

An Exploratory Study on the Influence of Salary Expectations on Graduate Employment

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Research Methodology

I hereby declare that the Research Report submitted for the Bachelor of Commerce Honours in Management Degree to The Independent Institute of Education is my own work and has not previously been submitted to another University or Higher Education Institution for degree purposes.

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ABSTRACT

For the past 14 years South Africa has been experiencing an unemployment rate above 20%. The purpose of the study was to investigate the influence of salary expectations on graduate unemployment - a factor that contributes to South Africa's overall unemployment rate. A qualitative approach was adopted for this study, interviews were used to explore the trends in relation to graduates' salary expectations and its influence on their employability, the influence of employers' expectations and the role it plays in motivating employers to employ graduates was also investigated. The study also considered the influence of gender, race and attitudes. The researcher used the interviews to analyse the respondents' response by analysing body language, tone and verbal reaction to questions asked. The results of the study concluded that the graduates have a naïve perception of the business environment and that they should remain open minded to opportunities presented by employers who are looking for enthusiastic, suitable qualified, entrants for their organisation.

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INTRODUCTION

Contextualisation/ Background & Problem Statement

In 2008, the world went through an impactful financial crisis called the recession. Ever since then countries like South Africa, United States, Europe, and Turkey have been undergoing severe economic instability with their business environment (Kokotovic, 2016). One of the factors of the economic environment that was affected is the unemployment rate of these countries. Each of these countries, are now experiencing increasing unemployment rates (Kokotovic, 2016).

Presently, South Africa has an unemployment rate of 27.7% (Stats SA, 2017). According to Stats SA (2017), South Africa has been at an unemployment rate of above 20% for 14 years. Bayrak (2016) defines unemployment as the unused labour in the process of production which is a main economic problem for most countries. Bayrak (2016) continues to state that human resources are one of the important factors in production and not having this factor in production processes will result in increased costs in the economy of a country.

The purpose of this study is to focus on the influence of salary expectations on graduate unemployment - a factor that adds to South Africa's overall unemployment rate. Graduate employment is crucial for developing the socio-economic environment of every country. In South Africa particularly, graduate unemployment has been a concern. In a study conducted by Yu (2013), the researchers carried out a survey among graduates. As a result of the surveys, the researchers have found that the unemployment rate between the ages 20-24 is 52.3%, between the ages 25- 29 is 36% and from the ages 30-49 the unemployment rate is at 48% - since the financial crisis occurred in 2008 (Yu, 2013). According to Yu (2013), graduate unemployment is caused by the expectations graduates have in seeking employment; most specifically in relation to their salary expectations.

The aim of this study is to explore the role of graduate salary expectations and its influence on graduate unemployment.

Rationale

Research conducted this far on salary expectations of graduates are limited. Studies conducted by Yu (2013) and Oluwajodu et al. (2013) showed salary expectations as one of the reasons for graduate unemployment but had lack of extensive research.

Yu (2013) study presented statistics showing high rates of unemployment between the ages 20-49 - due to these high rates, graduate unemployment is becoming one of South Africa's main issues. The graduates of South Africa have the ability to develop South Africa's socio-economy and the lack of graduate employment will result in a lack of skills which will be a disadvantage to the country in developing its socio-economy (Oluwajodu et al., 2013).

When graduates are not approached or encouraged to pursue experiences, the graduates will tend to lack focus in attaining a job. A new entrant in an organisation can result in fresh ideas, new strategies and can help develop the skills of an organisation in sharing abilities and knowledge of new technology (Gokuladas & Menon, 2014).

It has been identified from past literature that salary expectations is one the barriers to graduate employment. This study will be relevant in understanding if there is a misalignment in perceived value between the employer and graduates. Graduates may perceive that the employer should pay them more than they currently offer based on the skills they obtain. Employers may perceive that a graduate is at entrant level and will be paid an entrant market related salary of the organisation.

Research Goal/Question

How do graduates' salary expectations impact their employability?

Sub-Questions

- a. Are their expectations realistic and market related or industry bench marked?
- b. How much of focus do they place on their salary- is it the key determinant?
- c. How do the expectations of the employers impact the employability of graduates?
- d. How does a graduate's skill and work ethic influence their employability?

Research Objectives

1. To explore the trends in relation to graduates salary expectations and its influence on their employability.
2. To investigate the role of employers' expectations in motivating them to employ graduates.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Unemployment

Govender & Mtembu (2015) defined unemployment in South Africa as individuals between the ages of 15-64 without jobs after completing interviews, but who still search for employment or aspire to own their own start-up. Govender & Mtembu (2015) then expanded the definition in stating that unemployment also includes individuals who have stopped seeking employment; as they refer to them as discouraged workers.

Unemployment is also defined by Bayrak (2016) as unused labour in the process of organisational production which is observed to be an economic problem for all countries.

Oluwajodu et al. (2015) and Yu (2013) both defined unemployment as a socio-economic issue that results in economic costs. According to Oluwajodu et al. (2015), unemployment diminishes economic welfare and human capital.

Graduate Unemployment

Oluwajodu et al. (2015) defined graduates as the youth of South Africa to be between the ages of 15-34. These individuals have a tertiary education showing that a skilled labour force should be increasing for South Africa as per the demand for skills in organisations, according to Oluwajodu et al. (2015).

Yu (2013) stated that one of the reasons for graduate unemployment is that the youth of South Africa do not have the right information to seek out employment; they have limited knowledge on how to network themselves across the working environment. Yu (2013) states that even if they do have the knowledge on how to network and where to seek jobs, graduates have high expectations on what salary they should earn, which prolongs their search for employment. To employers, graduates are perceived to be unskilled, have no communication skills and have lack of emotional maturity (Yu, 2013).

Oluwajodu et al. (2015) suggests that reasons for graduate unemployment are that graduates choose the wrong field to study, graduates perceive that employers are the reason to blame for their unemployment while employers think that graduates have a negative attitude towards work, the type of tertiary institute that the graduate has graduated from also plays a role; graduates from a white tertiary institute are more likely to receive a job than a graduate from a black tertiary institute (Oluwajodu et al., 2015).

Oluwajodu et al. (2015) stated that graduates are unsuccessful in finding jobs because they lack the necessary skills. It has been found that this reason is most commonly found in graduates that have graduated from a black institute. This puts graduates at a disadvantage because the skills they have learnt in their institute are inefficient (Oluwajodu et al., 2014; Eliska, 2016; van Broekhuizen & van der Berg, 2012).

Khosrozade et al. (2013) focused their study on gender preferences in a working environment. These researchers have found that most organisations perceive women to have the inability to perform in an organisation as well as men can (Khosrozade et al., 2013). This barrier for women is one of the reasons for graduate unemployment being high, as female graduates are unable to find jobs that will notice their capabilities rather than their gender.

van Broekhuizen & van der Berg (2012) stated in their study that graduate unemployment should not be a priority or concern for the country. According to their research findings, the trend in statistics of graduate unemployment has no potential in increasing. Yu (2013) states the opposite to van Broekhuizen & van der Berg (2012), that graduate unemployment should be a concern as graduate employment will increase the capabilities and skills of the country, helping develop South Africa's socio-economy.

Expectations

- **Graduates**

Graduates that are confident in their qualification, skills, and knowledge set themselves a salary bracket resulting in high expectations for the employer to match (Eliska, 2016; Oluwajodu et al., 2015). An employer will not employ an individual; more specifically a graduate that do not meet their standards of skills, knowledge and maturity.

Employers seek for recruits from colleges and universities that build a competitive nature with other employers. The employer will take the opportunity of paying the highest salary out of all the other employers to the most successful graduate of the university or college which they believe will have the highest level of job performance (Gokuladas & Menon, 2014). When the researchers of this study gathered their data, they found that a graduate with high grades will not necessarily have a high job performance level (Gokuladas & Menon, 2014).

Graduates expect to seek employment in their 'dream' job and will rather remain unemployed than receive a job of what they perceive to be lower level to their standards (Oluwajodu et al., 2015). Graduates that are unemployed believe that they obtain the same set of skills as every graduate that has been employed and expect to receive employment at the level of every graduate employed (Oluwajodu et al., 2015).

Graduates in South Africa are expected to earn an annual salary between R275 000 – R300 000. Interviews done by Oluwajodu et al. (2015), has resulted in findings that recruitment managers confirm that graduates get paid between R250 000 and R320 000 yearly. Therefore it can be said that the expectations

of a graduate for their yearly salary payment is not a big difference from what they are set to be paid in an organisation - graduates desire what the working industry offers (Oluwajodu et al., 2015).

A study done in Florida by Khosrozade et al. (2013) based their research on salary differences in gender. The researchers demonstrated that women are not usually considered for a job, as they may have family commitments or are unsuitable for a harsh, dynamic business environment which is why men are mostly considered as they are perceived to have the ability to handle harsh working environment (Khosrozade et al., 2013).

Khosrozade et al. (2013) have found that women are still paid a lower salary than men, even if both male and female share the same work experience. Their statistics show that in the United Kingdom men earn 24% more than women, 39% earn more in Ireland and in South Africa 47% men earn more than women (Khosrozade et al., 2013). Women, generally have higher salary expectations than men, however their expectations are aligned to their capabilities and the value they are able to add to the organization (Khosrozade et al., 2013). In their conclusion, they have found that women accept lower salaries than men, even though it is seen as unfair, because it has been the business norm.

Khosrozade et al. (2013) research findings showed that graduates that were able to network through relationships with potential working firms expected to earn a high salary five years post-graduation. This study suggests that if graduates spend their years after graduation building a network to find a job, they have a high chance of earning a high salary payment. Networking through the business environment prepares and enlightens the graduate on how an organisation operates building maturity, awareness and tolerance (Khosrozade et al., 2013; Yu, 2013).

- **Employer**

Gokuladas & Menon (2014) defines employability as a possession of market skills and capabilities of an employee that is demanded by an employer. These

skills and capabilities of an individual are necessary to meet changing needs of customers and employers.

A graduate to an employer is seen as a high risk to invest into their organisation, as most graduates do not have experience in a working environment and knowledge on how an organisation operates (Eliska, 2016). Employers look for skills and experience when hiring an individual. They perceive school capabilities and tertiary education as low quality skills. These qualifications do not prove that the graduate has the knowledge and capabilities to operate in a working environment; these qualifications are considered to be a learning aid by the employers (Yu, 2013). The initial salary and wage level of R200 000-R320 000 for a graduate is seen as overstated by the employers, for individuals that are known to be inexperienced (Yu, 2013)

In a study done in India by Gokuladas & Menon (2014) on engineering graduates, the researchers have observed that their graduates and future employees need to have the knowledge on social impacts as they need to find a link between techniques and society, as well as strong analytical and critical reasoning skills, problem solving and interpersonal skills. These technology companies hire graduates with a belief that they have the knowledge to operate in a working environment, and that they are good problem solvers through analytical thinking processes (Gokuladas & Menon, 2014). They also believe that students should possess curiosity, risk-taking ability, creativity and patience. In their findings, the researchers have found that hiring graduates has had a major impact on their production; as graduates were bringing in fresh ideas to improve work efficiency in the organisation (Gokuladas & Menon, 2014).

They concluded that in general, employers look for graduates that are driven, motivated, innovative, have social maturity, a cultural understanding, language skills, proven intellectual ability, leadership skills and commitment (Eliska, 2016; Gokuladas & Menon, 2014; Oluwajodu et al., 2015; van Broekhuizen & van der Berg, 2012).

Employers realistically pay less to new entrants that lack skills and experience; who have to be trained to match the demands of the organisation. They tend to hire graduates at an older age of 24 rather than younger at an age of 20, as they believe that an older graduate is more mature to handle a working environment. (Bulgina et al., 2015; Eliska, 2016; Oluwajodu et al., 2015)

One reason that is not frequently considered in relation to the employment of graduates is the limitation of resources (Bulgina et al., 2015). The researcher states that employees may not have the facilitations or cash flow to meet employees' needs, relating back to Alderfer's ERG Theory. Organisations highly impacted by the financial crisis in 2008, will still be trying to cover up for damages that was caused, so these organisations will be reluctant in seeking or employing new entrants (Kokotovic, 2016).

Lloyd & Leibbrandt (2014) stated that, a country with high unemployment does not necessarily mean that individuals in the country have stopped searching for a job occupation. People that are unemployed are discouraged by the thought of not being able to seek employment, but with reference to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, these individuals will keep searching so that their needs are satisfied.

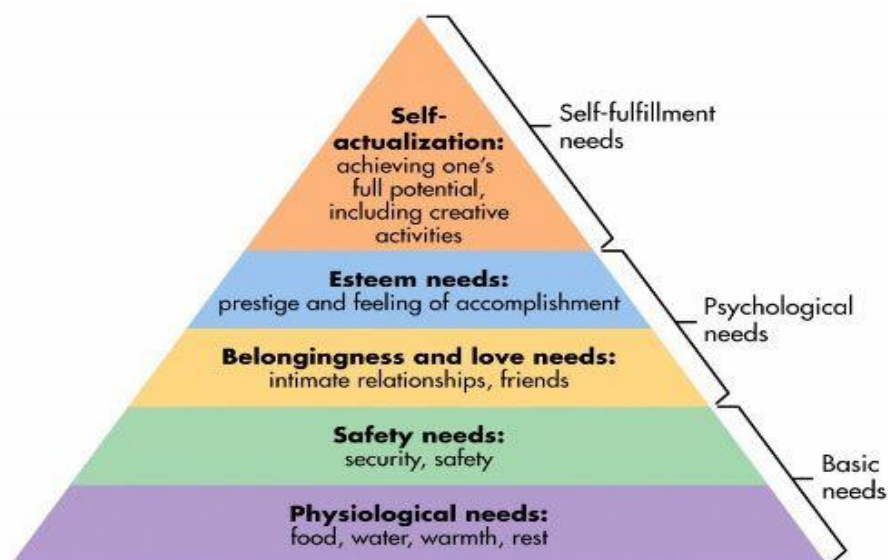
Graduates may not meet the expectations of employers and employers may not agree to the salary expectations of the graduates but drawing on previous research, graduates eventually reach an age of maturity which is considered to be 24 years old. At which point, employers will be more comfortable in employing the graduates. Employers are adamant on the type of skills that are required for their organisation, if a graduate does not possess those skills, they will not be considered to be employed. From the past literature reviewed, it can be deduced that salary expectations of graduates are not much different from what the employers are set to be paying them, as stated above.

Theoretical Framework

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs:

In 1943, Abraham H. Maslow presented a paper based on the complexity of human behaviour called A Theory of Human Motivation which depicts a hierarchal pyramid of five levels of human needs (JL, 2014). Maslow's intention to present the idea was to show that human behaviour is goal orientated. Maslow states that a human action or goal is intended to satisfy a craving or need (JL, 2014).

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs has five levels; four levels are considered as the lower-order needs – physiological needs. Physiological needs are needs that human need to survive on a daily basis. Top levels are considered as growth needs (Higher-order needs) for a human. According to Maslow, a human needs to fulfil each level at a time from bottom to top to reach self-fulfilment (JL, 2014).



SOURCE: Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (Chapman; 2014)

Each level from the bottom of the pyramid to the top:

1. Physiological needs: Air, shelter, water, food and sleep; factors needed for homeostasis (JL, 2014).
2. Safety Needs: Security and Safety; in an environment, health, employment and in the ability to attain human resources (JL, 2014).
3. Belongingness: forming meaningful, stable relationships whether it is friendship, love, intimacy or having their own family (JL, 2014).

4. Self-Esteem: Confidence in one's self which is built by success in achieving goals and respect (JL, 2014).
5. Self-Actualization: Confidence in own values, morality, creativity and problem solving (JL, 2014).

Graduates set their salary norm based on the needs that need to be fulfilled in their present time and also salaries that will help them build on to future goals/needs, with the confidence in having the ability to invest with their annual salary. A graduate will initially focus on fulfilling the first two levels of Maslow's Hierarchy of needs. In line with the theory, graduates will expect a salary that will enable them to buy food, pay rent for shelter and provide a sense of security by having the confidence in their income received each month. Once these two levels are fulfilled by the graduate, they will begin to plan for future investments that will improve self-esteem and finally strive to reach for self-actualization. To summarise the relation between this theory and graduates' expectations –graduates' needs influence their salary expectations.

Alderfer's ERG Theory:

Alderfer's ERG Theory states that it is not necessary for a human to fulfil each level of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs to reach Self-Actualization. Alderfer simplifies Maslow's theory into three stages (Your Coach, 2017). This theory states that one does not need to fulfil needs stage by stage, he refers to a business environment and states that either way an employee will be motivated in satisfying a need; regardless to what "stage" they are in (Your Coach, 2017).

Alderfer condenses Maslow's Hierarchy of needs into:

1. Existence Needs: these needs include Maslow's first two stages of needs, Physiological needs and Safety needs. These are needs that are necessary for a human life to live. Needs being again, as repeated before, air, water, food, shelter, security, and good health (Your Coach, 2017).
2. Relatedness Needs: Individuals who aspire to have interpersonal relationships whether it is interacting with family, friends, or work colleagues (Your Coach, 2017).

3. Growth Needs: the top two stages of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs; Self-Esteem and Self-Actualization. These two stages are specific on personal growth (Your Coach, 2017).

According to Alderfer, each stage can be fulfilled at any point and does not have to be fulfilled step by step; which according to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs each step has to be fulfilled to move on to the next need (Your Coach, 2017).

In Alderfer's ERG Theory, there are three relationships among the different categories:

Satisfaction Progression: comparing to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, Individuals reach satisfaction by satisfying lower needs first. According to Alderfer's theory, satisfying a need does not necessarily mean that the individual has reached satisfaction. Alderfer's theory states that needs are ongoing (Your Coach, 2017).

Frustration Progression: when one cannot satisfy a higher level need, they may regress to satisfy a lower level need. Frustration occurs when the individual is not able to satisfy a growth need (higher level need), and then relatedness need surfaces (Lower level need) as a motive to satisfy the growth need (Your Coach, 2017).

Satisfaction strengthening: a high level need is satisfied; high level being growth needs of an individual, this satisfaction of growth need is used to strengthen the lower level needs of an individual which are the basic physiological needs (Your Coach, 2017).

This theory states that in an organisational environment, managers or employers have to recognize their employees' needs within the organisation. If employees' needs are not recognised by the employer, frustration- regression takes place, negatively impacting the environment of the organisation (Your Coach, 2017).

In relation to this study, Alderfer's ERG Theory looks at needs of the employees that employers have to understand to be able to motivate their work force. When hiring an individual to form part of their work force, managers have to evaluate if their company can afford to employ another employee. For example, if an individual has a post-graduate qualification, these individuals have to be paid within a certain range (Oluwajodu et al., 2013). If an employer cannot satisfy this need, he/she will not be

employed because they will be perceived as too qualified for the job or the employer will not be able to afford the individual.

Conceptualisation

Unemployment: is regarded as a person between the age of 16 and 55 that does not have a paying job but is able to work and seek for employment (Business Dictionary, 2017)

Unemployment Rate: According to the Business Dictionary (2017), unemployment rate is a portion of a labour force that does not have jobs, represented as a percentage. This percentage either rises or falls as a result of changing economic conditions. If the economy is unstable and jobs are scarce, the unemployment rate will increase (rise). If the economy is stable and there job opportunities, the unemployment rate will decrease (fall). The unemployment is calculated by the number of unemployed people divided by people in the labour force (Investopedia, 2017)

Graduates: a group that has completed a course of study or training and awarded with an undergraduate or degree (English Oxford Living Dictionary, 2017)

Salary: a monthly paid compensation for employment according to the Business Dictionary (2017)

Expectations: According to Merriam-Webster (2017), expectation is anticipation; waiting for something to happen.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Paradigm

This research study focuses on analysing individual's perceptions, behaviours and opinions with reference to the topic of graduate salary expectations and employer expectations. Qualitative methods were chosen to gather information on the issue as behavioural aspects has a key in finding the trends in both graduates' expectations and the employers' expectations. The Qualitative method chosen is an interview approach that will aid the relevant data collection of this study which will further be discussed.

This study falls under the interpretivist paradigm; this particular paradigm is suitable for this study because it is based on human experiences and is a socially involved paradigm (Cohen et al., 1998). Reality is identified by the respondents' views; their background, personal experiences and is suitable to view different perspectives. Interpretivist paradigm helps a researcher use the experience of the respondents' to understand and gather data (Cohen et al., 1998).

When using interviews to gather data, the researcher had to analyse the interviewee's reactions, body language, tone and behaviour and alter analyse their response. Interpretivism is a behavioural paradigm and applicable in social situations, providing meaning to social situations. This study is an interpretivist study as it is aimed to build an in-depth understanding for graduate and employer experiences, views and opinions (du Plooy Cilliers, 2014).

Research Design

For this particular study, a series of interviews have been conducted to gather information for the purpose of analysis. A Qualitative study is a method that is used to explore a topic - gaining the understanding of opinions and primary reasons of why a topic is brought up and why it is necessary (Gill et al., 2008). Qualitative method shows insight on trends in behaviour and common opinions amongst people when analysed (Gill et al, 2008).

The purpose of an interview is to look more into beliefs, experiences, views and motivations of others on a particular matter. Interviews provide more of an understanding, and direct the study to a conclusion with the amount of information it can provide (Gill et al., 2008).

This study needs a verbal understanding of reasons and opinions of graduates and employees on the basis of their expectations (Gill et al, 2008). Behaviour and attitudes have to be analysed to gain a much deeper understanding of their problem which is why a qualitative study of interviews was chosen for this research (Gill et al, 2008). A group of graduates and employers of organisations were interviewed for the relevance of this study, to help identify the necessary information; by asking relevant questions and follow up questions, in order to receive sufficient amount of data.

This study was aimed to take the inductive approach. The inductive approach moves from specific to a broader generalisation and theories (Trochim, 2006). In relation to the study, an inductive approach looks at the specific observation of the study, and then begins to find patterns and trends in the data to form a generalised observation to explore and finally develop a conclusion (Trochim, 2006).

Research Plan/Data Collection Methods

Population and Parameters

According to Explorable (2017), a population is a defined collection of individuals and also a possibility of a number of objects that are perceived to have a common, binding characteristic. The population that this study focused on are two groups (target population); the graduates in South Africa and the employers in the Human Resources department of a company that handle the interviews and employing process of an organisation. The parameter of this study is within the age group of 15-34 year olds (Oluwajodu et al., 2013). The common factor between these individuals; being the graduates, are their views on employment and salary expectations. In regards to the employers, their common aspect is what they need and expect from their future employees.

Sampling

Sampling is a portion of the population that the study will be focused on and analysed (Explorable, 2017). A portion is required as there is an inability of studying the whole population (Explorable, 2017). A sample subset will be much easier to control and analyse to form a conclusion than analysing a whole population.

Unit of analysis is the analysis that determines what the unit is for the study (Trochim, 2006). Unit of analysis will be the employers and the graduates of South Africa. The employers were analysed to identify what they expect from their future employees. The graduates were analysed to gather an understanding of their salary expectations and reasons on why they feel they should receive a salary payment in a specific bracket.

The sampling method for this study is convenience sampling, with a sample of 2 graduates and 2 employers. Convenient sampling is relevant because data is used from respondents that were willing and able to take part in the study. With the amount of respondents the research received; willing to take part in the research study, was analysed and taken into consideration (Crossman, 2017).

Data Collection Method

This study used an interview approach to collect sufficient amount of data. An interview allows for an understanding of individuals motives by analysing their attitudes, preference and behaviour. This approach can be done one-to-one or in a group, but for this study it was more efficient to implement interviews on a one-to-one basis, so that one's perception or behaviour is not influenced or criticised by another (Wyse, 2014). An interview allows an interviewer to analyse the interviewee's body language, reactions and personal opinions; and be done in the comfort of the interviewee, whether it is their home, place of work or any location that will have limited distractions (Wyse, 2014).

There are three types of interviews; structured, semi-structured and unstructured. Structured interview approach, is based on an interview schedule and the interviewee will have to tick their answers in response to questions (Wyse, 2014). Semi-structured interviews which is the approach taken by this study, focuses on a certain amount of questions which allows the interviewee to express freely without any limitations to what they need to say (Wyse, 2014). Unstructured interviews is general questions asked by the interviewer that then have follow up questions which is usually used to gather information on an event that occurred or the interviewees' emotional state on the topic being questioned (Wyse, 2014).

An interview will provide information with more detail and accuracy especially for this study as opinions, perceptions and the behaviour of graduates and employees need to be analysed with a detailed amount of information to try and find a link or trend in graduate salary and employer expectations. It was convenient for the interviewees because it was a once off procedure; there was no follow ups needed once the data was collected. Interviews were done immediately and completed at that point, interviewees were able to answer as quick as they could as there is no follow up

questions and there were no frustrations of filling in answers which will take more time and infuriate the interviewee as they might see it as time consuming or irrelevant.

Each interview was recorded using a mobile phone to keep a record of collected data that was further analysed based on interviewees' answers, and reaction to the questions. Notes were taken during the interviews to judge body language and presence of the interviewee (Wyse, 2014). After the interviews been done, a final step of a written phase of the answers given in each interview; exactly in the way it was initially said, was typed to have a further record and transcript proof of the interview (Wyse, 2014).

Data Analysis Method

To analyse the data collected for this study, the thematic analysis approach was used as it is best suited in analysing qualitative methods - like the interview approach that was used when the study was implemented (Psych, 2017).

Thematic analysis helps to identify trends or patterns within the data and also provides a meaning for the data (Psych, 2017). This analysis is applicable as it finds trends across a social and behavioural nature. These patterns and trends are identified by commonality, data coding, familiarity and theme development. Each pattern found by the analysis will reach to answer research questions and aim of objectives (Psych, 2017).

The main benefit of this analysis is that it is theoretically flexible which means it is adaptable to most aspects (Psych, 2017). It adapts well in analysing individual's experiences, perceptions and opinions. It helps to gather an in-depth understanding of the data collected so that related themes within the data can be identified (Psych, 2017).

According to Psych (2017), there is a six phase process in analysing data for the Thematic Approach:

1. Familiarisation: becoming familiar with the data collected which involves reading the data over and over again.

2. Coding: these are labels that identify the features in the data that can answer the questions of the study. Each feature will be coded to its data extract and left for a later stage in the process.
3. Themes: each code will be analysed to find a set of patterns or trends, to identify the potential themes within the data. Each trend will be allocated to its respective theme, according to each participant which will help analyse the data even more when each respondent's response is categorised into a theme.
4. Reviewing themes: each theme for a participant is revised to then be combined, discarded or split when compared to other participants in the research. Each theme will be accepted or rejected if it correlates with the aim of the study or not.
5. Defining themes: in this stage, each theme will undergo a detailed analysis, identifying the purpose of the theme.
6. Final Phase: involves putting all the data together and contextualising the analysis.

This method was chosen as it is relevant for this study when using interviews as a method. In this study, participants' views, behaviour and perceptions were analysed. Thematic analysis allowed for these factors to be critically analysed to answer the research questions and reach the aim of the study. It will be beneficial in sifting through all data collected, finding a purpose in every part of the information provided.

Validity, Reliability and Trustworthiness

This particular study is a qualitative study, so validity and reliability will not take part in justifying the value of research findings. Validity and reliability are considered in a quantitative study (Shenton, 2004).

Instead the focus will be on Trustworthiness of data. Trustworthiness has four components; credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Shenton, 2004).

Credibility: Is having the confidence in the truth of the research findings. Generally in this part of the study, researchers check to see if their findings are what were intended to be a result initially (Shenton, 2004). Triangulation and member checks are two methods used to measure credibility (the balance, 2017). Triangulation is using the same research questions but applying it to other participants while collecting data from other different source and using other methods to answer these research questions. Member checks, the participants of the study check the data that was collected by the interviewer or researcher. This provides the participants with a chance of verifying their statement provided to the study (the balance, 2017).

Transferability: generalisation of the research findings applied to other contexts or situations. This is to verify if the findings can be adapted to other situations (Olivia, 2017). Researchers have found that it is impossible for research findings to adapt to every situation, as every finding is unique in its own way (Shenton, 2004).

Confirmability: this verifies that all research findings are based on the participants' response and there are no biased opinions or motives from the researcher. Confirmability ensures that the researcher has not manipulated any of the finding to suit their own needs or to match the study (Olivia, 2017). An audit trail can be done, suggested by Olivia (2017), to measure confirmability and ensure that the response of participants is correctly and accurately shown (Olivia, 2017).

Dependability: if this study were to be repeated by another, dependability shows in whether the study will provide that research with enough information to carry out the study (Olivia, 2017). This will measure if the study is reliable or not for future use and applicable for further readings to other researchers.

Trustworthiness will help to identify if the research findings at the end of the study is relevant and needed to answer and support the research issue, if these finding can realistically adapt to situations, more importantly other situations. It ensures that these findings have been ethically presented and true to participants and that this study is

worthy enough to be used as a recommended source for others to be done in the future that are related.

Anticipated Contribution

This study has an aim of providing more understandable reasons on why graduate unemployment rate is increasing in South Africa, more specifically the reasons why graduates have high salary expectations, why do the employers not match the graduates' salary expectations and what will an employee seek in order to match their salary expectations, and lastly are these expectations realistic from the employer's point of view. By finding answers to the research questions of the study, there will be a more in-depth understanding provided to graduates on how they should approach a job opportunity in regards to setting their salary worth, while diminishing the amount of expectations of both the employer and graduate, as graduates do have the skills which can be improved on and employers have to be willing to train these graduates to reach their expectations.

Ethical Consideration

Ethical consideration is more informal than lawful norms or code of conduct that need to be followed when carrying out this study (Resnik, 2015). These are norms set to 'do no harm'; it maintains respect for the respondent and the researchers of the study. Ethics are considered to ensure that participants within the study are not offended by questions asked, or any responses being made and to maintain integrity, commitment, honesty and discipline throughout the research process (Resnik, 2015).

These ethics help to refrain from falsifying or misrepresenting data collected for the research, it promotes truth and minimal error while supporting the objectives of the study (Resnik, 2015). In this particular research study, a qualitative approach of interviews were done to collect data necessary for the topic. Interviews involve collaboration with others; ethics is much needed for collaboration as it sets the behaviour, approach and boundaries for when the field work commences. It will build trust, mutual respect, fairness and accountability (Resnik, 2015).

In order to carry out this study and have the ability to gather data from graduates and employees. A letter of consent needed to be signed and agreed upon by all participants of the study. No person was approached, or questioned without any consent as it will be a violation towards the individual. These consent forms encouraged the respondents to be confident in the ability to speak their own mind and share his/her opinion without any limitations (nhmrc, 2014).

When data collection began, each participant were reassured that they will remain anonymous throughout the research process, so that their image is not compromised as a result of the study (nhmrc, 2014). Remaining anonymous will also provide the individuals with confidence in their answer provided to the research. Participants answered with no restrictions to what they have to say, as more detailed information was encouraging to the study to reach objectives (nhmrc, 2014). Participants of the study were allowed to exclude themselves from the study as it is understandable that some answers or repercussions of the study will be sensitive. For the participant to remain comfortable and under no stress of jeopardising their image, they could have refused to take part in the study (nhmrc, 2014).

Each interview was taken place in a venue of the respondents choosing and was privately done; one-on-one. The interview commenced with a formal, welcoming greeting and concluded with a 'thank you for your time'. Before the interview, the participants were given the questions in advance to get their perspective on the questions, so they knew what to expect and with the questions they had the ability to prepare in advance (Gill et al, 2008).

All responses and information provided for the study and any personal details given are guaranteed to remain confidential to maintain privacy and anonymity for participants. Each answer provided by participants appeared exactly the way it was delivered; these answers were not compromised or exaggerated to benefit the study (Bryman & Bell, 2007).

Limitations

Limitations are one part of the study that cannot be controlled by the researcher; it is subject to occur at all odds. Being a Qualitative study, one downfall is not being able to generalise findings over a large population (Bcps, 2017).

During the interview process, any follow up questions thought of on the spot would have result in it being difficult to analyse. These interviews can be time consuming to gather a sufficient and efficient amount of data to support the study. Each interview was carried out in the comfort of the participant therefore there could have been distractions from a phone call or if it is a home environment; distractions from family members. Interviews have the disadvantage of being influenced by biased opinions when there is human interaction. The researcher could have unintentionally encouraged the interviewee's opinion and views on a particular question (Bcps, 2017)

Participants also had the ability to remove themselves from the study at any point which could have resulted in setbacks and more time taken to find another participant to interview and further analyse (nhmrc, 2014).

Lastly, there is no guarantee that the findings found as a result of the study will be able to support and answer all the research questions, and have the ability to reach the aim of objectives.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Narrative Description

These are descriptions based on each participant of this study. Due to ethical consideration, each respondent will remain anonymous and are provided with false names.

Respondent one was a graduate, female, Anna. Anna is a graduate in Bachelor of Commerce in Financial Management with no work experience and is currently in search for a job that falls under her qualification.

Respondent two was a graduate male, Adam. Adam has a Bachelor of Commerce Degree with work experience and is currently studying his honours in Bachelor Commerce - Management, hoping to find a job with his qualification and experience.

Respondent 3 is HR Officer for African Bank, Betty. Betty has a qualification in Bachelor of Commerce majoring in Supply Chain and Human Resources Management. She has been in Human Resources for 3 years.

Respondent 4 was a Director of Human Resources (Employer), Barbara. Barbara has 12 years managerial experience, a skill development facilitator, payroll, taxation and industrial labour law. She is currently completing her studies in Industrial Psychology.

While analysing the data from each interview collected, it was noticed that there were a few common themes within the findings:

THEME 1

Discrimination of graduates based on Gender

When gender stereotypes get attached to a job, it biases the authority that people attribute to the man or woman who happens to work in that position. In this way, women experience negative bias when working in positions that others associate with men. (Thebaud & Doering, 2008).

- Gender

Anna: I think the gender is actually equal ...

Adam: There was a preference for men clearly, I don't think anything happens by accident in a company that is fully structured, so clearly there was a structure to get more men or if not then there wasn't much consideration into why we are getting more men but uh, there's definitely a preference towards getting more men; consciously or unconsciously there is. . I think it is almost a fact but in terms of pay, when you start; as in a fresh start like I did the pay is normally synchronized; it's normally the same but with time of course it changes from one job to another.

Betty: It's dependent on the role itself. If they require- if that space requires a female or requires a male. Only if it is required, otherwise it doesn't play factor.

Barbara: No, it is discrimination. We can't do that because the employment equity, yes, it builds up calibre.

Khosrozade et al. (2013) research findings showed that there is a salary disparity between men and women. The researchers state that women in the same position as men earn a lower salary. The findings of this research study showed that there is no salary disparity between men and women. Employers state that, both men and women working the same job will earn the exact same market related salary. Respondents reacted stating that it will be discrimination if a male or female was favoured in an organisation.

Theme 2

Misalignment of salary expectations between graduates and employer

Employers are given a stipend to pay their entrants which they have to implement as per company law. The graduates have calculated their own salary payments based on their skills, qualification and experiences of the working environment. There is a misalignment as the graduates expect a specific amount from an organisation but an organisation can only pay a salary amount that is market related (Oluwajodu et al., 2013).

- Realistic

Betty: I do believe that it has to be market related. No matter what, uhm, job role it is. It has to be market related. Some companies do go according to experience but it has to be market related.

Barbara: We get a stipend, and a stipend of a degree is R 3500 with the wholesale and retail SETA because a retail SETA works according to, er, a pay grade. So we will work in that line but that is only whilst you are training as an intern or to gain work experience. Once you've completed that in the retail sector itself, we then grade you in a fixed term contract which we offer you. Now you were the learner, now you become an employee as per a job description and we see you based on performance and basically it is called a balanced score card.

So in saying that if you go to a manufacturing setting, and that's gonna be with merSETA; their stipends are little bit heavier in a sense that and it is cruel, you all part of SETAs, they are R 5000. So they give you a R 5000 stipend and we pay the intern the R 5000 stipend but we've done previously now and for this last couple months, we've increased the stipend to R 5000 for an intern because we felt value that you have

spent 4 years studying, you sacrificing your travel time coming through to us and R 3500 to be in a menial type of living wage we gave you R5000.

- Non-realistic

Anna: Okay, it will be approximately around R 6000 – R8000 monthly.

Adam: Well, er, when seeking employment my monthly salary expectation; being realistic, R15 000, I think is being realistic.

From the findings above, graduates have calculated their own monthly salary based on their qualification and basic skills. Employers do take their qualification and skills into consideration but because the graduates are at entrant level, there is a stipend that the organisation is required to pay. The graduates are considered to be non-realistic, as these amounts are calculated based on the graduates' hard work in achieving a tertiary education – emotionally based judgement. Employees, are seen as realistic as they consider graduates at entrant level and are required to pay the graduates a specific stipend based on non-emotional judgement.

Interviews done by Oluwajodu et al. (2015), stated that recruitment managers confirm, graduates get paid between R250 000 and R320 000 annually. The findings of this study revealed that graduates earn at least R5000 per month; R60 000 annually.

THEME 3

Legislation facilitating Graduate Unemployment (BEE)

Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) is a South African legislation enforced to facilitate employment for people of colour in the country. A pillar of BEE is an employment equity which encourages the advancements for people of designated colour, ensuring that all races have an equal opportunity. The BEE legislation diversifies the working environment whilst judging individuals on their skills and abilities (SAB & T BEE, 2017).

Anna: African's are earning more than any other race.

Barbara: It is value to an employer because we have a BEE score card in place. So if you coming in as unemployed, you add value to my BEE score card because I just got a point – hiring a female of designated or deemed colour, or none female or male because it will still add value to my work skills plan.

One of the respondents of the study stated that she thinks African's in South Africa receive a higher salary than any other race in the country. This statement gathered by the study is verified as incorrect. Graduates at entrant level will all be paid the same stipend despite their race, but the organisation will gain points for their company by employing a person of colour. This person will still be paid the same as every other graduate but will have preference based on their colour.

Oluwajodu et al. (2013) researchers stated in their findings that in Universities and Colleges people who are not of colour have preference in applying to these institutes and are more likely to have job preferences and acceptance.

Theme 4

Existence of strong work ethic

Employers believe that a strong work ethic is important to achieve organisational goals (Jenkins, 2017). Jenkins (2017) states that a good work ethic should be instilled from the CEO to entry-level workers in order for the organisation to function at its optimum level. An individual with strong work ethics carries traits of integrity, sense of responsibility, emphasis on quality, discipline, and sense of teamwork (Jenkins, 2017).

Betty: You have to be open minded - you have to be open minded and you cannot take anything personally, you cannot take anything to heart, you cannot be weak, you must try not to be weak because it does, it will kill you, it will crush you because if you can't handle, like you know criticism or you can't handle being a subordinate or you can't handle the pressures, if you can't handle. It is going to be difficult for you.

Barbara: Value is very critical for us because if you are coming through to us, you must replicate what we sell, so if you're saying that we are selling PPE – we want you to know our code of conduct, we want you to adhere to the code of conduct but at the same time, we want you to value what we promote. So, if I'm saying I am selling a perishable item or if I'm selling PPE, you should know the product, when someone walks in, you must be able to talk, eat and breathe that product – at the same time, when management ask you, you are young, you are vibrant, do me a presentation I've got people coming through from SASOL. You will say yes, I will drop everything and we don't even say – when I say yes, I will say no. yes, because you are, you know... (referring to enthusiasm)

Adam: I think as an individual, what I can bring to an organisation is... Wow, that's an interesting question again. Er, I would say... er, definitely, the obvious thing will be thinking out the box, coming up with solutions or bringing up new ideas, problem solving. I think that's one

thing we learn in school that gives scholars an added advantage in a working environment. We are taught how to critically evaluate any issue and solve problems as they arise from a scientific point of view; if you can identify a problem and prove it is there and come up with solutions that will work you have a better chance at succeeding and I think that's why people want higher education like degrees and honours have a better approach towards solving problems in success.

Employers search for candidates that are enthusiastic and are able to manage a tough business environment that challenges them to learn and show their potential. The graduates know what traits and skills they should show to their employer but are naïve in their thinking that they are ready for a challenging working environment. They believe that they have the skills and potential but do not consider the amount of hard work they will have to put in to their jobs.

A graduate to an employer is seen as a high risk to invest into their organisation, as most graduates do not have experience in a working environment and knowledge on how an organisation operates (Eliska, 2016). Employers look for skill and experience when hiring an individual. They perceive school capabilities and tertiary education as low quality skills. These qualifications do not prove that the graduate has the knowledge and capabilities to operate in a working environment; these qualifications are considered to be a learning aid by the employers (Yu, 2013).

Trustworthiness of the study:

Findings collected answered research questions and were related to the research objectives. These findings were able to aid this study and direct it to a conclusion. All data collected and presented is exactly transcribed from the recordings. No data has been manipulated or tampered with. Due to the reliability of data collected, this study may be used for other studies that research employability in South Africa.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Students should apply for work experience in their chosen career field.

When students have work experience it will provide them with a more realistic perception of the real working environment. Learnership programmes, internships and part –time work will equip the students with the knowledge on how the working environment operates - diminishing assumptions and false perceptions.

Once graduated, the students will be disciplined and mature enough to handle the working environment and they will be able to make a proper transition from being a student to becoming a valuable employee.

2. Establishment of a graduate to employee transitioning programme in their final year of study.

This programme will prepare the students on what to expect after graduation. The focus of the programme will be to prepare students for the interview process; on what to expect, how one should conduct themselves, what information they should have on the organisation that is hiring them and what questions they should ask when accepting a job. This programme can help the students to be more confident in their approach to opportunities in the workplace.

The programme can also inform the students of their career options in line with their studies, their outcomes, job expectations and what career paths they could follow, in the future.

3. Graduate mentoring programmes using past graduates that are successfully employed.

Ex-students can share their experiences on how they have transitioned from being a student to being part of the working world, this will enlighten the students on what to expect. It will also be relatable to hear from a speaker that was a student, who perceived the working world in a certain way, only to have that perception change after joining the working environment.

4. Host an “Employers” evening.

Inviting employers to speak to the students will give them an idea of what is expected of them when they enter the working environment. Employers can also help with any questions the students have and can guide the students appropriately.

Conclusion

The focus of this study was to identify the trends in relation to graduate salary expectation and its influence on their employability, and the second objective was to investigate the role of employers' expectations in motivating them to employ graduates.

The findings of this study revealed that graduates have a certain perception of what their working environment should be like. Graduates believe that, in their personal capacity they add significant value to an organisation and hence organisations should have some appreciation for what these graduates bring into the organisation. Their salary expectations are based on their hard work they put in order to achieve their tertiary qualification, this tertiary qualification is viewed as being of high value to the graduates.

An employer's perspective is that, graduates do have a tertiary qualification which they have worked hard for but other than that, a graduate will have to bring much more value in to the organisation. A candidate that stands out and shows the appropriate traits of an individual that is enthusiastic, capable and willing to learn is considered for employment by the employer. From the findings, it has been observed that an employer can only offer a graduate a salary that is market related. The salary will be the same for every graduate employed by the organisation, whether they have work experience or not and despite their gender or race. The organisation receives a stipend that has been approved by the board, and that stipend amount will be the starting salary for graduates.

Limitations of this study were the small sample size and the limited time given to collect sufficient data. This study used a sample size of four; four respondents were chosen due to the amount of time given to complete the study. Using more than four respondents would have resulted in more time needed to gather and analyse data. If more respondents were used during this study, results may have been more accurate.

At the beginning of each interview, respondents read the ethical clearance letter, signed a consent form for the interview to be conducted and recorded. The interviewee made sure that the respondents understood the purpose of the study and the value of their participation. There were no negative comments after the interviews therefore it can be concluded that the interviews and process of data collection were ethically implemented.

Graduates currently have a perception of what a working environment should be, in order for this perception to become more realistic; graduates have to gather factual information based on the opportunities available to them when searching for employment. Graduates should ask more questions in an interview about what the job will entail, as well as the salary being offered, so that they have assurance on why a company pays the specific stipend to an entrant of the organisation. Graduates should remain open minded to a job opportunity as they will be gaining

experience and their salaries will be a starting salary and will increase based on their performance.

In South Africa, there is a legislation that influences an organisation's employment equity. An organisation receives points and a positive reputation if they employ an individual that is of colour. If most organisations follow this protocol and employ individuals only of colour then this aspect could be a reason for a high unemployment rate in South Africa. Organisations will only employ individuals of colour to maintain their positive reputation.

Unemployment has been a rising problem for South Africa, improving the skills for the youth of the country should be a main focus as these individuals are the future. Therefore, the graduates perceptions and assumptions of the working environment should be corrected with factual information of what a working environment entails. Graduates should remain open minded and optimistic for job opportunities as their assumptions and perceptions are limiting their opportunities to gain experience and skills.

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Information sheet for participants

To whom it may concern,

My name is Kamara Naidoo and I am a student at Varsity College, Durban North. I am currently conducting research about graduate salary expectation and employer expectations. I hope that this research will enhance our understanding of graduate unemployment.

I will be clearly explaining to you exactly what the participation in my research study will involve, which I have done below. I have listed these in the forms of questions that I will try to fully answer. If you have any questions that you feel are not addressed or explained fully in this information sheet, please do not hesitate to ask the researcher for more information. Once you have read and understood all the information contained in this sheet, please complete and sign the consent form below.

What will I be doing if I participate in your study?

I would like to invite you to participate in this research because your views and experiences on employment will be beneficial to the study. If you decide to participate in this research, I would like to interview you to gather information for my research.

You can decide whether or not to participate in this research. If you decide to participate, you can choose to withdraw at any time or to decide not to answer particular interview questions.

Are there any risks/ or discomforts involved in participating in this study?

Your work at any organisation is completely separate from this research. Whether or not you decide to participate in this research, there will be no impact on your work. There are no direct risks or benefits to you if you participate in this study. You might, however, indirectly find that it is helpful to talk about your views on employing graduates/ expectations of employment. If you find that it is distressing to talk about your views on employing graduates/ expectations of employment, you may seek help from the learning support staff at Varsity College, Durban North (031 573 2038).

Do I have to participate in the study?

- Your inclusion in this study is purely voluntary;
- If you do not wish to participate in this study, you have every right not to do so;
- Even if you agree to participate in this study, you may withdraw at any time without having to provide an explanation for your decision.

Will my identity be protected?

I promise to protect your identity. I will not use your name in any research summaries to come out of this research and I will also make sure that any other details are disguised so that nobody will be able to recognise you. I would like to ask your permission to record the interviews, but only myself and a professional transcriber (who will sign a confidentiality agreement) will have access to the recordings. Nobody else, including anybody at Varsity College, Durban North, will have access to your interview. I would like to use quotes when I write a summary of the research but I will make sure that nobody will be able to recognise you.

What will happen to the information that participants provide?

Once I have finished all interviews, I will write summaries to be published in academic journals or books, or presented at academic conferences. You may ask me to send you a summary of the research.

What happens if you have more questions about the study?

Please do feel free to contact me should you have any questions about this research, or if there is anything you need to know before you decide whether or not to participate.

You should not agree to participate unless you are completely comfortable with the procedures followed. The contact details of the researcher are as follows:

Kind regards

Kamara Naidoo

0729733944

Kamara.n111@gmail.com

Consent form for participants

I, _____, agree to participate in the research conducted by Kamara Naidoo about graduate salary expectations and employer expectations.

This research has been explained to me and I understand what participation in this research will involve. I understand that:

1. I agree to be interviewed for this research.
2. My confidentiality will be ensured. My name and personal details will be kept private.
3. My participation in this research is voluntary and I have the right to withdraw from the research at any time. There will be no repercussions should I choose to withdraw from the research.
4. I may choose not to answer any of the questions that are asked during research interviews.
5. I may be quoted directly when the research is published, but my identity will be protected.

Signature

Date

Consent form for audio-recording/ video recording

I, _____, agree to allow Kamara Naidoo to audio record my interviews as part of her research about graduate salary expectations and employer expectations.

This research has been explained to me and I understand what participation in this research will involve. I understand that:

1. My confidentiality will be ensured. My name and personal details will be kept private.
2. The recordings will be stored in a password protected file on the researcher's computer.
3. Only the researcher and a transcriber (who will sign a confidentiality agreement) will have to access to these recordings.

Signature

Date

An Exploratory Study on the Influence of Salary Expectations on Graduate Employment

GRADUATES

1. When seeking employment, what monthly salary are you expecting employers to offer? Why do you set yourself this salary amount?
2. How would you describe your capabilities, knowledge and skills?
3. What trait/s do you possess that will benefit an organisation?
4. How would you describe a working environment best suited to you?
5. Can you describe your interview experiences and state your views on why you think these jobs did not come through at the end?
6. What type of jobs are you seeking; high or low level?
7. What is your opinion on salary differences between a man and woman?

EMPLOYERS

1. What skills and capabilities does an employer expect from a graduate?
2. How much will an organisation agree to pay a graduate with experience and a graduate without experience? On what basis is the annual salary measured on?
3. What is your opinion on salary differences between a man and woman?
4. Graduates are perceived by employers to be?
5. Do employers look at behaviour and maturity when hiring graduates and how can they tell when a graduate is ready for a working environment or not?