

## **Can Training in Employability Skills Help Adolescent Girls and Young Women in South Africa Increase Their Employment Opportunities?**

**Jean Damascene Mvunabandi**<sup>1</sup>

**Msizi Mkhize**<sup>2</sup>

**Ferina Marimuthu**<sup>3</sup>

**Bomi Cyril Nomlala**<sup>4</sup>

**Lawrence Gadzikwa**<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1,3</sup>Durban University of Technology

<sup>2,4</sup>University of KwaZulu Natal

<sup>5</sup>Hand in Hand Southern Africa

<sup>1</sup>Author's correspondence: JeanM2@dut.ac.za

**Abstract.** This article investigated how employability skills training can be used to foster adolescent girls and young women's employment opportunities and to improve their employment pathways in South Africa. This study adopted quantitative and descriptive research approaches via longitudinal data collection. Secondary data was collected from 3584 AGYWs using a questionnaire survey during employability training from July-October 2021. Robustness analysis was performed using descriptive statistics using SPSS version 28.0. The empirical findings proved that employability skills training significantly improved the capabilities of adolescent girls and young women on labour market assessments. Relying on these empirical findings, this study proposes a framework for linking AGYWs and the labour market through an employability skills training capability-based conceptualised model. The results of this study will fill a gap in understanding the twelve dominant employability skills variables identified by this research study which has justified with most relevant literature and theories in particular. This study contributes to the current body of knowledge and further contributes to the career development and employability among adolescent girls and young women required to cope with the labour markets in South Africa. The study recommends schools, Universities and other key role players in skills development among employability skills guidelines for ensuring the readiness of young graduates for employment opportunities in South Africa.

**Keywords:** Adolescent Girls and Young Women (AGYWs); Employability opportunities; Employability skills; Local Labour Market Assessments (LLMAs); Job search strategies.

**Abstrak.** Artikel ini menyelidiki bagaimana pelatihan ketrampilan ketenagakerjaan dapat digunakan untuk mendorong gadis remaja dan perempuan muda dan peluang kerja untuk meningkatkan jalur kerja mereka di Afrika Selatan. Penelitian ini mengadopsi pendekatan penelitian kuantitatif dan deskriptif melalui pengumpulan data secara longitudinal. Data sekunder dikumpulkan dari 3.584 gadis remaja dan perempuan muda dengan menggunakan survei kuesioner selama pelatihan ketenagakerjaan pada periode Juli-Oktober 2021. Analisis keandalan dilakukan dengan statistik deskriptif menggunakan aplikasi SPSS versi 28.0. Temuan empiris dalam penelitian ini membuktikan bahwa pelatihan ketrampilan ketenagakerjaan secara signifikan meningkatkan kemampuan para gadis remaja dan perempuan muda dalam penilaian pasar tenaga kerja. Berdasarkan temuan empiris ini, penelitian ini mengusulkan kerangka kerja untuk menghubungkan para gadis remaja dan perempuan muda, serta pasar tenaga kerja melalui model konseptual berbasis kemampuan pelatihan ketrampilan kerja. Hasil penelitian ini mengisi kesenjangan dalam memahami dua belas variabel ketrampilan kerja yang dominan dan diidentifikasi melalui penelitian ini, serta telah dibenarkan dengan literatur dan teori yang paling relevan pada khususnya. Studi ini berkontribusi pada pengetahuan saat ini, dan selanjutnya berkontribusi pada pengembangan karir dan kemampuan kerja di kalangan remaja putri dan perempuan muda yang dibutuhkan untuk mengatasi pasar tenaga kerja di Afrika Selatan. Hasil penelitian ini merekomendasikan sekolah, perguruan tinggi, dan pemain kunci lainnya dalam pengembangan ketrampilan menggunakan pedoman ketrampilan kerja untuk memastikan kesiapan para lulusan berusia muda untuk memperoleh kesempatan kerja di Afrika Selatan.

**Kata kunci:** Ketrampilan kerja; Peluang kerja; Penilaian pasar tenaga kerja lokal; Remaja putri dan perempuan muda; Strategi pencarian kerja.

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## BACKGROUND

Employability skills are essential character traits and interpersonal skills that characterise the ability of a person's relationships with other people (Dafou, 2018; Robbins & Hoggan, 2019). Yong and Ling (2022) concur, adding that career and employability skills as all activities such as highly-quality career advice, and exposure of graduates to job possibilities. Yong and Ling (2022) further add that those factors robustly assist youth in employability skills building for them to make successful transitions from schools to the labour market. Pitan and Muller (2020) revealed employability skills gaps in work readiness skills among unemployed young people globally and particularity in South Africa. In a study conducted by Ansarey (2017) and Alamgir, Haq, Tufail, and Mehmood (2021), they praised the fact that employability skills are highly required to eliminate or reduce skills not only gaps but also enhance the employment of young people in the private sector. McMahon and Watson (2022), briefly classified the most required by the labour market including but not limited to: (1) LLMA (local labour market assessment) skills, (2) self-leadership and personal values, (3) communication skills, (4) critical and analytical thinking, (5) team working skills,

(6) professional ethics, and (7) CV writing, and conducting job interviews among others.

Zaharim et al. (2019) stressed that empowering and equipping young people with employability skills should be done through Local Labour Market Assessment (LLMA) is a qualitative research process, including, for example, surveys, interviews, and focus group discussions with both current and potential future members of the workforce as well as employers. At the same time, Misra and Khurana (2018) accentuate that “the employability skills gap is harshly affecting adolescent girls and young women’s employability and achievement in their workforce. Shockingly, unemployment due to a lack of local labour market assessment (LLMA) knowledge among adolescent girls and young women (AGYWs) is a subject that has received much attention globally and in South Africa (Dawson, 2021)”. Specifically, for instance, statistics show that the global rate of unemployment from 2010 to 2020 is escalating; the global rate of unemployment amounted to 6,47% in 2021 (2017=5.55%; 2018= 5.37%; 2019= 5.37%, and in 2020= 6.7% (Huikari & Korhonen, 2022). According to Pitan and Muller (2020), South African young women lack effective opportunities in terms of being trained in employability knowledge and skills critical to the building of essential skills for success in labour market.

South Africa alone has a youth population of 20.6 million, making up 35.7 percent of the country’s total population of 60 million people. Bhatnagar (2020) provided empirical evidence on youth unemployment and clustered formally and academically delivered within a populace falling within the “=or>18 up to <or = 34 years” parameter. South Africa’s unemployment is remarkably high, and in 2022, it was officially measured at 34.5%.

Worse still, StatsSA (2022) reveals that the unemployment rate is 63,9% for those aged 15-24, and 42.1% for those aged 25-34 years old and as of June 2022, 35.3% of people actively looking job a job in South Africa were unemployed (Huikari & Korhonen, 2022). It has become evident that South Africa has become a high temple of unemployment, especially due to the lack of employability training among youths, including adolescent girls and young women (Ijeoma & Ndedi, 2021). According to Alenda-Demoutiez and Mügge (2020), 7.5 million South Africans ages 15-34 are not in employment, education or training (NEETs). The issue of unemployment in South Africa has not been addressed rigorously. There is also a paucity of evidence on whether employability skills training is a powerful tool to foster AGYWs’ employability opportunities and to improve their employment pathways in South Africa (Pitan & Muller, 2020).

The escalation of the unemployment rate has forced developed and developing countries to tackle its consequences. Mtawa, Fongwa, and Wilson-Strydom (2021) proposed employability training through labour market assessment (LMA) in order to reduce unemployment. However, empirical evidence based on a rigorously developed model tackling on unemployment crisis among youth in South Africa is lacking. Key challenges and critical gaps include conducting local labour market assessment and analysis, lack of key critical training on employability knowledge and skills that limit AGYWs to access available jobs, and lack of career exposure; another key limitation is that many rural youths, township communities who appear to be excluded from the labour market. These necessitated this research study.

Pitan (2016), identified employability training issues are the intangible that hinders basic requirements to finding a job. Okolie, Nwosu, and Mlanga (2019), concur, adding that “employability training, including labour market assessment, could help jobseekers to develop not only better job-related skills but also to enhance their chances of finding employment in an increasingly diversified knowledge-based labour market.” McMahon and Watson (2022:21) defined “employability as minor skills that are different from technical skills learners acquire in the classroom.” The objective of this study is to assess employability skills training in strengthening positive AGYW employment and career pathways advancement among youth in South Africa with a primary focus. Relied upon the extensive literature reviewed, the following research question was formulated to guide this research: Can Conducting Labour Market Assessment be used as a catalyst for Adolescent girls and young women to enhance their employment opportunities in South Africa?

The results of this article will be highly relevant for South Africa and other developing country's research initiatives that aim to build and foster the employability of young women through training initiatives. The study's results have significant implications for employability and career development in the South African context. This research study contributes to the current body of knowledge by providing significant suggestions on how best to build sustained young women's and labour market partnership to foster their employability opportunities through employability training but more globally on the labour market assessment training model. These contributions are crucial not only for strengthening the employability knowledge and skills that employers need, which are often not imparted to the students by the teachers but also for stimulating AGYWs to be proactively active in searching for jobs using qualitative strategy instead of them sitting and waiting for adverts without thinking for taking a step further for local labour market analysis (LLMA).

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Underpinning Theories**

The teaching and learning theories that guided this study including: Human capital theory (Marginson, 2019), education and economic development theory (Breton, 2012), and behaviour theory (Hull, 1943), are behind this research and will be the building blocks of the study and framework development. These theories are intended to outline the factors influencing the attainment of AGYW's readiness for employability and most required skills and also can pave the new way, ensuring that AGYWs can attain new skills that could be required for both current and potential future members of the workforce as well as employers.

#### **1. Human Capital Theory**

The human capital theory was first propounded by Slaughter et al. (2015:23), as “the collection of knowledge, habits, and social and personality traits, including creativity, embodied in the ability to perform labour so as to produce economic value”. Fix (2021:48) pointed out that “human capital theory is one of the most considered theories used to address employability skills”. This theory has been extensively utilised to assess and examine the link which connects higher education and career from 1960 onward. By subsidising HCT, Winterton and Cafferkey (2019) debated that “the future

social and economic development and growth of any nation heavily rely on the skills and knowledge gained from education and work placement, which indicates the expectation of its human capital.” Schwab (2018) “examined the financial benefits resulting from the investment in the people’s skills and resources and recommended that highly skilled labours should be placed in highly skilled careers, which could improve the nation’s prosperity and economy”. Becker (2009:35) noted that “HCT regards that human resources people can distinguish the efficacy readiness of employment seekers”. However, Pitan and Muller (2020) warned that the lack of AGYWs’ employability skills and the deficiency of future career opportunities make the process of employability highly challenging.

Clarke (2018) educated or trained people to have higher selection priority for employment, and finally, higher income payments depend on graduates’ productivity; therefore, the HCT has a direct link between skilful graduates and employment. This claim was also backed by Nadezhina and Avduevskaia (2021:9), who stressed that “employers could ensure high productivity as a result of employees’ performance when highly educated and trained effectively.”

## **2. Behaviourism Theory**

Behaviourism Theory was propounded by Kalfa and Taksa (2015). (Holmes, Sheehan, Birks and Smithson (2018:11) further alluded that “this theory is regarded as one of the fundamental theories of learning and teaching.” Guerin and Sleet’s (2021) theory states that the changes in behaviour are the consequences of the individual’s reactions to events. Moreover, behaviourism is particularly interested in detectable and determinable features of human behaviour. Hence, behaviourists such as Clark (2018), emphasised that “students learn and behave in response to stimuli from their ambient surroundings and the environment with the assumption that all students are receptive trainees.”

## **3. Educational and Economic Development Theory**

The concept of education and economic development started with Smith (1791:68), who first stated that “the acquired and useful ability of all inhabitants identified now as human capital is the first element of the four fixed capital elements which leads to productivity in national economies.” The theory was enhanced by Paganelli (2022:16), who elaborated that “the expansion of physical capital and skilled, educated labours as the nation’s capability to attain national economic growth productively.” Finally, Kamaruzaman, Hamid, Mutalib, and Rasul (2019), in a study titled “conceptual framework for the development of 4IR for young graduates,” endorsed the theory of education and economic development as a valid theory that deals with the balance between education and or training and employment as well as its applicability when studying employability as it directly involves the mastery of new skills for young graduates’ employability through education and training with the development of the fourth industrial revolution.

## **Empirical Review Findings**

Empirical work on how employability skills training could potentially enhance employment improvement (Group, 2018; Joll, McKenna, McNabb, & Shorey, 2018; Lerman, 2019). However, criticisms range from pointing out that only a very small

number of AGYWs are actually well trained in LLMA and analysing the trends in the labour market, and a big percentage of them are not, due to a lack of labour market assessment skills (Brewer, Gardiner, & Handscomb, 2020). Du Toit, De Witte, Rothmann, and Van den Broeck's (2018), leading experts on unemployment issues as authors and academics. Their critique on Youth unemployment is found in the book "root cause of unemployment discourse." Thorne (2021) argues that Youth is academically equipped with substantial knowledge and skills, but instead of being proactively active in searching for jobs, they just sit and wait for adverts without thinking about taking a step further for local labour market assessment (LLMA).

Petrariu (2018) strongly emphasises the great need for youth to be trained and suggests that for youth to improve their employability skills and labour market analysis. Another criticism that comes from Thowfeek, Fernando, Perera, and De Silva (2018), is the failure to provide ground competency-based training to adolescent girls and young women, which hugely contributes to the failure of unemployment. Thowfeek et al. (2018:31) further soundly criticise that "graduates are not adequately capacitated to adapt to changing labour market circumstances due to a lack of labour market analysis and employability skills training."

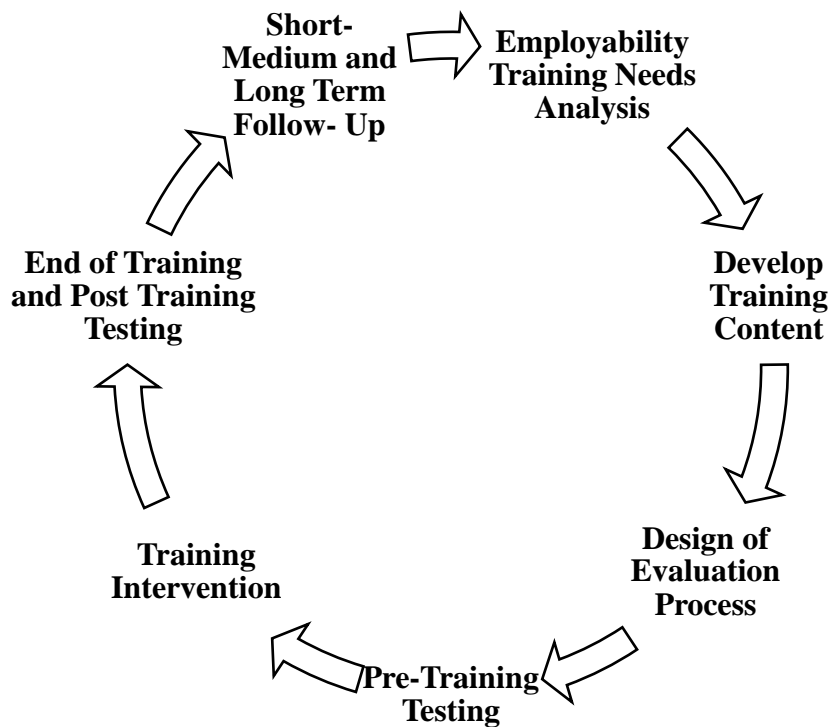
Donald, Ashleigh, and Baruch (2018), argue that unemployed people cannot find jobs without having a technical base of practice and capabilities, the knowledge base of practice, the attributes of such person for that occupation or profession, and more importantly, labour market analysis is fundamentally unique to grab better employment opportunities. Okolie et al. (2020), renowned for their criticism of measuring employability skills and knowledge and proposed capability theory of assessing, analysing and comparing and ranking various possible options available in order to climb the career ladder. In their debates, Okolie et al. (2019), rightly points out that employability skills training is not always imparted to students by schools and universities.

Universities have also been criticised for not imparting employability skills which are different from what is being taught in classrooms (academic and technical), which prevent students from developing job-related skills (Ng, Chan, Wut, Lo, & Szeto, 2021). Kluge et al. (2019:48) said, "employability skills include but are not limited to (1) problem-solving skills, (2) labour market assessment and analysis, (3) critical thinking, and (4) the ability to work with people from diverse backgrounds, among others."

Cranmer (2016:81) further criticises and argues that "higher learning institutions should ensure that students are offered the opportunities to develop the right employability skills, including labour market assessment skills". Another issue is the lack of career initiatives and programmes and the increase in public criticism of youth graduates, and Hooley, Watts, and Andrews (2018:37), argue that "schools and other career initiatives should assist graduates in (1) developing job search strategies including labour market analysis, (2) network with others to grow their career connections, (3) be able to check job offers and make a career decision, (4) help graduates on how best to write their resume or curriculum vitae and conducting interviews, (5) to make smooth transitions from schools to workplaces and (6) acquire creative ideas to shape their future career success required by employers."

Clarke (2018) argues that "young graduates lack employability skills that employers demand and proposes an employability framework consisting of (1) indivi-

dual behaviour, (2) class and university ranking (3) career self-management and career-building skills problem-solving skills, (4) labour market assessment and analysis, (5) critical thinking, (6) emotional intelligence, and (6) ability to work with people from diverse backgrounds among others graduates' employment success to close employability gap.”



Source: Developed by the researcher (2023).

**Figure 1. Model for Validating and Sound Evaluation of Training Intervention**

Okolie et al. (2019) found that the majority of young people do not have career trainers and professional mentors, as well as employability skills that could assist them in making smooth transitions from schools or universities to workplaces. Ekong and Ekong (2016) researched factors affecting the employability of young graduates. Ekong and Ekong’s (2016) findings indicated that “workplace decision preferences are widely in line with the outstanding integrity of a person as well as the employability skills he/she holds.” Empirical findings are indications that any nation can enhance young people’s employability opportunities if they can be strengthened in the development of suitable career development approaches. Thus, this research study aligns with early findings in the search for effective employability skills in improving employment opportunities. Based on the extensive literature reviewed, the researcher proposes the following model for validating and sound evaluation of employability skills training intervention.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This was a quantitative research project based on secondary data collected via longitudinal data collection at the large anonymised organisation level based in Johannesburg, South Africa. Access to the organisation's secondary data, which was captured into an excel spreadsheet, was granted on the condition of maintaining the anonymity of the organisation and the 3584 adolescent girls and young women who participated in the survey, hence the need to protect their identity. The questionnaire instrument was developed by the organisation's master trainer and it was grouped into two sections: Section A involved data on the demographic details of the respondents and section B comprised a range of questions to capture their views of employability skills and used as a basis for analysis. Pre-training survey tests were conducted from the second day of the training programme, which was 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2021, in order to capture AGYWs' initial knowledge of employability skills. An AGYW was deemed to have been trained through a sequenced process preparing AGYWs within July, August and October 2021 to succeed in their employability opportunities and expand their career enhancement behaviour and knowledge when they have completed the employability content module. Post-test surveys were conducted on the 28<sup>th</sup> of October 2021. The researcher analysed the raw data pertaining to pre and post-tests in order to measure the knowledge improvement gained by the AGYWs in the employability skills training intervention framework.

The data was available to the researcher; hence no ethical clearance was required for the researcher to access data. The data set for this study contains longitudinal dimensions from 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2021 (pre-tests data) to 28<sup>th</sup> October 2021 (post-tests data) as 3584 AGYWs across the four provinces, namely: Eastern Cape (EC), KwaZulu-Natal (KZN), Mpumalanga (MP) and Western Cape (WC) trained within that particular period. The longitudinal quantitative surveys (pre-tests data of 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2021 and post-test data of 28<sup>th</sup> October 2021) enabled the investigator to measure the LMA's knowledge among the participants of the study.

Pre- and post-tests measured the knowledge gained by the AGYWs in the employability training intervention framework. The pre-test was a set of questions given to participants before the training began to determine whether AGYWs had job-related skills (knowledge-based labour market) or not and to measure their employability skills level. Upon completing the training module, the AGYWs were given a post-test questionnaire to answer the same set of questions. Comparing post-test scores to their pre-test scores enabled the researcher to examine whether the training was successful in increasing the participants' knowledge of employability skills. This analysis involved all the 3584 (100%) respondents (AGYWs) who were trained. Six hundred fifty-four (644) participants were from Western Cape, 2288 from Mpumalanga, 188 from Eastern Cape and 454 from KwaZulu Natal. Robustness analysis was performed on all AGYWs who participated in the surveys. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics where percentages, frequencies, standard deviations and means among the selected variables were estimated. The results were presented using tables.

### 1. Reliability of measurement scales

The reliability of scales is the degree to which the items that make up the scale all measure the underlying attribute. This is known as internal consistency (Pallant, 2011). Pallant (2011) adds that reliability can be measured by means of Cronbach's Alpha,



which provides an indication of the average correlation among all the items that make up the scale. Cronbach's Alpha Reliability Statistics are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1. Cronbach's Reliability Statistics**

<b>Cronbach's Alpha</b>	<b>Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items</b>	<b>N of Items</b>
<b>.884</b>	<b>.886</b>	<b>12</b>

The Table 1 shows that Cronbach's Alpha for the scales used in this study was .884, which suggests a high level of internal consistency. Ghauri, Grønhaug, and Strange (2020) note that Cronbach's Alpha values of 0.7 and above indicate that a scale is reliable. Based on research by Dall'Oglio et al. (2015), Cronbach's alpha of 0.5 is still acceptable if the research consists of a few variables. Even Nguyen et al. (2019) said research with items or indicators that tend to have a small Cronbach alpha value was appropriate or reliable for psychological studies with a Cronbach's alpha value. LMAs of .884 are still acceptable because the lower items involved are consistent with previous studies. Therefore, the overall analysis suggested that the main factors influence AGYW's LMA's skills. All these factors are significantly influential, with a p-value of <0.05.

## **Data Presentation and Analysis**

### **1. Demography of Respondents**

Table 2 presents the data relating to the background information of the respondents. Table 2 illustrates that 25.7% (n=920) of the respondents were between the ages of 18 and 19; 36.3% (n=1300) were aged 20 to 25; 20.6% (n=737) fell into the age group of 26 to 30; 16.6% (n=596) were between the ages of 31 and 35, and 0.9% (n=31) were over 35 years of age. Thus, the majority of the respondents were between 20 and 25 years old. Furthermore, the table illustrates that 454 (12.7%) respondents were from KwaZulu Natal, 654 (18.2%) respondents was from Western Cape, 188 (5.2%) respondents were from Eastern Cape, and 63.8%, 2288 respondents were from Mpumalanga.

In terms of the district representation of the respondents, the table shows that 85 (2.4%) respondents were from Alfred Nzo, 103 (2.9%) respondents were from Buffalo City, 333 (9.3%) respondents were from King Cetshwayo, 121(3.4%) respondents were from Ugu, 36.6% [n=1311] of the respondents were from Enhlanzeni, 19.3% [690] of the respondents were from Gert Sibande, 287 (8.0%) of the respondents were from Nkangala, and 654 (18.2%) were from the City of Cape Town. Finally, Table 2 above illustrates that, (51.9%, 1861 respondents) held matric certificates, 580 (16.2%) a Post Matric, and 1109 (30.9%) respondents were in Grade 12. Furthermore, 34 (0.9%) of the respondents were in Grade 11.

**Table 2. Demographic Data of the Respondents**

Response type	Questionnaire items	Respondents rate
Age	18-19	920 (25.7%)
	20-25	1300 (36.3%)
	26-30	737 (20.6%)
	31-35	596 (16.6%)
	Above 35	31 (0.9%)
Total		3584(100.0%)
Province	KZN	454 (12.7%)
	WC	654 (18.2%)
	EC	188 (5.2%)
	MP	2288 (63.8%)
Total		3584(100.0%)
District	Alfred Nzo	85 (2.4%)
	Buffalo City	103 (2.9%)
	King Cetshwayo	333 (9.3)
	Ugu	121 (3.4%)
	Enhlanzeni	1311 (36.6%)
	Gert Sibande	690 (19.3)
	Nkangala	287 (8.0%)
	City of Cape Town	654 (18.2)
	Total	
Level of education	Matric	1861 (51.9%)
	Post Matric	580 (16.2%)
	Grade 12	1109 (30.9%)
	Grade 11	34 (.9%)
Total		3584(100.0%)

Source: Author's compilation.

## 2. ANOVA

The analysis of variance is used to test whether the employability training intervention framework is fit for prediction. The results indicate the P-value is less than 0.05, indicating a statistically significant. The result indicates that the hypothesis that the null hypothesis that the framework is not fit for prediction is rejected and the alternative hypothesis that the model is fit for prediction is accepted.

**Table 3. ANOVA**

	Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	321.025	7	45.861	61.783	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	2654.435	3576	.742		
	Total	2975.460	3583			

<sup>a</sup>Dependent Variable

<sup>b</sup>Predictors: (Constant), Independent Variables

Source: Survey (2022), SPSS Version 28.

From the ANOVA statistics, the study showed a significance level of .000, which is an indication that the data was ideal for drawing a valid conclusion on the population

parameters. The finding confirms the objective of this article which investigated the impact of labour market assessment training opportunities in strengthening positive adolescent girls and young women employment and career pathways advancement among youth in South Africa with a primary focus as a tool to develop career competencies by increasing the knowledge, skills and ability to effectively engage with the labour market.

## Discussion of the Results

### Comparison of the pre-post Means and Standard deviations ratings

This study sought the respondents' views on the degree to which they understood employability skills that employers need and how they can be used to foster their employment opportunities and career pathways. The means and standard deviations for the twelve questions are presented in Table 4.

Table 4 shows that the means of all the responses are above 4 and there is little variation among the responses, with the highest standard deviation at 0.982, which depicts consensus. Based upon the study's results, the respondents expressed significant agreement that employability skills training is a tool to foster adolescent girl's and young women's employment opportunities and improve their employment pathways in South Africa. Table 3 further highlights comparing the mean values between pre-post-tests in the eleven employability skills. This is demonstrated by the means and standard deviations for the different items. The results showed that there is statistically significant knowledge improvement after employability skills training intervention took place for all factors since the mean scores after the completion of the training were greater than the means scores before the training intervention took place, which indicates that the respondents had the higher rating or opinion on these variables of employability skills-based training which assumes a direct link between qualifications and jobs. This implies that an increase in employability skills training would provide AGYWs in South Africa with more employable transferable skills, building them the capacity and capabilities to better adapt to changing Labour market circumstances.

**Table 4. Comparison of the Pre-Post Means and Standard Deviations Ratings**

Item No	Questionnaire Items	Pre-Tests		Post-Tests	
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation
1	Conducting Job Interviews Skills	3.60	.750	4.47	.954
2	CV Writing Skills	3.53	.683	4.10	.730
3	Communication Skills	3.60	.750	4.06	.867
4	Leadership Skills	3.71	.450	4.18	.856
5	Problem Solving Skills	3.02	.735	4.29	.761
6	Critical and Analytical Thinking Skills	3.11	.764	4.30	.982
7	Emotional Intelligence Skills	3.09	.583	4.89	.830
8	Ability to work with people from diverse background	3.07	.810	4.25	.846
9	Teamwork Skills	3.03	.755	4.32	.813
10	Local Labour Market Assessment Skills	3.22	.777	4.57	.868
11	Ability to check job offers and make career decisions	3.34	.674	4.46	.860
12	Professional Ethics	3.20	.655	4.48	.874

Source: Survey (2022), SPSS version 28.

The results of the current study support the results of prior research studies that found that career and employability learning activities strongly equip young people to build the skills they need most in order to make successful transitions from schools or universities to workplaces (Chowdhury, 2020; Clarke, 2018; Cranmer, 2006; Dafou, 2018; Ekong & Ekong, 2016; Hooley et al., 2018; Kluge et al., 2019; Lerman, 2019; Misra & Khurana, 2018).

The finding of this study confirms the findings of a study conducted by the Council and Square (2018), who found that Youths are academically equipped with substantial knowledge and skills but instead of being proactively active in searching for jobs, they just sit and wait for adverts without thinking about taking a step further for local labour market assessment (LLMA). Thowfeek et al. (2018), found that failure to provide ground competency-based training to adolescent girls and young women hugely contributes to their failure in their employment opportunities. Thowfeek et al. (2018) also stated that graduates are not adequately capacitated to adapt to changing labour market circumstances due to a lack of employability skills training. Whilst, Donald et al. (2018), found that unemployed people cannot find jobs without having a technical base of practice and capabilities, the knowledge base of practice is fundamentally unique to grab better employment opportunities.

From the descriptive and longitudinal results, the respondents were in significant agreement that employability skills training intervention would lead to the greatest influence on AGYWs enhanced employment opportunities as the means of all responses are above 4, and the standard variations are low, with the highest at 0.982, depicting consensus. The findings of the study show that the increased employability skill variable is driven by the training conducted. This implies that an increase in employability skills training enhances the chances of employment among AGYWs in South Africa. These findings are supported by Ng et al. (2021), who found that the willingness of young women to acquire both formal and informal employability training to develop higher capabilities in investigating local job opportunities is of huge benefit for the youths in the reduction of unemployment.

The results are in line with previous studies that demonstrated the positive impact of employability training beyond the training session (Mtawa et al., 2021; Ogbuanya & Chukwuedo, 2017). Combs, Liu, Hall, and Ketchen (2017) found that employability skills include: problem-solving skills, labour market assessment and analysis, critical thinking, the ability to work with people from diverse backgrounds, developing job search strategies, the ability to check job offers and make informed career decisions, help graduates on how best to write their resume or curriculum vitae and conducting interviews, to make smooth transitions from schools to workplaces and to acquire creative ideas to shape their future career success required by employers.

These earlier findings indicate that employability skills training can enhance AGYW's employment opportunities if they can strengthen their efforts in developing suitable career development approaches to identify jobs available (Van Hootegem, De Witte, De Cuyper, & Elst, 2019). However, Ranchhod, and Daniels (2021) found weak links between employ-ability training and occupational pathways but strong links with the field and level of education within labour market destinations. In this study, Olaosebikan and Olusakin (2014) finding aligns with earlier findings in the search for effective career development and employability.

## CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

The evidence showed that South Africa had become a high temple of unemployment, especially due to the lack of employability skills training among youths, including adolescent girls and young women. The focus of this article was to investigate how employability skills training can be used to foster employment opportunities and improve employment pathways among 3584 adolescent girls and young women from four provinces of South Africa, i.e. KwaZulu Natal, Mpumalanga, Eastern Cape, and Western Cape.

Overall descriptive statistics and longitudinal analysis on how employability skills training can be used to strengthen AGYW's employability skills that employers need to show a statistically significant relationship between the use of all the variables to stimulate the rate of job placements and employment opportunities. This implies that an increase in the employability training intervention is associated with an increase in AGYW's employability skills improvements. Overall the result showed that AGYW's expectations were met after the employability training. This article has demonstrated that AGYW's gained new employability skills that employers need in the labour market.

This article has also outlined the strategic approach to improving the links between AGYW's employability through skills training in the different types of employability skills by proposing short-medium and long-term employability training objectives by boosting AGYW's overall competition in the Labour Market. This has a huge potential implication to result in a better alignment between employability skills in the labour market to address the structural deficiencies in the labour market and the unemployment crisis among youths. The findings of this study also have significant implications for the employability skills advancement of AGYW's and graduates in the emerging world context. Based on the descriptive and longitudinal results for the employability skills variables, the study can therefore draw a valid conclusion on the crucial role of employability skills training as a tool for improving the skills of adolescent girls and young women for better employment opportunities.

This article proposes a framework for linking AGYW's and the labour market through an employability skills training capability-based conceptualised model. The article further recommends the service provider make robust and rigorous short-medium and long-term follow-ups to evaluate the intended training impact and outcomes achieved. More resources should be invested in the organisation conducting this useful training in order to be able to make short, medium and long-term follow-ups on AGYW's trained.

The study was only limited to AGYW's without comparing them to their male counterparts; further research should also include young men to address the issue of a gender gap. Since the research was limited to only four provinces of South Africa, it is difficult to generalise the findings to the whole country; hence it is suggested that further research should be conducted on any of the twelve dominant variables identified by this research study in other provinces to compare the findings. Future research could consider how the findings could be used in other countries.

## Declaration of Interest

The authors report no conflicts of interest regarding this piece of the research paper. Only the authors are responsible for the content and writing of this paper. Therefore, we have no conflicts of interest to disclose.

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## Author Contributions:

- Conceptualization:** Jean Damascene Mvunabandi, Bomi Cyril Nomlala, Msizi Mkhize, Ferina Marimuthu, Lawrence Gadzikwa.
- Data curation:** Jean Damascene, Bomi Cyril Nomlala.
- Formal analysis:** Jean Damascene, Bomi Cyril Nomlala.
- Investigation:** Jean Damascene Mvunabandi, Lawrence Gadzikwa
- Methodology:** Jean Damascene Mvunabandi, Bomi Cyril Nomlala.
- Supervision:** Jean Damascene Mvunabandi, Bomi Cyril Nomlala.
- Validation:** Jean Damascene Mvunabandi, Bomi Cyril Nomlala, Msizi Mkhize.
- Visualization:** Ferina Marimuthu, Bomi Cyril Nomlala, Msizi Mkhize.
- Writing:** Jean Damascene Mvunabandi.

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