GRADUATE EMPLOYABILITY

University of Kelaniya

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UNIVERSITY OF KELANIYA

University Statistics & Data Monitoring Unit

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SUMMARY

The graduate employability rate of the University of Kelaniya in 2021 is 60.5%. In overview, most of the graduates are working in the private sector and are having permanent placements. On average, they earn between Rs. 40,000 to Rs. 49,999 average monthly salary. Most of the graduates have found employment after completing the degree program and the average time to find employment after completing the degree program is 8 months.

In contrast, the current economic crisis has caused fewer job opportunities for graduates and the high cost of living has caused some graduates to not accept job offers they received away from their hometown.

PROLOGUE

The present report is the outcome of the annual graduate employability survey of 2021 conducted by the University Statistics and Data Monitoring Unit of the University of Kelaniya. The survey was carried out continuously for the sixth time since 2016.

Adopting the strengths and features from the changes made in the previous surveys, the graduate employability survey 2021 has been a clear reflection of the status of the graduates of the University in 2021. The findings of the survey reveal the influential factors for employability as well as the reasons for unemployability.

The survey is not free from limitations. Incomplete or invalid responses and 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 the undergraduates could get immediate employment opportunities the utmost purpose of doing the survey will be fulfilled.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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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.

> **"With the changing economy, no one has lifetime employment. But community colleges provide lifetime employability"**
>
> ~Barack Obama

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 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.

- 2,655 undergraduate students have passed out in 2021

- 2,517 are proper batch graduates.

Assumptions

- Repeat students are not considered for the survey.

- Faculty of Medicine was excluded from the survey.

METHODOLOGY

The 2021 survey was conducted using the newly introduced data collection platform of the USDMU, surveys.kln.ac.lk. Thus, the data collection was conducted online, and the data collection period began in April 2022 and ended in September 2022.

Population and Target Population and accessible population

The University graduate output of the 2021 is 2,655 students which includes the proper batch students as well as the repeat candidates. As indicated in the table 2-1, out of the 2,655 graduates, 2,517 are proper batch graduates.

The study omitted the MBBS graduates of the Faculty of Medicine assuming that, they all get employment right away. Also, the BSc-Speech & Hearing Sciences students had not responded to the survey. Thus, the accessible population of the survey is 2,342.

Table 1: Population, target population, accessible population, and response rates

Faculty	Graduate Output	Target Population	Accessible Population	Response Rate
FCMS	481	478	478	79%
FCT	110	110	110	100%
FHU	548	518	518	77%
FMED	209	175	0	0%
FSC	419	373	373	51%
FSS	888	863	863	82%
Overall	2,655	2,517	2,342	76%

Sampling Method, Sample Size, Sampling Technique, and the Sample

To reduce the sample biasedness, probability sampling technique was adopted and the sample size for the study based on the previous survey was as following.

Equation 1: Sample size by proportions

$$n = \frac{Z_\alpha^2\, p\,(1-p)}{\left(\frac{a}{100}\right)^2 + \left(\frac{Z_\alpha^2\, p\,(1-p)}{N}\right)};$$

where Z_α=1.96, a=2.5, p=0.34, N=2,342

And thus,

$$n = 868$$

Five faculties of the University were considered for the study and therefore, stratified random sampling was used for the study considering each Faculty under the study as a stratum. Accordingly, the sample was allocated to each Faculty proportional to the population size. The sample sizes for each Faculty are indicated in the table 2.

Table 2: Required sample size.

Faculty	Accessible Population	Proportion	Sample Size
FCMS	478	20%	177
FCT	110	5%	41
FHU	518	22%	192
FSC	373	16%	138
FSS	863	37%	320

Data

The survey questionnaire consists of both open ended and closed ended questions. It included, general information regarding the graduates and their academic period, academic activities, and performance. Then,

upon the choice of their employment situation at that moment, either questions related to employed graduates or unemployed graduates could be answered.

The demographic variables collected through the questionnaire included name, gender, year of exam and z-score, location, and contact details. And the academic related questionnaire included, Faculty, name of the degree program, type of the degree, medium of instruction, English language proficiency, Academic performance, feedback about the University education, involvement in extra- curricular and concurrent activities.

Unemployment section of the questionnaire consisted of questions regarding the reasons for the unemployment, job rejection, job field of interest, and feedback on the University and requests for the University to improve employability. On the other hand, the employment section consisted of questions on status of the employment, type of employment, date of appointment, field of employment, and monthly salary. Furthermore, employment section also included method of finding the employment, most relevant aspect in getting a job, employment in relation to the study area and job satisfaction.

Data Analysis

This report focuses on an overall idea about the employability in relation to the employment as well as unemployment. Therefore, the study involves analyzing both quantitative data and qualitative data related to employed graduates and unemployed graduates. Basic descriptive statistics and content analysis is used to address the objectives of the study.

Monte Carlo sampling method was adopted for the survey and 1000 samples were considered to estimate the University's overall employability rate.

FINDINGS

Employability Rate

The employability rate of the University indicates the proportion of graduates in the respective year who are involved in any kind of paid employment during the data collection period of the survey. In general, it is the proportion of employed graduates of the University.

The employability rate for 2021 is 53.5%

The graduate employability rate is calculated based on the Monte Carlo simulation method using 1000 samples of size 868 and the calculations were done at a 95% level of significance.

The analysis revealed the graduate employability rate of 2021 to be 53.5% with a 95% confidence interval being (0.52, 0.55)
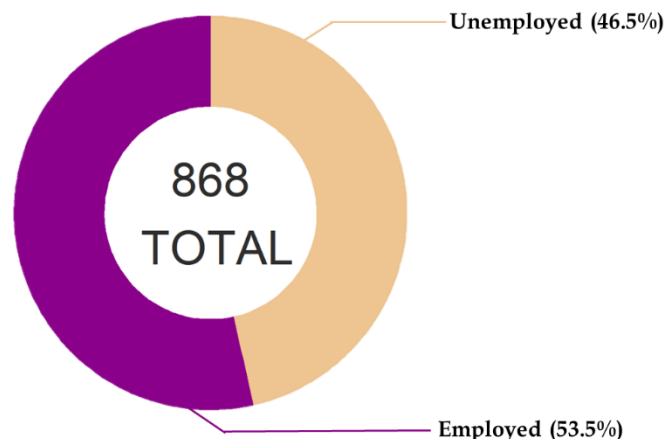
Figure 1: Employment Rate

Employment Rates Over Years

Graduate employment rates have shown a gradual decline over the past few years due to various reasons, but 2021 has shown an increase in the employment rate, which is equal to the rate in 2018.

Table 3: Employability rates over years

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Employment Rate	78%	81%	61%	51%	35%	54%

Figure 2: Employability rates over years

Employability by Faculty

The highest employability rate of the University of Kelaniya recorded from the Faculty of Commerce & Management Studies where 82.1% out of the total respondents are employed. As depicted in Table 3, the lowest employability rate is recorded from the graduates belonging to the Faculty of Social where only 28.7% of graduates are employed.

Table 4: Employability by Faculty

	FCMS	FCT	FHU	FSC	FSOSC
Employment Rate	82.1%	68.7%	43.5%	79.4%	28.7%
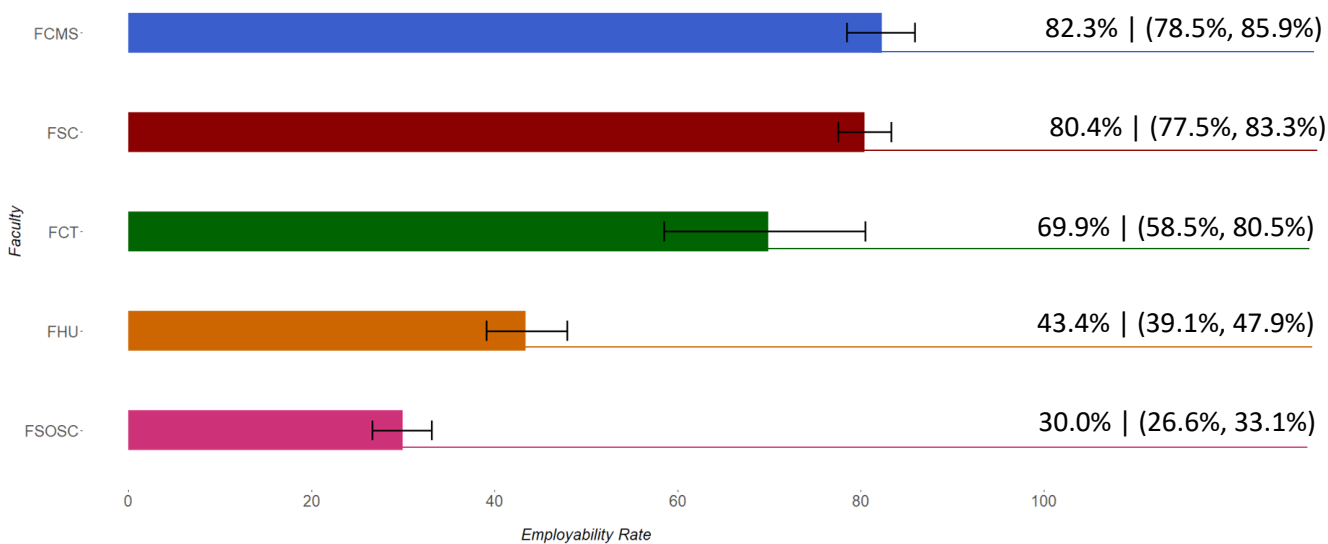
Figure 3: Employability by Faculty

Employability by Gender

The University has had more female students than male students for the past few years and the graduate output is thus dominated by the female population. Regardless of the situation, male graduates have the highest employability rate, which is 70.9% while female graduate employability rate is 47.2%. The findings are depicted in table 4

Table 5: Employability by gender

	FCMS	FCT	FHU	FSC	FSOSC	Overall
Employment Rate - Male	87.6%	68.9%	46.7%	90.6%	44.5%	70.9%
Employment Rate - Female	79.9%	71.1%	42.9%	74.2%	28.1%	47.2%
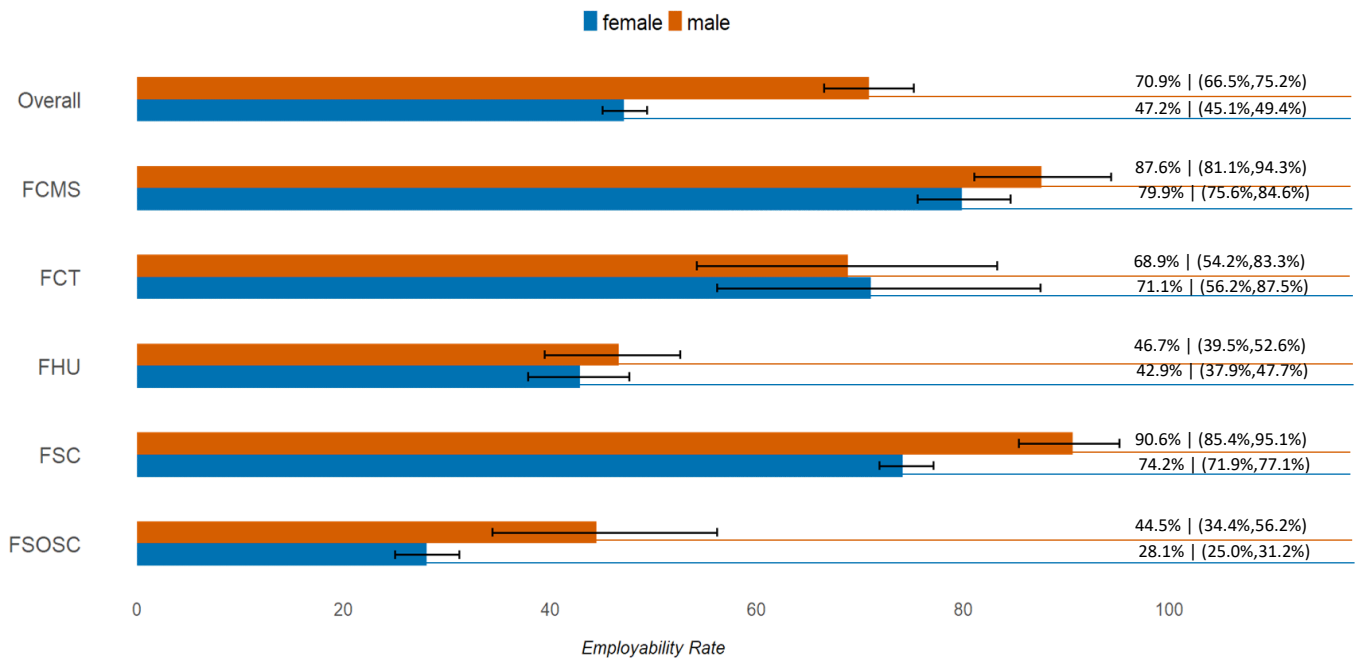
Figure 4: Employability by gender

Characteristics of Employment

As identified in the previous employability surveys from 2017 to 2020, employability has several characteristics. These include timing to find employment, the status of the employment, type of employment, economic sector, method of finding the employment, position, and average monthly salary. Characteristics of the employability helps to create an overall picture on how the graduates are moving forward in the corporate world.

Timing of the Employments
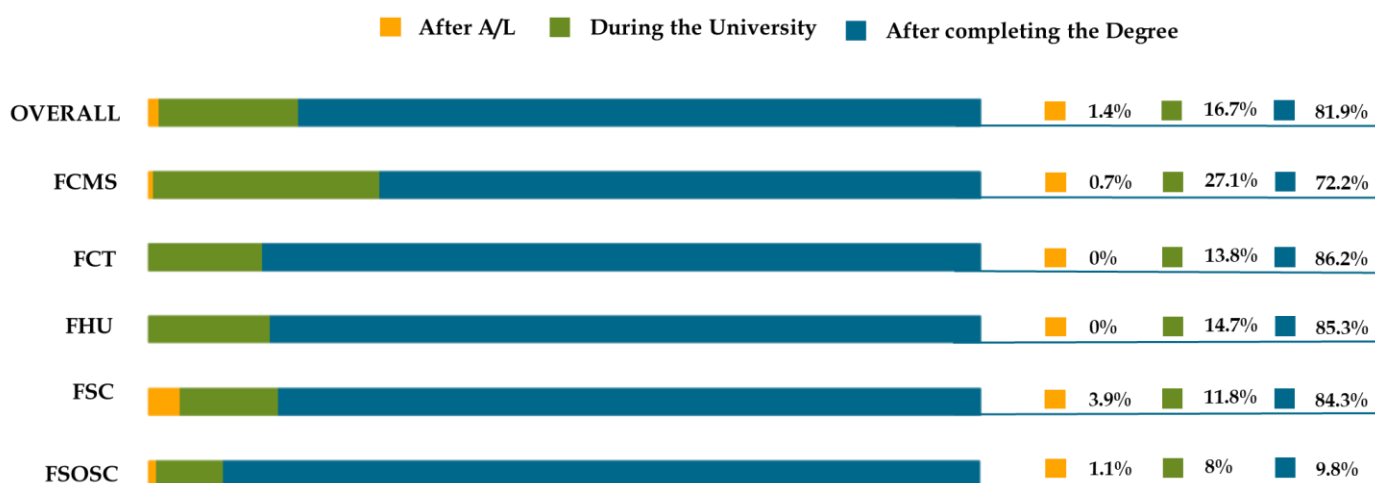
Figure 5: Timing of the employment

In overall, more than 80% of the employed graduates have found their employments after completing the studies at the University. And 1.4% has found employments before starting the studies at the University and 16.7% has found employments while studing at the University. Compared to the previous year's study, percentage of graduates who have found jobs during the study period has beed decreased by 10% (Gunarathne & Weerarathne, 2021). Faculty of Commerce & Management Studies, Faculty of Humanities and Faculty of Computing & Technology shows higer percentage of graduates who have found an employment during the academic period, compared to the other Faculties.

Apart from that, the shortest average time to find an employment is recorded from the Faculty of Science where it has taken 07 months on average for an employment. The table 6 depicts the average time to find an employment by Faculty.

Table 6: Average time to find an employment

	FCMS	FCT	FHU	FSC	FSOSC	Overall
Average Time (Months)	8	8	9	7	10	8

The Status of the Employment, Type of Employment and Economic Sector

Employments can be categorized as permanent employment, temporary employment, self-employment and as entrepreneurships. Moreover, an employment can belong to public sector or private sector and as well as for different economic sectors.

As per the statistics reveled from the analysis of 2021, it has found that in overall majority of the graduates are having temporary jobs which represents 48% of the employed graduates and which is approximately 2% higher than that of the graduates who are having permanent employments. And 6% are engaged in either self-employments or are entrepreneurs.
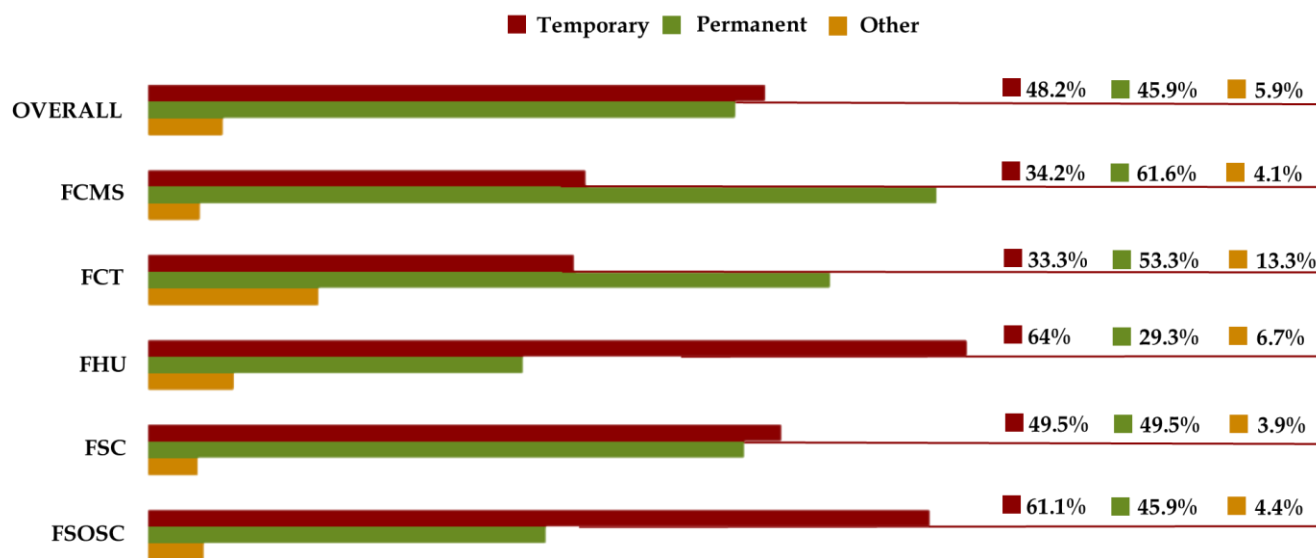
Figure 6: Status of the employment

The faculty wise comparison reveals that, a higher percentage of the employed graduates belonging to the Faculty of Commerce & Management Studies, have obtained permanent employments which is the highest among the other Faculties. And Faculty of Computing & Technology also have a higher percentage of

employed graduates who have found a permanent employment. In contrast, students belonging to the Faculty of Science, Faculty of Social Sciences and Faculty of Humanities has comparatively higher temporary employment rates than the other two Faculties.

Private	71.4%
Public	14.4%
Semi government	9%
Other	2.7%
Self employed	2.5%
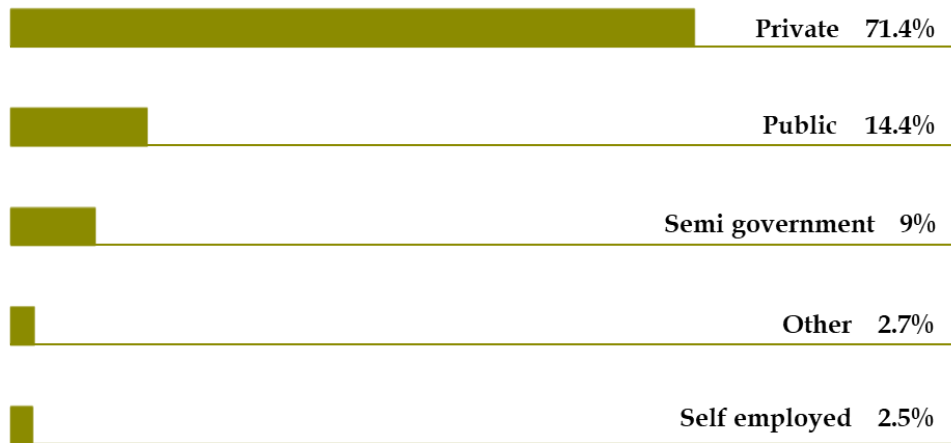
Figure 7: Employment Sector

In overall, the graduates of the University of Kelaniya are employed in private sector mostly than in other sectors which is more than 70%. And the percentage of graduates who are employed in public sector or semi governmen sector exceeds 23%. Self employments and other type of employments are about 5%.

When compared each Faculty regarding the employment sector, the highest percentage of graduates who are working in the private sector is recorded from the Faculty of Commerce & Management Studies and the Faculty of Social Sciences. Percentage of graduates who are employed in government sector (Either in public sector or semi government sector) is higher for the Faculty of Humanities and Faculty of Science, while the percentage of self- employed graduates are higher for the Faculty of Comuting & Technology.
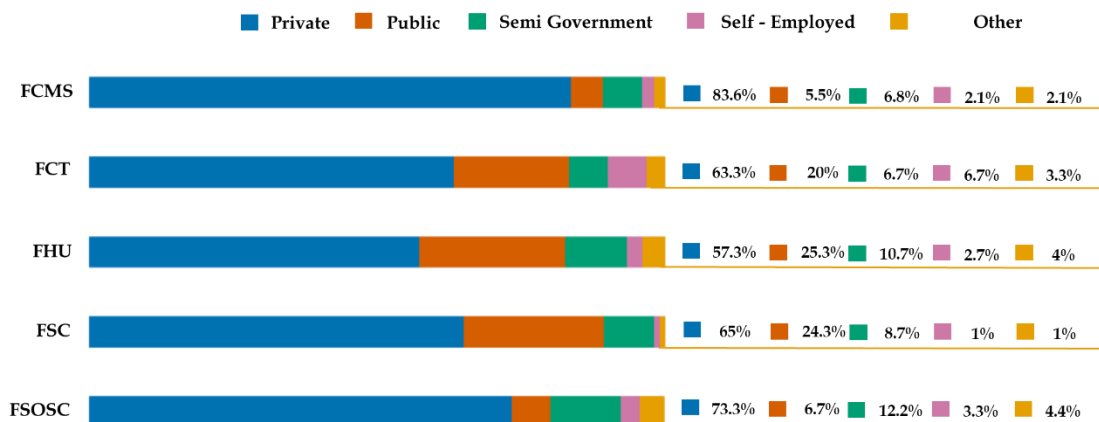
Figure 8: Employment sector by Faculty

Average Monthly Salary

In overall, most of the employed graduates earn between Rs. 40,000 to Rs. 49,999 while around 10% of employed graduates earn below Rs. 20,000. However, it is noted that,the percentage of grautes who earn beyond Rs. 75,000 is approximately 15% which is almost doubled compared to 2020's employability figures (Gunarathne & Weerarathne, 2021). Furthermore, the percentage of employd grautes who earn more tha Rs. 40,000 is higher than 60%.

When compared the average monthly salary of the graduates of each Faculty, Faculty of Science has the highest percentage of employed graduates who earn more Rs. 75,000. Apart from the Faculty of Science, Faculty of Commerce & Management Studies and Facult of Computing & Technology has higher percentage of employed graduate who earn beyond Rs. 75,000. On the other hand, most of the graduates of the Faculty of Commerce & Management Studies and Faculty of Science earn between Rs. 40,000 to Rs.49,999 and the most of the graduates of the Faculty of Computing & Technology earn between Rs. 60,000 to Rs. 75,000. Apart And most of the graduates of the Faculty of Humanities earn between Rs. 30,000 to Rs. 39,999 and in the Faculty of Social Sciences it is between Rs. 20,000 to Rs. 29,999.

	Less than 20,000	20,000 - 29,999	30,000 - 39,999	40,000 - 49,999	50,000 - 59,999	60,000 - 75,000	Over 75,000
OVERALL	5.8%	10.2%	17.7%	26.3%	14.2%	10.9%	14.9%
FCMS	6.3%	8.3%	18.1%	27.8%	15.3%	8.3%	16%
FCT	7.1%	10.7%	10.7%	17.9%	14.3%	25%	14.3%
FHU	4.1%	4.1%	27.4%	23.3%	20.5%	11%	9.6%
FSC	1%	3.1%	6.2%	36.1%	13.4%	13.4%	26.8%
FSOSC	11.4%	26.1%	23.9%	18.2%	8%	8%	4.5%
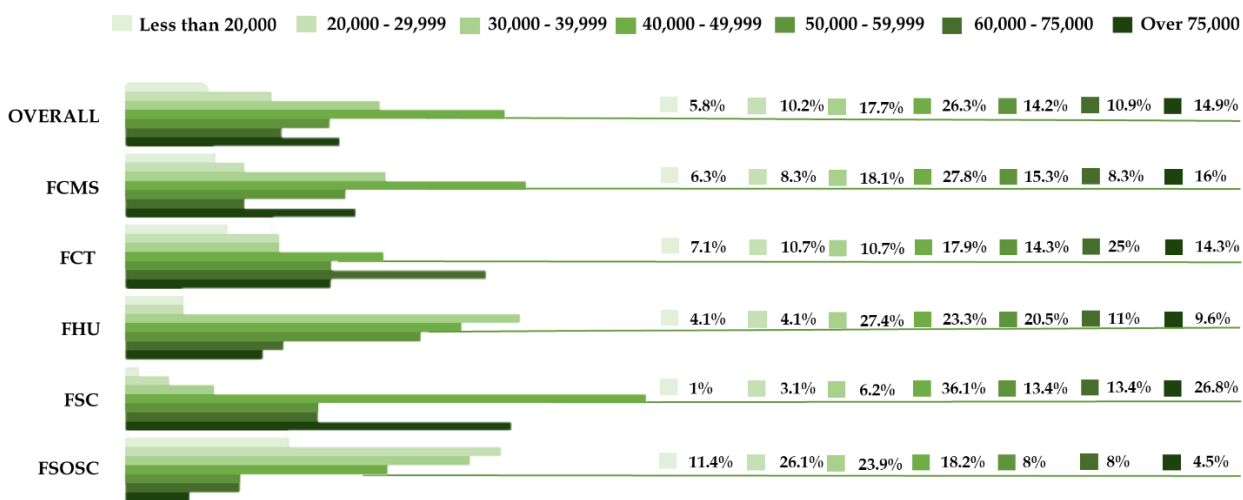
Figure 9: Average monthly salary

The further analysis revealed that, the highest incomes are generated by the self-employed graduates where 27% of self-employed graduates earn beyond Rs. 75,000. Moreover, graduates employed in the private sector also earn beyond Rs. 75,000 than other other sectors. In general, the percentage of employed graduates who earn beyond the average salary is higher in private sector than other categories. That is, 52% of private sector graduate employees are generating income more than Rs.50,000.
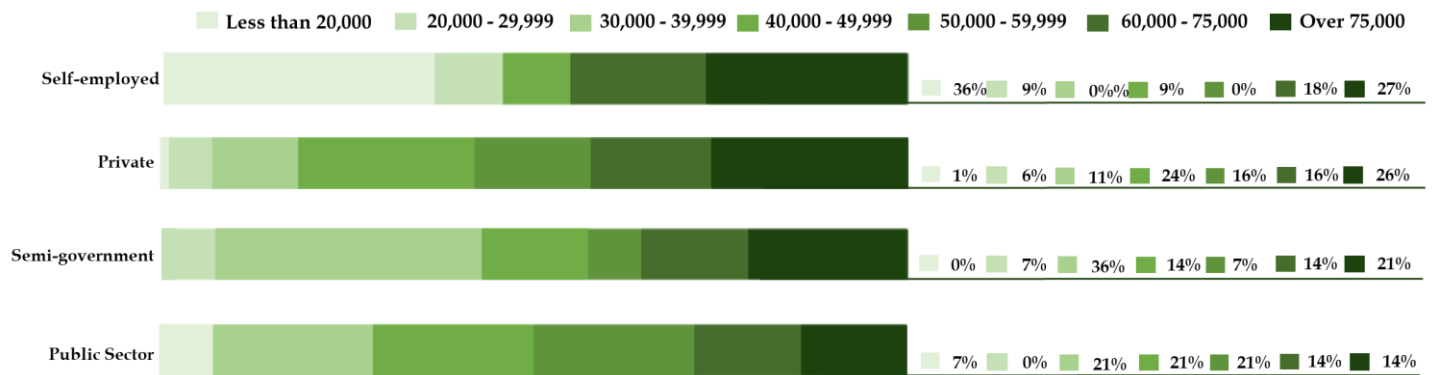
Figure 10: Salary by employment sector

Attributes of the Employability

Employability is a set of skills which enables an individual to gain and retain in a proper and suitable employment. And the employability of a graduate can be determined by several factors. In previous studies done by the USDMU regarding the graduate employability, it has identified that the degree type, academic performance, medium of instruction, participation in extra-curricular activities and involvement in full-time/ part-time employment during academic period have some impact on being employed. (Gunarathne & Weerarathne, 2021)

Degree Type

The University offers it's undergraduates three type of programs namely. General degree programs of 3-years duration, honors degree programs of 4- years duration and MBBS program which is 5-years in length. In 2021, 1,951 students have passed out from honors degree programs and 430 have passed out from general degree programs. Among them, in overall, out of the honors degree graduates, 54.9% are employed while out of the general degree students, 46.9% are employed.
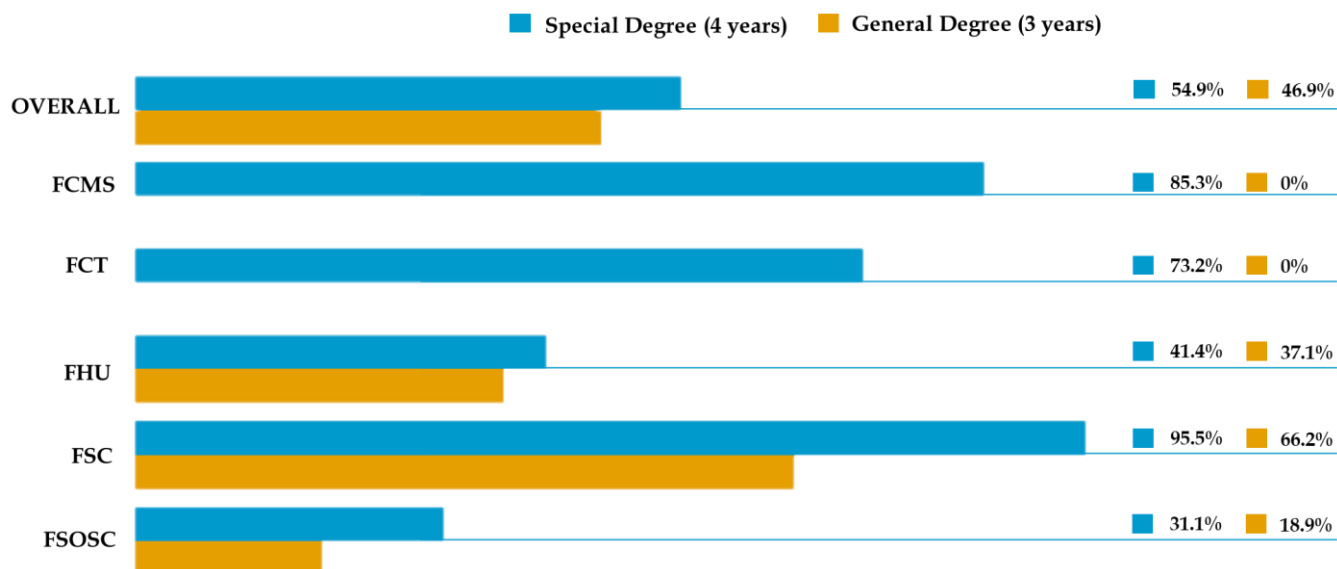

Figure 11: Employability by the type of degree program

The honors degree graduates of the Faculty of Science has the highest employability rate so far recorded among all the other Faculties which is more than 95%. Apart from the Faculty of Science, the graduates of the Faculty of Commerce & Management Studies has 85.3% employability rate and Faculty of Computing &

Technology has 73.2% employability[1]. In contrast, for all faculties, the percentage of employed graduates are higher for honors degree programs than compared to the general degree students.

Academic Performance

Acaedmic performance is a highly effective factor in employability as suggested by various studies. The University's previous studies on graduate employability has also ssuggested that the top performing students have higher employability rate than compared to the lowest performing students.

Table 7: Graduate output by faculty

Faculty	First Class	Second Class Upper Division	Second Class Lower Division	Ordinary Pass	Total
FCMS	70 (15%)	217 (45%)	130 (27%)	61 (13%)	478
FCT	6 (5%)	32 (29%)	26 (24%)	46 (42%)	110
FHU	67 (13%)	334 (64%)	60 (12%)	57 (11%)	518
FMED	12 (7%)	54 (31%)	65 (37%)	44 (25%)	175
FSC	53 (14%)	151 (40%)	89 (24%)	80 (21%)	373
FSOSC	52 (6%)	704 (82%)	50 (6%)	57 (7%)	863
Overall	260 (10%)	1492 (59%)	420 (17%)	345 (14%)	2517

Overall in 2021, the percentage of students who have obtained second class upper divisions is higher than other class awards and except for the Faculty of Medicine and Faculty of Computing & Technology it is as same as the overall performance. The highest percentage of first class honors has received by the graduates of the Faculty of Commerce & Management Studies which is 15% and lowest first class honors has received by the graduates of the Faculty of Computing & technology which is 5%. Apart from that, graduates of the Faculty of Medicine and Faculty of Social Sciences has less percentage of fisrt class honors graduates which is lower than 10% while the Faculty of Humanities has 13% and Faculty of Science has 14% fisrt class awards.

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[1] Faculty employability rates in Table 4 were calculated using the Monte Carlo method of sampling and the statistics in Figure 10 were calculated based on a single random sample. The two values are different but are among the 95% confidence interval.

Moreover, the graduates of the Faculty of Social Sciences and the Faculty of Humanities has the highest percentage of second-class upper divisions which exceeds 50% while the Faculty of Medicine has the highest percentage of graduates with second-class lower divisions. Faculty of Computing & Technology has the highest percentage of graduates with ordinary pass.

Table 8: Employability by academic performance

Faculty	First Class	Second Class Upper Division	Second Class Lower Division	Ordinary Pass
Employability	69%	47%	67%	60%
Pearson Chi-square	30.024			
Degree of freedom	3			
P-Value	0.000			

As depicted in Table 8, in the overview, there's more tendency for the students who have gained First Class honors to have more employment than compared to the other awards. That is, the employability rate of the graduates with first-class honors is the highest percentage among the other class awards. The graduate employability rate for the graduates with second class lower divisions has the second highest employability rate which is 67%. However, the null hypothesis of the Chi-squared test for association, that is, there is no association between employability and academic performance, can be rejected at a 95% level of significance concluding that academic performance has an impact on graduate employability.

Medium of Instruction

Degree programs of the University are offered in three medium instructions. Those are English medium, Sinhala medium, and a combination of Sinhala and English medium. Degree programs in the Faculty of Commerce & Management Studies, Faculty of Computing & Technology, and, Faculty of Science are offered in English medium while the degree programs of the Faculty of Humanities and Faculty of Social Sciences are offered either in any of the above three mediums.

The medium of instruction has been identified as a factor which influences the employability of a graduate's previous studies. In 2021, considering the sample, 78.9% of those who mentioned English as the medium of

instruction for the entire university were employed. Also, 33.3% of those who mentioned Sinhala and English media and 23.9% of those who mentioned Sinhala media are employed.
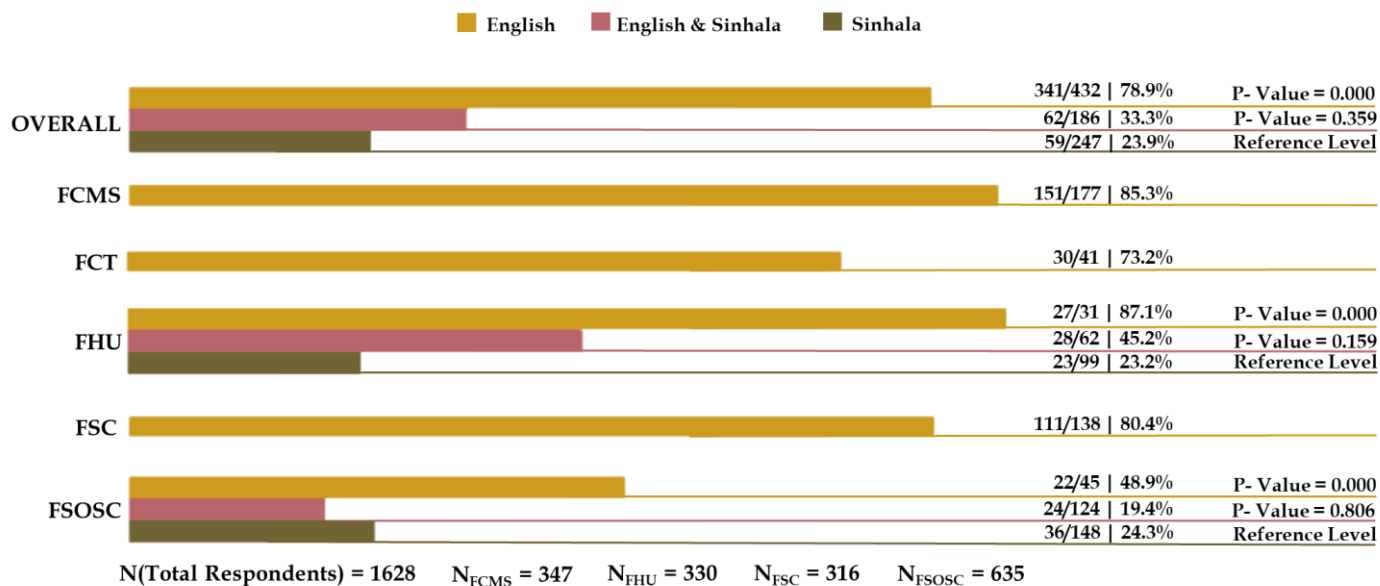

Figure 12: Employability by the medium of instruction

Employability rate of the graduates of the Faculty of Humanities and Faculty of Social Sciences for those who have mentioned English as the medium of instructions is 87% and 48.9% respectively. Furthermore it can be clearly seen that, employability rate of the graduates whose medium of instructions is English is higher than other two options.

Involvement in extra-curricular activities

A University is a place with so many opportunites. An undegraduate can involve in various extra-curricular activities during the academic period. The University of Kelaniya has several clubs like, Gavel club, AISEC, Rotary Club as well as student Unions like Catholic Students Movement, Buddhist Association, Vision Club, Nature club and some other subject unions such as SCSSA, Mathematics Students' Union, etc and Students councils. Apart from that, students can invlove in sports, aesthetic activities and voluntary services. All of these activities help to improve interpersonal skills of undergraduates.

Participation in extra-curricular activities enhances the communications skills, teamwork, reading/ writing skills, ability to adapt to new situations, analytical and problem solving skills, effective use of IT, English language proficiency and decision making skills. Previous studies have revealed that above skills some of the most valuable skills which employers are looking for (Gunaratne, Asoka, & Damayanthi, 2018).
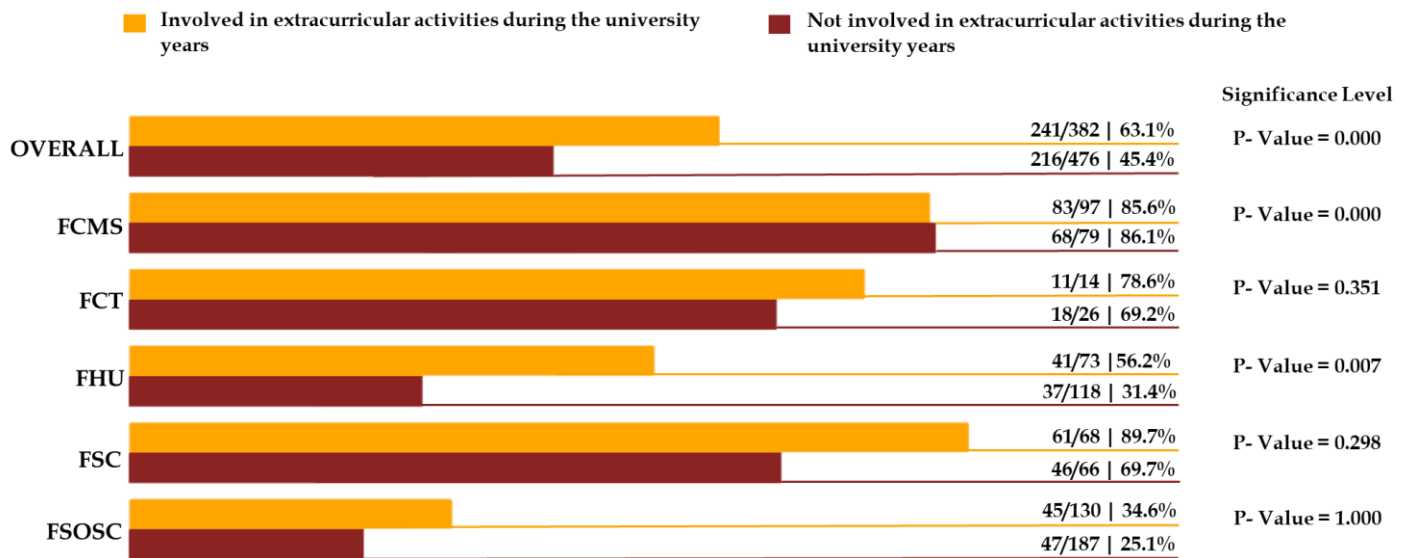
Figure 13: Employability by the participation in extra-curricular activities

In overview, 63.1% of graduates who participated in extra-curricular activities are employed while for the group who haven't been involved in extra-curricular activities, the percentage of employed graduates is less than 50% which is 45.4%. Moreover, this reveals that there is an association between participation in extra-curricular activities and employability at a 95% level of significance.

Facultywise comparison yields that, the employability rate of the graduates who participated in extra-curricular activities of the Faculty of Science is the highest while the lowest is from the Faculty of Social Sciences. And also, the employability of the group who did not participate in extra-curricular activities is higher than the employability of the group who participated in extra-curricular activities in the Faculty of Commerce & Management Studies. For all other Faculties, the employability rate of the participants in extra-curricular activities is higher than that of those who haven't participated. Moreover, participation in extra-curricular activities is associated with graduate employability at 95% level of significance in the Faculty of Commerce & Management Studies and Faculty of Humanities.

Involvement in part-time/ full-time employment

Some of the graduates are involved in full-time or part-time employment while they are studying at the University. For those who have said that they have been working during the academic period the employability rate is higher than that for those who haven't been involved in full-time or part-time employment. Moreover, involvement in full-time or part-time employment during the academic period is related to the employability of the graduates as the p-value of association is less than 0.05. That is, there is a possible relationship between the full-time part-time employment and the employability of the graduates.
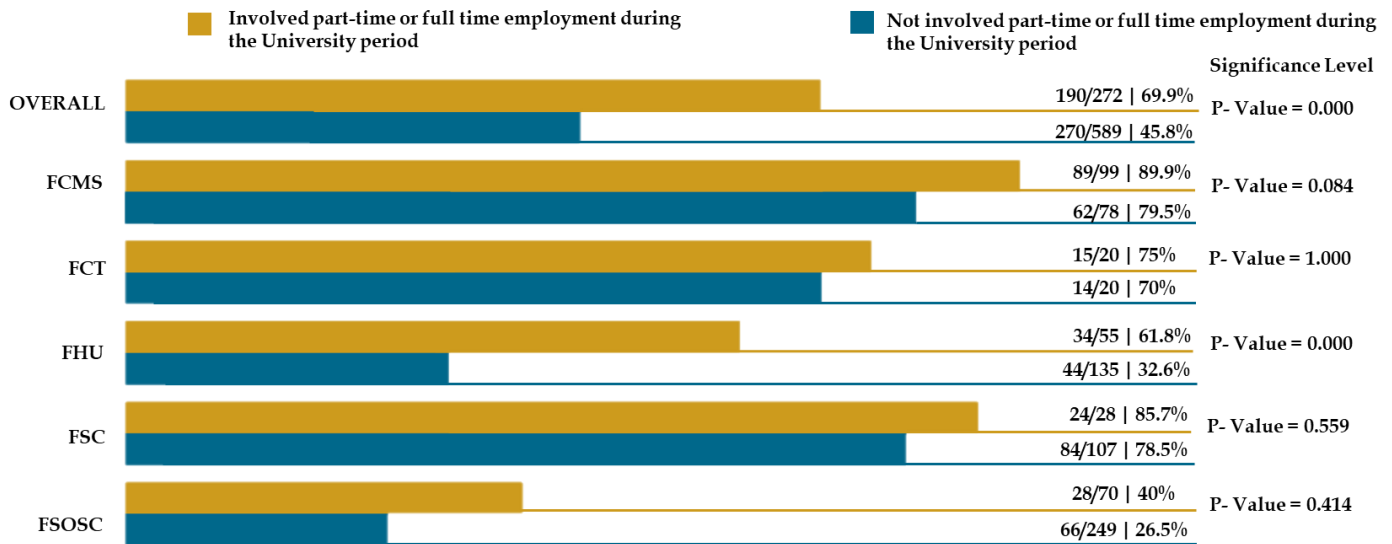
Figure 14: Employability by the participation in full-time or part-time employment

In each faculty, the employability rate of the graduates who did full-time or part-time jobs is higher than that of the graduates who did not work during the academic period. And, the employability rates of both groups are higher in the Faculty of Commerce & Management Studies and in the Faculty of Science. And, the employability rates do not show much difference between the two groups in the Faculty of Commerce & Management Studies, Faculty of Computing & Technology, and in the Faculty of Science. But in the Faculty of Social Sciences and in the Faculty of Humanities, the employability rates show a fairly high difference between the two groups compared with the other Faculties. Somehow, only the Faculty of Humanities shows a significant association between the two groups to conclude that having done full-time or part-time employment affects the graduate employability (p-value=0.000).

Graduates' Attitudes on Employability

The post-COVID economy has dramatically affected the careers of the people even causing less job security. Under these circumstances, at present, finding reliable and suitable employment is challenging due to various reasons. Thus, the study focused on the factors which helped the graduates to find proper employment, so that, the University can help its undergraduates to be prepared for the corporate world.

The most influential factor to find an employment

Degree qualification has been identified as the most influential factor in getting an employment in which most of the respondents, 66% has mentioned it in the survey. Personality and English language proficiency has been also mentioned by the graduates as influential factors in obtaining an employment. Apart from that, field of study, computer literacy, previous working experience and other professional qualifications has been mentioned as the factors which helps getting an employment.
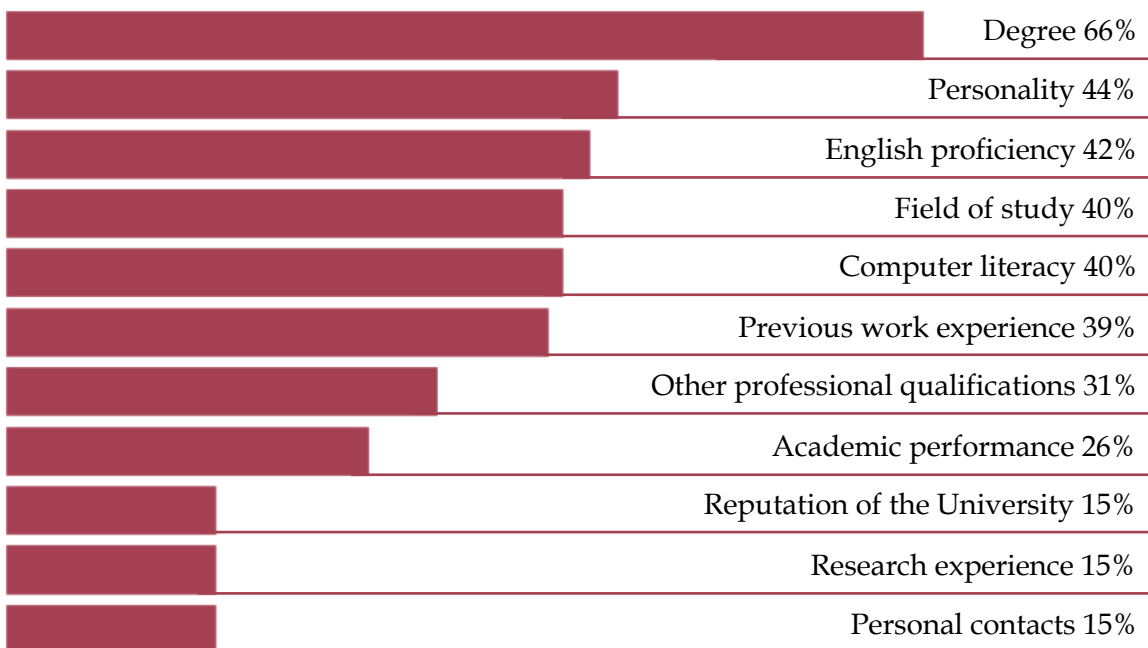

Figure 15: Most influential factor to obtain an employment

Apart from that, academic performance, reputation of the University, research experience and personal contact are some factors which affects the employability but with less influence.

Method of finding employment

At present, there are so many ways to find employmentssuch as social media platforms, websited and news papers. Specially, the Career Guidance Unit of the University of Kelaniya annually organizes the career fair so that the students can find jobs.

As per the statistics of 2021, the most popular method of finding an employment is online/ social media. 50% of the employed graduates has mentioned they found the employment via online chanells. Apart from that, 24% have found employments via personal contacts. Moreover, 7% have also indicated that they have found employments because of personal contacts in the University. Most specially 3% of the employed graduates have found their employments through career fair.
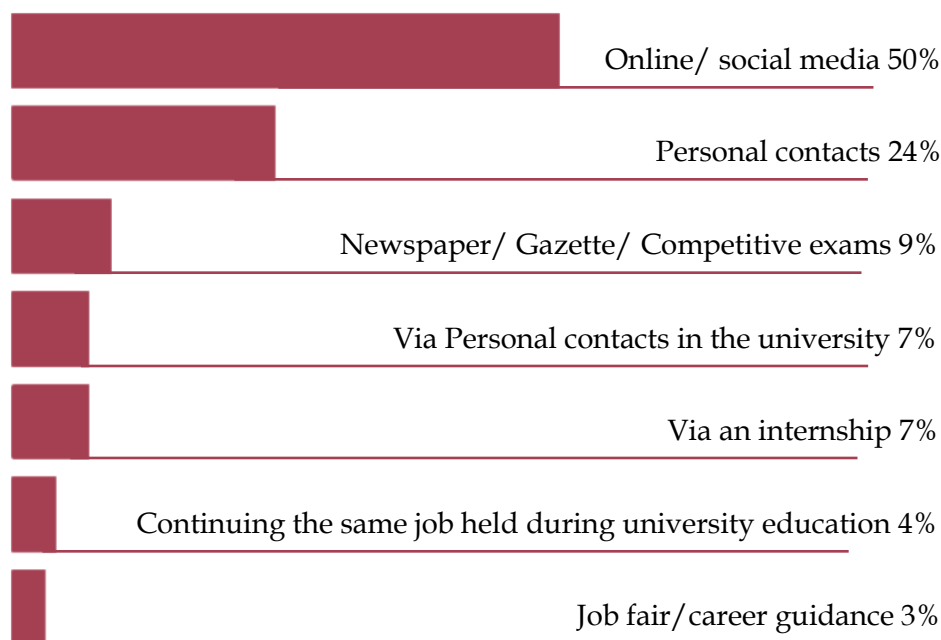

Figure 16: Methods of finding employment

Relevance of degree program to employment and job satisfaction

As per the statistics in figure 15, the most influential factor ingetting an employment is degree qualification. In which the study focused on finding whether the employment done by the graduates are related to their academic field. Most of the employed respondents,58%, has indicated that their employment is related to the academic field. Less than 20% of employed respondents have mentioned that their employment is not related or less related to the academic field.
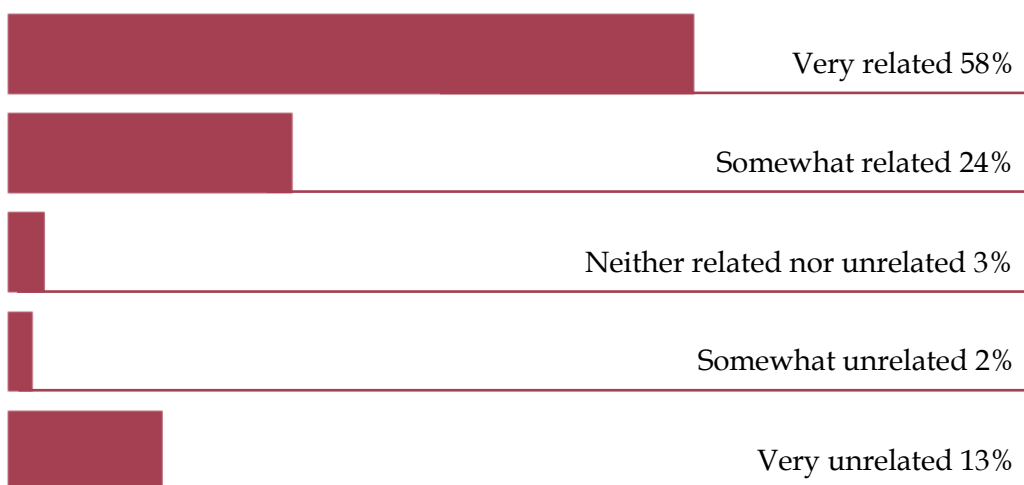
Figure 17: Relevance to the degree program

Most of the employed graduates are satisfied about their employment. That is, 87% are satisfied about the job and only 1% are very unhappy with their employment.
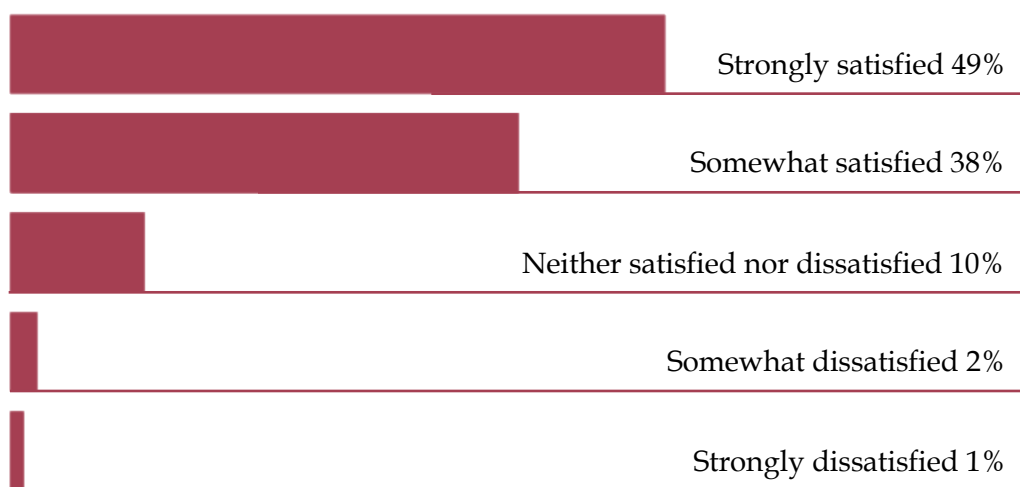

Figure 18: Job satisfaction

Unemployability

In overall, 46.5% graduates of 2021 are unemployed at the time of data collection of the study. And unemployment may have various reasons such as difficulty in finding employment and not getting suitable employments related to the academic field or interests.

The most common reason for the graduate unemployability is the not finding the suitable employments. 76% of unemployed graduates have mentioned that they were unable to find a proper employment. Apart from that, 11% are continuing further studies and thus not looking for the employments. And 10% have either quitted the job or haven't accepted the job offers they got.
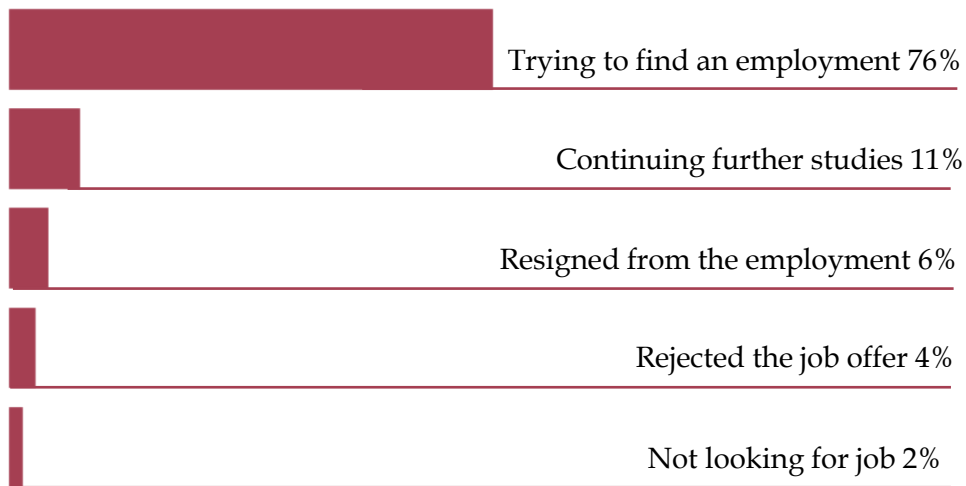

Figure 19: Reasons for unemployment

Trying to find an employment 76%

Continuing further studies 11%

Resigned from the employment 6%

Rejected the job offer 4%

Not looking for job 2%

The 10% who resigned from the job or rejected the offer has mentioned that the less salary, irrelevance to the academic field or interest, difficult working conditions were a few reasons for their decision. Moreover, some has resigned from the jobs to start further studies. And the majority, that is, the group who couldn't find the employments have mentioned that less opportunities, skill shortage, lack of English knowledge were several reasons for being unable to find the employments. Apart from that, post-COVID circumstances as well as the country's economy have greatly affected the job market.

DISCUSSION

Graduate employability is one of the preliminary performing indicators of a university. It is helpful in self-evaluating the degree programs of the University. This study on graduate employability is conducted annually to assess how successful the University of Kelaniya is in creating the outstanding graduates that the corporate world is looking for.

Total of 2,517 were considered for the survey in which more than 1,500 had responded to the survey. After data cleaning and validation, 868 respondents were selected for the study. The response rate of the survey for 2021 is 76% which is less than that of the 2020.

Employability rate has increased to 53.5% in 2021

The analysis estimated the graduate employability rate 53.5% with the 95% confidence interval being (52%, 55%). The highest graduate employability is recorded from the Faculty of Commerce & Management Studies and least is from the Faculty of Social Sciences.

On average, most of the employed graduates have obtained permanent employments in the private sector and are earning in between Rs.40,000 to Rs.49,999. The average time to find an employment after completing the degree program is 8 months. Moreover, the most influential factors in finding an employment are degree qualification and English language competency.

Compared to the studies conducted in previous years, the graduate employability rate has shown an increase. After 2017, the employability rate of the University had shown a consecutive decrease over past three years. The minimum employability rate was recorded last year 2020, which is 34%, but the employability rate of 2021 has increased above the rate of 2019.

Respondents of the survey has mentioned that finding a proper job is challenging in the current context due to the post-COVID circumstances and the economic crisis. And the government has stopped public sector recruitments causing the graduates who are looking for public sector employments to be unemployed. Moreover, some employments are based on the capital city or urban areas and some graduates have difficulties in moving into these areas for jobs due to high cost compared to the income at present. The most highlighted causes for unemployment in 2021 compared to previous years are shortage of job opportunities due to economic crisis and it's circumstances like high cost of living if had to a accept a job offer out of hometown.

Moreover, comparatively higher percentage of students have mentioned that they are looking forward to migrating to another country in the coming years than previous years. Graduates of the Faculty of Science has mentioned the willingness to migrate to another country compared to other Faculties and among that more are expecting to further studies. In contrast, some graduates are looking forward to starting their own business and to become entrepreneurs than previous years. And the graduates with that mindset are higher in the Faculty of Humanities and Faculty of Science.

The graduates have also suggested that if the University could introduce more practical and job-oriented programs to curriculum the employability of graduates could increase. Moreover, they have proposed creating a database of employed graduates so that undergraduates can know when there are job opportunities. Also, since most of the graduates have mentioned that lack of English language competency has caused unemployability, if the University could offer some English language programs would be beneficial for undergraduates. They have further suggested that internship programs during the academic period can increase the employability of graduates.

Finally, the 95% of graduates would like to recommend the degree programs of the University of Kelaniya for others and remaining 5% has refuses recommending the University since they are unable to find employment.

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