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MAPPING THE LANDSCAPE OF SKILL DEVELOPMENT AND EMPLOYABILITY: A BIBLIOMETRIC REVIEW

MAPOWANIE KRAJOBRAZU ROZWOJU UMIEJĘTNOŚCI I ZATRUDNIALNOŚCI: PRZEGLĄD BIBLIOMETRYCZNY

Rakesh Sheoran[1,A-F], **Ombir Singh**[2,A,D-E], **Jaikishan Bhambhu**[3,D-F], **Babloo Jakhar**[4,A-F]

[1] Department of Economics, Maharishi Dayanad University, Rohtak, India
[2] Department of Business Management, School of Management, Gautam Buddha University, Greater Noida, India
[3] Economics, F.G.M. Govt. College, Adampur, India
[4] Department of Economics, Central University of Odisha, India

[1] Wydział Ekonomii, Uniwersytet Maharishi Dayanad, Rohtak, Indie
[2] Wydział Zarządzania Biznesem, Szkoła Zarządzania, Uniwersytet Gautam Buddha, Greater Noida, Indie
[3] Ekonomia, F.G.M. Govt. College, Adampur, Indie
[4] Wydział Ekonomii, Centralny Uniwersytet Odiszy, Indie

Abstract

Subject and purpose of work: This paper aims to map the landscape of skill development and employability research through a bibliometric review. It seeks to identify key trends, thematic areas, influential contributors, and gaps to guide future interdisciplinary inquiry and policy development.

Materials and methods: The analysis is based on a curated dataset of 132 publications retrieved from Scopus and Web of Science. Using the Bibliometrix R package, both performance analysis and science mapping were applied to evaluate research productivity, identify leading authors and sources, and explore thematic evolution within the domain.

Results: The analysis of 132 publications revealed rising research on skill development and employability since 2021, with dominant themes including curricula, soft skills, and digital learning aligned with labor market needs.

Conclusions: The study concludes that research on skill development and employability has intensified since 2021, emphasizing curricula, soft skills, and digital learning to meet evolving labor market demands.

Keywords: Education, Employability, Skill development, Bibliometric review

Address for correspondence / Adres korespondencyjny: Babloo Jakhar, Department of Economics, Central University of Odisha Sunabeda, NAD Post Office, 763004, Koraput, India (e-mail: Babloojakhar1993@gmail.com), ORCID: 0000-0003-3885-6421

Rakesh Sheoran, Ombir Singh, Jaikishan Bhambhu, Babloo Jakhar

Streszczenie

Przedmiot i cel pracy: Niniejszy artykuł ma na celu zmapowanie krajobrazu badań nad rozwojem umiejętności i zatrudnialnością poprzez przegląd bibliometryczny. Celem jest identyfikacja kluczowych trendów, obszarów tematycznych, wpływowych autorów oraz luk, aby ukierunkować przyszłe badania interdyscyplinarne i rozwój polityki.

Materiały i metody: Analiza oparta jest na starannie dobranym zbiorze danych 132 publikacji pochodzących z baz Scopus i Web of Science. Korzystając z pakietu Bibliometrix R, zastosowano analizę wydajności i mapowanie naukowe w celu oceny produktywności badań, zidentyfikowania wiodących autorów i źródeł oraz zbadania ewolucji tematycznej w obrębie danej dziedziny.

Wyniki: Analiza 132 publikacji ujawniła rosnącą liczbę badań nad rozwojem umiejętności i zatrudnialnością od 2021 r., przy czym dominującymi tematami były programy nauczania, umiejętności miękkie i uczenie się cyfrowe, dostosowane do potrzeb rynku pracy.

Wnioski: Badanie stwierdza, że badania nad rozwojem umiejętności i zatrudnialnością zintensyfikowały się od 2021 r., kładąc nacisk na programy nauczania, umiejętności miękkie i uczenie się cyfrowe, aby sprostać zmieniającym się wymaganiom rynku pracy.

Słowa kluczowe: edukacja, zatrudnialność, rozwój umiejętności, przegląd bibliometryczny

Introduction

Graduate employability has emerged as a critical construct, encompassing not only students' readiness to secure employment but also their ability to achieve sustained success in their professional roles. Increasingly, this topic commands the attention of institutional leaders, industry stakeholders, and national policymakers (Oppong & Segbenya, 2023; Tan et al., 2022). As the global economy continues to evolve, the need for continuous educational renewal of human capital becomes essential to meet both current and future workforce demands (Cavanagh et al., 2015).

This study presents a bibliometric analysis that maps key research developments in the field, beginning with the concept of globally competent graduates, then examining essential employability skills and persistent performance gaps, and finally exploring the role of extracurricular activities in skill development. Contemporary definitions of employability have expanded beyond the goal of initial job placement to include an individual's capacity for self-marketing, career management, and long-term adaptability in a dynamic labor market (Oppong & Segbenya, 2023; Tan & Laswad, 2018). This broader view underscores the importance of cultivating both hard skills (technical competencies) and soft skills such as communication, teamwork, and problem-solving (Oppong & Segbenya, 2023; Tan et al., 2022).

To meet the demands of an interconnected global workforce, higher education institutions (HEIs) must design programs that foster global competencies and offer students opportunities for skill development aligned with international market expectations (Minocha et al., 2018; Hawawini, 2017). Despite these needs, a gap persists between graduate capabilities and employer expectations, with many graduates lacking essential job-related skills (Lichy & Khvatova, 2019; Webb & Chaffer, 2016). Employers increasingly emphasize non-technical skills such as effective communication, collaboration, and organizational awareness (Tan et al., 2022), highlighting the urgent need for HEIs to align curricula with industry standards (Cavanagh et al., 2015).

Integrating authentic assessments – such as reflective practices on skill development – offers a meaningful way to embed workplace relevance into higher education (Miller & Konstantinou, 2022). Moreover, participation in extracurricular activities has been shown to enhance graduate readiness by fostering motivation, transferable skills, and practical experience (Chapman et al., 2023; Fraser et al., 2019). These activities serve multiple student motivations, including improving communication skills, building professional networks, enhancing résumés, and contributing to community service (Chapman et al., 2023). Innovative approaches to supporting graduate employability are also gaining momentum. Digital badges and micro-credentials offer verifiable digital representations of competencies, helping employers identify qualified candidates more effectively (Perkins & Pryor, 2021). Additionally, career adaptability – a self-regulatory resource – promotes long-term career sustainability by encouraging flexible, proactive career behaviors (Pajic et al., 2018).

In the face of rapid technological advancements and evolving labour market demands, skill development and employability have become central to addressing global workforce challenges. Although the volume of empirical research on these topics has grown significantly, the existing literature remains highly fragmented. There is a lack of synthesis regarding key trends, influential contributions, and emerging areas, which limits the ability of stakeholders – such as policymakers, educators, and industry leaders – to draw on evidence-based insights for designing effective interventions. A bibliometric review offers a systematic and quantitative approach to analyzing the evolution of scholarship in this field. It enables the identification of major themes, mapping of influential authors and sources, and the detection of intellectual structures and research gaps. By consolidating and organizing existing knowledge, this study aims to bridge theoretical and practical divides, offering a comprehensive overview of the field's development. Furthermore, understanding both global and regional research trends is essential for crafting inclusive and context-sensitive skill development strategies. These strategies must not only respond to global economic challenges but also address local workforce needs and social realities. Accordingly, this study seeks to contribute to the advancement of research and the formulation of evidence-informed policies on employability and skill development. It addresses the following research questions as follows:

RQ1: What are the emerging themes and trending topics in the field of skill development and employability?

RQ2: Who are the most influential authors, journals, and publication sources contributing to research on skill development and employability?

RQ3: Which countries have contributed the highest volume of research publications in this field?

RQ4: What are the most highly cited and prominent scholarly works shaping the field of skill development and employability?

Materials and Methods

As the volume of academic literature continues to expand, researchers face increasing challenges in systematically reviewing relevant studies and understanding their interconnections. Traditional literature reviews – such as narrative, systematic, and thematic reviews (Khatib et al., 2021a)— offer various approaches to synthesizing prior research. Among these, the bibliometric review, introduced by Pritchard (1969), provides a quantitative method for evaluating scholarly output (Donthu et al., 2021). This structured approach enables the classification of published research based on key parameters such as authorship, institutional affiliation, geographical distribution, and source publications. Khatib et al. (2021b) emphasize the importance of adopting a holistic strategy when assessing academic literature. In this context, Donthu et al. (2021) outline two core techniques in bibliometric analysis: performance analysis, which measures research productivity, and science mapping, which reveals the intellectual and conceptual structure of a field. This study employs both approaches – performance analysis to assess scholarly contributions and science mapping to uncover thematic patterns and relationships within the domain of skill development and employability.

For data, Scopus and Web of Science (WoS) are widely recognized as reliable and comprehensive databases for social science research. Due to their extensive coverage of peer-reviewed journals, both databases are frequently recommended for bibliometric studies (Kumar et al., 2021; Donthu et al., 2021). Accordingly, this study exclusively draws its dataset from Scopus and Web of Science. An initial search was conducted on January 2, 2025. As noted by Jain et al. (2021), defining precise and relevant search terms is often the most challenging aspect of conducting bibliometric searches. Based on prevailing literature, the search query used was: "Skill Development" and "Employability". The search was applied to article titles, abstracts, and keywords, yielding 574 records from Scopus and 72 from Web of Science.

To narrow the focus to literature relevant to business, management, and related domains, a subject-area filter-Business, Business Finance, Management, or Economics-was applied, resulting in 137 articles from Scopus and 7 from Web of Science. The dataset was further refined by including only articles, book chapters, and review papers, written in English, resulting in 128 documents from Scopus and 7 from Web of Science.

After identifying and removing duplicate entries-due to overlapping coverage between the two databases-the final dataset comprised 132 unique publications, which formed the basis for this bibliometric review.

This study employs bibliometric analysis to provide a comprehensive assessment of the research landscape in the field of skill development and employability. Several open-source tools are available for conducting bibliometric studies, including BibExcel, CiteSpace, Pajek, and HistCite. However, this research utilizes the Bibliometrix R package (Aria & Cuccurullo, 2017), owing to its robust analytical capabilities and advanced visualization features. Bibliometrix offers an integrated environment for performing performance analysis and science mapping, making it a widely adopted tool in bibliometric research.

Results and Discussion

The bibliometric analysis reveals a growing and collaborative body of research on skill development and employability, characterized by diverse publication types, moderate citation impact, and strong author collaboration. Emerging thematic clusters and influential contributors highlight evolving academic interest and interdisciplinary engagement in this field.

Overview of Data

As shown in Table 1, the dataset comprises 132 documents published across 84 distinct sources, including journals, books, and conference proceedings, spanning the period from 2015 to 2024. This provides a comprehensive bibliometric foundation for analyzing trends in skill development and employability research. The average age of the documents is 4.03 years, with an average of 7.689 citations per document and 1.153 citations per year, supported by a total of 6,078 references. The dataset reflects a heterogeneous distribution of publication types, consisting of 100 journal articles, 25 book chapters, and 7 conference papers. A significant thematic richness is observed in the use of 444 author-provided keywords compared to 101 database-indexed keywords, indicating diverse research orientations and subject foci.

Table 1: Descriptive overview of the dataset

Description	Results
Overview	
Timespan	2015:2024
Sources (journals, books, etc)	84
Documents	132
Average years from publication	4.03
Average citations per documents	7.689
Average citations per year per doc	1.153
References	6078
Document types	
Article	100
Book chapter	25
Conference paper	7
Document contents	
Keywords plus (id)	101
Author's keywords (de)	444
Authors	
Authors	341
Author appearances	352
Authors of single-authored documents	22

Description	Results
Authors of multi-authored documents	319
Authors collaboration	
Single-authored documents	23
Documents per author	0.387
Authors per document	2.58
Co-authors per documents	2.67
Collaboration index	2.93

Source: Prepared by the authors using Biblioshiny (Bibliometrix package in R) based on data extracted from SCOPUS and Web of Sciences.

The dataset reveals a strong collaborative research environment, involving 341 unique authors across 352 author appearances, suggesting multiple contributions by some authors. There are 22 solo authors responsible for 23 single-authored documents, while the remaining 109 documents are co-authored, pointing to a clear inclination toward teamwork and scholarly collaboration. The average number of authors per document is 2.58, with an average of 2.67 co-authors per document, and a Collaboration Index of 2.93, highlighting a robust culture of academic cooperation. The documents per author ratio is 0.387, indicating selective and focused contributions rather than high-volume individual publishing. Overall, the dataset showcases moderate but consistent citation metrics, a balanced spread of publication types, and high levels of collaboration. The breadth of sources, keywords, and authors reflects an active and dynamic scholarly discourse with significant potential for interdisciplinary impact. This analysis underscores nearly a decade of collective academic engagement in advancing the field of skill development and employability.

Annual Scientific Production: Publication trend analysis (2015–2024)
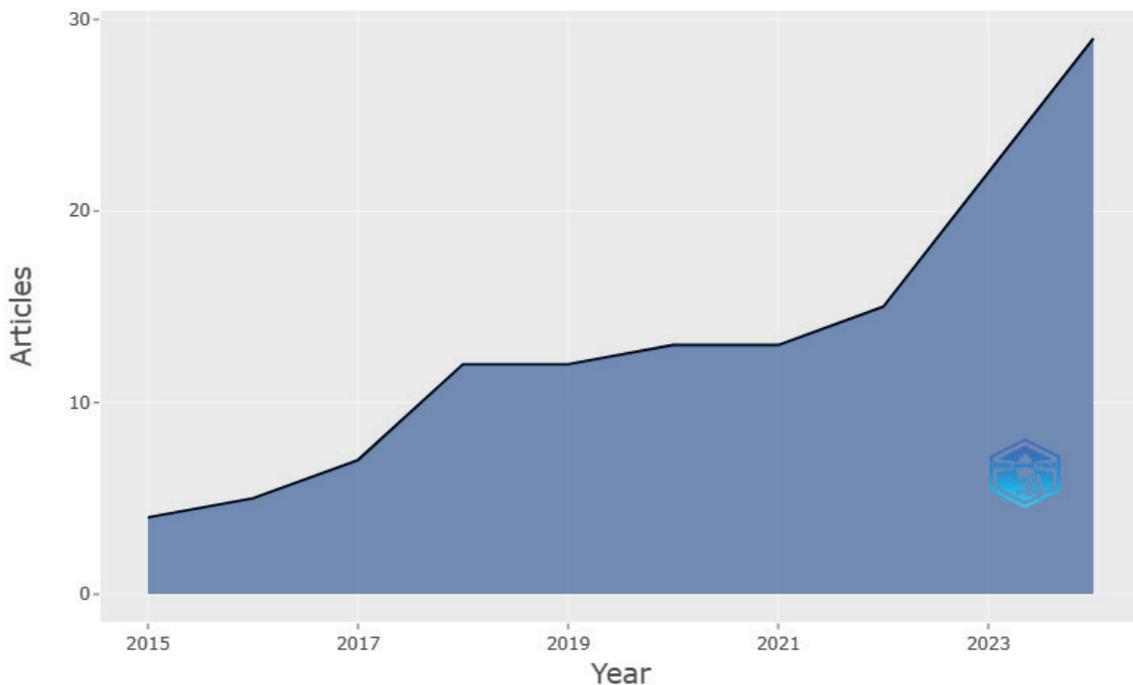

Figure 1: Annual scientific production

Source: Prepared by the authors using Biblioshiny (Bibliometrix package in R) based on data extracted from SCOPUS and Web of Sciences.

Figure 1 illustrates the annual publication trend from 2015 to 2024, showing an overall upward trajectory in research output on skill development and employability. During the initial growth phase (2015–2018), publications increased gradually, suggesting foundational work in the field. A plateau phase (2019–2021) followed, marked by steady output, possibly influenced by research consolidation or external disruptions such as the COVID-19 pandemic. The sharp rise in publications from 2022 to 2024, peaking at approximately 30 articles in 2024, indicates renewed scholarly momentum. This surge may reflect enhanced collaboration, improved funding, and growing interdisciplinary interest. The pattern highlights a dynamic and evolving research ecosystem, with increasing academic engagement and responsiveness to global and contextual challenges.
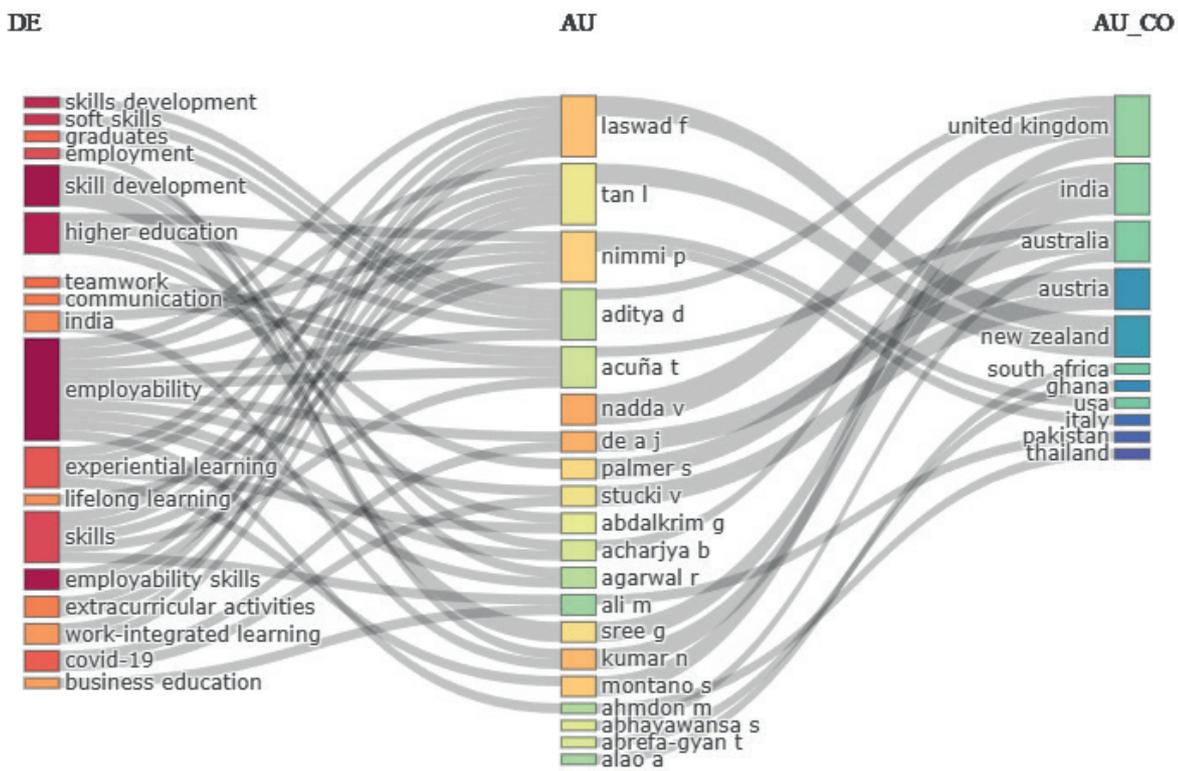
Three Field Plot Analysis

Figure 2: Three field plots

Source: Prepared by the authors using Biblioshiny (Bibliometrix package in R) based on data extracted from SCOPUS and Web of Sciences.

Figure 2 presents a three-field plot that maps the relationships among key research domains/topics (DE), authors (AU), and authors' countries (AU_CO). Prominent themes such as *skill development*, *employability*, *lifelong learning*, and *higher education* appear in the leftmost column. These are linked to central column authors – such as Laswad F., Tan L., and Nimmi P. – who contribute significantly across multiple thematic areas. The rightmost column connects these authors to their affiliated countries, including the UK, India, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa, highlighting the international scope of scholarship.

The visualization reveals how globally distributed authors engage with common themes, underlining the universal relevance of topics like employability and skills development. It also captures patterns of international collaboration and concentrated expertise, where specific authors contribute across several topics. This three-field analysis provides valuable insights into the thematic focus, geographic distribution, and collaborative networks shaping the field of education, employability, and skill development.

Bradford's Law and Journal Distribution

Figure 3 illustrates the distribution of articles across journals using Bradford's Law, which explains the core-periphery structure of information sources. The Y-axis represents the number of articles published per journal, while the X-axis (logarithmic scale) ranks journals based on productivity. The shaded area marked "Core Sources" highlights the most prolific journals in the field – such as *Journal of Teaching and Learning*, *Education and Training*, and *International Journal of Employability and Skills* – which collectively contribute the highest volume of relevant literature.
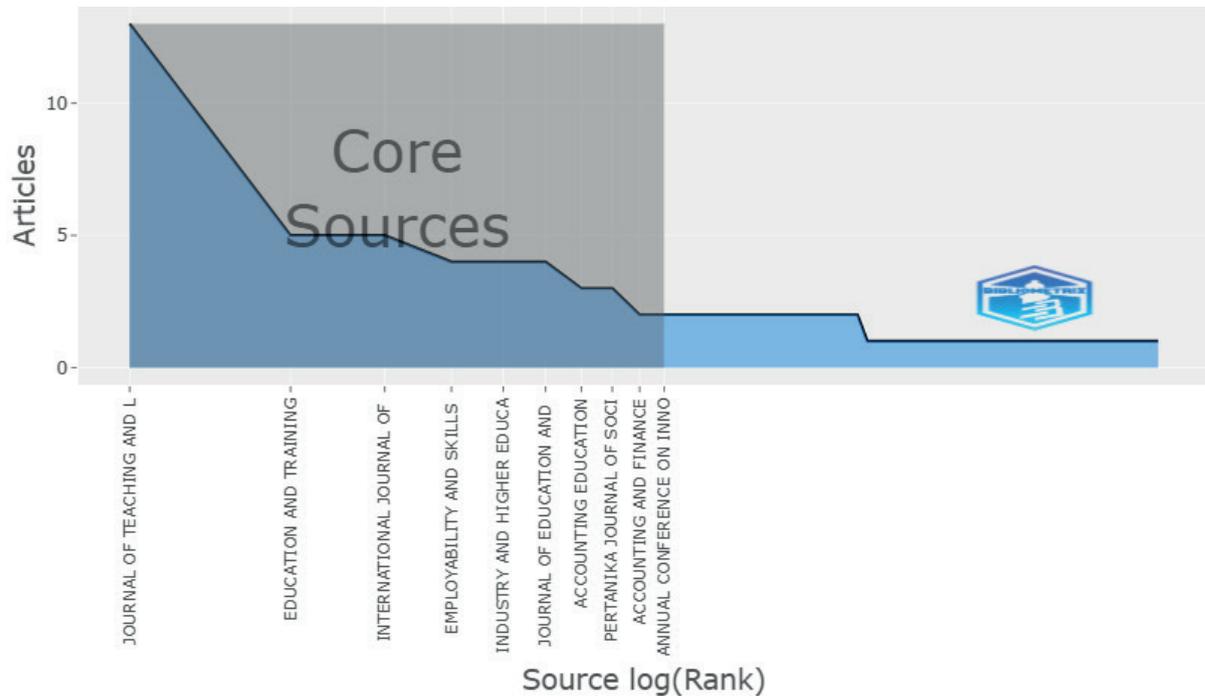

Figure 3: Bradford law

Source: Prepared by the authors using Biblioshiny (Bibliometrix package in R) based on data extracted from SCOPUS and Web of Sciences.

This concentration of publications in a few journals results in a steep initial drop in the curve, followed by a gradual flattening as journal productivity decreases. This pattern aligns with Bradford's Law, which posits that a small number of core journals generate the majority of significant research, while a larger number of peripheral journals contribute fewer articles, often only one or two.

The visualization underscores the central role of core journals in shaping scholarly discourse on skill development, education, and employability. For researchers, this serves as a strategic guide to prioritize high-impact sources for literature reviews, citations, and staying current in the field. While peripheral journals may offer niche insights or emerging viewpoints, the core set forms the intellectual backbone of the domain. Thus, understanding this distribution is essential for effective knowledge acquisition and targeted academic engagement.

Most Relevant Authors

Figure 4 presents the most relevant authors in the field, ranked by the number of documents they have contributed. The X-axis represents the number of publications, while the Y-axis lists the authors. Nadda V emerges as the most prolific contributor with three publications, followed by a group of authors – De A J, Kumar N, Laswad F, Montano S, Nimmi P, Palmer S, Sree G, Stucki V, and Tan L – each with two publications. The distribution suggests a relatively balanced contribution pattern among key

researchers, with only a slight lead by the top author. This visualization is valuable for identifying prominent contributors and potential collaborators in the domain. It also reflects a moderate but consistent level of author engagement and collaboration, underscoring the growing academic interest and shared effort in the study of skill development and employability.
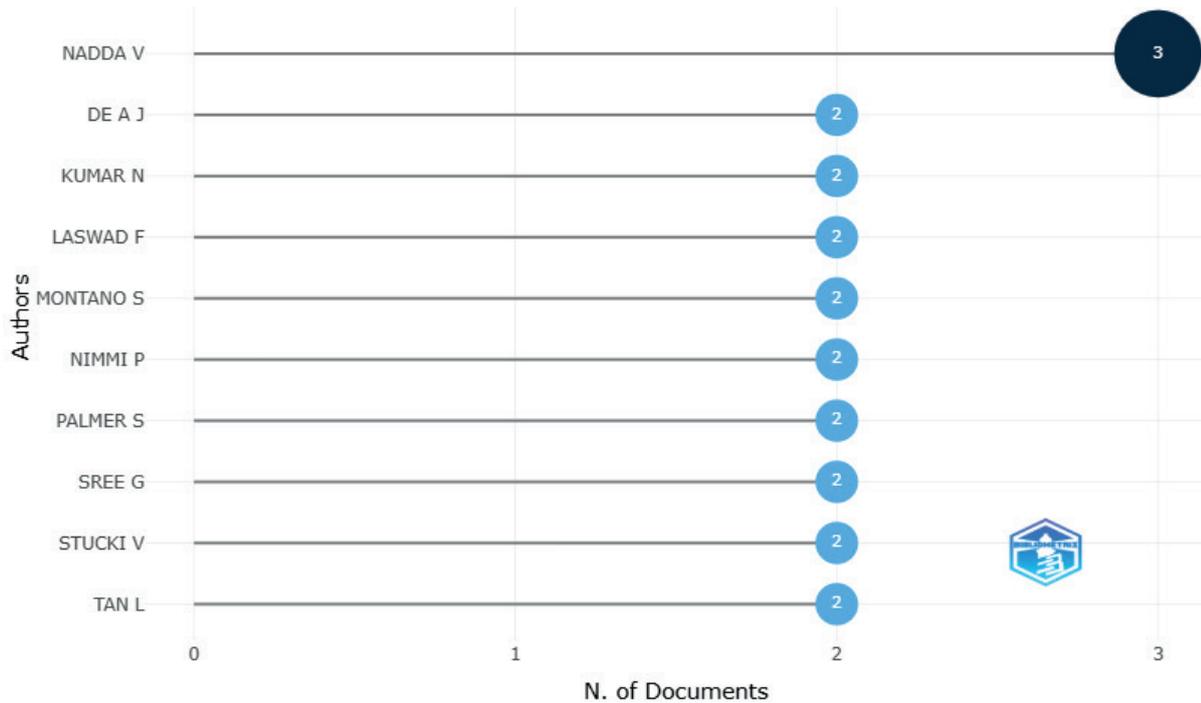

Figure 4: Most relevant authors

Source: Prepared by the authors using Biblioshiny (Bibliometrix package in R) based on data extracted from SCOPUS and Web of Sciences.

Cross-Country Analysis of Research Citations and Impact

Global disparities in research contributions, in terms of total citations and average article impact, are illustrated in Table 2 and Figure 5. The United Kingdom leads with 260 total citations, reflecting a broad and influential research output. New Zealand stands out for its exceptionally high average of 46 citations per article, demonstrating significant research impact despite its smaller population. Bangladesh also exemplifies high-impact research, averaging 23 citations per article – highlighting the strength of focused, niche scholarship.
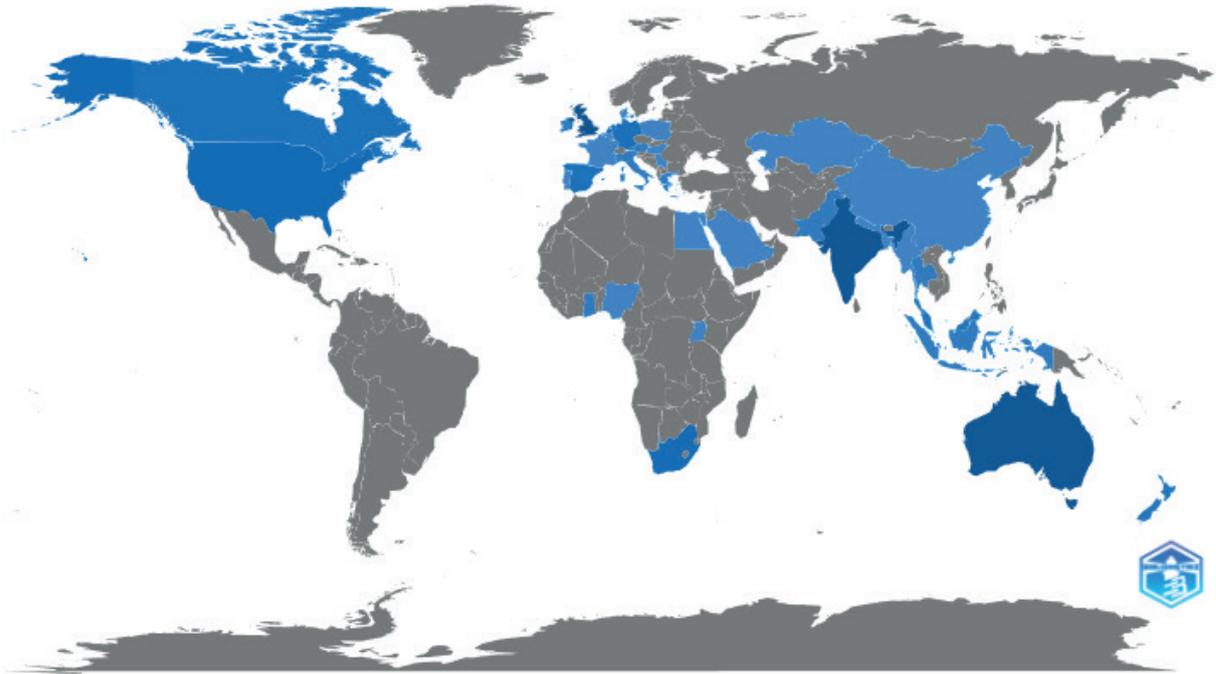
Figure 5: Cross-Country Analysis of Research Citations and Impact

Source: Prepared by the authors using Biblioshiny (Bibliometrix package in R) based on data extracted from SCOPUS and Web of Sciences.

Italy and Pakistan follow closely with averages of 19 and 20 citations per article, respectively, indicating notable academic influence. Australia shows a balance of volume and impact, with 133 total citations and an average of 7.82 citations per article. In contrast, India, with 32 citations and an average of 2.29, reflects its position as an emerging research hub, while Malaysia records 16 citations with an average of 5.33 – suggesting room for growth in both output and impact.

Ghana, despite limited output (11 citations), maintains a moderate average of 5.5 citations per article, signaling consistent research efforts under resource constraints. Regionally, Europe, Oceania, and parts of Asia dominate research contributions, supported by robust academic institutions and funding systems. The limited representation from Africa and South America underscores the need for capacity building and stronger international collaborations. In particular, South America's underrepresentation signals an opportunity for investment in research infrastructure.

Table 2: Leading countries based on citation impact

Country	Total citations	Average article citations
United Kingdom	260	15.29
New Zealand	138	46.00
Australia	133	7.82
Pakistan	40	20.00
Italy	38	19.00
India	32	2.29
Bangladesh	23	23.00
Netherlands	20	10.00
Malaysia	16	5.33
Ghana	11	5.50

Source: Prepared by the authors using Biblioshiny (Bibliometrix package in R) based on data extracted from SCOPUS and Web of Sciences.

Overall, the analysis highlights the relationship between research quantity and impact. Countries like New Zealand and Bangladesh show how high impact can be achieved with fewer publications, while emerging economies such as India and Malaysia can enhance their global visibility by increasing output alongside a focus on quality and international engagement.

Most Prominent Scholarly Contribution

Table 3 highlights key scholarly contributions addressing employability and skill development from diverse perspectives and contexts, along with their citation counts. The most cited work is by Tan, L.M. (2018) in *Accounting Education* (98 citations), examining job advertisements to identify professional skills required in the accounting profession. Cavanagh, J. (2015), in *The International Journal of Management Education* (71 citations), explores Australian undergraduates' perceptions of employability, emphasizing graduate readiness. Barnes, S-A. (2015), in *New Technology, Work and Employment* (66 citations), investigates how individual circumstances influence employability in crowdsourcing contexts. Webb, J. (2016) (62 citations) discusses the 'expectation–performance gap' in UK accounting education, focusing on generic skills. In *The International Journal of Training and Development*, Ngoma, M. (2016) (39 citations) studies psychological capital, career identity, and social capital in shaping employability in Uganda. Succi, C. (2019) (38 citations) analyzes graduate soft skill assessment in the *European Journal of Management & Business Economics*.

Table 3: Most impactful publications based on citations

Author & Year	Paper title	Source	Total Citations
Tan Lm, 2018	"Professional skills required of accountants: what do job advertisements tell us?"	Accounting education	98
Cavanagh J, 2015	"Contributing to a graduate-centred understanding of work readiness: an exploratory study of Australian undergraduate students' perceptions of their employability"	The international journal of management education	71
Barnes S-A, 2015	"Crowdsourcing and work individual factors and circumstances influencing employability"	New technology, work and employment	66
Webb J, 2016	"The expectation performance gap in accounting education a review of generic skills development in UK accounting degrees"	Accounting education	62
Ngoma M, 2016	"Psychological capital career identity and graduate employability in Uganda the mediating role of social capital"	International journal of training and development	39
Succi C, 2019	"Walk the talk soft skills assessment of graduates"	European journal of management and business economics	38
Chughtai A, 2019	"Servant leadership and perceived employability proactive career behaviours as mediators"	Leadership & organization development journal	38
Detsimas N, 2016	"Workplace training and generic and technical skill development in the Australian construction industry"	Journal of management development	37
Griffiths K, 2017	"The impact of engagement in sport on graduate employability implications for higher education policy and practice"	International journal of sport policy and practices	26
Gooptu N, 2018	"Skill work and gendered identity in contemporary India the business of delivering homecooked food for domestic consumption"	Journal of south Asian development	24

Source: Prepared by the authors using Biblioshiny (Bibliometrix package in R) based on data extracted from SCOPUS and Web of Sciences.

Chughtai, A. (2019) (38 citations), in *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*, explores the link between proactive behavior, servant leadership, and employability. Detsimas, N. (2016) (37 citations), in *Journal of Management Development*, evaluates the role of workplace training in developing technical and generic skills in Australia's construction industry. Griffiths, K. (2017) (26 citations), in

International Journal of Sport Policy and Practice, connects sports engagement with graduate employability and implications for education policy. Finally, Gooptu, N. (2018) (24 citations), in *Journal of South Asian Development*, examines gendered identity in India's gig economy through the lens of home-cooked food delivery platforms.

Trending Topic

Figure 6: Evolving Trends in Education, Skills, and Employability (2018–2024)
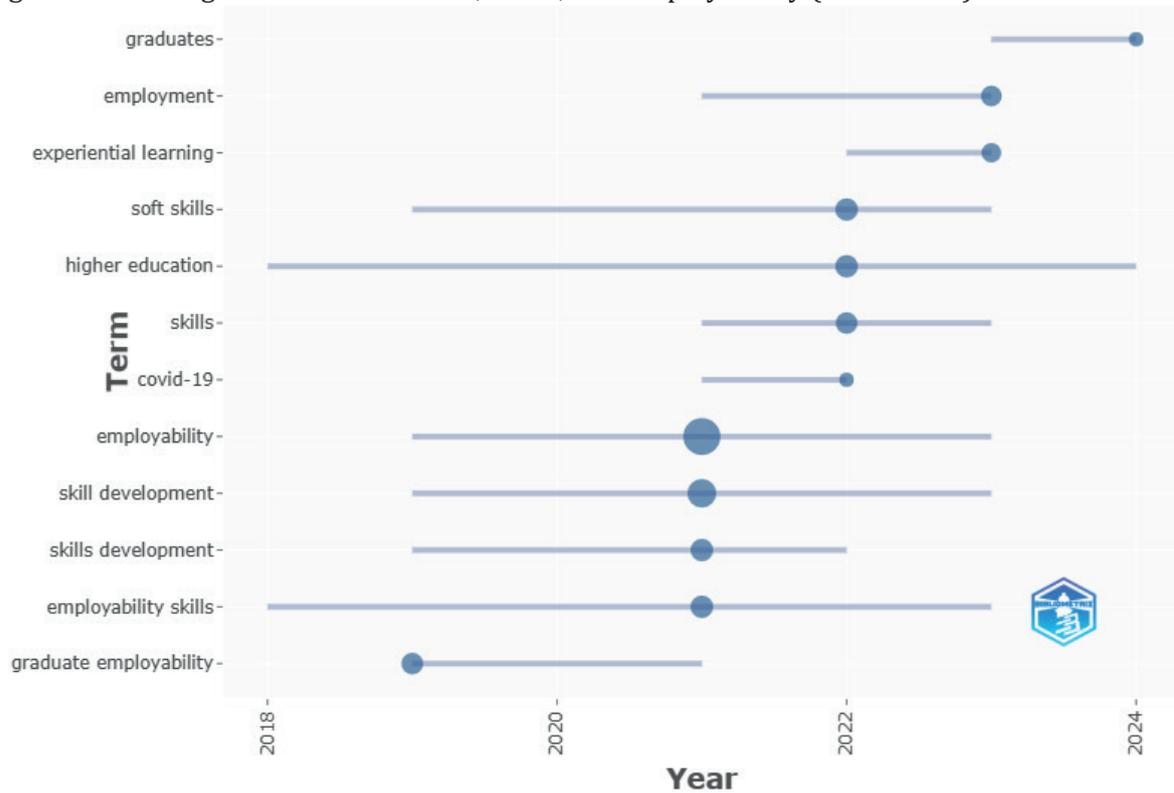

Figure 6: Evolving Trends in Education, Skills, and Employability (2018–2024)

Source: Prepared by the authors using Biblioshiny (Bibliometrix package in R) based on data extracted from SCOPUS and Web of Sciences.

Figure 6 illustrates the trending topics related to education, skills, and employability from 2018 to 2024, capturing the evolving priorities in research and policy over time. The persistent relevance of terms such as *"higher education"* and *"soft skills"* throughout the timeline reflects their sustained significance within both academic discourse and workplace requirements. In the earlier years, topics such as *"graduate employability"* and *"employee"* gained prominence, highlighting an increasing emphasis on practical, skills-based work readiness among graduates.

The term *"COVID-19"* peaks between 2020 and 2022, signaling the pandemic's considerable impact on reshaping educational structures and employment paradigms. More recently, topics like *"skills development,"* *"skill development,"* and *"experiential learning"* have gained momentum, indicating a policy shift towards more applied, functional, and hands-on learning approaches. The noticeable rise in the term *"graduates"* – especially peaking in 2024 – suggests growing concerns among students and educators about aligning graduate competencies with labor market demands.

Post-pandemic, the growing emphasis on *"employment"* underscores the urgent need to address emerging workforce challenges. Overall, the figure reflects a transition from traditional education-centric themes to more dynamic, skills-oriented approaches – driven by global disruptions and evolving labor market needs. The increasing focus on experiential and skills-based learning signifies a broader effort to prepare individuals for rapidly changing employment landscapes.
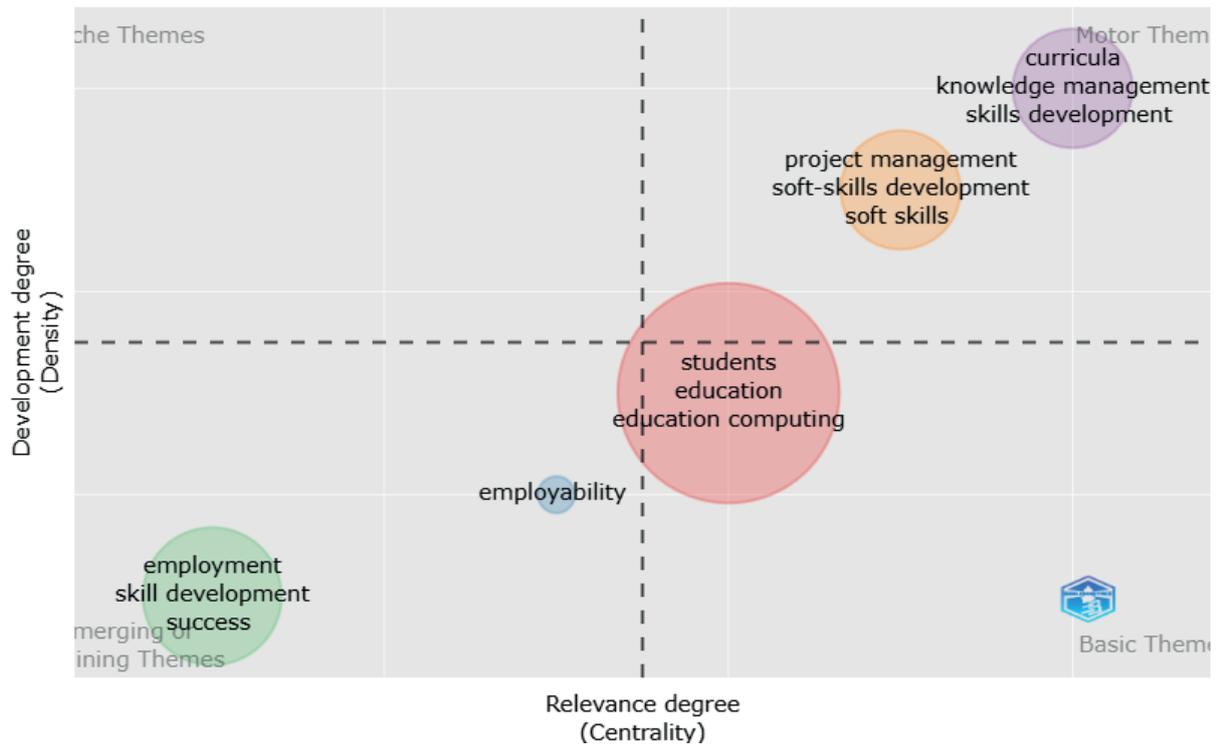
Thematic Map

Figure 7: Thematic Map of Research Clusters in Education, Skills, and Employability

Source: Prepared by the authors using Biblioshiny (Bibliometrix package in R) based on data extracted from SCOPUS and Web of Sciences.

Figure 7 presents a thematic map that classifies key topics related to education, skills, and employability based on two dimensions: centrality (indicating relevance) and density (indicating the level of development). Each theme is positioned within one of four quadrants, reflecting its strategic role within the broader discourse. Themes in the upper-right quadrant (Motor Themes) – including *"curricula," "knowledge management," "skills development,"* and *"soft skills development"* – are both highly relevant and well-developed. These represent dynamic drivers of the field, underscoring their critical role in shaping contemporary educational practices and preparing individuals for the evolving demands of the workforce. The inclusion of *"soft skills"* and *"project management"* further emphasizes the importance of equipping learners with versatile competencies applicable across professional contexts.

In the lower-right quadrant (Basic Themes) lie fundamental but less developed topics such as *"students," "education," "educational computing,"* and closely related terms. While these themes are highly relevant and form the core of the domain, their comparatively lower density suggests they require further conceptual refinement and empirical exploration to address emerging challenges effectively.

Notably, the upper-left quadrant (Niche Themes) is unoccupied in this dataset, indicating an absence of highly specialized but less connected topics within the current literature.

In the lower-left quadrant (Emerging or Declining Themes), we find themes such as *"employment," "skill development,"* and *"success."* These are characterized by both low centrality and low density, suggesting they are either underdeveloped areas with potential for future research or themes that are losing relevance in the current scholarly landscape.

Overall, the map highlights a strong emphasis on skill-based education, particularly through themes like "skills development" and "soft skills," which are identified as key drivers of the field. While foundational concepts such as *"education"* and *"students"* remain central, the thematic positioning of *"employment"* and *"success"* suggests a growing imperative to align educational outcomes more closely with labor market needs.

Conclusions

This bibliometric review of skill development and employability research revealed their critical role in addressing global workforce challenges amid rapid technological change, globalization, and shifting labor market demands. Scholarly output has surged, with emphasis on digital skills, vocational training, and lifelong learning. Research contributions span multiple countries, notably the UK, India, and Australia, with international collaborations such as those by Aditya D and Acuña T linking New Zealand and South Africa.

Leading journals include *Journal of Teaching and Learning* and *Education and Training*. Nadda V is the most prolific author (three publications), followed by several with two publications each, including Kumar N, Montano S, and Tan L. The UK leads in citations (260), while New Zealand shows the highest average impact (46 citations per article). The most cited paper – "Professional Skills Required of Accountants: What Do Job Advertisements Tell Us?" – has 98 citations.

From 2020 onwards, research increasingly addresses "graduate employability," "skills development," and "COVID-19," reflecting policy focus on workforce resilience. Thematic mapping shows "curricula," "knowledge management," and "skills development" as well-developed, while "employment" and "success" appear as emerging or declining themes.

The findings highlight the need for coordinated, multi-stakeholder strategies to strengthen employability, integrate education with labor market readiness, and address mismatches between skill supply and demand. Greater interdisciplinary integration – drawing from education, sociology, economics, and management – is vital.

At the end, it is not free from limitations, the review relied on Scopus and Web of Science, excluding non-indexed or non-English publications, leading to potential biases. Bibliometric methods emphasize quantitative metrics, overlooking conceptual depth. Regional disparities – especially underrepresentation of Africa and South America – limit generalizability. Future research should adopt inclusive, context-sensitive approaches to capture diverse demographic, cultural, and geographic dimensions of employability.

Disclaimer on AI Assistance

We have used Artificial Intelligence (ChatGPT) solely for language refinement, including rephrasing, compressing paragraphs, and correcting grammar. As a result, the text may read similar to AI-generated language. However, the research idea, the substantive content, data analysis, and conclusions remain entirely our own work.

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