



GRADUATE EMPLOYABILITY 2019

A Study on the Graduate Employability
of the University of Kelaniya

University Statistics & Data Monitoring Unit



GRADUATE EMPLOYABILITY

2019

University of Kelaniya

University Statistics & Data Monitoring Unit

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2020

*“The doors will be opened to those bold enough to
knock”*

PROLOGUE

The present report is the outcome of the annual graduate employability survey of 2019 conducted by the University Statistics and Data Monitoring Unit of the University of Kelaniya. The survey was carried out continuously for the fourth time since 2016.

Adopting the strengths and features from the changes made in the survey in 2018, the graduate employability survey 2019 has been a clear reflection of the status of the graduates of the University in 2019.

The survey differentiates between “Degree was a ladder for my dreams” to “Degree solemnly not relevant for us to get employment”. The findings of the survey reveal that not only the degree, but also the personality, soft skills along with good academic performance result in quick employment opportunities after completing the degree qualifications.

The survey is not free from limitations. Incomplete or invalid responses, inappropriate and contradictory responses made some drawbacks but, the research team managed to complete the report as mistake free as possible.

If anyone gets the full use of this report to facilitate the first employment after completing the degree or to rearrange the study patterns during the academic period so that they could get immediate employment opportunities the utmost purpose of doing the survey will be fulfilled.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The University Statistics and Data Monitoring Unit would like to express the deepest appreciation to the Vice- Chancellor of the University of Kelaniya, Senior Professor (Mrs.) Nilanthi R De Silva and to the former Vice Chancellor, Professor DM Semasinghe for providing the USMDU the possibility to conduct and complete this graduate employability survey and the report for 2019.

Moreover, special gratitude we give to the Deans of the Faculty of Commerce and Management Studies, Faculty of Humanities, Faculty of Science, Faculty of Social Sciences and the Director of the Inter-Faculty Center for Coordinating the Modular System (ICCMS) for giving the permission to get all the data and information as required whenever we needed. Furthermore, we would like to acknowledge with profound appreciation the crucial role of the systems analysts of the Faculty of Commerce and Management Studies, Faculty of Science and the ICCMS and the Deputy Registrar and the staff of the Examinations branch, who gave the information and details promptly and properly.

Also, a special thank goes to Ms. DS Kodithuwakku, Lecturer probationary, of the Department of Social Statistics of the Faculty of Social Sciences and her team for the enormous support extending for the USDMU in collecting data.

Last but not least, many thanks go to the Director of the USDMU whose have invested his full effort in guiding the USDMU in achieving the goal.

And finally, the USDMU would like to pay the gratitude to the graduates who responded to the survey.

VICE- CHANCELLOR'S MESSAGE

Graduate employability is widely seen as an indicator of the quality of education offered by any higher education institute, providing a very important measure of how its graduates meet the expectations of the corporate sector and other employers. As one of Sri Lanka's largest national universities, the University of Kelaniya endeavours to produce graduates who are able to secure gainful employment soon after graduation and support the development needs of the country in either the private or the public sector.

The annual graduate employability survey was conducted in 2019 for the 4th consecutive year by our University Statistics & Data Monitoring Unit, to monitor progress in this regard. I invite you to explore the findings of this latest survey as reported here and reflect on their implications in order to decide on the best measures to improve graduate employability.

On behalf of the entire University, I extend my sincere thanks to the Director of the USD MU, Dr Manjula Gunaratne, and the Assistant Statistician, Ms Gayanthima Weeraratne, for their dedication and hard work in producing another excellent report.

Senior Professor Nilanthi De Silva

Vice- Chancellor

University of Kelaniya

MESSAGE OF THE DIRECTOR

Higher education institutions are increasingly expected to engage with the challenges of the contemporary world. Thus, the graduate employability has become one of the central issues that drive the mission of higher education institution. Therefore, several efforts have been made by higher education institutions to meet identified challenges.

A graduate to be a successful employee must have both the technical and non-technical skills. A student of the University of Kelaniya has been provided all the necessary facilities to gain the above mentioned skills. Other than the theoretical knowledge, extra-curricular activities help the students to strengthen their soft skills.

Hence, the University Statistics and Data Monitoring Unit of the University of Kelaniya carried out an employability survey with the aim of measuring the productivity of the effort taken by the University in 2019 under the supervision of the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Kelaniya as well as the University Grants Commission of Sri Lanka.

This Report provides the significant information about the graduate employability of University of Kelaniya in the year 2019.

Dr. K. M. L. M. Manjula Gunarathna

Director

University Statistics & Data Monitoring Unit

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

HEI	: Higher Education Institute
FCMS	: Faculty of Commerce and Management Studies
FHU	: Faculty of Humanities
FMED	: Faculty of Medicine
FSC	: Faculty of Science
FSOSC	: Faculty of Social Sciences
M	: Male
F	: Female
E	: English
E/S	: English and Sinhala
S	: Sinhala

1 INTRODUCTION

The quality of higher education is one of the prominent factors which highly affect the economy and the development of a country. In questioning the quality of higher education, the term “graduate employability” comes into consideration with high impact and Maharasoa and Hay expresses, the ability of a higher education institute to ensure high graduate employability as a notion of quality of the HEI (Maharasoa & Hay, 2001).

The employability as described by Yorke, is a set of achievements – skills, understandings and personal attributes that make graduates more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations, which benefits themselves, the workforce, the community and the economy (Yorke, 2004). He further states that employability as a set of achievements which constitute a necessary but not sufficient condition for the gaining of employment. Another explanation for employability as defined by Hillage and Pollard is; the ability to be employed is employability (Hillage & Pollard, 1998). That is, the ability to gain initial employment, maintain employment and obtain new employment if required.

However, the employability is not only about gaining employment. The capability of an individual to grab the correct opportunities of employment by focusing on the cooperate world and job market trends and by developing the required skills and competencies along with developing the skills continuously after gaining an employment to secure the employment as well as to enhance career development and being able to perform outstanding and independently. Therefore, a graduate must be trained and informed to cover all these stages for a secure employment.

Nevertheless, the first part of employability seems challenging for all after completing the higher studies. The researchers on graduate employability states that, due to the complex economical behaviors and competitiveness, gaining an employment is far more difficult

for the graduates (Kalufya & Mwakajinga, 2016). When a country undergoes economic failures, it eventually affects the labor market resulting less employment opportunities even with loss of employments. Brown, Hesketh and Williams points out that, national governments can no longer guarantee the employment for all and since they have limited provisions on enhancing the employability, higher education should be developed to upgrade the knowledge and skills of the graduates to meet the requirements of knowledge driven business environment (Phillip, Anthony, & Sara, 2003).

Therefore, HEIs should focus on creating a high potential skilled graduate along with entrepreneurial skills to assure the employability and also to meet the national utmost requirement from HEIs; the national and economic development of the country.

Accordingly, the University of Kelaniya has a growing interest on the graduate employability for the past few years and is investing in enhancing the employability rate of the graduates and also seeking solutions for the issues related to facilitating the first employment after completing the degree which can be controlled. The University has a different cell, 'Career guidance unit' for promoting the employments for the graduates of the University, and annually conducts a career fair to support the undergraduates to find employments.

This report consists, the findings of the graduate employability survey 2019 of the University of Kelaniya.

2 METHODOLOGY

The graduate employability survey 2019 adopted the methodology used in 2018 enabling the interfaculty comparison and year wise comparison of the employability rate. Accordingly, the data collection for the survey 2019, was carried out during October 2019 to January 2020. This chapter explains the methodology used in the survey in brief.

2.1 POPULATION

The survey focuses on the graduates of 2019 who belongs to the main cohort of relevant intake. Accordingly, in 2019 total of 2449 first graduates have passed out from the University of Kelaniya representing all the Faculties except for the Faculty of Computing and Technology. The below table 2-1 indicates the respective undergraduate output of each Faculty.

Table 2-1: Undergraduate output of the University

Faculty	Undergraduate Output
Faculty of Commerce and Management Studies	515
Faculty of Humanities	391
Faculty of Medicine	241
Faculty of Science	453
Faculty of Social Sciences	849
Grand Total	2449

Accordingly, the highest number of students who have passed out in 2019 are from the Faculty of Social Sciences and represents 35% of the population while the least number of graduates belong to the Faculty of Medicine which is 10% of the total output. Furthermore, 21% graduates belong to the Faculty of Commerce and Management Studies, 18% belong to the Faculty of Science and 16% belong to the Faculty of Humanities.

2.2 TARGET POPULATION

The graduates except from the Faculty of Medicine were considered for the survey and table 2-2 illustrates the target population.

Table 2-2: Target population

Faculty	Total
Faculty of Commerce and Management Studies	515
Faculty of Humanities	391
Faculty of Science	453
Faculty of Social Sciences	849
Grand Total	2208

2.3 SAMPLING TECHNIQUE, SAMPLING METHODOLOGY AND SAMPLE SIZE

Stratified sampling was used considering each Faculty as a stratum. Accordingly, there were 4 strata namely, Faculty of Commerce and Management Studies, Faculty of Humanities, Faculty of Science, Faculty of Social Sciences. And, the selection of the sample was conducted using the simple random sampling methods using random number generators with the need of selecting an unbiased sample for the survey.

At 95% confidence level, the sample size required for the survey was 905 respondents and stratum sizes were calculated proportional to the population size. Accordingly, the respective sample sizes of each Faculty is show in the below table 2-3.

Table 2-3: Sample sizes of the survey

Faculty	Sample Size
Faculty of Commerce and Management Studies	211
Faculty of Humanities	160
Faculty of Science	186
Faculty of Social Sciences	348
Grand Total	905

2.4 DATA COLLECTION METHODOLOGY

As mentioned earlier, since the successful accomplishment shown by the survey methodology in 2018, data collection process of the graduate employability survey 2019 was conducted same as 2018.

On that account the graduate employability survey was conducted during the period of October 2019 to January 2020 and a total of (approximately) 1800 graduates were considered for the data collection. Accordingly, the graduates of the Faculty of Commerce and Management Studies and Faculty of Science were given the online questionnaire and the graduates of the Faculty of Humanities and the Faculty of Social Sciences were given the paper based questionnaire. However, only (approximately) 1300 graduates had responded to the survey. After validating, some of the incomplete responses and inappropriate responses had to be removed. After, to comply with the sample sizes required by each Faculty, 905 responses were randomly selected.

2.5 DATA ORGANIZATION AND DATA ANALYSIS

The data organization and analysis involved set of descriptive analysis techniques and several statistical packages including Minitab17, SPSS and Microsoft Excel were used where appropriate.

3 FINDINGS

This chapter illustrates the findings of the survey; Graduate Employability 2019

3.1 PROFILE ANALYSIS

The sample for the graduate employability survey was selected proportional to the total undergraduate output of each Faculty. Accordingly, the highest respondents were from the Faculty of Social Sciences, which represented 38% of the total sample. As shown in the figure 3-1, the least number of respondents were from the Faculty of Humanities.

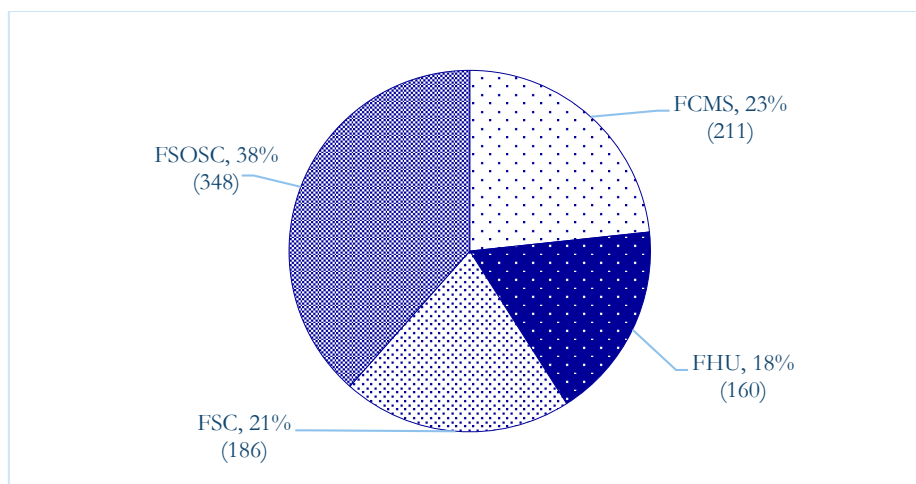


Figure 3-1: Respondents by the Faculty

The University of Kelaniya offers the undergraduates three types of degree which are namely, the general degree which is three years in duration, the special degree of four years duration and the medical degree program which is five years in duration. However, since the graduates of the Faculty of Medicine were not considered for the survey since the majority of graduates of the Faculty of Medicine do not have any employability issue, the respondents of the survey belong either to the general degree or the special degree.

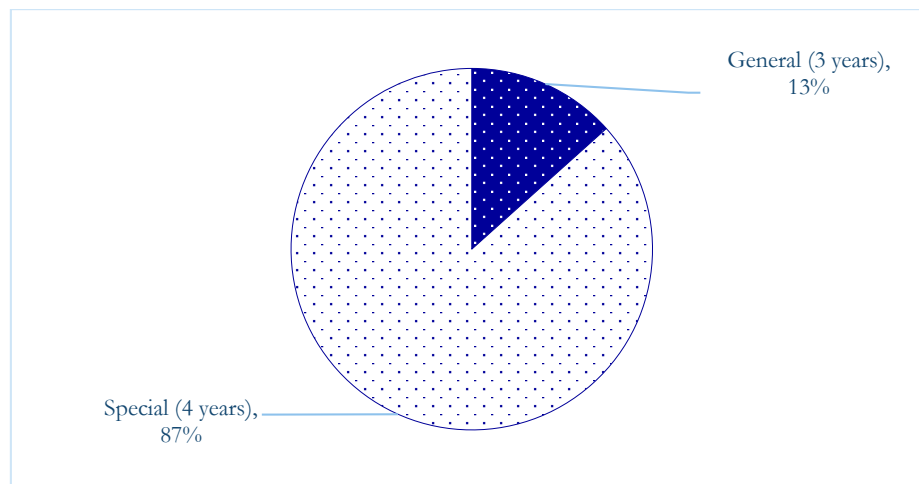


Figure 3-2: Respondents by the type of degree

As shown in the figure 3-2, a higher number of graduates have obtained an honor's degree than general degree. The sample consists of 87% of honor's degree recipients and 13% general degree recipients.

Based on the male female ratio of the University of Kelaniya, the sample of graduates of the survey consists of more females than male graduates. 78% out of 905 respondents of the survey are female graduates. Figure 3-3 illustrates the composition of the sample by the gender.

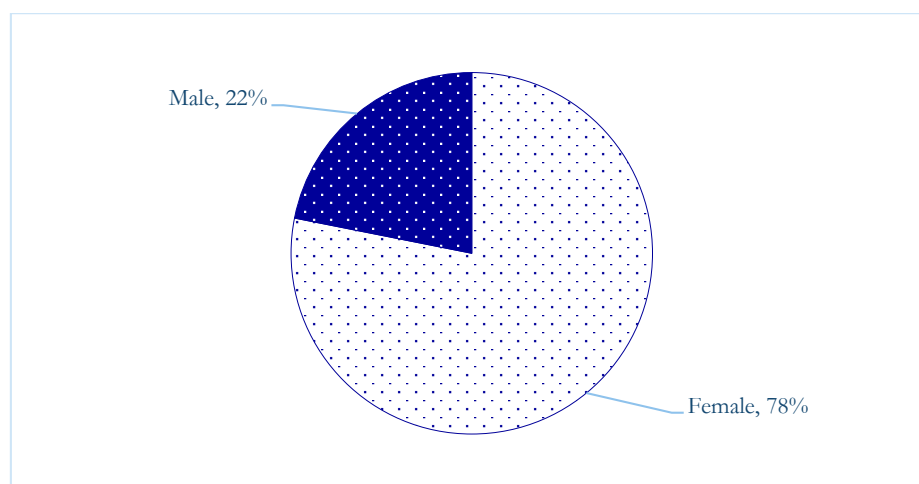


Figure 3-3: Respondents by the gender

3.2 EMPLOYABILITY

The graduate employability rate is the proportion of employed graduates to the total number of graduates of the sample. This value can be used as an estimator for the graduate employability of the University. Following section reveals the information related to the employability.

3.2.1 Graduate Employability Rate

The graduate employability rate of the University of 2019 is 51% tending the unemployment rate to be 49%. This value indicates that, more than half of the graduates of the University of Kelaniya is employed within one year after completing the degree. Following table 3-1 and figure 3-4 depicts the difference between employability rate and the unemployment rate of the University.

Table 3-1: Employability rate of the University 2019

Employment Status	Percentage
Employed	51%
Unemployed	49%

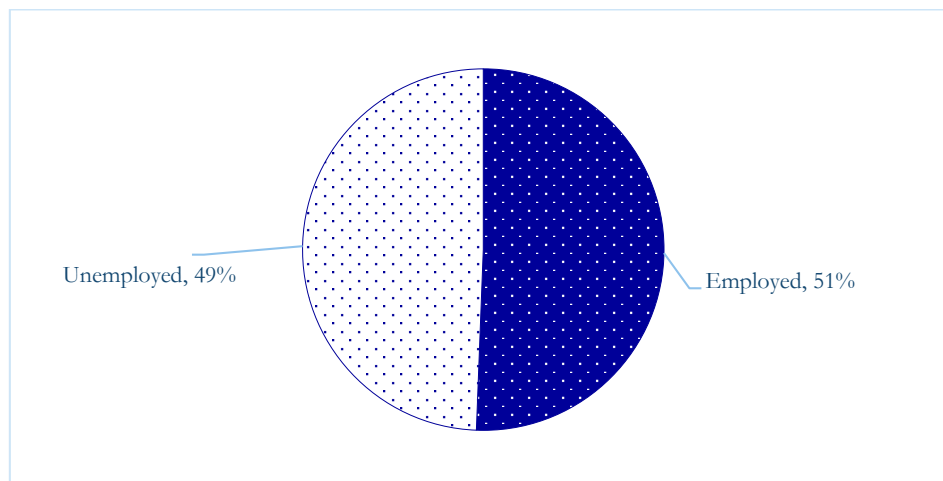


Figure 3-4: Employability rate of the University 2019

3.2.2 Graduate Employability Rate by the Faculty

The highest employability rate has been recorded from the Faculty of Science (84%) and the Faculty of Commerce and Management Studies (81%) respectively. Below table 3-2 depicts the graduate employability rate by the Faculty.

Table 3-2: Graduate employability by the Faculty

Employability Status	Faculty			
	FCMS	FHU	FSC	FSOSC
Employed	81%	27%	84%	25%
Unemployed	19%	73%	16%	75%

Comparatively, graduates from the Faculty of Social Sciences as well as the Faculty of Humanities has reported considerably low employment rate. The lowest, 25%, is reported from the Faculty of Social Sciences while the second lowest, 27%, is reported from the Faculty of Humanities. In both faculties, the unemployment rate is more than the employability rate. Moreover, these rates are approximately one fourth of the employment rates of the other two faculties, Faculty of Science and the Faculty of Commerce & Management Studies.

3.2.3 Graduate Employability Rate by the Gender

In 2019, 2,449 graduates have been passed out from the University where 73% out the total, that is 1,797 are female graduates. As illustrated in figure 3-3, that is nearly three fourth of the total output is female graduates. The profile analysis depicted in section 3.1 also revealed that the distribution of the respondents by gender shows a similar composition.

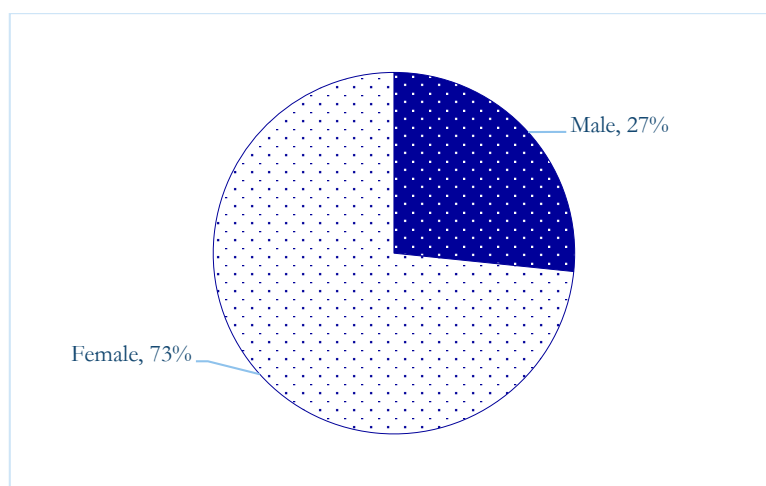


Figure 3-5: Graduates by the gender

Although, the number of female graduates is higher in the population and the sample selected for the survey, the employability rate of female graduates is lower than the male graduates in 2019. 70% of male graduates are employed while only 45% of the female graduates are employed.

Table 3-3: Graduate employability by the gender

Employability Status	Female	Male
Employed	45%	70%
Unemployed	55%	30%

As shown in table 3-3, more than 50% of the female graduates were unemployed and the difference between the employability rates of the two genders is 25%. Table 3-4 illustrates the graduate employability by the gender of each faculty.

Table 3-4: Faculty wise graduate employability rate by gender

Employability Status	Faculty							
	FCMS		FHU		FSC		FSOSC	
	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M
Employed	78%	90%	28%	18%	83%	86%	24%	34%
Unemployed	22%	10%	72%	82%	17%	14%	76%	66%

The highest employability rate among female graduates belongs to the Faculty of Science while the lowest belongs to the Faculty of Social Sciences. Similarly, the highest employability rate among male graduates belongs to the Faculty of Commerce and Management studies while the lowest belongs to the Faculty of Humanities. Furthermore, except for the Faculty of Humanities, the graduate employability rate of male graduates of the other three Faculties is higher than that of the female graduates. Also, the rates between females and males of the Faculty of Science differs only from 3% indicating that both female graduates and the male graduates are having equal chances of getting employed.



3.3 CHARACTERISTICS OF THE EMPLOYED GRADUATES

Some of the important characteristics of the graduate employment after six months of upon completion of the degree involves average time to find the employment, status of the employment, type of employment, economic sector of the employment and average monthly salary.

3.3.1 Average Time to Find the Employment

A graduate may find an employment before University, during University years and after University. Most of the graduates of the University in 2019, have found their employments after the University period. That is, 67% out of the total sample has found their jobs after completing the degree. And 2% of graduates worked before joining the University for studies. As shown in figure 3-7, compared to the number of graduates who have found the employments after completing the degree, a considerable amount has found employments during the University period.

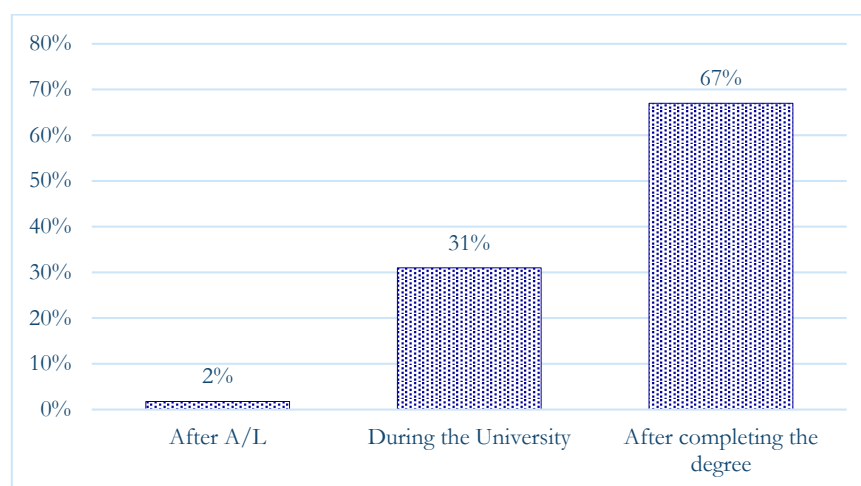


Figure 3-7: Time point to find the employment

Further analysis revealed that, the average time to find an employment was approximately five months and majority of the graduates have found their employments after the first six months of completing the degree. The below table 3-5 illustrates the time to find the employment descriptively.

Table 3-5: Time to find employment after completing the degree

Number of months from the graduation	Percentage
0	11.4%
1	10.3%
2	4.5%
3	6.9%
4	7.2%
5	11.0%
6	23.1%
7	15.2%
8	10.3%

3.3.2 Status of the Employment

An employment can be permanent or temporary. Also, people can engage in voluntary services and create their own businesses and become entrepreneurs. The findings of the previous surveys have pointed out that, the graduates of the University of Kelaniya engage in all of these employment status. Accordingly, as shown in figure 3-8, most of the graduates, 53%, have engaged in permanent employment while 44% of the graduates are in temporary or contract basis or assignment basis employments. Compared to the previous year 2018, percentage of graduates who are employed in permanent employments have increased by 32.5% and consequently, the percentage of temporary employment have decreased by 25%. Moreover, when compared with the statistics of previous year 2018, it seems the percentage of graduates who have become entrepreneurs has been increased.

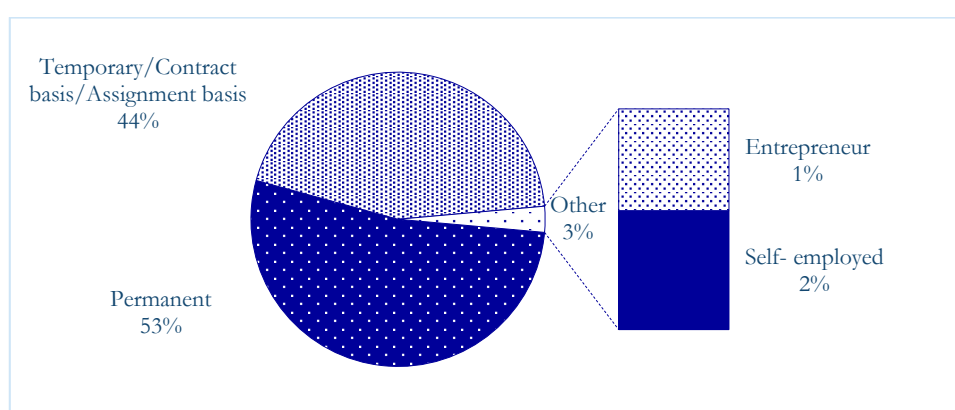


Figure 3-8: Status of the employment

The further analysis of the temporary employment revealed that, most of the graduates whose status of the employment belongs to the temporary category are working in the private sector. That is, about 63% of temporary employees are working in the private sector. Below figure 3-9 illustrates the types of temporary employments of the graduates of 2019.

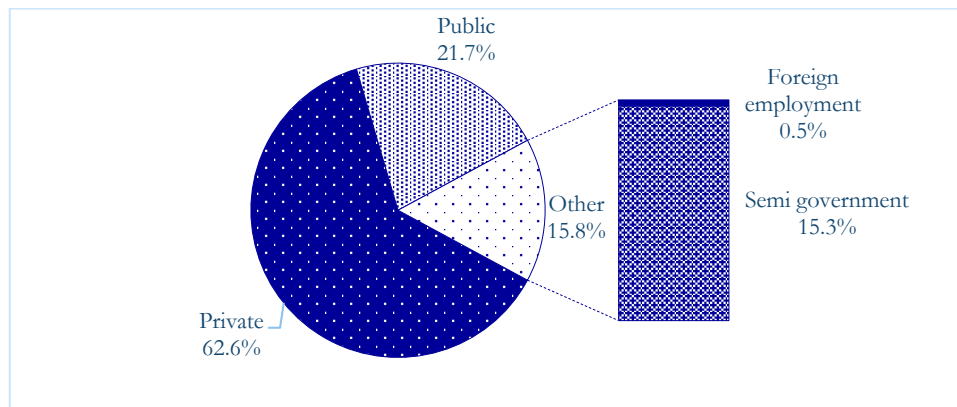


Figure 3-9: Type of temporary employment

3.3.3 Type of Employment

Types of the employment indicate the sector, which the graduate employment belongs to such as public sector, private sector, self-employment and foreign employment. Accordingly, most of the graduates of the University of Kelaniya are employed in the private sector, while the least are working in foreign employment. Figure 3-10 illustrates the distribution of graduate employees among the employment types.

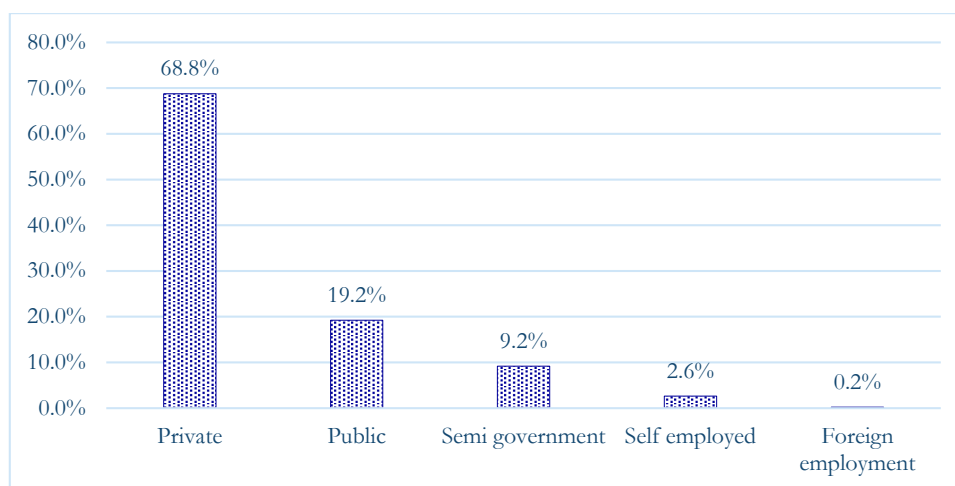


Figure 3-10: Type of employment

As shown in figure 3-10, 68.8% of the employed graduates are working in the private sector while, 19.2% and 9.2% are working in government sector and semi- government sector. Involvement in self- employment and foreign sector employment represent 2.6% and 0.2% respectively.

Compared with each sector, the percentage of employed graduates who work in the private sector is thrice more than the public sector employment. This may indicate the difficulty in acquiring a public sector employment within a short period of time after graduation in Sri Lanka. Moreover, compared to the previous year, engagement in the private sector employment and public sector employment has increased and decreased respectively. But, involvement in semi government employments and self- employments does not exhibit any difference. Furthermore, foreign employment rate has also decreased.

Table 3-6: Type of employment by the Faculty

Type of Employment	FCMS	FHU	FSC	FSOSC	Overall
Private	85.4%	41.9%	68.8%	49.4%	68.8%
Public	7.0%	34.9%	22.9%	28.7%	19.2%
Semi government	4.7%	16.3%	5.7%	20.7%	9.2%
Self employed	2.9%	7.0%	1.9%	1.1%	2.6%
Foreign employment	0.0%	0.0%	0.6%	0.0%	0.2%

Inter Faculty comparison on the type of employment indicates that, graduates of the Faculty of Commerce and Management Studies work with more in the private sector than other Faculties. However, in general, the majority of the employed graduates of each Faculty works in the private sector. It is clearly can be seen in table 3-6, among the four faculties, a higher percentage, nearly 50%, of the employed graduates of the Faculty of Humanities as well as the Faculty of Social Sciences work in either public service or semi-government sector. Also the statistics indicate that only the graduates from the faculty of science engage with foreign employment

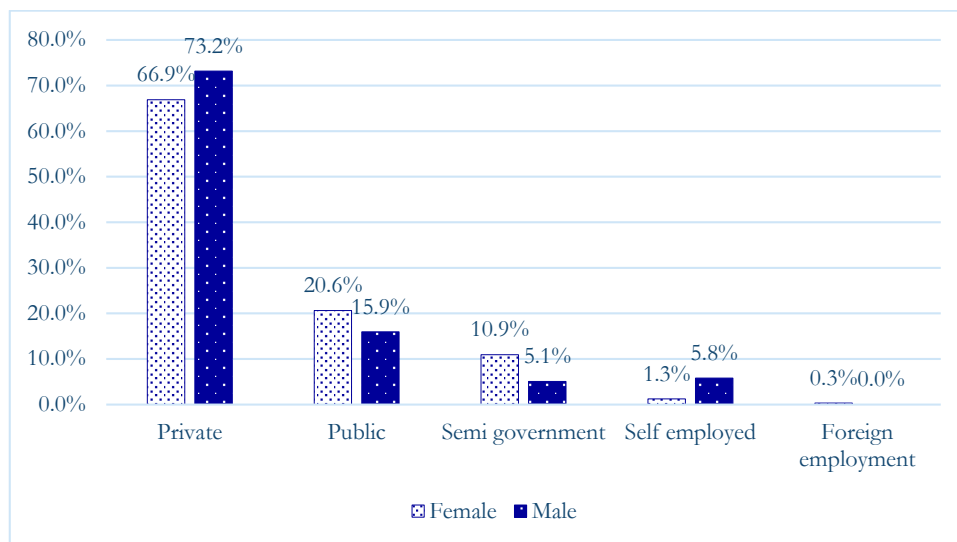


Figure 3-11: Type of employment by gender

Employed male graduates are working in the private sector than that of female graduates while employed female graduates work in public sector and semi government sector than that of male graduates. In addition, compared to the employed female graduates, majority of employed graduates have engaged in self- employments. But, according to the survey results, only female graduates are working in foreign employments.

3.3.4 Employability by the Economic Sector

The survey respondents were requested to select an economic sector based on their employment. For this, they were suggested about 15 economic sectors. According to the statistics revealed through the survey, 24.5% that is the majority, belongs to education sector second highest percentage of employed graduates, 14.8%, works in IT sector and 12% are working in manufacturing field. Moreover, 17% of respondents has mentioned miscellaneous economic sectors. The least participated economic sectors are defense, plantation and power and energy. Below table 3-7 indicates the rate of employability by the economic sector respectively.

Table 3-7: Employability by the economic sector

Economic Sector	Percentage	Economic Sector	Percentage
Defense	0.4%	Professional, Scientific & Technical	3.3%
Plantation	0.4%	Trade	4.4%
Power and energy	0.4%	Hotel/ Travels/ Tourism	4.6%
Telecommunication	1.3%	Bank finance/ Insurance	7.6%
Agriculture/ Dairy	2.2%	Manufacturing	12.0%
Health care	2.2%	IT	14.8%
Public Administration	2.2%	Other	17.0%
Construction/ Engineering	2.6%	Education	24.5%

3.3.5 Gross Monthly Salary

The majority of the employed graduates of the University in 2019, which represents 24%, earn between Rs. 30,000 to Rs. 39,999. And there are 11% of employed graduates who earn over Rs. 75,000. But, compared to each salary group, a considerable percentage is

having a salary below Rs. 20,000. The table 3-8 indicates the percentage of employed graduates per the gross monthly salary.

Table 3-8: Gross monthly salary

Gross Monthly salary (Rs.)	Percentage
Less than 20,000	13%
20,000 - 29,999	18%
30,000 - 39,999	24%
40,000 - 49,999	21%
50,000 - 59,999	5%
60,000 - 75,000	7%
Over 75,000	11%

The inter Faculty comparison of gross monthly salary indicates that, the graduates of the Faculty of Science are having highest salaries among the other Faculties. That is, higher percentage of graduates belonging to the Faculty of Science earn more than Rs. 75,000 compared to others. Also, 40% of graduates of the Faculty of Science, 30% of graduates of the Faculty of Humanities, 15% of graduates of the Faculty of Commerce and Management Studies and 9% of graduates of the Faculty of Social Sciences earn over Rs. 50,000. This indicates that, graduates of the Faculty of Social Sciences and Faculty of Commerce and Management studies are getting salaries lower than the other two Faculties. Moreover, as shown in table 3-9, least percentage of the graduates of the Faculty of Humanities and the Faculty of Science are getting salary lower than Rs. 20,000.

Table 3-9: Gross monthly salary by Faculty

Gross Monthly Salary	FCMS	FHU	FSC	FSOSC
Less than 20,000	16%	5%	7%	21%
20,000 - 29,999	24%	9%	8%	30%
30,000 - 39,999	25%	35%	21%	24%
40,000 - 49,999	20%	21%	24%	16%
50,000 - 59,999	4%	7%	6%	6%
60,000 - 75,000	6%	14%	10%	3%
Over 75,000	5%	9%	24%	0%

According to the survey findings in 2019, male graduates tend to have higher salaries than female graduates. Per the statistics in table 3-10, 38% of male graduates earn over Rs. 50,000 while only 18% of female graduates earn more than Rs. 50,000.

Table 3-10: Gross monthly salary by gender

Gross Monthly Salary	Male	Female
Less than 20,000	11.6%	13.1%
20,000 - 29,999	11.6%	21.3%
30,000 - 39,999	16.7%	27.5%
40,000 - 49,999	23.2%	19.7%
50,000 - 59,999	6.5%	5.0%
60,000 - 75,000	5.8%	8.1%
Over 75,000	24.6%	5.3%

3.4 ATTRIBUTES OF THE EMPLOYABILITY

Graduate employability depends on some special attributes which can be acquired during University years or even before the University. Several studies conducted over many countries as well as the previous studies on graduate employability by the University itself have pointed out, these attributes affect the chance of finding employment and keeping up employment. Gunaratne, Weerathne, et al has revealed in their previous study of graduate employability of the University of Kelaniya in 2018, academic performance, English language proficiency, the medium of instruction, experiences gained through internship training, participation in extracurricular activities, and involvement in full- time or part-time employment during academic years have effects on the employability of the graduates passed out from the University of Kelaniya (Gunaratne, Weerathne, Thilakaratne, Sarathchandra, & Devindi, 2020). Moreover, Gunaratne PSM, Asoka, and Damayanthi have pointed out in their study that medium of instruction has a major impact on graduate employability in Sri Lanka (Gunaratne, Asoka, & Damayanthi, 2018). Apart from this, Martin, Rolf and Annelore have found in their research that the graduates with the flying colors get more chances of having an employment as soon as they leave the University (Martin, Rolf, & Annelore, 2013).

The following section reveals the applicability of these attributes on employability for the graduates of the University of Kelaniya in 2019.

3.4.1 Graduate Employability and Academic Performance

Various studies on graduate employability have revealed that the higher the academic performance is the higher the employability rate. Martin, Rolf and Annelore in their research clearly says that the top 25% of the graduates get more chances of being called for an interview, even than the lowest 25% (Martin, Rolf, & Annelore, 2013).

According to the statistics illustrated in table 3-11, most of the graduates, that is 58%, have obtained a second class upper division, while the lowest number of graduates, 11%, have obtained first class honors. When comparing the exhibited academic performances of the graduates of each Faculty it is clearly seen that, lowest percentage of first class honors, 4%, has been received by the graduates of the Faculty of Social Sciences while the graduates of the Faculty of Commerce and Management Studies and Faculty of Humanities have received 16% of first class awards. 14% of the graduates belonging to the Faculty of Science has received first class honors. Moreover, from the graduates who have received ordinary passes, the highest percentage, 36%, belongs to the Faculty of Science while the lowest percentage, 7%, belongs to the Faculty of Social Sciences.

Table 3-11: Academic performances of the graduates 2019

Faculty	First Class	Second Upper	Second Lower	Ordinary Pass	Total Number of Graduates
FCMS	16%	37%	20%	27%	515
FHU	16%	59%	9%	16%	391
FSC	14%	29%	21%	36%	453
FSOSC	4%	86%	3%	7%	849
Overall Performance	11%	58%	12%	19%	2208

The respondents of the survey do not exhibit a much deviation from the population performance that, the highest overall performance of the respondents, which is 61% out of the total, is also second class upper division. However, the remaining 39% of the respondents has equally distributed among the other class awards and ordinary passes. The

table 3-12 shows the percentage of respondents by the academic performance by each Faculty and the overall performance.

Table 3-12: Academic performance of the respondents 2019

Faculty	First Class	Second Upper	Second Lower	Ordinary Pass	Number of Respondents
FCMS	16%	42%	26%	16%	211
FHU	23%	62%	7%	9%	160
FSC	18%	28%	22%	31%	186
FSOSC	5%	90%	2%	3%	348
Overall Performance	13%	61%	13%	13%	905

The analysis of the survey 2019 indicates that the employability rate of the graduate who have obtained first class honors is higher than the other class awards. 74% of the first class honors receivers are employed while 70% of second class lower division receivers and 69% of ordinary pass receivers are employed. A little conflict arises that, comparatively a higher percentage of second class upper division receivers are unemployed.

Table 3-13: Employability by the academic performance 2019

Employment Status	First Class	Second Upper	Second Lower	Ordinary Pass
Employed	74%	38%	70%	69%
Unemployed	26%	62%	30%	31%

As shown in table 3-13, the employability rate is higher than 50% for the graduates who have received first class honors, second class lower division and ordinary pass. But, the employability rate of second class upper division receivers is 38%, which is 12% lower than 50%. That is, the number of employed graduates who have second-class upper division is lower than that of those who are unemployed. However, this indicates that the graduates who have gained a first class honors have higher chances of getting employments than other grades.

3.4.2 Graduate Employability and the Medium of Instruction

The University of Kelaniya offers various degree programs to the undergraduates in English medium, as a combination of English and Sinhala Medium and in Sinhala medium. Since the official language of Sri Lanka is Sinhala, there exists an effect the medium of instruction of the higher education program on the employability. This effect influences the employability along with the language proficiency as well.

The sample of the graduate employability survey 2019 consists with 52.4% of graduates whose medium of the instruction of their respective degree program was English. And, the medium of instruction of 36.2% of the graduates of the sample has been Sinhala while 11.4% of respondent have studied in both English medium and Sinhala medium.

Table 3-14: Respondents by the medium of instruction 2019

Medium of Instruction	Percentage
English	52.4%
Sinhala	36.2%
English and Sinhala	11.4%

According to the statistics show in the table 3-15, only the graduate who has followed the degree program in English medium has an employability rate exceeding the unemployment. That is, 77% the graduates whose medium of instruction of the degree program has been English are employed the employability rate of the other two categories of the medium of instruction is 29% and 19% respectively.

Table 3-15: Graduate employability by the medium of instruction

Medium of Instruction	Employed	Unemployed
English	77%	23%
English and Sinhala	29%	71%
Sinhala	19%	81%

The graduates who have followed the degree program in Sinhala medium or in a combination of English and Sinhala medium have received comparatively a fewer employment opportunity.

3.4.3 Graduate Employability and the English Language Proficiency

In a country like Sri Lanka, where the native language differs from the international language the competency of language skills contributes majorly for the employability of people. The respondents of the survey 2019, has shown that most of them has obtained an “A” pass for English language in general certificate of examination- ordinary level. Out of the total respondents only 3% have failed the GCE- O/L examination.

Table 3-16: English language proficiency and employability

English Language Proficiency in GCE O/L	Respondents	Employed	Unemployed
A	42%	71%	29%
B	13%	46%	54%
C	28%	39%	61%
S	13%	20%	80%
W/F	3%	25%	75%

As shown in table 3-16, only the graduates who have obtained an “A” grade has a higher employability rate than 50%. The employability rate of all the other grades is below 50% indicating that the more graduates are unemployed than employed. The top 20% in English language competency represents 42% of the sample and among them 71% are employed while the bottom 20% of the English language competency which represent 3% of the sample has only 25% employability rate. These values indicate that; the English language competency has a strong effect on the graduate employability of the University of Kelaniya.

Moreover, the graduates who have a higher grade for English in GCE- O/L examination and has followed the degree in English medium has a higher employability rate than others.

As shown in figure 3-12 graduates who have received lower grades in English in GCE-O/L and followed the degree program in English medium has the lowest employability rate.

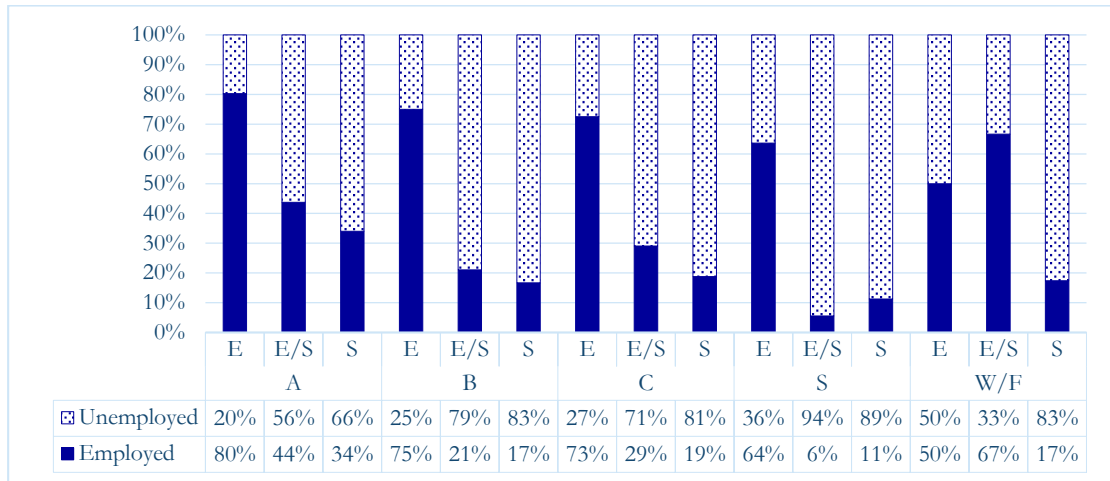


Figure 3-12: Graduate employability by the English language proficiency vs medium of instruction

3.4.4 Graduate Employability and Internship Training

Some of the graduates of the University of Kelaniya undergo internship training as a part of the academic activities of their respective degree programs. Accordingly, a graduate may participate in internship training which is compulsory and credits are counted for the GPA, compulsory and credits are not counted in GPA, elective and credits are counted for the GPA and elective and credits are not counted in GPA.

As shown in figure 3-13, 52% of graduates, who have gone through an internship component during their study period are employed while 45% of graduates, who have not received any internship training are employed. That is, graduates with the experiences of internship training has employability rate exceeding 50% indicating that having an internship during the study period enhances the chances of getting an employment.

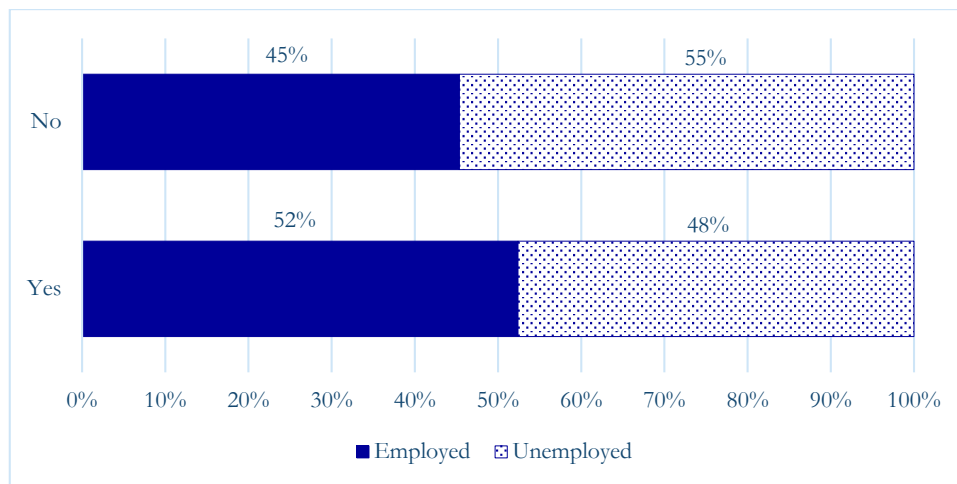


Figure 3-13: Graduate employability with respect to the internship training

3.4.5 Graduate Employability and Participation in Extra- Curricular Activities

Being a graduate not solemnly lead the path to a strong occupation. The graduates have to sharpen their interpersonal skills to compete with others to get an employment and to keep on the employment while developing their career path. Participation in extra- curricular activities such as sports, aesthetic activities, students' clubs and association develops the interpersonal skills of graduates and gives the opportunity to identify the strengths and weaknesses of their own. Previous studies have revealed that, communications skills, teamwork, reading/ writing skills, ability to adapt to new situations, analytical and problem solving skills, effective use of IT, English language proficiency, decision making skills and sector specific skills are some of the most valued skills and competencies by the employers. (Gunaratne, Asoka, & Damayanthi, 2018)

According to the respondents' profile, 64% of the graduates have involved in extra-curricular activities and among them 58% are employed while those who have not participated in extra- curricular activities only 50% are employed. The below figure 3-14 shows the difference of graduate employability based on the participation in extra-curricular activities.

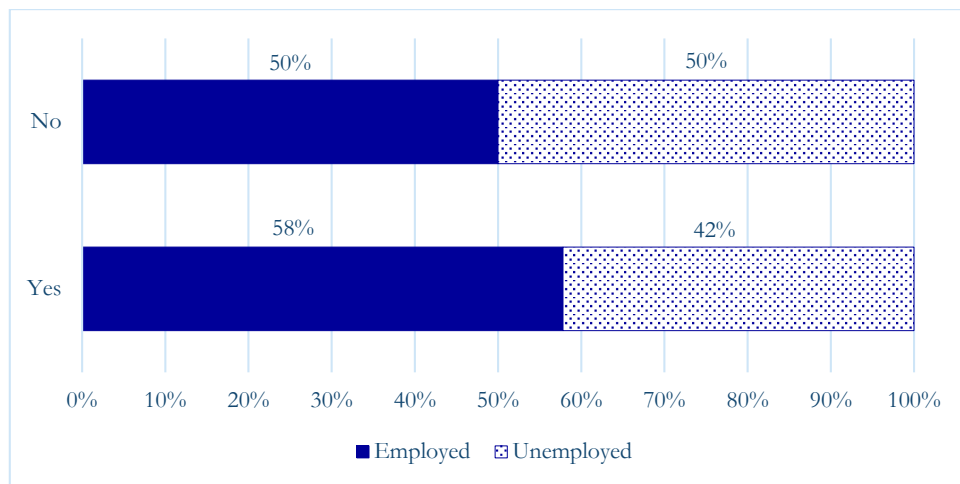


Figure 3-14: Graduate employability with respect to the participation in extra-curricular activities

3.4.6 Graduate Employability and Involvement in Full-time/ Part-time Employment During the University

Some of the graduates so of the University of Kelaniya have been working during the academic periods of the University. The experiences gained through those employments have affected the employability rate of the graduates in 2019.

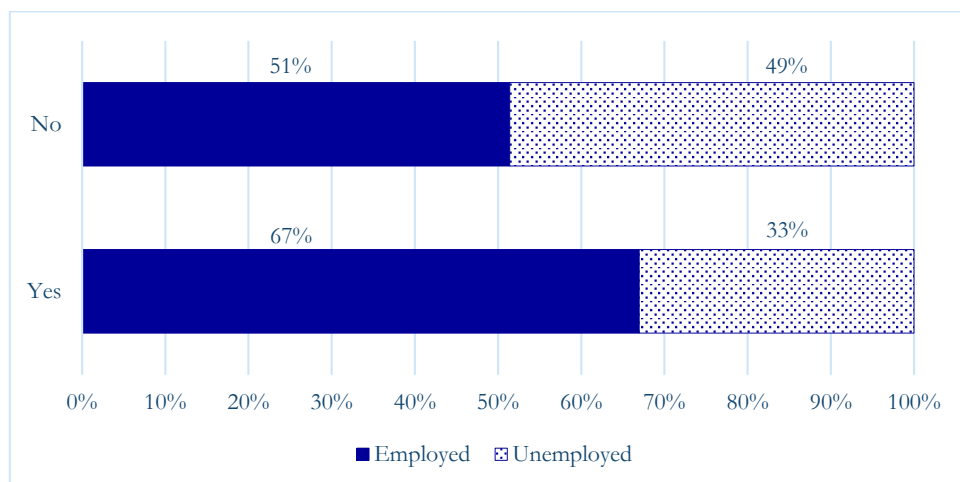


Figure 3-15: Graduate employability and the involvement in full-time or part-time employment

The findings of the survey (figure 3-15) indicate that the employability rate of the graduates who have involved in full-time/ part-time employment during the academic period (67%) is higher than that of who have not (51%)

3.5 GRADUATES' ATTITUDES ON EMPLOYABILITY

The study focused on getting the insights of graduate employability from graduates' point of view so that the University can have a wider knowledge on how to improve the career guidance process of during the academic period. Accordingly, the respondents were asked about the way they found their employments, what the most influential factor was to get the job, relevance of the degree program to the degree and the job satisfaction.

Accordingly, the majority of the employed graduates, 34%, had found their corresponding employments via online media like Topjobs, LinkedIn and etc. As depicted in figure 3-16, second popular method of finding employments is personal contacts. 3% out of the total employed graduates of the sample has found their employment through career guidance.

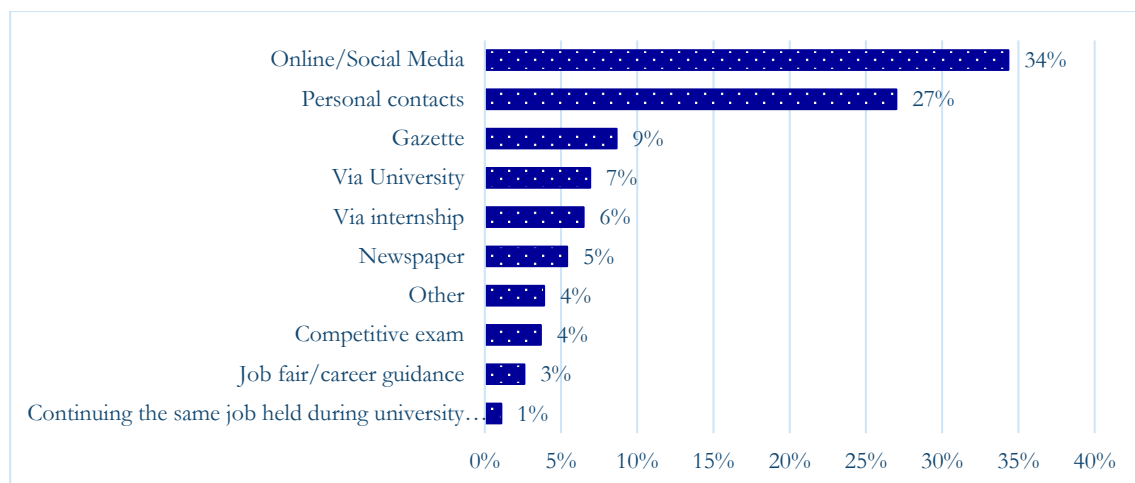


Figure 3-16: Method of finding the job

The respondents have also mentioned that, according to their point of view, the most influential factor for them to get an employment was the degree. This factor has been mentioned by more than 64% of the respondents. The second most influential factor for obtaining an employment is the personality of the candidate. 53% of respondents have mentioned that personality has been a major influential factor for them to get an employment. (figure 3-17)

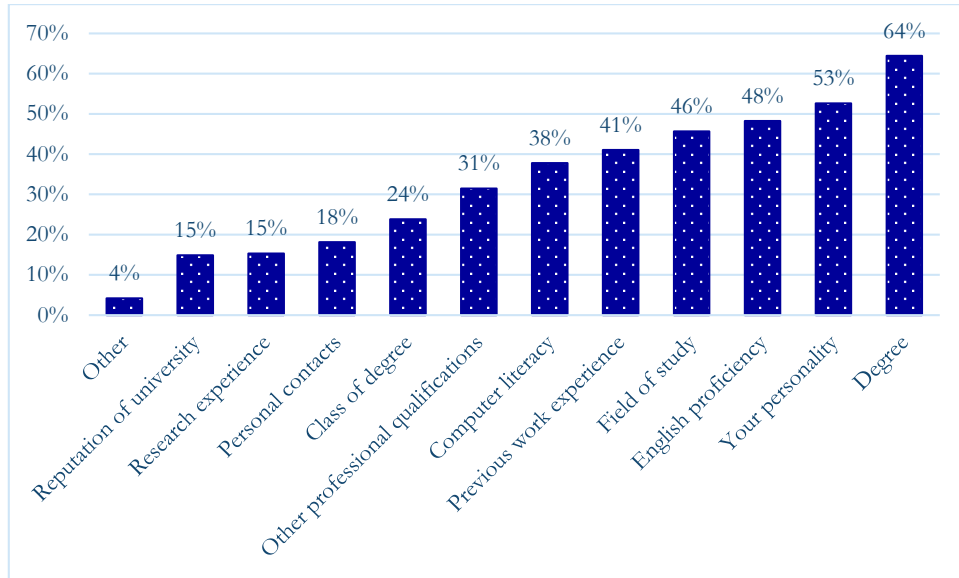


Figure 3-17: Most influential factor to obtain an employment

Apart from degree and personality, English language proficiency, field of study, work experience and proficiency in computer literacy are also mentioned by the graduates as the most influential factor for employability.

Since the most influential factor for being employed is degree, the relevance of the corresponding degree program to the current employment of the graduates were asked of the respondents and 52.6%, which is the majority, has mentioned that their degree program has been very related to their corresponding employment.

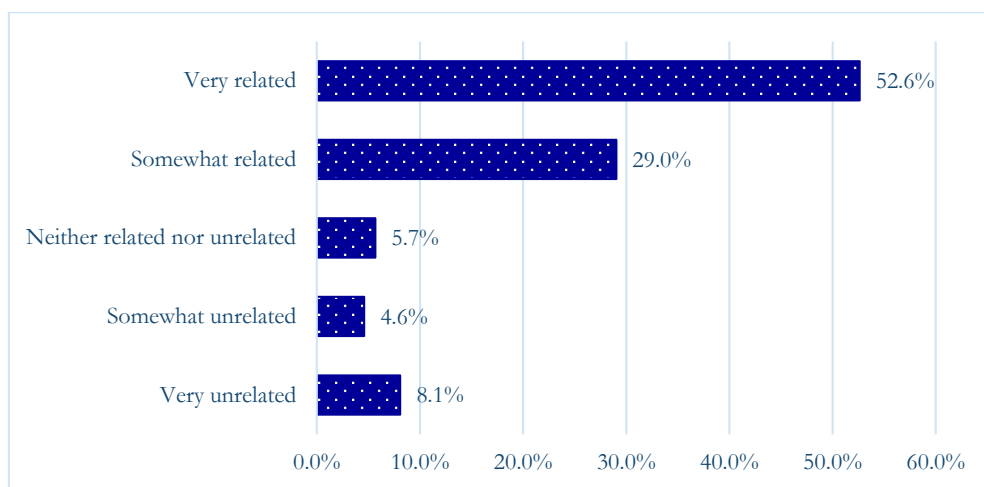


Figure 3-18: Relevance to the degree program

As shown in figure 3-18, 81.6% of the respondents have mentioned their employments are related to the degree program while 12.7% of the respondents have mentioned that the degree program is irrelevant to their degree programs.

Moreover, per the statistics revealed by the figure 3-19, majority of the employed respondents are satisfied about their employment while 38% of respondents are strongly satisfied about their employments. Only 7% are dissatisfied about their employments.

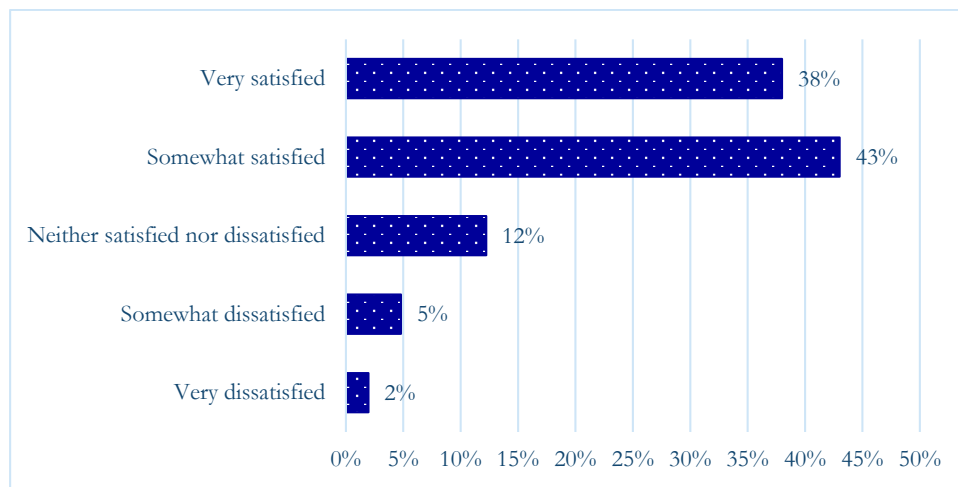


Figure 3-19: Job satisfaction

3.6 UNEMPLOYMENT

The survey findings indicate that, nearly a half of the graduates of 2019 are unemployed even within the 6 months to 10-month period after completing the degree. Therefore, the survey also focused on the graduates who are unemployed and explored about the reasons that they yet unemployed.

Per the points of view of unemployed graduates, the main reason that they do not have an employment is, basically, a suitable employment has not been found and they are yet looking for employments. The reasons for unemployment is illustrated in figure 3-20.

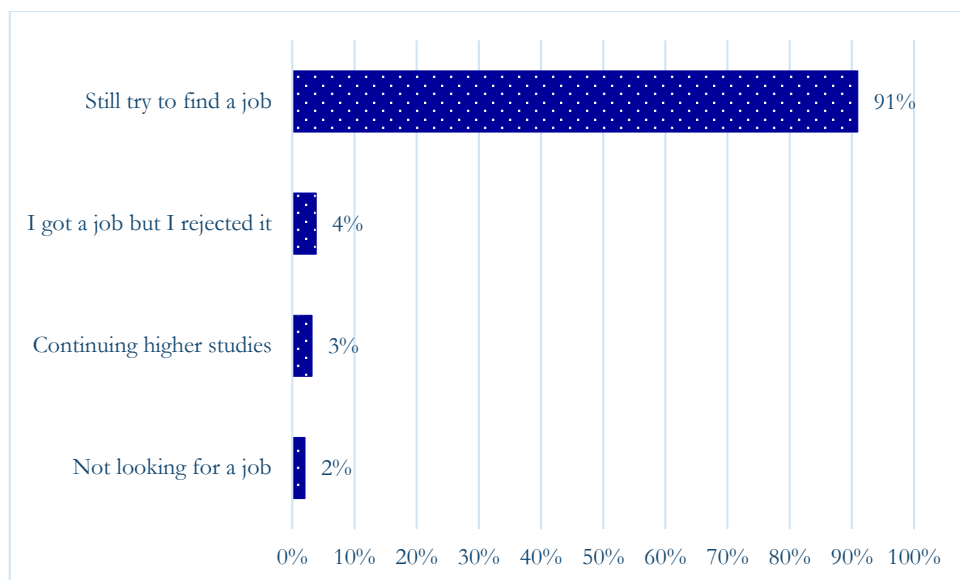


Figure 3-20: Reasons for unemployment

As shown in figure 3-20, 91% of unemployed graduates were trying to find a suitable job and 4% have rejected jobs they received. The 4% of graduates who rejected jobs have mentioned the main reason they rejected the job was the low salary along with heavy workload. Moreover, some of them have mentioned, the gap between qualification and skills with the suitability of employment, less recognition, less career development and travelling and transportation problems were the reasons for them to reject jobs. The other

3% of unemployed graduates are continuing higher studies and 2% are not looking for employments. A few of these 2% are trying to start their own business or trying commence and develop self- employments.

4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Employability is one of the prominent factors for a University to show off the excellence of higher education. A University should produce graduates, who are well shaped to grab the opportunities in a competitive job market and to be attracted by employers. The University of Kelaniya annually conducts the graduate employability survey in order to measure how far the University has succeeded in creating an outstanding graduate.

Accordingly, the graduate employability survey of 2019 was carried out within 6- months to 10- month period after the degree completion date of the main cohort. On that account, the survey was conducted between October 2019 to January 2020. Since the new methodology adopted in the 2018 survey was very successful, the same method was used to conduct the survey for 2019. The graduates belonging to the main cohort were separated into two groups in which the graduates of the Faculty of Commerce and Management Studies and Faculty of Science received the online questionnaire and the graduates of the Faculty of Humanities and Faculty of Social Sciences received the paper-based questionnaire. The survey showed an approximately 60% response rate in which compared to the surveys conducted in 2016 and 2017 shows a considerably higher response rate. However, to comply with the proportion of graduates from each Faculty in 2019, and after validating inappropriate and incomplete responses, a sample of 905 responses were selected randomly from the received responses.

Consequently, the survey findings revealed that 51% of the graduates of the University of Kelaniya in 2019 are employed and most of them are having permanent employment mostly in the private sector and is related to the educational field and on average earning salaries in between Rs. 30,000 to Rs. 40,000.

Compared to the graduate employability rate of 2018, the employability 2019 shows a 16% drop. It can be questionable that, whether the employment rate was affected by the Easter attacks in Sri Lanka. However, when considered the employability rates by each Faculty, the employability rate of the Faculty of Science has reported a 5% increment than 2018 while the Faculty of Commerce and Management studies have become successful in keeping the same employability rate without a drop. On the other hand, the graduate employability rate of the Faculty of Humanities and Faculty of Social Sciences has reported 50% and 26% decrement compared to the previous year. The percentage drop of the graduate employability of the Faculty of Humanities is 50% which is greater than the overall drop of graduate employability compared to 2018.

The survey finding of 2018 also indicated that the degree has a higher impact on graduate employability which is also mentioned by the respondents of the survey 2019. Accordingly, as reported earlier, the University has focused on more job-oriented and outstanding degree programs or to review the current degree programs and develop them to match the current cooperate needs.

However, the drop in graduate employability rates of the Faculty of Humanities and the Faculty of Social Sciences has affected the overall employability rate solemnly since the faculty of Science and the Faculty of Commerce and Management Studies has not lowered the graduate employability rate.

According to the comments given by the respondents of the survey, most of the graduates have mentioned that the main obstacle for them to get employed is the lack of working experience. Also, fewer vocational qualifications are also mentioned to be an obstacle to find better employment. Some of the respondents have mentioned that along with degree graduates needs to have professional qualifications to stand out from the other individuals. Moreover, the loss of suitable vacancies in respective fields and less competency in soft

skills and other skills such as English language proficiency and competency in IT literacy is also lacking the graduates to get employment. Especially, throughout the survey, it was found that there are a considerable number of graduates seeking government employment. And those who are looking for government employments have mentioned that vacancies are not called for respective employments. Furthermore, the graduates who are focusing on being entrepreneurs and are about to involve in self-employments have mentioned that they are lacking business ideas and initial capital to establish their businesses has been a greater barrier.

The respondents have also commented about the things that can be done to facilitate the first employment after completing the degree. Accordingly, the graduates require to have a description of employment opportunities in the respective fields of study at the beginning of the degree program or at least in the last semester of the academic period. According to their points of view, undergraduates need to have a good understanding of the global and local job market to get the maximum use of opportunities, and hence they are seeking the guidance of the University. Moreover, a few graduates have suggested having an interactive employment support cell on social media networks like Facebook or in professional networks like LinkedIn to update about the latest employment opportunities so that lecturers, other staff, and students can provide information regarding job opportunities and build communication links with industry.

The overall feedback given for the University by the respondents is that 95% of them would like to recommend the University of Kelaniya and the degree program for others. And the remaining 5%, neglect recommending the University mainly since unemployment and further it is mentioned that the degree programs need to be updated and aligned to current global situations and needs to restructure to give undergraduates more job-oriented learning opportunities.

The graduate employability survey of 2019 has given some fresh ideas to increase the employment rate of the University. The statistics revealed in this report can be used to restructure the career guidance criterion to support undergraduates in their first employment after completing the degree.

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2019 GRADUATE EMPLOYABILITY

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