in the Hambantota district. The result reveals that the mean value of CDL, Experience, KSU, GS, EI, and employ ability are 3.74, 3.75, 3.60, 2.98, 4.03, and 3.56, respectively on a 1-5 Likert scale. While their standard deviations are between the ranges of 0.280 to 0.369. Further, it indicates that the mean value of the CDL, Experience, KSU, EI, and employ ability is higher than the neutral value of 3. Accordingly, these results point out that the HND holders in general quite agreed with the importance of the above factors and they have a moderate level of employ ability. Furthermore, it depicts that HND holders have a good understanding of managing emotions and working together in an organization. However, they think that there is room for improvement in terms of GS. In addition, the results of the correlation matrix show that there is a direct and positive relationship between determinants and employ ability at a 1% significant level. Career development learning, experience, and emotional intelligence have a strong significant positive relationship with employ ability. However, diploma subject knowledge, understanding and skills, and generic skills have a moderate positive relationship with employ ability.

Table II. Descriptive Analysis and Correlation Between Dimensions of Career Development Learning, Overall Career Development Learning, And Employ ability

	Mean	Standard Deviations	Critical and Reflective Analysis	Planning and Organization	Adapting to New Situations	Continuous learning	Career Development Learning
Critical and Reflective Analysis	3.23	.580					
Planning and Organization	3.49	.558	.572**				
Adapting to New Situations	3.31	.543	.697**	.655**			
Continuous learning	4.94	.209	-.044	.028	-.056		
Career Development Learning	3.74	.369	.860**	.848**	.882**	.114	
Employability	3.56	.280	.759**	.759**	.863**	.015	.912**

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Table II shows that HND holders have a “Very Strong” level of continuous learning (M= 4.937 and S.D = 0.20885) and an “Average” level of “critical and reflective analysis, planning and organization and adapting to new situations (M= 3.23, 3.49, 3.31 and S.D 0.580, 0.558, 0.541 respectively). The results of Pearson correlations show that despite continuous learning other dimensions of CDL have a significant positive relationship with dependent variable employ ability at a 1% significant level. There was a strong positive relationship between Critical and Reflective Analysis (.759), Planning and Organization (.759), Adapting to New Situations (.863), and Career Development Learning (.912) with employ ability apart from continuous learning (.015). Table 4.6.2 further deduces that all the CDL factors except continuous learning have a notable positive linear correlation with the CDL at a 1% significant level. i.e. Critical and Reflective Analysis (.860), Planning and Organization (.848), and Adapting to New Situations (.882).

Table III. Descriptive Analysis and Correlation Between Dimensions Of Experience, Overall Experience, And Employ ability

	Mean	Standard Deviations	Autonomous learning	Information Management	In-plant training	Creativity and Innovation	Experience
Autonomous learning	4.51	.275					

Information Management	3.56	.529	-.053				
In-plant training	3.67	.660	-.077	.423**			
Creativity and Innovation	3.24	.577	-.010	.526**	.562**		
Experience	3.75	.364	.166	.775**	.807**	.848**	
Employability	3.56	.280	.100	.697**	.646**	.820**	.877**

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Table III illustrates that HND holders have a “Very Strong” level of Autonomous learning (M= 4.51 and S.D = 0.275) and a “Strong” level of Information Management and In-plant training (M = 3.56, 3.67 and S.D = 0.529, 0.660) and “Average” level of Creativity and Innovation (M = 3.24 and S.D = 0.577). HND holders have a “Strong” level of experience (M=3.75 and S.D = 0.364). Furthermore, the results of Pearson correlations express that despite autonomous learning other dimensions of experience have a significant positive relationship with dependent variable employ ability at a 1% significant level. There was a significant positive relationship between Information Management (.697), In-plant training (.646), and Creativity and Innovation (.820) with employ ability. Except autonomous learning, other dimensions have an outstanding positive linear correlation with the experience at a 1% significant level. i.e. Information Management (.775), In-plant training (.807) and Creativity and Innovation (.848).

Table IV. Descriptive Analysis And Correlation Between Dimensions Of Ksu, Overall Ksu And Employ ability

	Mean	Standard Deviations	Cognitive flexibility	Service orientation	Negotiation	People management	GPA	Diploma subject Knowledge, Skills, and Understanding
Cognitive flexibility	3.24	0.626						
Service orientation	4.59	0.255	-0.065					
Negotiation	3.86	0.295		-0.045				
People management	3.7	0.423	.371**	-0.074	0.026			
GPA	2.62	1.112	-0.072	0.08	0.003	0.05		
Diploma subject Knowledge, Skills, and Understanding	3.6	0.291	.477**	.177*	.215*	.480**	.761**	
Employ ability	3.56	0.28	.803**	-0.045	0.141	.562**	0.074	.586**

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Table IV shows that HND holders have “a Very Strong” level of Service Orientation ( $M = 4.59$  and  $S.D = 0.255$ ), a “Strong” level of Negotiation and People Management ( $M = 3.86, 3.70$  and  $S.D = 0.295, 0.423$  respectively) and “Average” level of GPA and Cognitive Flexibility ( $M= 2.62, 3.24$  and  $S.D = 1.112, 0.626$  respectively). HND holders have a “Strong” level of Diploma subject Knowledge, Skills, and Understanding ( $M=3.60$  and  $S. D=0.291$ ). Additionally, the correlations matrix explains that Cognitive flexibility (0.803) and People management (0.562) have a significant positive relationship with the dependent variable employ ability at a 1% significant level. Service orientation, on the other hand, shows a non-significant negative connection with the dependent variable employ ability (-0.045). At a 1% significance level, negotiation (0.141) and GPA (0.074) had a negligible positive connection with the dependent variable employ ability. Cognitive flexibility (0.477), Service orientation (0.177), Negotiation (0.215), People management (0.480), and GPA (0.761) all had a positive relationship with employ ability.

Table V. Descriptive Analysis And Correlation Between Dimensions Of Generic Skills, Overall Generic Skills, And Employ ability

	Mean	Standard Deviations	General Knowledge	Digital literacy Skills	Communication skills	Teamwork	Generic
General Knowledge	1.76	.545					
Digital literacy Skills	3.30	.477	.091				
Communication skills	3.36	.417	.165	.108			
Teamwork	3.50	.529	.224*	-.036	.483**		
Generic skills	2.98	.303	.640**	.456**	.672**	.689**	
Employability	3.56	.280	.290**	.115	.675**	.765**	.736**

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Table V depicts that HND holders have a “Strong” level of Teamwork ( $M= 3.50$  and  $S.D= 0.529$ ), “Average” level of Digital Literacy Skills and Communication Skills ( $M= 3.30, 3.36$  and  $S.D= 0.477, 0.417$  respectively) and General Knowledge ( $M= 1.76$  and  $S.D= 0.545$  Generic Skills are “Average” among HND holders ( $M= 2.98$  and  $S.D = 0.303$ ). Furthermore, correlation results show that despite digital literacy skills, other dimensions of generic skills have a significant positive relationship with dependent variable employ ability at a 1% significant level. There was a significant positive relationship between General Knowledge (.290), Communication skills (.675), and Teamwork (0.765) with employ ability. Table 6.5 further deduces that all the dimensions of generic skills have a notable positive linear correlation with the generic skills at a 1% significant level. i.e. General Knowledge (.640), digital literacy skills (0.456) Communication skills (.672), and Teamwork (0.689).

Table VI. Descriptive Analysis And Correlation Between Dimensions Of Generic Skills, Overall Generic Skills, And Employ ability

	Mean	Standard Deviations	Initiative and Entrepreneurship	Decision making	Leadership	Emotional intelligence
Initiative and Entrepreneurship	3.11	.580				



Decision making	4.72	.483	-.044			
Leadership	3.30	.646	.682**	-.013		
Emotional intelligence	4.03	.303	.826**	.370**	.855**	
Employability	3.56	.280	.762**	.138	.805**	.855**

Table VI shows that HND holders have a “Very Strong” level of decision-making (M = 4.72 and S. D = 0.483) and a “Strong” level of Initiative and Entrepreneurship and Leadership (M 3.11, 3.30 and S. D = 0.580, 0.646 respectively). HND holders have a “Strong” level of Emotional Intelligence (M= 4.03 and S. D= 0.303). The Pearson correlations reveal that, notwithstanding decision-making, other dimensions of EI have a substantial positive connection with the dependent variable employ ability at the 1% level. There was a positive relationship between the relationship with Entrepreneurship (.762) and Leadership (.805) with employ ability. Table VI further deduces that all the EI factors have a significant positive linear correlation with the EI at a 1% significant level.

Table VII. Regression Analysis

Variable	Level of significance				R square	Adjusted R-Square
	$\beta$	Correlation	T-test	ANOVA		
Career Development Learning	1.200	0.912	23.274	541.701	0.831	0.830
Experience	1.255	0.877	19.101	364.86	0.768	0.766
Diploma subject Knowledge, Skills & Understanding	1.732	0.586	57.638	57.638	0.344	0.338
Generic Skills	1.717	0.736	11.415	130.312	0.542	0.538
Emotional intelligence	0.669	0.855	17.318	299.925	0.732	0.729

The influence of the independent factors on the dependent variable is seen in Table VII Career development learning, experience, and emotional intelligence explain a significant degree of the variance in the employ ability of the HND holders (Adjusted  $R^2 = 0.830, 0.766$  and  $0.729$ ). Generic skills, on the other hand, indicate a modest degree of variation in employ ability (Adjusted  $R^2 = 0.538$ ). In contrast, diploma subject knowledge, skills, and understanding explain a marginally significant amount of variation in HND holders’ employ ability (Adjusted  $R^2 = 0.338$ ). Additionally, the regression coefficient results of each predictor show a significant positive relationship between career development learning, experience, diploma subject knowledge, skills and understanding, generic skills, and emotional intelligence with employ ability ( $\beta = 1.200, 1.255, 1.732, 1.717, 0.699$ ) at 1% significance level. As a result, the majority of the variation in employ ability may be attributed to variations in the determinant of employ ability.

## HYPOTHESES TESTING RESULTS

The hypothesis testing was done by using the results of both Pearson’s Correlation analysis and regression analysis.

H1: There is a strong relationship between career development learning and employ ability.

The findings of the correlation analysis show a strong positive association between CDL and employ ability,

with a correlation coefficient of 0.912 and significance at the 1% level. Thus, H1 is accepted.

H2: There is a strong relationship between experience and employ ability.

The findings of the correlation analysis show a strong positive link between experience and employ ability, with a correlation coefficient of 0.877 and significance at the 1% level. Accordingly, H2 is accepted.

H3: There is a strong relationship between diploma subject knowledge, skills, and understanding and employ ability.

The findings of the correlation analysis show that there is a moderate association between KSU and employ ability ( $p=0.01$ ,  $r=0.586$ ). H3 is therefore rejected.

H4: There is a strong relationship between generic skills and employ ability.

The findings of the correlation analysis show that GS and employ ability are moderately positively correlated with a correlation coefficient of 0.736 and significance at a 1% level. Thus, H4 is rejected.

H5: There is a strong relationship between emotional intelligence and employ ability.

The findings of the correlation analysis show that a strong positive association between emotions and employ ability is 0.855 and significant at the 1% level. Thus, H5 is accepted.

H6: Career development learning has a more significant impact on employ ability than experience, diploma subject knowledge, understanding & and skills, generic skills, and emotional intelligence.

The findings of the regression analysis reveal that adjusted  $R^2$  is 83% at the 1% level. This means that CDL has a significant positive impact on employ ability and 83% of the variations in employ ability are due to CDL. Thus, H6 is accepted.

H7: Experience has a more significant impact on employ ability than career development learning, diploma subject knowledge, skills, and understanding, generic skills, and emotional intelligence.

The regression analysis indicates that the adjusted  $R^2$  of experience on employ ability is 76.6% at a 1% level. This means that experience has a significant positive impact on employ ability and 76.6% of the variations in employ ability are due to the experience of the Higher National Diploma holders. Thus, H6 is accepted.

H8: Diploma subject knowledge, skills, and understanding have a more significant impact on employ ability than career development learning, experience, generic skills, and emotional intelligence.

It reveals that the adjusted  $R^2$  of diploma subject knowledge, understanding & and skills are 33.8% at a 1% level. This means that KSU has a weak positive impact on employ ability and only 33.8% of the variations in employ ability are due to KSU. Thus, H6 is rejected.

H9: Generic skills have a more significant impact on employ ability than career development learning, experience, diploma subject knowledge, skills, and understanding, and emotional intelligence.

According to the regression analysis, adjusted  $R^2$  is 53.8% at a 1% significant level. This means that GS moderately affects employ ability and 53.8% of the variations in employ ability are due to GS. Thus, H6 is rejected.

H10: Emotional intelligence has a more significant impact on employ ability than career development learning, experience, diploma subject knowledge, skills, and understanding, and generic skills.

It reveals that the adjusted  $R^2$  of diploma subject knowledge, understanding & and skills are 72.9% at a 1% level. This means that EI has a weak positive impact on employ ability and only 72.9% of the variations in employ ability are due to KSU. Thus, H6 is rejected.

## RESULT & DISCUSSION

The present research has examined factors that stimulate the employ ability of HND holders in the Hambantota district. It found that career development learning, experience, diploma subject knowledge, skills and understanding, generic skills, and emotional intelligence have a strong association with employ ability. This has been ascertained by the previous scholars' career development learning (83%), experience (76.6%), diploma subject knowledge, skills and understanding (33.8%), generic skills (53.8%) and emotional intelligence (72.9%) accounted for variances in employ ability. Hence, it showed that career development learning has more influence on the employ ability of HND holders than diploma subject knowledge, skills and understanding, and emotional intelligence which have a lesser impact on employ ability.

The study discovered that critical and reflective analysis, planning and organization, and adapting to new situations significantly correlated with career development, learning, and employ ability. However, continuous learning has an insignificant association with career development learning and employ ability among the HND holders in Hambantota district.

Furthermore, it has been revealed that information management, in-plant training, creativity, and innovation have influenced the experience and the employ ability of Higher National Diploma holders in Hambantota district. Autonomous learning has an insignificant association with the experience and employ ability of HND holders.

Moreover, it has been ascertained that HND holders' cognitive flexibility, service orientation, negotiation, people management, and subject knowledge have a significant connection with Diploma subject knowledge, skills, and understanding. Despite that cognitive flexibility and people management have a significant association with employ ability. Service orientation, negotiation, and subject knowledge have no significant connection with it.

General knowledge, communication skills, and teamwork are significantly associated with generic skills and employ ability. Even though digital literacy skills have a significant relationship with generic skills, it does not influence employ ability.

It has been found that decision-making, imitativeness, and entrepreneurship, leadership are significantly related to emotional intelligence. Nevertheless, imitativeness, entrepreneurship, and leadership are significantly associated with employ ability, decisions making have insignificantly influenced employ ability.

HND holders strongly agreed that continuous learning is important for career development learning which leads to employ ability.

In addition, results indicated that career development learning, experience, diploma subject knowledge, skills and understanding, generic skills, and emotional intelligence have a significant positive impact on employ ability at a 1% significance level. The beta coefficient of career development learning, experience,

diploma subject knowledge, skills and understanding, generic skills, and emotional intelligence are 1.200,1.255,1.732,1.717, and 0.699 respectively. This reveals that diploma subject knowledge, skills, and understanding is the most influential variable on employ ability and emotional intelligence is the least influential variable on employ ability.

## CONCLUSION

This study was designed to identify the determinant factors causing employ ability of Higher National Diploma holders in the Hambantota district. It has been discovered that employ ability (dependent variable) is caused by career development learning, experience, diploma subject knowledge, understanding and skills, generic skills, and emotional intelligence (independent variables) in the sample data set. Additionally, career development learning, experience, and emotional intelligence have a strong positive relationship with Employ ability, whereas diploma subject knowledge, skills, understanding, and generic skills have a moderate positive relationship with Employ ability. The study that was undertaken shows that career development learning and experience are the statistically significant determiners of employ ability of Higher National Diploma holders than diploma subject knowledge, skills, and understanding, and emotional intelligence.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Students must focus on working hard and earning a good grade for their diploma since some employment opportunities need a specific grade. However, a good grade is not the only specific requirement for the HND holder's employ ability. According to the outcome of the research analysis herewith we recommend allowing students to continue the internship beyond the 06-month compulsory period. Moreover, we strongly recommend students obtain other relevant professional qualifications for their target careers. Along with those, taking necessary actions to improve the students' digital literacy level, and soft skills especially communication skills are also recommended according to the results of the research.

## LIMITATIONS

The present research was designed to explore the determinants of factors causing employ ability among the Higher National Diploma holders in the Hambantota district. Accordingly, career development learning, experience, diploma subject knowledge, understanding and skills, generic skills, and emotional intelligence lead to the employ ability of the HND holders.

The research was based on five essential elements of students' employ ability in [05],[01], and other theories of employ ability. However, no other management theories such as job-related attitudes, the personality of the student, and motivational theories that affect employ ability were deeply discussed and explored.

Furthermore, employ ability depends on several factors, but the present research only studies how career development learning, experience, diploma subject knowledge, understanding and skills, generic skills, and emotional intelligence lead toward employ ability where no other factors were discussed deeply.

Accordingly, this is the theoretical limit of the present research.

This study focused on employ ability in the Hambantota district. A similar study could be carried out to determine the factors affecting the employ ability of Higher National Diploma holders and their employers concerning basic employ ability skills using a larger sample group throughout other districts in the country.

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