



## The Influence of Emotional Competencies on University Students' Perceived Employability: The Moderating Role of University Commitment

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### ABSTRACT

The objective of this study was to examine the impact of emotional competencies among university students on their perception of employability while also exploring the potential moderating role of university commitment in this relationship. In order to achieve the objective of the study, quantitative data was gathered from a sample of 214 students enrolled in various universities in Saudi Arabia during the previous semester. The data that was gathered was subjected to regression analysis and processed using the Hayes macro in SPSS. of the analysis indicate that,

with the exception of self-awareness and empathy, all of the emotional competencies developed during one's time in university, such as self-regulation, motivation, leadership, social skills, and cooperative learning, are significantly and positively correlated with perceived employability. Additionally, the relationship between self-awareness and perceived employability, self-regulation and perceived employability, leadership and perceived employability, social skills and perceived employability, and collaborative learning and perceived employability was found to be positively influenced by university commitment. The current investigation provided a thorough examination of the intricate relationship between emotional competencies, commitment to university, and perceived success in employment. Through an in-depth exploration of these complex dynamics, this study has contributed to a nuanced comprehension of the interconnections among these variables. The results of this study ultimately make a valuable contribution to the advancement of targeted interventions and strategies that can be utilised to improve outcomes in the domain of employment.

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## 1. Introduction

The endeavour to attain professional success among individuals who have successfully completed their tertiary education holds significant significance within the present-day dynamic and fiercely competitive labour market. The transition from academia to the professional sphere is characterised by various factors that possess the potential to exert a substantial impact on the trajectory of a graduate's professional journey. The study of emotional competencies has garnered significant attention in the realm of human behaviour and well-being, presenting an intriguing yet relatively underexplored domain of inquiry (Fernandez-Perez & Martin-Rojas, 2022). The notion of emotional competencies, encompassing a variety of aptitudes such as emotional intelligence, self-awareness, empathy, and interpersonal skills, has received considerable scholarly and professional interest owing to its perceived influence on individuals' prospects for employment and professional progression.

The aforementioned competencies are of utmost importance as they equip individuals with the necessary abilities to excel academically and effectively navigate intricate workplace dynamics. Additionally, these competencies enable individuals to adapt to evolving environments and engage in successful communication and collaboration with their peers (Belchior-Rocha, Casquilho-Martins, & Simões, 2022; López-Cassà et al., 2021; Wirajaya, Suganda, & Zuraida, 2019). The necessity to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the influence of personal and professional development on the perceived attainment of employment success among university graduates' stems from the ample literature emphasising their significance (Aloui & Shams Eldin, 2020).

The main objective of this study is to examine the complex correlation between emotional competencies and the perception of attaining success in the context of employment. The primary focus of this study will be to investigate the potential mediating role of university commitment in relation to this association. The acknowledgement of the significance of emotional competencies within the professional domain is widely recognised (Belchior-Rocha et al., 2022; López-Cassà et al., 2021). However, further investigation is warranted to examine the impact of a graduate's allegiance to their alma mater on their professional achievements (López-Cassà et al., 2021; Wirajaya et al., 2019). The phenomenon of university commitment, which refers to the emotional attachment that individuals develop towards their educational institution, has been found to have significant implications for graduates' career aspirations, job satisfaction, and preparedness for the job market (Azila-Gbettor et al., 2020).

The primary objectives of this study are to examine the impact of emotional competencies cultivated during the duration of higher education on the perceptions of graduates regarding their level of accomplishment in the professional realm. Additionally, the study seeks to ascertain the potential moderating influence of university commitment on this relationship. The present study will utilise a rigorous mixed-methods methodology, integrating quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews, in order to gather comprehensive data from a diverse cohort of recent university graduates.

By conducting a comprehensive investigation into the intricate and complex interconnection at hand, the current research endeavour seeks to make substantial contributions to both academic scholarship and practical implementations. The primary objective of this study is to provide a thorough investigation into the intricate relationship between emotional

competencies, university commitment, and perceived employment success. Through an in-depth exploration of these complex dynamics, the present study aims to offer a comprehensive comprehension of the interconnections among these variables. In conclusion, the results of this study will provide valuable insights for the advancement of focused interventions and strategies aimed at improving employment outcomes.

The main objective of this study is to offer valuable insights that can be utilised by educational institutions, career counsellors, and employers in order to effectively equip graduates for a smooth transition from the academic setting to the professional domain. Through a comprehensive analysis of multiple variables and the collection of relevant empirical evidence, the primary objective of this study is to make a valuable contribution to the advancement of strategies and resources that facilitate the acquisition of essential skills and provision of adequate support for graduates. Consequently, this will ultimately enhance their potential for a prosperous transition into the labour market.

## 2. Literature Review

The phase of transitioning from higher education to the professional realm is a crucial juncture in the lives of graduates, marked by their sincere efforts to attain success in obtaining job prospects. The recognition of emotional competencies' importance in the realm of employment acquisition has experienced a notable increase, in conjunction with the traditionally acknowledged factors of education and technical skills (Fernandez-Perez & Martin-Rojas, 2022). The primary objective of this literature review is to examine the complex dynamics underlying the association between emotional competencies and individuals' perceived level of success in their employment. Additionally, this review will explore the potential moderating effect of university commitment on this relationship.

### 2.1 Emotional Competencies and Employment Success

The concept of emotional competencies encompasses a wide range of cognitive and behavioural abilities that play a role in an individual's overall emotional intelligence (Ahmed, Asim, & Pellitteri, 2019). These competencies encompass a range of skills, with emotional intelligence being one of them. Emotional intelligence refers to the ability to recognise, comprehend, and regulate one's own emotions as well as the emotions of others. Furthermore, it is crucial to recognise that empathy, self-regulation, and interpersonal skills play a pivotal role in emotional competencies. These competencies empower individuals to adeptly manage and control their emotions within the context of social interactions and relationships (Fernandez-Perez & Martin-Rojas, 2022).

Collectively, these capabilities constitute a comprehensive framework for evaluating and enhancing emotional competencies in individuals. The significance of these entities within the professional setting has been extensively underscored in numerous research studies (Cherniss & Goleman, 2001). Considerable scholarly investigation has been undertaken pertaining to the subject matter of emotional intelligence, thereby emphasising its notable importance across diverse domains. In 1995, Goleman published a seminal work that introduced the concept of emotional intelligence and emphasised its significant impact on personal and professional accomplishments. Previous studies have established that individuals with higher levels of emotional intelligence tend to exhibit outstanding performance in diverse areas, such as leadership, teamwork, and conflict resolution (Brackett & Salovey, 2006).

## 2.2 Perceived Employment Success

The term "perceived employment success" refers to a person's subjective assessment of their accomplishments and level of satisfaction in their professional endeavours. The incorporation of an individual's self-evaluation of their professional advancement enhances the significance of this measure. The perception of achieving success in employment is impacted by various factors, including but not limited to job satisfaction, opportunities for career advancement, and the ability to maintain a balanced work-life relationship (Azila-Gbette et al., 2020). Based on prior research conducted by Abele and Wojciszke (2007), it has been observed that individuals with strong emotional competencies tend to exhibit elevated levels of job satisfaction. Moreover, a study conducted by Di Fabio and Kenny (2016) indicates that these individuals also demonstrate higher levels of career adaptability. Additionally, the study conducted by Lopes (2016) revealed that individuals who possess robust emotional competencies experience an overall improvement in their well-being within the workplace.

## 2.3 University Commitment

The notion of university commitment pertains to the deep emotional connection and steadfast allegiance that individuals who have completed their education at an academic institution feel towards their alma mater. The concept under consideration is firmly situated within the broader context of organisational commitment (Mowday, Porter, & Steers, 1982). Research findings indicate that there exists a positive correlation between the degree of commitment exhibited by graduates towards their universities and their inclination to engage in alumni activities, make financial contributions to their alma maters, and maintain a lasting sense of affiliation with their educational institutions (Azila-Gbette et al., 2020). Previous scholarly research has extensively examined the antecedents and consequences of university commitment, including its influence on career decision-making and subsequent outcomes (Schwartz & Hage, 2009).

## 2.4 The Moderating Role of University Commitment

The extant literature has thoroughly investigated the distinct impacts of emotional competencies and university commitment on the attainment of employment success. Nevertheless, the complex interplay between these two variables has been subject to insufficient scrutiny and necessitates additional research. The current study aims to examine the potential mediating effect of university commitment on the association between emotional competencies developed during the university experience and graduates' commitment to their institution. Moreover, this study delves into the subsequent effects of this dedication on the graduates' perceived level of achievement in securing employment. The mediation hypothesis proposed in this study is grounded in the widely recognised social identity theory. Based on this theoretical perspective, it is posited that individuals have a tendency to derive a substantial portion of their personal identity from their affiliations with various groups, including their alma mater.

## 2.5 Emotional Competencies and Perceived Employability

### 2.5.1 Self-awareness and Perceived Employability

The concept of self-awareness, which involves the ability to recognise and understand one's own emotions, personal abilities, limitations, and career goals, has a substantial influence on an individual's perceived employability (Limo, Maru, & Geoffrey, 2019). According to recent studies conducted by Masianoga and Govender (2023), there is evidence to support the notion that individuals who possess an elevated level of self-awareness are better equipped to make informed decisions regarding their career paths. Additionally, these individuals demonstrate a greater ability to identify suitable employment opportunities and present themselves confidently to prospective employers (Robbins & Judge, 2018). Individuals possess the capacity to strategically align their distinct skill sets and aspirations with their selected career trajectories, thereby enhancing their prospects of securing substantial and gratifying employment prospects (Robbins & Coulter, 2019).

Furthermore, it has been noted that individuals who possess self-awareness demonstrate an enhanced capacity to identify and acknowledge their own limitations, thus exhibiting a greater inclination to address and resolve any deficiencies in their set of skills (Goleman, 1995). This attribute makes them more formidable candidates in the fiercely competitive job market. The development of this consciousness not only contributes to the improvement of individuals' career decision-making but also fosters a deep sense of self-efficacy. As a result, this increased self-perception has a notable impact on individuals' evaluation of their employability, thus enhancing their attractiveness as potential candidates from the perspective of prospective employers (Iqbal et al., 2021; MacCann et al., 2020).

### 2.5.2 Self-regulation and Perceived Employability

The notion of self-regulation, denoting an individual's ability to proficiently govern and regulate their emotions, cognitions, and actions, assumes a pivotal role in influencing one's perceived employability. According to Daniela (2015), individuals who exhibit a heightened degree of self-regulation possess a notable advantage in effectively navigating the complex demands of the job market and the workplace. Human beings exhibit a notable capacity to maintain emotional stability and control in the midst of difficult situations, thereby showcasing their aptitude for adjusting to ever-changing surroundings and displaying fortitude when faced with obstacles or instances of disapproval.

The aforementioned attributes not only exert a positive influence on an individual's job performance, but they also play a substantial role in shaping employers' perceptions of them. Individuals who demonstrate self-regulatory capacities often display attributes that are commonly linked to professionalism, adaptability, and composure (Daniela, 2015). These attributes can greatly augment their appeal as prospective employees from the perspective of potential employers (Wójcik & Nęcka, 2019). The rise in perceived employability can be attributed to individuals' proficiency in stress management, proficiency in navigating challenges (Baumeister, Tice, & Vohs, 2018), and maintenance of a positive and confident demeanour during job searches and career transitions. Hence, it can be deduced that self-regulation plays a significant role in shaping an individual's competitiveness in the labour market and their overall self-assurance in attaining employment prospects.

### 2.5.3 Motivation and Perceived Employability

Motivation, as a psychological construct that encompasses internal drive and determination, has a notable impact on an individual's perception of their employability. The aforementioned influential factor significantly influences an individual's endeavour to achieve their goals and aspirations within the realm of employment (Zacher & Frese, 2018). According to existing research, individuals who demonstrate elevated levels of motivation are inclined to exhibit enhanced proactivity and persistence across multiple domains within their professional endeavours. This encompasses their efforts in exploring job prospects (Wang et al., 2021), their dedication to ongoing skill development, and their aspiration for professional progression. The aforementioned motivation functions as a primary catalyst for individuals' commitment to improving their personal development and attaining professional achievements.

As a result, it is common for individuals to display increased levels of self-assurance during interviews, networking events, and other job-related interactions, which may have an influence on employers' evaluations of their suitability for employment (Iqbal et al., 2021). Furthermore, it has been noted that individuals with a heightened level of motivation demonstrate a higher inclination to establish and effectively achieve their career goals (Zacher & Frese, 2018). This statement provides a conspicuous demonstration of their resolute commitment to both personal and professional progress (Gilar-Corbi et al., 2020). This observation underscores the demonstration of motivation, which subsequently bolsters individuals' self-assurance in their employability and augments their appeal as potential candidates to employers.

### 2.5.4 Empathy and Perceived Employability

The concept of empathy, defined as an individual's ability to understand and engage with the emotional experiences of others, has been observed to have a significant impact on the perception of an individual's employability. In professional contexts, employers highly value the quality of empathy because of its substantial impact on promoting successful communication, nurturing positive interpersonal connections, and cultivating a cohesive and pleasant work atmosphere (MacCann et al., 2020). Empathy is a characteristic frequently correlated with individuals who exhibit robust team dynamics (Ringwald & Wright\*, 2021). This trait facilitates their ability to actively participate in collaborative endeavours, adeptly manage conflicts, and provide exceptional customer service (Che, Zhu, & Huang, 2022). The aforementioned attributes make individuals valuable assets to organisations, thereby enhancing their perceived employability.

Moreover, it has been noted that individuals who exhibit adept empathetic skills frequently cultivate advantageous interpersonal connections with their colleagues, clients, and supervisors. Consequently, this can lead to improved opportunities for career progression and the establishment of extensive professional networks. As a result, it is more probable for these individuals to possess a resolute belief in their market value and prospects for employment (Doğru, 2022). The concept of empathy holds great importance in facilitating the growth of individuals, both personally and professionally (Rodrigues & Rebelo, 2019). Moreover, it contributes to enhancing an individual's competitiveness in the job market. The primary reason for this phenomenon can be attributed to its capacity to function as an indicator of an individual's proficiency in fostering productive collaboration and cultivating a cohesive professional atmosphere.

### 2.5.5 Leadership and Perceived Employability

The possession of effective leadership skills significantly influences the perceived employability of an individual. Employers highly value leadership competencies because they are strongly associated with effective team management, sound decision-making, and the capacity to drive organisational success (Nguyen et al., 2017). Individuals who demonstrate exceptional leadership abilities are not only regarded as valuable assets but also as potential future leaders within an organisation (Kark, Van Dijk, & Vashdi, 2018). The skills encompassed within this category include the ability to effectively communicate information, solve intricate problems, demonstrate adaptability in diverse situations, and possess the capacity to inspire and foster motivation in others.

Engaging in leadership roles and showcasing accomplishments can bolster an individual's credibility and perceived employability, particularly when they can adeptly demonstrate the favourable impact of their leadership on teams and organisations. Consequently, it can be deduced that individuals who possess a strong track record of successful leadership are more inclined to feel a greater level of confidence in their ability to obtain employment opportunities (Aggarwal et al., 2020). Consequently, this phenomenon could potentially augment their level of competitiveness and desirability as prospective candidates within the labour market.

### 2.5.6 Social Skills and Perceived Employability

The significance of social skills in relation to an individual's perceived employability is notable, as they encompass a range of factors, including effective communication, teamwork, conflict resolution, and interpersonal relationships (Treglown et al., 2020). Employers highly value these skills because of their substantial impact on cultivating a favourable work atmosphere, promoting efficient teamwork, and facilitating successful engagements with both clients and colleagues. Individuals who exhibit exceptional aptitude in social skills are often regarded as highly proficient collaborators (Goleman, 2006), influential individuals, and valuable contributors to the attainment of organisational goals.

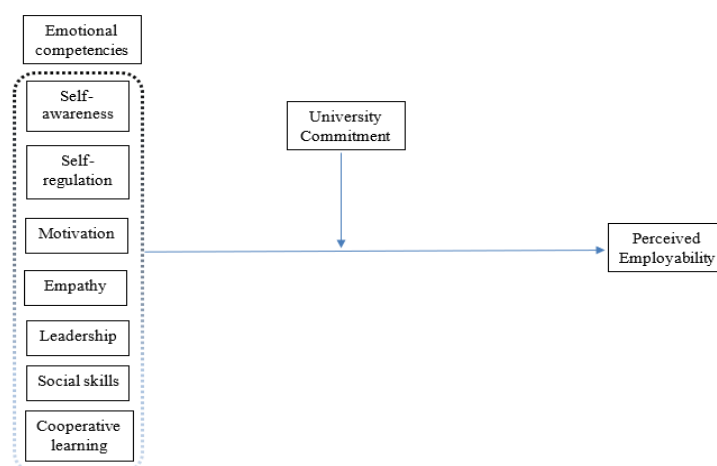
Human beings possess a remarkable capacity to effectively express their thoughts, actively engage in attentive listening, and skilfully navigate complex social dynamics. The enhancement of individuals' perceived employability is facilitated through the acquisition and demonstration of specific competencies. These competencies are intricately connected to the ability to collaborate effectively with others, establish and sustain positive interpersonal relationships, and foster an environment that is conducive to collaboration. Consequently, it has been noted that individuals who demonstrate elevated levels of social skills frequently display an enhanced sense of self-assurance regarding their capacity to obtain employment. The augmented self-assurance subsequently amplifies their attractiveness and competitiveness as job market contenders (Treglown et al., 2020).

### 2.5.7 Cooperative Learning and Perceived Employability

The implementation of cooperative learning, an instructional strategy that prioritises collaborative group tasks to achieve common educational goals, has been observed to significantly impact an individual's perception of their employability. Engaging in collaborative learning initiatives offers individuals a wide range of skills and attributes that

are highly sought after by employers (Zhou et al., 2022). The skills mentioned above encompass a wide range of valuable attributes, including effective communication, collaborative abilities, strong problem-solving skills, adaptability to changing circumstances, and exceptional leadership qualities, among others. Cooperative learning is an instructional strategy that promotes the cultivation of collaboration, collective accountability, and the incorporation of varied viewpoints among participants.

Through active participation in cooperative learning, individuals are able to acquire essential skills that can be directly applied in professional settings, thereby enhancing their ability to efficiently complete tasks and attain desired outcomes. The results of cooperative learning programmes often involve the cultivation of increased self-confidence among participants in their ability to effectively collaborate with peers, address complex challenges, and make valuable contributions to the success of teams and organisations. Their enhanced self-assurance regarding their job prospects can be attributed to their active participation in a collaborative learning environment (Lee, 2019). The increased self-confidence exhibited by individuals has the capacity to enhance their competitiveness in the labour market, as employers hold individuals in high esteem who demonstrate the aptitude to seamlessly assimilate into and flourish within cooperative work settings (Zhou et al., 2022).



Conceptual Model of the Study

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1 Instruments for Data Collection

The study's variables were assessed using established and validated measurement questionnaires. The scales utilised for the subcategories of emotional competencies were derived from the research conducted by Fernandez-Perez and Martin-Rojas (2022). The measurement scale used for the variable of perceived employability was derived from the research conducted by Rothwell and Arnold (2007). The measurement of university commitment was conducted by utilising the tool developed by Rothwell, Herbert, and Rothwell (2008). The variables were assessed using a 5-point Likert scale. Table 1 displays the measurement items and statements for each variable, along with their respective sources.



<b>Self-awareness</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I am able to recognise my own emotions and their effect on my actions.</li> <li>• I am aware of my own strengths and limits.</li> <li>• I have great confidence in my self-worth and my ability to do anything.</li> <li>• I consider myself an honest and upright person.</li> <li>• I am able to take responsibility for my personal actions.</li> </ul>	(Fernandez-Perez & Martin-Rojas, 2022)	
<b>Self-regulation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I consider myself a person who is flexible and capable of addressing changes.</li> <li>• I feel comfortable and open to new ideas, approaches and information.</li> <li>• I commit myself to working for the goals of a group or an organisation when I identify with them.</li> </ul>		
<b>Motivation</b>	<p>I act quickly to seize opportunities I am persistent in working to achieve my goals, despite obstacles and setbacks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I am able to understand the feelings and viewpoints of others, and I am actively interested in the things they care about.</li> <li>• I acknowledge the needs of other people to progress, and I like to foster their capabilities.</li> </ul>		
<b>Empathy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I am able to anticipate, recognise and meet the needs of others.</li> <li>• I like to take advantage of the opportunities offered by different types of people.</li> <li>• I am aware of the emotional currents and underlying power relations within a group</li> <li>• I can make use of effective means of persuasion.</li> <li>• I am a good listener and can transmit a compelling message.</li> </ul>		
<b>Leadership</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I have the ability to negotiate and resolve disagreements.</li> <li>• I am capable of inspiring and leading groups and individuals.</li> <li>• I am capable of initiating and directing change.</li> <li>• I like to take care of and expand my network of contacts.</li> </ul>		
<b>Social Skills</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I know how to work with others to achieve a common goal.</li> <li>• I can create group synergies in the achievement of collective goals.</li> <li>• Members on my team have complementary abilities and skills.</li> <li>• In this course, each team member must be helpful to the others in order to achieve combined results.</li> </ul>		
<b>Cooperative Learning</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In this course, improving skills for dealing with all team members is a goal to be accomplished.</li> <li>• The better the achievement of each team member, the better group's performance.</li> <li>• In my team, there are diverse opinions that are helpful for us learning.</li> </ul>		
<b>Employability</b>			
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. I have good prospects of becoming employed because people value my personal contributions.</li> <li>2. Even if there could be downsizing in the organisation that I will be working at, I am confident that I would be retained.</li> <li>3. My personal networks will help me in my career.</li> <li>4. I am aware of the opportunities arising in the labour market even if they are different to what I am studying.</li> <li>5. The skills I have gained in my field of study are transferable to other occupations outside my field of study.</li> <li>6. I could easily retrain to make myself employable elsewhere.</li> <li>7. I can use my networks and business contacts to develop my career.</li> <li>8. I have a good knowledge of opportunities for me in the labour market even if they are quite different to what I am studying.</li> <li>9. Among the students who do the study the same course as me, I am well respected in this institution.</li> <li>10. Students who study the same course as me in this institution are valued highly.</li> <li>11. If I needed to, I could easily get a job.</li> <li>12. Students who study the same course as mine are presently really in demand by organisations.</li> <li>13. I could easily get a job in almost any organization.</li> <li>14. Anyone with my level of skills and knowledge will be highly sought after by employers.</li> <li>15. I could get any job, anywhere, so long as my skills and experience were reasonably relevant.</li> </ol> <p>People with my kind of knowledge and skills are very highly valued.</p>			(Rothwell & Arnold, 2007)

**University commitment**

16. I talk up this university to my friends as a great university to be at.
17. I would have accepted almost any type of course offer in order to come to this university.
18. I find that my values and this university's values are very similar.
19. I am proud to tell others that I am at this university.
20. Being at this university really inspires the best in me in the way of study performance.
21. I am extremely glad I chose this university over others I was considering at the time I joined.
22. I really care about this university and its future.
23. For me this is the best of all universities to be a member of.

(Rothwell et al., 2008)

**3.2 Data Collection Method and Sample**

The data for this study was obtained through the use of self-administered survey questionnaires. The questionnaires were disseminated to a sample of 300 students enrolled in various universities in Saudi Arabia during the previous semester. The participants were informed that their data would be treated with confidentiality and would not be subject to any form of misuse. A total of 300 questionnaires were distributed to participants, of which 214 completed questionnaires were returned and subsequently utilised for data analysis. The data analysis was performed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

**4. Data Analysis****4.1 Descriptives**

The initial stage of the data analysis process involves presenting the descriptive statistics for the various variables under investigation. The descriptive statistics encompass key measures such as the mean, standard deviation, and correlation statistics, which provide insights into the relationships among the different variables examined in the study. The table below illustrates that the correlation between variables is at a moderate level, which does not pose any issues in the analysis of the data. Furthermore, Cronbach's alpha is a statistical measure used to assess the reliability of variables. The reliability statistics for all variables in the study exceed the threshold value of 0.7, indicating that all variables are deemed reliable and suitable for further analysis.

**Table 2***Descriptive Statistics*

Variable	Mean	SD	Cronbach's alpha	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Self-awareness	3.22	0.35	0.756	1								
Self-regulation	2.98	0.32	0.731	0.34**	1							
Motivation	2.64	0.26	0.701	0.24**	0.57**	1						
Empathy	2.99	0.18	0.769	0.30*	0.54*	0.26*	1					
Leadership	3.28	0.19	0.814	0.29*	0.31**	0.70	0.26**	1				
Social Skills	3.64	0.26	0.834	0.24**	0.10**	0.68*	0.28*	0.54*	1			
Cooperative Learning	2.48	0.25	0.791	0.31	0.26	0.59*	0.36**	0.56**	0.58*	1		
University Commitment	2.66	0.17	0.788	0.26**	0.67*	0.18**	0.30	0.49	0.46**	0.28**	1	
Perceived Employability	2.94	0.34	0.768	0.25	0.60*	0.40**	0.24**	0.37	0.44*	0.34**	0.49	1

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

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2 tailed)

## 5. Results

Following the assessment of variable reliability, the study hypotheses were examined through the utilisation of regression analysis in the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The regression analysis yields the adjusted coefficient of determination (R-squared). The table presented below illustrates that the adjusted R square value was 0.28, indicating that the emotional competencies variables collectively account for 24% of the variance in perceived employability. The remaining variance remains unexplained. The regression analysis yields regression coefficients, as well as p-values and t-values, which are used to assess the validity of research hypotheses. The table reveals that there is no significant correlation between self-awareness and perceived employability among university students in Saudi Arabia. This finding does not support hypothesis H1 of the study. This implies that an individual's self-awareness regarding their emotions, aspirations, abilities, and limitations does not influence their perception of employability.

In light of the highly competitive job market, individuals may experience a lack of confidence in securing employment or perceiving themselves as suitable candidates, despite their belief in their own abilities and awareness of their capabilities. Furthermore, the examination of the data additionally demonstrates a positive and statistically significant correlation between self-regulation and perceived employability, thereby offering support for Hypothesis 2 as posited in the study. Individuals who possess a strong sense of self-regulation in managing their emotions, thoughts, and behaviours and who are capable of adapting swiftly to various situations and environments hold the belief that they are well-suited for employment opportunities. This belief stems from their inherent flexibility in both their behaviours and mindset, enabling them to effectively navigate diverse working conditions.

In addition to this, the examination of the data reveals a positive and statistically significant correlation between motivation and perceived employability, thereby supporting the hypothesis H3 put forth in this study. Individuals who possess motivation to enter the labour market and have specific goals and aspirations they strive to achieve will actively seek out employment opportunities. Consequently, their willingness to invest effort in this pursuit contributes to their perception of employability. In addition, the study did not yield significant evidence supporting Hypothesis 4, as there was no significant association found between empathy and perceived employability. The ability to recognise and understand the emotions and sentiments of others does not have a substantial impact on an individual's own perception of their employability. In the context of employment and team dynamics, possessing empathy can prove to be a valuable attribute for fostering effective collaboration within the team.

However, when considering the employability of an individual, the significance of empathy appears to be negligible. In addition to this, it was observed that there exists a positive and significant correlation between leadership skills and perceived employability, thereby supporting the hypothesis H5 put forth in the study. Possessing leadership skills and qualities entails the ability to proficiently oversee and guide a team, make timely and strategic decisions, and demonstrate foresight regarding the achievement of organisational goals. The possession of these qualities greatly increases an individual's likelihood of securing a job opportunity, as employers tend to prioritise candidates who possess such attributes. Additionally, the study revealed a positive and significant correlation between

social skills and perceived employability, thus supporting Hypothesis 6. Individuals who possess proficient social skills are more likely to cultivate a robust social network as a result of their adeptness in communication and their capacity to establish and sustain interpersonal connections.

The acquisition of networking skills can significantly augment individuals' awareness of their employability, as it equips them with the ability to respond to interview questions in a highly proficient manner. In the job market, there is a preference for candidates who possess the ability to effectively respond to inquiries and interact with individuals in a manner that is both articulate and persuasive. Furthermore, the study revealed that competitive learning exhibited a noteworthy and statistically significant correlation with perceived employability, thereby supporting hypothesis H7. Engaging in a collaborative learning environment through the establishment of study groups and participation in group assignments and projects fosters the cultivation of team-building skills within individuals. This acquisition of skills contributes to their employability, as they acquire knowledge and experience in teamwork, shared responsibilities, conflict resolution, and other valuable competencies through these collaborative exercises.

**Table 3**

*Regression Analysis (Perceived Employability)*

Regression Statistics					
Multiple R					0.34
R <sup>2</sup>					0.28
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>					0.24
Observations					214
ANOVA					
	df	SS	MS	F	Significant F
Regression	18	13.67	13.60	22.36	6.58
Residual	72	7.64	0.56		
Total	100	21.31			
	Coefficients	SE	t value	P-value	
Self-awareness	0.301	0.18	1.28	0.821	
Self-regulation	0.287	0.32	2.64	0.014	
Motivation	0.204	0.27	3.01	0.040	
Empathy	0.329	0.31	1.67	0.413	
Leadership	0.267	0.36	4.68	0.014	
Social Skills	0.369	0.28	4.01	0.028	
Cooperative Learning	0.266	0.22	3.68	0.030	

$P < 0.05$  (Hair et al., 2007),  $t > 1.96$  (Hair et al., 2007)

Additionally, a further examination of the data was undertaken in order to assess the potential moderating influence of university commitment. The findings indicate that there is a positive moderating effect of university commitment on the association between self-awareness and perceived employability. This implies that an individual's dedication to their university fosters and reinforces the connection between self-awareness and perceived employability. In a similar vein, the level of dedication demonstrated by individuals towards their university education plays a constructive role in influencing the connection between self-regulation and the perception of employability. This implies that an individual's dedication to their university fosters and reinforces the connection between self-regulation and perceived employability.

However, the level of commitment to university does not have a moderating effect on the association between motivation and the perception of employability. This implies that an individual's dedication to their university does not have a significant impact on the relationship between motivation and perceived employability. Furthermore, it has been found that university commitment does not serve as a moderating factor in the association between empathy and perceived employability. This implies that an individual's dedication to their university does not have a positive impact on the correlation between empathy and perceived employability. Furthermore, it is worth noting that commitment to university has a positive moderating effect on the association between leadership and the perception of employability. This implies that an individual's dedication to their university fosters and reinforces the correlation between leadership qualities and perceived employability.

In addition, it is observed that the level of commitment to university has a positive moderating effect on the association between social skills and the perception of employability. This implies that an individual's dedication to their university fosters and reinforces the correlation between social skills and perceived employability. Finally, the level of commitment to the university has a positive moderating effect on the association between collaborative learning and the perception of employability. This implies that an individual's dedication to their university fosters and reinforces the connection between collaborative learning and perceived employability.

**Table 4**

*Moderating Role of University Commitment*

Dependent Variable	R <sup>2</sup>	Variables	B	T	F	P
Perceived Employability	0.21	Constant	2.65	3.64	12.35	0.02
		SA	0.21	2.01		0.01
		UC	0.14	1.64		0.04
		SA x UC	0.02	3.29		0.00
Perceived Employability	0.33	Constant	3.21	6.54	19.64	0.03
		SR	0.40	2.34		0.24
		UC	0.11	2.14		0.14
		SR x UC	0.04	5.00		0.03
Perceived Employability	0.19	Constant	2.60	5.58	11.01	0.04
		Motivation	0.25	1.14		0.34
		UC	0.21	1.19		0.25
		Motivation x UC	0.05	1.35		0.08
Perceived Employability	0.25	Constant	3.11	6.66	19.54	0.05
		Empathy	0.34	1.01		0.41
		UC	0.21	1.22		0.23
		Empathy x UC	0.07	1.23		0.09
Perceived Employability	0.30	Constant	2.99	4.54	8.67	0.04
		Leadership	0.48	2.34		0.16
		UC	0.10	1.58		0.19
		Leadership x UC	0.04	3.69		0.03
Perceived Employability	0.29	Constant	2.54	4.97	10.21	0.01
		SS	0.23	2.60		0.12
		UC	0.14	2.11		0.20
		SS x UC	0.03	5.48		0.02
Perceived Employability	0.16	Constant	2.97	7.60	8.99	0.02
		CL	0.27	3.01		0.18
		UC	0.19	1.58		0.19
		CL x UC	0.05	4.75		0.03

## 6. Discussion

The objective of this research was to examine the impact of emotional competencies cultivated during the duration of higher education on the perceptions of graduates regarding their level of accomplishment in the professional realm. Additionally, this study aimed to ascertain whether university commitment plays a moderating role in this relationship. In order to achieve the objective of the study, quantitative data was gathered from a sample of 214 students who were enrolled in various universities in Saudi Arabia during the previous semester. The data that was gathered was subjected to regression analysis and processed using the Hayes macro in SPSS. The study's results show that, besides self-awareness and empathy, developing emotional skills like self-control, motivation, leadership, social skills, and cooperative learning while in college is strongly and positively linked to how employable someone thinks they are. The level of self-awareness an individual possesses regarding their emotions, aspirations, aptitude, and limitations does not have a discernible impact on their perception of employability.

In light of the highly competitive job market, individuals may experience a lack of confidence regarding their prospects for employment or their suitability for available positions, despite their self-perceived competencies and awareness of their capabilities. Furthermore, individuals who possess a strong sense of self-regulation in managing their emotions, thoughts, and behaviours and who are adept at adapting themselves to various situations and environments hold the belief that they are more likely to secure employment opportunities. This is due to their inherent flexibility in their behaviours and mindsets, which enables them to effectively navigate diverse work environments and successfully tackle the challenges associated with varying working conditions (Daniela, 2015). Individuals who demonstrate self-regulatory abilities often display traits that are commonly linked to professionalism, adaptability, and composure. These qualities can greatly augment individuals' appeal as prospective employees from the perspective of potential employers (Wójcik & Nęcka, 2019). Individuals who possess intrinsic motivation to enter the labour market and harbour specific objectives and ambitions that they strive to achieve will actively seek out employment prospects.

Consequently, the level of effort they are willing to invest in this pursuit contributes to their perception of employability (Wang et al., 2021; Zacher & Frese, 2018). Motivation plays a pivotal role in individuals' commitment to fostering their personal development and attaining professional achievements. As a result, it is common for individuals to demonstrate increased levels of self-assurance during interviews, networking events, and other job-related interactions, which may have an influence on employers' evaluations of their suitability for employment (Iqbal et al., 2021). The extent to which an individual possesses knowledge and understanding of the emotions and sentiments experienced by others does not exert a substantial impact on their personal perception of employability. In the context of employment and team dynamics, possessing empathy can prove to be a valuable attribute that facilitates effective collaboration within the team (Ringwald & Wright\*, 2021).

However, in terms of an individual's employability, the significance of empathy appears to be negligible. Possessing leadership skills and qualities entails the ability to proficiently oversee and guide a team, make well-timed and strategic decisions, and

demonstrate foresight regarding the success of an organisation (Nguyen et al., 2017). The possession of these qualities greatly increases an individual's likelihood of securing a job opportunity, as employers tend to prioritise candidates who possess such qualities (Kark et al., 2018). Individuals who possess proficient social skills exhibit a robust social network as a result of their adeptness in communication and their capacity to cultivate and sustain interpersonal connections. The acquisition of networking skills enhances individuals' perception of employability by enabling them to effectively respond to interview questions.

Employers in the job market tend to favour candidates who possess the ability to respond to inquiries and interact with individuals in a proficient and articulate manner (Treglown et al., 2020). Engaging in a collaborative learning environment through the establishment of study groups and participation in group assignments and projects fosters the cultivation of team building skills within an individual. This, in turn, enhances their employability by facilitating the acquisition of valuable competencies such as teamwork, shared responsibilities, conflict resolution, and other pertinent proficiencies through these experiential exercises (Zhou et al., 2022).

### **Implications**

The current investigation provided a thorough examination of the intricate relationship between emotional competencies, commitment to university, and perceived success in employment. Through an in-depth exploration of these complex dynamics, this study has contributed to a comprehensive comprehension of the interconnections among these variables. The study's findings have significant implications for the advancement of targeted interventions and strategies aimed at improving employment outcomes. This study offers valuable insights that can be utilised by educational institutions, career counsellors, and employers to effectively prepare graduates for a smooth transition from the academic environment to the professional sphere. Through a comprehensive analysis of multiple factors and the collection of relevant data, this study makes a valuable contribution to the advancement of strategies and resources aimed at equipping graduates with the essential skills and sufficient support required to enhance their prospects for a successful transition into the labour market.

### **Limitations and Future Research Directions**

The study has some limitations when it comes to the context and settings of the data. The data is limited to the context of the universities in Saudi Arabia. Future studies can investigate these factors in other contexts. Moreover, this study is quantitative in nature and analysed the data using statistical approaches. The future studies can look into qualitative methods to get better and deeper insights. Future studies can also employ structural equation modelling for analysis of the data.

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