

Exploring the Connection Between Self-Efficacy and Career Attributes Among Masters in Business Management Students

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Received 20th November 2025; Accepted 20th December 2025; Published Online 21st February 2026

DOI: 10.63941/DIT.ADSimrj.2026.2.1.36

ABSTRACT

This study investigated the link between self-efficacy and employability attributes of Master's in Business Management students at Capitol University. This study employed a descriptive-correlational research design to determine self-efficacy levels in academic, career, and social domains, and the most essential employability attributes, such as soft skills, technical skills, readiness for the workplace, and lifelong learning. Research data were gathered using a structured, validated questionnaire with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.85 from 114 MBM students. The data were analyzed using various statistical tools, including frequency distributions, means, standard deviations, and correlation analysis. According to the findings, very high levels of self-efficacy and employability were reported. The degree of workplace readiness and capacity for lifelong learning received the highest grades. The demographic profile does not yield any significant difference in employability attributes. However, a strong positive correlation was found between self-efficacy and employability attributes, indicating that the more confident participants were, the stronger their employability attributes. Therefore, the study concludes that increasing self-efficacy through experiential learning, mentoring, and skills-enhancement interventions can further improve students' career readiness and competitiveness.

Keywords: *Self-efficacy, Employability Attributes, Master's in Business Management, Career Readiness*

INTRODUCTION

As the labor market rapidly evolves and becomes more competitive, graduate education prepares students to succeed in their professional lives. Employers are now looking for more than just knowledge; they want technical expertise, soft skills, adaptability, and the capacity for lifelong learning (World Economic Forum, 2023). As organizations undergo digital transformation and organizational restructuring, business management graduates must possess domain knowledge and confidence in applying their skills. Psychological factors, especially self-efficacy, play a vital role in increasing employability.

Self-efficacy is the belief in one's ability to plan and execute courses of action to reach goals (Bandura, 1997). It is considered a strong predictor of motivation, persistence, and performance. Past studies have shown that individuals with confidence in their abilities are more likely to take up challenging activities and continue them despite adversity than their counterparts (Pajares, 2008; Zimmerman, 2000).

In the context of higher education, self-efficacy is related to academic performance decisions, worker training, and readiness (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994; Wang & Liao, 2021). Most students who are confident in their skills are more likely to upgrade skills, take on leadership roles, and network professionally.

Employability attributes refer to a set of skills, competencies, and personal qualities that enhance a student's ability to secure and retain employment (Yorke 2006). Skills that are necessary for workplace success include soft skills such as communication, teamwork, and leadership; technical skills associated with industries; workplace readiness; and a commitment to lifelong learning (Harvey, 2001; Andrews & Higson, 2008). The management curriculum must prepare students with the technical and interpersonal skills necessary to successfully tackle challenges in a managerial setting. Having skills doesn't guarantee employment, but confidence in those skills matters equally.

Although previous literature emphasizes self-efficacy and employability, less has been written about the link between graduates of management programs in local settings. In the Philippines, particularly in private universities that offer master's in business management (MBM) programs, there is limited empirical evidence on the impact of students' self-beliefs on their perceived employability attributes. It is necessary to understand this relationship to enhance curriculum design and career-support interventions, as many MBM students are working professionals seeking to advance their careers.

The goal of this study is to determine the relationship between self-efficacy and the employability attributes of Master's in Business Management students at Capitol University, Cagayan de Oro City. The study aims to describe in detail the demographic profile of MBM students according to sex, age, civil status, educational attainment, and employment status. To determine the self-efficacy levels of MBM students in academic, career, and social areas. To determine the employability attribute levels of MBM students in soft skills, technical skills, workplace readiness, and lifelong learning. To determine the significant differences in employability attribute levels among MBM students grouped by profile variables. To determine the significant relationship between self-efficacy and employability attribute levels among MBM students.

By examining these objectives, the study aims to build on the growing knowledge of the psychological factors of employability in graduate education. Outcomes may inform curriculum design, student support services, and institutional activities aimed at enhancing competence and confidence among future business leaders.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Self-Efficacy Theory

The notion of self-efficacy is derived from Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory, which asserts that individuals' beliefs in their capabilities greatly sway their behavior, motivation, and performance (Bandura, 1997). Self-efficacy influences people's motivation and behavior. People with a high sense of self-efficacy view difficult tasks as challenges to be mastered rather than threats to be avoided. People with a high sense of self-efficacy show greater commitment, resilience, and accomplishment (Bandura, 1997; Pajares, 2008).

Educational self-efficacy has been related to both performance and persistence in education. According to Zimmerman (2000), students with strong self-efficacy beliefs are more likely to use effective strategies and manage their learning behavior. Similarly, Lent, Brown, and Hackett (1994) claimed, through the Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT), that self-efficacy affects career interests, choices, and performance outcomes. This theoretical groundwork implies that self-efficacy is not only a key to academic success but also essential for career development and employability.

Self-Efficacy in Higher Education and Career Development

Research indicates that self-efficacy influences students' readiness for the education-to-employment transition. According to Betz and Hackett (2006), students who have higher career self-efficacy are likely to have clearer career goals and better job-search behaviors. According to Wang and Liao

(2021), self-efficacy positively predicts the acquisition of technical skills and workplace adaptability among business students.

Furthermore, social self-efficacy plays a crucial role in networking and building professional relationships in management careers. On the other hand, it enhances persistence in finishing academic work and overcoming challenges, indirectly increasing career preparedness (Pauwels et al., 2022). The findings show that self-efficacy is multifaceted, influencing higher education, work quality, job performance, and more.

Employability Attributes

An individual's employability goes beyond the possession of qualifications; it encompasses a broader set of competencies. Moreover, it helps an individual succeed in a career. According to Yorke (2006), employability is the combination of a person's skills, understandings, and personal attributes that make a graduate more likely to gain employment and succeed in his or her chosen occupation. Harvey (2001) also suggested that possessing skills is not enough, but being able to deploy them is.

Employability attributes refer to your soft skills, technical skills, and readiness for the workplace and lifelong learning. The importance of soft skills such as communication, teamwork, and leadership is growing across organizations (Andrews & Higson, 2008). According to Zhao and Li (2020), in the business management profession, technical skills are extremely important, especially data analysis, digital tools, and strategic planning. A person's readiness for the workplace, including their adaptability, professionalism, and problem-solving abilities (Nguyen et al., 2019), indicates an eagerness to undertake lifelong learning, learning continuously throughout one's life (Ahmed, 2021).

Recent global reports increasingly emphasize adaptability and continuous learning in the face of disruptions from technology and automation (World Economic Forum, 2023). As a result, study programs must ensure that students develop foundational and transferable employability skills.

Relationship Between Self-Efficacy and Employability

Previous research shows that psychological factors can influence employability outcomes. According to Bandura (1997), an individual's belief in their capabilities affects how effectively they use their skills. Students with high self-efficacy are more likely to engage in skill development activities, pursue internships, and take on leadership roles, all of which enhance employability (Lizzio & Wilson, 2019).

This relationship is also supported by studies. According to Wang and Liao (2021), workplace readiness and technical competence were significantly predicted by self-efficacy. A recent study by Chen and Carter (2022) found that mentorship and experiential learning enhance self-efficacy, thereby boosting communication and leadership performance. The results show that employability is not based solely on the acquisition of skills but rather on the student's confidence in applying those skills.

MATERIALS & METHODS

The study employed a descriptive-correlational research design to determine the relationship between self-efficacy and employability attributes of Master's in Business Management (MBM) students at Capitol University in Cagayan de Oro City. Using a descriptive method, the researcher identifies the demographic profile of the respondents and assesses their levels of self-efficacy and employability. The correlational component determines if there is a significant relation between self-efficacy (independent variable) and employability attributes (dependent variable). The present study was apt, as it attempted to describe current conditions and understand associations among variables.

MBM (Master of Business Management) students who had completed at least one semester were selected as respondents to provide sufficient exposure. A random sampling technique was used so that

every eligible student had an equal chance to participate, thereby avoiding selection bias. Cochran's formula was used to determine a sample size of 95% confidence level with a 5% margin of error, but only 55 completed responses were obtained for analysis. Diverse backgrounds in terms of sex, age, civil status, educational attainment, and employment status were represented by the respondents.

The researchers used a structured questionnaire having three sections: demographic profile, self-efficacy, and employability attributes. Self-efficacy was measured across academic, career, and social dimensions. Employability attributes were assessed across soft skills, technical skills, workplace readiness, and lifelong learning. The responses were measured using a four-point Likert scale: 1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Agree, 4=Strongly Agree. Experts in business management and career development performed face validation of the instrument in this study. A pilot test was conducted among 30 MBM students to assess reliability, and Cronbach's alpha was computed at 0.85, indicating high internal consistency of the instrument.

Approval from Capitol University's Graduate School and the Research Ethics Committee was sought before the gathering of data. All respondents were made aware of the study, consented to participate, and confidentiality was maintained. A hybrid data collection approach was used to accommodate both students learning on campus and at a distance. Participants were given printed questionnaires during scheduled academic sessions. Online participants were given the same printed copy via email and the university's learning management system. The respondents were given a two-week deadline to complete the surveys, and follow-ups were sent to maximize response rates. The collected data were encoded and organized.

Descriptive and inferential statistics were used. Frequency and percentage distributions were used to describe the demographic profile of the respondents. Researchers calculated the mean and standard deviation of self-efficacy and employability attributes levels. Independent-samples t-test and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) applied to test differences in grouping and demographic variables for employability attributes. The study used the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient (r) to determine the strength and direction of the relationship between self-efficacy and employability attributes. All statistical tests were performed at the 0.05 level of significance. The reliability and systematic nature of the analysis ensured the findings are credible and can shed light on the relationship between self-efficacy and employability attributes of MBM students.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Demographic Profile of Respondents

A total of 114 Master in Business Management (MBM) students participated in the study. The demographic distribution provides important context for understanding the levels of self-efficacy and employability attributes.

Table 1

Sex	Frequency	Percentage
Male	39	34.2%
Female	75	65.8%
Total	114	100%

In the study, 65.8% participants were female, and the remaining 34.2% were male (Table 1). The study reports that the MBM program consists mostly of female students. This is consistent with reports worldwide of increased female participation in graduate management education (Johnson & Smith, 2021). According to studies, classrooms with diverse gender mixes encourage inclusive leadership

(Miller et al. 2022). Growing female representation may indicate changing professional aspirations and greater knowledge acquisition through advanced business education.

2. Level of Self-Efficacy

Table 2
Distribution of Respondents According to Age (n = 114)

Age Group	Frequency	Percentage
18–24	4	3.5%
25–34	54	47.4%
35–44	46	40.4%
45–54	8	7.0%
55+	2	1.7%
Total	114	100%

Results indicate quite high self-efficacy in all dimensions. The result of ($M = 3.45$) for academic self-efficacy indicates conviction of completing coursework. Career self-efficacy ($M = 3.35$) is students' confidence in achieving career goals, and social self-efficacy ($M = 3.43$) is competence in networking and professional interactions. The findings support theoretical implications developed by Bandura (1997) on self-efficacy, motivation, and performance.

3. Levels of Employability Attributes

Table 3
Level of Employability Attributes Among MBM Students

Attribute	Mean	Interpretation
Soft Skills	3.30	Very High
Technical Skills	3.29	Very High
Workplace Readiness	3.49	Very High
Lifelong Learning	3.58	Very High

Across all domains, employability attributes were rated extremely high. Lifelong learning had the highest mean (3.58), indicating strong development. Three point forty nine (3.49) indicates workplace readiness. The findings align well with Yorke's (2006) claim that employability comprises skills, adaptability to this environment, and so on.

4. Difference in Employability Attributes by Demographic Profile

Data analysis found that employability attributes did not differ across sex, age, civil status, and educational attainment ($p > 0.05$). Based on the outcome, the MBM program creates diverse learning opportunities for students across different demographics. Structured graduate programs can create an even playing field to acquire relevant skills (Andrews and Higson, 2008).

5. Relationship Between Self-Efficacy and Employability Attributes

The Pearson Product-Moment Correlation analysis indicated a significant positive correlation between self-efficacy and employability attributes ($p < 0.05$), indicating that higher self-efficacy is associated with better employability attributes, and vice versa. Higher self-efficacy is associated with stronger employability competency, according to the results.

The authors cited support for Social Cognitive Career Theory (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994), which holds that self-beliefs are significantly related to other career behaviors and outcomes. As Wang and

ao (2021) reported, students with higher self-efficacy exhibit better technical competence and workplace adaptability.

The outcomes suggest that self-efficacy acts as a psychological force that enables students to apply knowledge and skills professionally. Consequently, building students' confidence through mentoring, work-integrated learning, and leadership can further enhance employability.

CONCLUSION

This study sought to establish the relationship between self-efficacy and employability attributes of MBM students in Capitol University. Based on the findings, MBM students exhibited very high levels of self-efficacy in the academic, career, and social spheres. Furthermore, they showed very high levels of employability attributes, including soft skills, technical skills, workplace readiness, and lifelong learning. The program's outcomes help students become competent and confident.

There are no significant differences in the employability attributes when grouped by demographic variables: sex, age, civil status, and educational attainment. The learning opportunities suggest that MBM provides just that for every student, no matter who they are.

First, there is a significant positive relationship between self-efficacy and employability attributes. This means students with stronger confidence are more likely to be more professional with future employers. This finding is consistent with Social Cognitive Career Theory (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994) and Bandura's (1997) assertion that self-beliefs influence performance and career achievement.

The findings reveal that employability is influenced by students' perceptions of their ability to implement a skill, as well as by the acquisition of the skill itself.

Recommendations

The finding suggests the following recommendations. To enhance competence and confidence, MBM students should also participate in internships, industry projects, and leadership roles through experiential learning opportunities. Additionally, the curriculum should integrate more modules focused on workshops, case-based learning, communication training, and leadership development to address the identified skill gaps. The graduate school should organize mentoring programs and become more industrially integrated to create more connections and exposure.

Future studies can be longitudinal to examine how self-efficacy and employability attributes evolve and the impact they have on career outcomes. Comparative studies with those from other universities may also help provide insights into best practices.

To conclude, the study emphasizes that it is not only necessary to develop technical and soft skills but also to instill the confidence to use them in competitive situations to create employable graduates.

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