

Employability and International Experience: Indonesian Students perceptions

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Abstract. This paper presents a quantitative analysis of how Indonesian students see the impact of international experience on graduate employability. Previous literature suggests that the influence of internationalization on higher education and globalization of the world market has increased the necessities for degree holders with the potential to perform in a multicultural world and foreign language skills. Indonesian universities have emphasized more on short-term student mobility under international activities to train students for a global workforce. Some selected studies have been conducted in this field, but most previous studies have concentrated on specific subjects/ disciplines/faculty or private/state universities. This study will resolve this gap by inviting input from all disciplines of private and state universities in Indonesia and concentrating on student mobility dimensions, as it seeks to explore the effect of student mobility on the potential employability of Indonesian students. The research received 249 completed questionnaires from 15 state and private universities in Indonesia. The study's findings indicate that most students believed that an international experience of 6 months or more was likely to impact developing their soft skills, foreign language proficiency, and multicultural skills to enhance graduate employability and broaden career prospects

Keywords: International experience; Higher Education; Indonesian Higher Education; Student Employability

1 Introduction

Highlighting the need to build up an information-based economy, tertiary instruction enrolment expanded five-fold from 28.6 to 152.2 million between 1970 to 2007 (UNESCO, 2019). Shockingly, work rates have not stayed up with this pattern. Worldwide joblessness had ascended from 5.6 percent in 2007 to 6.2 percent in 2010 (ILO, 2010). It has established a difficult climate for youngsters matured 15-24 years, as can be seen from the high joblessness rates: 11.8% in 2007, 12.8% in 2009, 12.6% in 2010, and 12.7% in 2011 (UNESCO, 2020). These numbers are alarming because most developing nations battle to offer jobs to their young alumni (Wickramasinghe and Perera, 2010).

In this new challenging world, where knowledge and skills are largely a requirement for employment, universities seem to be a supply house to produce ready-to-work products (students) for global employers. However, it has been widely recognized that there is a gap between supply and demand due to current learning and development systems that do not actually generate students who meet international demands. Kavanagh and Drennan (2008) suggest that graduate students need to be mindful that employers have specific requirements of the skills and knowledge related to a specific domain. Most employers expect graduates to have good communication skills, technological skills, interpersonal skills, and flexibility to

work in a multicultural environment. For certain employers, these skills are more important than grades received by a student during college time. However, many employers have raised questions about graduates' skills and knowledge as they do not fulfill their criteria (Cory and Pruske, 2012). Cornelia, A & Adhariani, Di (2020) has also indicated these issues in their study, where they highlighted an understanding gap between the student and employer over the requirement of specific skills in the accounting domain in Indonesia.

Several scholars have raised similar concerns in Indonesia who highlighted concern over graduate employability (Surya, W. 2015). If we further look into the recent report of Petrus (2020), the unemployment numbers reached 6.88 million, which is higher than last year's number by 60,000, or 0.8% compared to last year's unemployment rate of 6.82%. The report further forecast that because of current pandemic issues, the joblessness rate will reach between 8.1% to 9.2% in August 2020, which will be the most elevated in 10 years, and assessed that an extra 4 to 5.5 million specialists could get jobless in 2020. These numbers are troubling because they directly affect graduate jobs, reflecting the countries' active labor force. And if they are not engaged for a longer period, there would be a dramatic rise in the country's dependent population.

To overcome the gap mentioned above, Indonesian universities have come up with many initiatives and policies, and one of them is the internationalization process, which includes international student mobility activity. The main aim to incorporate international student mobility activity at the university level is to build a global mindset and multi-skills into students to be an effective workforce, communicators, and peacemakers in a culturally diverse world. Most of the scholars and institution policymakers believe that the students participate in an international student mobility experience has a positive impact on employability, so they designed the internationalization process or activities at the institution level according to their understanding and comfort level without involving students or keeping the student's perception in mind. Although some selected studies have been conducted in this field, most previous studies have concentrated on specific subjects/ disciplines/faculty or private/state universities. This study will resolve this gap by inviting input from all disciplines of private and state universities in Indonesia and concentrating on student mobility dimensions, as it seeks to explore the effect of student mobility on the potential employability of Indonesian students.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Internationalization in Higher Education

Globalization influences the perception of time and space between nations using technology and telecommunications (Goldsmith et al., 2003). As a result, globalization has transformed the various facets of culture to establish a relationship amid diversity. Each nation aims to develop public policies that will enable the nation to meet global standards while responding to unique local needs. Internationalization of education is the most important factor in reacting to globalization patterns (Courts, 2004; Hovey, 2011; Kerry, 2012). Globalization initiates a transformation of information and instruction based on three phenomena: the interdependence of the world economy and the shift in human capital, massive migration and change in culture, and current universal environmental problems that have a ripple impact on the global economy (Mansilla & Jackson, 2011).

Knight (1994) introduced the most encouraging and exceptionally referred to working idea of internationalization, expressing that 'internationalization is the way toward joining the worldwide measurement into the instructing, learning, exploration and administration

elements of establishments,' which was later extended by Van der Wende (1997) by adding 'any coordinated exertion centered at setting advanced education receptive to the expectations and necessities of the globalization of economies, work markets, and the economy. In 2005, Paige portrayed that the internationalization of higher scholastic learning is a continuous activity that includes strong administration as a team with other college partners to achieve change because of an undeniably different, universally situated climate. A few scientists acknowledge that the internationalization of higher learning establishments is a cross country try to train people in the future of researchers to be universally occupied with tending to the issues confronting the world (De wit, Jaramillo, Gacel-Avila and Knight, 2005; Hawawini, 2011).

2.3 Internationalization of Indonesian Higher Education

Indonesia maintains internationalization as a primary practice in higher education. The internationalization process in Indonesian higher education centered on all facets of the educational process, including student mobility, academic exchange, international accreditation, encouragement for the use of English as a second instruction language, and international cooperation with other overseas institutions. There is a range of other steps taken by the Indonesian government, such as implementing new policies under which foreign institutions can open their branch campuses and the recommendation of local institutions to obtain international accreditation. Further, the Indonesian government has also taken other initiatives to allow Indonesian universities to hire up to 200 faculty members from the world's top 100 institutions (R. Nurdiani, 2018). These government initiatives aim to enhance the standard of Indonesian higher education through various university internationalization activities and raise awareness among policymakers about developing human capital and improving research culture and innovation at the institution level.

The Indonesian government has been trying to motivate universities to implement the internationalization process at all institutional operation levels. However, due to early preparation and frequent national policy changes on internationalization, there are many obstacles and challenges for institutions and slow progress. The future of the internationalization of Indonesian higher education entirely depends on government and university policymakers. There is an urgent need to follow a holistic strategy at the national level to encourage all educational institutions to work together in this area. According to a new study by the Boston Consulting Group (2013), there is a strong likelihood that Indonesian companies will face the challenge of quality talent capital in the future.

International experience generally refers to the kind of experience that any person or student has acquired in a foreign country or a country other than a graduate country. Students gain international experience under the universities' internationalization activities such as summer/winter school, semester exchange, dual/joint degree program, etc. These activities' international experience is growing prominence and commonly accepted as a vital asset and a possible source of competitive advantage for graduate students.

3. What do we mean by "Employability?"

The concept of employability tends to be expanded within the sense of various backgrounds, both those at work and those looking for work, according to the Cambridge dictionary concept of 'employability,' which is 'the skills and abilities that enable you to be

employed. Some scholars also highlighted the different understanding of employability in different contexts in Table 1.

Table 1. Employability Definition's

Source	Definition
Confederation of British Industry (1999)	portrayed employability as a person's ownership of the characteristics and abilities expected to meet the advancing requirements of employers and clients and consequently help to understand their desires and potential at work
Yorke, M. (2001)	Employability stems from diverse learning and is a broader variety than that of primary or core skills.
Lees, D. (2002)	The term "employability" has been conceptualized differently because it is difficult to define the meaning in a succinct and detailed manner
International Labor Office (2004)	Versatile skills and qualifications enhance individuals' ability to take advantage of the education and training opportunities available to ensure and retain decent work to make progress within and between jobs and businesses and cope with evolving technology and labor market conditions.
International Labor Office (2005)	Employability increments with the headway of a wide scope of instruction, preparing, significant level abilities, collaboration, critical thinking, information, communication technology (ICT), correspondence, and language aptitudes. This blend of aptitudes encourages them to adapt to the adjustments in the world.
Kumar, A. (2009)	It points out that employability attributes are so difficult to classify, quantify, assess and shift as 'skills' to different employers, instructors, students, and graduates in different settings and conditions of higher education.

3.1 Graduate Employability

There is a great deal of understanding and concepts relevant to graduate employability. According to Hinchliffe and Jolly (2011), the concept that graduates possess unique qualities that also decide their academic position or degree has been widely accepted. For Hillage & Pollard (1998), graduate employability is the expertise, skills, and qualities that graduates have to demonstrate in higher education. While other concepts likewise distinguish between graduates and non-graduates based on skill sets and characteristics that influence the chances of successful graduate employment (Yorke 2006; Boden and Nedeva 2010).

Graduate employability is indicated when students are trained for fields in which there is a strong need, and the skills and experience of graduates are well-matched with employers' needs in the workplace. According to Knight & Yorke (2004), four large interlinked

components affect employability. These elements are collectively part of the highly skilled communication practices, time- management, actualization, problem solving and personal development, and thorough understanding focused on discipline-based information skills. Bagshow (1997) gave a complex perspective on employability that is not limited to the link between the emerging graduate and the job market and the ownership of the knowledge and competencies to prevail in the working environment (Hedley, 2003).

3.2 Graduate Employability- Indonesian Context

Developing an economy requires highly trained, and professional global human capital, and universities are responsible for generating qualified graduates to fulfill these requirements. In the Indonesian context, employability is generally correlated with how easily a graduate finds a job after completing his program/degree. The main reason why many students choose to study at university is to improve their job prospects. However, while good academic qualifications are highly regarded, they do not seem sufficient to secure jobs.

According to the latest ILO (2020), Indonesia has the highest youth unemployment rate in the country, at around 17.6 percent. Many young university graduates have no choice but to take up jobs that do not require any university qualifications. Simultaneously, many workplaces needing advanced skills cannot find university graduates skilled enough to work because of Indonesia's skills gap. If we compare the last 10 years of unemployment data, we found that the youth unemployment (15-24) is always a big challenge in Indonesia as the percentage is always above 15 %, which is very high compared to the 7.7% world unemployment rate (CIA, 2019).



Fig 1. Unemployment, youth data% (ages 15-24)

Further, if we look at the level of unemployment on the bases of gender, we found the unemployment rate in male youth (15-24) is 17.3%, which is slightly lower than the unemployment rate in female youth (age 15-24), i.e., 18.1% (World Bank, 2020).



Fig 2. Unemployment, gender bases youth data% (ages 15-24) (ILO estimate)

A paradox of higher education, especially evident across Indonesia, is that even when the country produces a record number of graduates, employers complain about the lack of skilled workers, and graduate unemployment increases. Employers are increasingly worried that graduates' expertise and skills are not aligned with the labor market's needs.

3.3 International Experience and Employability Skills

Various examinations have indicated a considerable relationship between international experience and employability aptitudes. As indicated by Buck and Barrick (1987), employability aptitudes are characterized as non-specialized abilities. This ability is comprised of the attributes wanted by the organization. Bhanugopan and Fish (2009) featured distinctive employability aptitudes sought after by various managers, for example, Business abilities, specialized abilities, and Individual abilities. Recruiters look for people with solid attributes, such as high self-appreciation, who are creative and have a solid feeling of mission, and innovative to meet the country's difficulties and globalization in the 21st century (Griffin and Annulis, 2013).

Despite moderately limited engagement ratios, student mobility and international experience remain to be increased to improve information transfer and build essential graduate 'capabilities' or 'skills needed by the current century organizations (Teichler 2004; Chan and Dimmock 2008). For instance, a huge piece of current administration writing accentuates the need for intercultural flexibility and worldwide ability, perception, sympathy, liberality, activity, adaptability, intercultural affectability, correspondence, extraversion, thoughtfulness, coordinated effort, curiosity, resistance, and mindfulness (Bird, 2008).

As Mendenhall (World Initiative 2008) points out, modern global perspectives of thought, strategic leadership skills, and expertise do not develop inside individuals who have not gained experience in global contexts. Hermans (2007) also indicates that organizations operating in a globalized world are searching for 'strong attributes' that are innovative, supportive, and capable of working with various cultural groups and global teams. It thinks that international experience and an internationalized educational plan are significant requirements for creating such an ability. International experience is accounted for to influence comprehension, learning, social mindfulness, individual and expert development, and employability (Koskinen & Tossavainen 2003; Clarke 2005; Cowen 2007; Bird 2008).

4. Methodology

This study has used a quantitative approach, but some qualitative research components have also been used to understand better students' perceptions of employability and international experience in Indonesia. The study used descriptive and statistical analyses to assess international experience's impact on Indonesian students' employment prospects and professional competence. The study's descriptive methodology consisted of a percentage analysis of the respondents' demographic characteristics, and the statistical technique consisted of scale analysis, including a reliability test. The Cronbach alpha tested the reliability of the questionnaire. The questionnaire's structured methodology was used, consisting of three sections, i.e., 1. Student Demographic Statistics, 2. Internationalization of the University, and 3. Evaluation of internationalization and employability linked to professional and personal development and abilities with close-ended questions. Every component of the questionnaire was calculated using a 5-point Likert scale, where 0 for

“Strongly Agree,” 1 for “Agree,” 2 for “Neutral,” 3 for “Disagree,” & 4 for “Strongly Disagree.”

4.1 Test of Reliability

Cronbach's alpha coefficient is used to verify the reliability of the shared questionnaire. Like Nunnally & Bernstein have defined that Cronbach's alpha coefficient above 0.70 is considered to be reliable. The results highlighted that the alpha values of the Cronbach coefficient range from 0.7713 to 0.8329. As the important values fall within a reasonable range, the survey questionnaire is accurate. The results are shown in Table 4 below

Table 2. Reliability Test

Factors	Objects	Cronbach's alpha
Academic development	3	0.8129
Soft Skills	3	0.8329
Foreign language proficiency	3	0.7901
Personal improvement	3	0.7713

Based on the results of research and discussion discussed in the previous chapter, it can be concluded that urgency of implementing character education in Budi Mulia Dua International High School is based on several things including as an effort to realize the vision and mission of the school that not only focus on intellectual intelligence, but also focus on the moral and spiritual of students, as a form of anticipatory measures to strengthen the foundations of students so they are not easily affected by the swift currents of globalization and digitalization. The values of character education developed at Budi Mulia Dua International High School include the values of discipline, religion, responsibility, honesty, courtesy, and tolerance.

Implementation of student character education at Budi Mulia International High School is carried out through teaching and learning activities and by developing school culture, as well as centers for learning activities, spontaneous activities, exemplary, conditioning, and extracurricular activities such as social apprenticeship activities, business observations, class discussions, field activities trip, talent interest activities, cultural implementation. The implementation of mind-based character education is realized by reading pledges, giving advice and motivation to students. Not only students who implement character education in schools, but all school residents such as school principals and all teachers.

Factors that support the implementation of student character education at Budi Mulia International High School can be divided into two, namely factors within the student and external factors. Internal factors are the awareness of students themselves in implementing or applying character to themselves. Outside factors include the vision and mission of the school, the strength of the teacher, the activities that have been programmed, the principle of togetherness, cooperation, family of all members or members of the school such as students, teachers, foundations, and parents, the small number of students making it easy to control, facilities and infrastructure as well as adequate school facilities, and a conducive school environment. While the factors that hamper the implementation of student character education at Budi Mulia International High School, also include internal and external factors. Internal factors that influence are the condition of the students themselves, as well as the diversity of student characters so it is difficult to manage. External factors that influence are among others the social environment, differences in school culture with culture at home, lack of control from teachers and parents, and the influence of social media.

5 Results and Discussion

This category focuses on the empirical results and their estimates. This section highlighted the descriptive analysis, findings, summary, and conclusion.

Descriptive Study: This section shows the demographic profiles of the respondents.

Demographic Profiles: Below mentioned Table.2 highlighted the findings of participant's demographic information such as gender and age.

Table 3. Percentage distribution of participant's characteristics

Item	Percentage
Gender	
Female	62.7%
Male	37.3%
Age	
17- 20 years	43%
20-24 years	57%

The data show that amongst 249 respondents, 107 (43%) were aged between 17-20 years, and 142 (57%) were aged between 20-24 years. Of the total, 93 (37.3%) were male, and 156 (77.9%) were female participants. Further to this, Table. 3 elaborates on the type of university, programs, and the duration of programs participants are studying.

Table 4. Percentage distribution of demographic characteristics

University Type	Percentage
Public	64.7%
Private	35.3%
Programs	
Agriculture	3.2%
Engineering	13.0%
Language and Culture	8.1%
Law	10.1%
Management and Accounting	36.5%
Medical	19.6%
Political Science	4.4%
Science	5.2%
Program Duration	
0-1 year	33
2-4 year	216

The findings show that among 249 respondents, 161 (64.7%) were from public universities, and 88 (35.3%) were from private universities. Of the total participants, 91 (36.5%) were students from the Management and Accounting program, 49 (19.6%) from the Medical/Nursing program, 32 (10.1%) from the Engineering program, 25 (10.1%) from the Law degree program, 20 (8.1%) from the Language and Culture program, 13 (5.2%) from the

Science program, 11 (4.4%) from the Political Science program and 8 (3.2%) from Agriculture program.

5.1 Findings

This segment starts with the relationship between international experience and the respondents' employability and then outlines their future benefits. Participants across all participating universities in Indonesia were largely supportive of international experience's advantages related to employability. The majority of participants believed that the recruiters would be more likely to be favorable towards students with international experience than those who had not. As the data reflected, 86.35% of students agreed that international experience (semester exchange) has a direct and positive impact on their academic performance, and 54.3% of participants believed that international experience would make them more employable compared to those who never had any international experience.

The data collected through the respondents suggest the following key points about the international experience: (1) Almost 90.4% of students agreed that the university should provide the international experience during their programs. (2) In terms of the type of international experience, 52.6% believed semester exchange is the best way to gain international experience, followed by 47% for a Dual degree, 43.4% for an international workshop, and 43% for cultural exchange. (3) The majority of students see international experience as an opportunity to gain skills that will have a significant effect on their employability such as 69.1% of students feel the international experience will improve their soft skills, 55% of students said they could gain different prospect for their subject knowledge, 51% students feel it will help their foreign language proficiency, 48.6% agreed it will improve multicultural skills, 41.8% believe it has an impact on their global competencies and 41% it improves their international network which will make them ready for the global market (figure 3).

249 responses

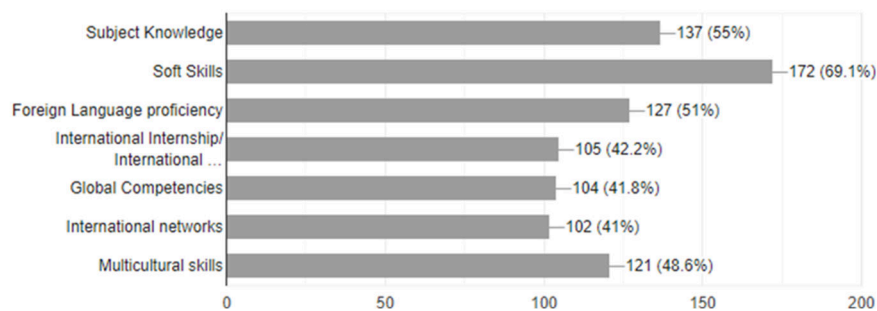


Fig 3. Students perceived skill analysis

The data highlighted that according to the student's perception, most of the Indonesian and global companies highly considered international experience along with regional and global links. Students assume that international experience will stand out in their resume," as it will encourage them to develop a cross-cultural connection and conduct business in the light of their knowledge and ability for intercultural competence. These analysis results are in line with recent findings on international movement and professional advancement (Marcotte et al., 2007). However, some students also pointed out that it also depends on the organization how much they recognized and depended on a specific international experience during the hiring process; (i) similar international experience in terms of company work; (ii) the type of

international experience of students; and (iii) whether the international experience was consistent with the summary assessment.

The main positive impacts of international experience in developing soft skills, possibilities for international connectivity, and foreign languages acquisition. Employers were aware that students with international experience were likely to have established relations abroad that could prove extremely useful. The gathered student data also emphasized the same direction and felt that international experience was the most required opportunity to improve the skills that recruiters generally require. Data also supports literature indicating that classroom learning is not the most successful method to enhance students' job prospects (Cranmer 2006). Data also resonated with literature indicating that classroom instruction is not the most successful way to boost graduates' employability (Cranmer 2006).

The effect that this could be seen as improving graduate employability and broadening career opportunities is doubtful given that the analysis offers a summary rather than any longitudinal evidence. These statements may indicate the observations of Teichler & Jahr (2001) that employers continued to see graduates with international experience (foreign language skills) as "relevant candidates" and are therefore more likely to be identified in the early hiring process statistics showed that international exposure was positively linked to student development and was commonly considered to be related to the first, the development of soft skills and the second, cultural understanding. The data also showed that most students assumed that an international experience of six months or more likely resulting in a semester or dual degree level would be more successful in improving soft skills, foreign language skills, and multicultural skills as they affect employability. These findings are reflected in more studies on cultural sensitivity (Marcotte et al. 2007) and international cognitive competence (Osland, 2008) due to international experience.

6 Conclusion

This study shows a clear connection between students' international experience and graduate employability from a student perspective. International experience tends to support soft skills, foreign language skills, cultural awareness, and adaptability and improve graduates' competitiveness in a globalized labor market, all of which are key factors in evaluating individual employability. Some noticeable synergies with this study's results inspire and indicate that this kind of information is relevant to all university stakeholders. It would seem that international experience enhances learning, cognitive abilities, enhanced soft critical skills, and, likely, total employability. Even if it does not improve long career growth, it can give graduates an 'advantage' in the initial recruitment process.

For this reason, institutions will encourage greater participation in international exchange programs, especially in English-speaking countries (as English has so far been considered a globally accepted language) where both language learning and cultural experience might make significant contributions to the student's portfolio of employability skills. Furthermore, this study provides valuable information and insight into how university stakeholders can better plan internationalization activities at the institutional level to enhance their students' employability. For potential researchers, it is possible to extend this study by contrasting the nature and degree of the students' overall graduate employability skills with international experience and those without it. This will help describe whether the skills acquired through international experience are simply improvements to those learned by all graduates or reflect a

specific collection of skills that can only be acquired through deep interaction with another community.

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