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The development of students perceived employability and its predictors in higher education: a Protocol for a Systematic Review

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ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

Support - None.

Review Stage at time of this submission - The review has not yet started.

Conflicts of interest - None declared.

INPLASY registration number: INPLASY202450021

Amendments - This protocol was registered with the International Platform of Registered Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis Protocols (INPLASY) on 06 May 2024 and was last updated on 06 May 2024.

INTRODUCTION

Review question / Objective This systematic review aims to evaluate current evidence examining the factors that develop the perceived employability of higher education students during their studies. Specifically, it aims to find the predictors of the perceived employability of university students and the strength of the relationship between the factors and the perceived employability of university students.

Rationale A preliminary review of the literature on the topic revealed a significant lack of insight into key factors that students should develop during their studies to increase their perceived employability. Therefore, the present systematic review will analyse current research on students' perceived employability, aiming to identify gaps

and key factors that predict the development of this phenomenon in the higher education setting.

Condition being studied The study of employees' experiences in the psychological literature has evolved in response to global market changes (McQuaid & Lindsay, 2005). Perceived employability was initially defined as the "individual's perception of his or her possibilities of getting new employment" (Berntson & Marklund, 2007, p. 281). However, the research went beyond this definition and explored the interconnection of personal and external factors influencing individuals' perceptions of their unique employability (Noori & Azmi, 2021). There are discrepancies between the employers' demands and the individual skills of graduates (Noori & Azmi, 2021). Higher education is now expected to equip students with "the transferable work readiness skills" to face this new labour market (Department

for Business, Innovation and Skills, 2015, pp. 10-11) and be ready for employment (Grotkowska et al., 2015).

Rothwell et al. (2007) investigated students' perceived employability towards the analysis of internal (e.g., self-beliefs, personality) and external (e.g., perception of the labour market and university) factors. This study provided insight into students' experience of this new vision of employability; however, the phenomenon should be further analysed across various student populations and factors related to the specific university context (e.g., subject of study, career aims) to better understand the behaviour.

METHODS

Search strategy

Databases:

- Web of Science
- PsycINFO
- IBSS
- British Education Index
- ERIC
- Science Direct
- Scopus
- Business Source Complete.

Participant or population Undergraduate students studying an academic/non-vocational subject in Higher Education of all ages, without regard to gender, race, ethnicity, nationality, with and without disability and SES.

Intervention Evaluation of different predictors of perceived employability and the strength of the relationship with the development of perceived employability.

Comparator The development of perceived employability.

Study designs to be included Mixed methods research, looking at qualitative and quantitative studies.

Eligibility criteria

Sample

Inclusion criteria:

- Undergraduate students
- Academic/non-vocational degrees
- All ages
- All genders
- All races or ethnicity or nationality
- Students with and without disability
- All SES

Exclusion criteria:

- Postgraduate and research students

- Vocational degrees
- Not university students

Phenomenon of Interest:

Inclusion criteria:

- Perceived employability of current students

Exclusion criteria:

- Employability of graduates
- Perceived employability of non-student populations.

Information sources The search process will use the following electronic databases: Web of Science, PsycINFO, IBSS, British Education Index, ERIC, Science Direct, Scopus, and Business Source Complete. We will evaluate peer-reviewed articles published in the English language, and Grey literature will be excluded from the search.

Main outcome(s) What are the predictors of the perceived employability of university students?

Additional outcome(s) What is the strength of the relationship between the factors and the employability of university students?

Data management A data extraction sheet will be specifically created and tested with a randomly selected group on the included study; if needed, it will be modified accordingly to perfectly fit the review aims. The data to be extracted includes details of the evaluation, the study design, descriptive statistics of the groups in the study (age, gender, etc.), the primary and secondary outcomes of the included studies, and the results.

Quality assessment / Risk of bias analysis After collecting all the results of the searches into EndNote, the first step is to deduplicate the same articles downloaded from multiple databases. The remaining studies will then be evaluated against the inclusion and exclusion criteria previously established in the protocol. This screening process will be completed in EndNote, with references moved to Include/Exclude groups as decisions are made. The database search results will then be further analysed, and decisions will be made based on the title and abstract of the articles against the inclusion and exclusion criteria. For any articles where this is unclear, the article will be carried forward into the full-text review. The full text of the remaining papers will be sourced and independently evaluated to determine if all inclusion and exclusion criteria are met. If the full text will not be accessible, the main author of the study will be contacted to obtain access.

Strategy of data synthesis The data from the results of each included study will be extracted into defined data extraction spreadsheets. The results will be synthesized in a narrative manner in the results and interpreted in the discussion sections. Based on the included manuscripts in the final library, the plausibility of a meta-analysis will be assessed depending on the variation of the included data presented.

Subgroup analysis We will explore demographic subgroups such as students' gender, race, ethnicity, nationality, disability status (with and without), and Socioeconomic Status (SES).

Sensitivity analysis During the review process, we will make sure to consider any individual peculiarities of the study, and if needed, a sensitivity analysis will be performed to test the robustness of the study by repeating the primary analysis and substituting alternative decisions that were arbitrary or unclear (if any).

Language restriction English language.

Country(ies) involved United Kingdom.

Keywords Perceived Employability; Students; Higher Education.

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