

Factors affecting Self- Perceived Employability among Tribhuwan University
Humanities and Social Science Students

A Thesis

Submitted to the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences,
Central Department of Sociology, University Campus, Kritipur, Kathmandu, Nepal
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
Degree of Masters of Arts in Sociology

Submitted by

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December, 2022

DECLARATION

I, Dilasa Shrestha, hereby declare that the work contained herein is my own except where explicitly stated otherwise in the text, and that this work has not been submitted for any other degree or qualification except as specified.

I understand that my dissertation will become a part of the permanent collection of the central library of Tribhuwan University, Kirtipur. My signature below authorizes the release of my dissertation to any reader upon request for scholarly purpose.

.....

Dilasa Shrestha

December, 2022

Letter of Recommendation

I am pleased to inform that this thesis entitled “Factors affecting Self-Perceived Employability among Tribhuvan University Humanities and Social Science Students” has been successfully completed under my supervision by Dilasa Shrestha in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in Sociology. To the best of my knowledge, this study is original and I hereby forward this thesis to be examined by the evaluation committee.

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Letter of Approval

The dissertation entitled “Factors affecting Self-Perception of Employability among Tribhuwan University Humanities and Social Science Students” submitted by Dilasa Shrestha as a partial fulfillment for the requirements of the master’s degree in Sociology, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Central Department of Sociology has been accepted by the undersigned evaluation committee.

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Acknowledgements

Working on this thesis for a period of eight long months has been synonymous to a journey of intense learning, better understanding, and constant growth in all academic, professional, and personal arenas of my life. For making this study possible, I would like to thank all of those supportive and motivational persons without whom this research would not have been possible.

First and foremost, I would like to thank my supervisor, Dr. Tika Ram Gautam, for his tireless guidance, motivation and his unwavering support. I cannot express how grateful I am for all of our meetings, phone- conversations, emails, and for his valuable advice throughout my research journey. This endeavor would not have been possible without his constant support, and his belief in this project.

I would also like to thank all the department heads, teachers, and students (2nd and 4th semester) of Sociology, Psychology, and English departments for their cooperation and the patience by wholeheartedly agreeing to fill up the survey questionnaire, which is the heart of my research.

My heartfelt appreciation also goes out to my dearest mother who helped me achieve this accomplishment by constantly supporting, encouraging and believing in me. Lastly, for the love, for hours long video- call to keep me company as I work on my thesis, for helping me in every way possible, for the patience, unfailing support and continuous encouragement, an ocean of thanks to Dr. Rejal Thapa. Your belief in me has kept my spirits and motivation high during this process!

Dilasa Shrestha

Abstract

One of the most pressing problems conspicuous in job markets all around the world is the never-ending supply of graduates who have acquired tertiary education, but a limited demand for workers in comparison to this supply, leading to high rates of unemployment and underemployment among the graduate students (Jackson & Wilton, 2016). Correspondingly, the situation of Nepali students/graduates is such that as soon as they complete their Master's level degree, they start worrying about their job prospects. Nepali students of all faculties-- technical and mostly Humanities and Social Sciences-- grow dejected and exceedingly unsure about how to put their degree to use and consequently, they begin doubting on their potential and their qualifications. To doubt on one's potential of being able to navigate the challenges in the labor market (Jackson & Wilton, 2016) and being unconfident about progressing in the labor queue, is having low self- perceived employability.

Taking into consideration this ever- growing problem of job- insecurity and decreased self- perception of employability in students/ graduates, this research has focused on three factors—the possession of cultural- social capital of students (CSC), the state of the external labor market and students' knowledge of it (SELM), and economic- class and university brand strength (UBS)--- under internal and external dimensions that are known to shape the self- perception of employability (SPE). The results of Spearman's Rank correlation reveal a significant positive correlation between each of the independent variables to the dependent variable, SPE. And furthermore, the highest value of standardized beta (β) for CSC at .400 in the multiple linear regression analysis indicates that for this sample of TU social science students, their possession of CSC has the strongest relationship with SPE.

Since the study results for TU social science students indicate that all three dimensions— CSC, SELM and UBS—have a significant positive relationship with SPE, it can be concluded that as argued in theories by Bourdieu, Collins and as shown by other existing empirical studies, CSC, SELM and UBS having a significant positive relationship with SPE is true in the context of Nepal too. Finally, given this relationship, stakeholders working to better the condition of these dimensions may produce a highly confident workforce that can compete and secure a desirable job not only in the national market but also international market.

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

ANOVA: Analysis of Variance

CSC: Cultural- Social Capital

ESL: English as a Second Language

IT: Information Technology

MOE: Ministry of Education

NCERT: National Council of Educational Research and Training

NGO: Non-governmental organization

OECD: Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development

SAT: Scholastic Assessment Test

SELM: State of External Labor Market

SPE: Self- Percieved Employability

SPSS: Statistical Package for Social Sciences

TU: Tribhuwan University

UBS: University Brand Strength

UNESCO: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 University education and employment

When university students are asked “What next?” after completion of a post-graduate degree, their most common answer is to secure a desirable job. It would be no overstatement to say that young people enroll in higher education and go to universities in the hopes of becoming more sellable in the labor market. Jackson and Wilton (2016) opine that an important role of university education has become to send “employable graduates to the labor market” (p.1).

However, despite the fact that young people are going to universities and gaining a degree now more than ever before, university graduates worldwide are currently struggling to obtain jobs that match their qualification level (Antonio & Tuffley, 2017; Collins 2018, 2019). According to prior studies, university graduates typically wait 4.7 years before finding a permanent job after graduation (Healey & Lewis, 2016; Stanwick et al., 2014; Walsh, 2016, as cited in Antonio & Tuffley, 2017). Long gone are days when a university degree would directly mean career success.

In today’s fiercely competitive labor market, students/ graduates are expected to cultivate core- employability skills in addition to their academic qualifications (Ergün & Şeşen, 2021; Hillage & Pollard, 1998; Pathak, 2020), so that it distinguishes them from their competitors and helps them come first in the labor queue. To add to that, as Alessandri et al. (2006) mention, university’s rank, reputation, and its brand strength also play a significant role in assuring students of their future employability.

In order for university students/graduates to feel self- confident in their capabilities and for them to be able to handle career challenges in this fiercely competitive job market (Jackson & Wilton, 2016), they need to have a strong sense of self- perceived employability. Álvarez-González et al. (2017) borrow from social cognitive career theory by Bandura and assert that self- perceived employability “influences career related interests and choice behavior” (para.

18) in individuals and also boosts their confidence of being able to find jobs. But what exactly is self- perceived employability?

1.2 Self-perceived employability

Rothwell et al. (2008, p.2) defines self-perceived employability as “the perceived ability to attain sustainable employment appropriate to one’s qualification level”. In other words, it is the confidence of an individual that they will be able to find a steady job in their area of interest, do well in it, and in the process, improve their quality of life (Creed & Gagliardi, 2014; Hillage & Pollard, 1998; Rätty et al., 2019; Rothwell et al. (2008, 2009)).

Rothwell et al. (2008, 2009) further explain that how high individuals rank themselves as being employable is determined by both personal/internal elements and by external elements. Under internal elements fall the concepts of cultural capital of a person which is made up of their academic knowledge, their core- skills and abilities, and their temperament (Hillage & Pollard, 1998); and social capital i.e., a good job contact network. It is understood that possessing a strong job contact network proves to be beneficial to the students in terms of future employment opportunities, job recruitment process, and also career growth (Ergün & Esen, 2021; Hillage & Pollard, 1998; Rothwell & Arnold, 2007).

On the other hand, there are also external factors that determine the self-perception of employability. These external factors are students’ economic condition, university brand strength (the reputation of the university they are studying in), and the state of external labor market. External labor market factors can be studied in terms of credential inflation, vacancies, and the situation of demand for university graduates in that job market out of many things (Rothwell et al., 2008, 2009).

Talking about credential inflation, Collins (2018, 2019) states that in a technologically advanced society, the middle- class jobs become scarce and the remaining few positions will require highly skilled personnel, which will mean more competition and more students staying in the education market for longer years in the hopes of attaining advanced degrees that can help them come first in the labor queue. On the same, Antonio and Tuffley (2017) write that every year a lot of students graduate with similar qualifications and compete to get the same job. The jobs are in small number but the graduates competing for it are a lot. This,

Antonio and Tuffley (2017) say, shows that the supply of potential labor is “not matched by corresponding rise in actual demand” (p. 107). Similar instances can be seen in Nepali job market too. Three decades ago, in order to get an employment as a higher- secondary level teacher, a bachelor’s level degree would suffice, but now, seeing people with master’s level degree applying for this position is quite commonplace.

Another factor after credential inflation that has been studied under the state of external labor market that shapes students’ self- perception of employability, is the demand for social science graduates in the job market. Numerous research around the world have demonstrated that the labor market might be more favorable towards graduates from applied or technical subject, rather than students of Humanities and social sciences (Acharya, 2022; Collins, 2018; Dayaratna-Banda & Dharmadasa, 2022; Kalamatianou & Kougioumoutzaki, 2012; Moleke, 2010; Singh, 2006).

These aforementioned factors- both internal and external- that shape self- perceived employability may also impact people’s career choice. Creed and Gagliardi (2014) point out that in the process of choosing a career, graduates start compromising on their interests when these internal and external elements act as a barrier to their career goals and dreams. Thus, to secure a career of their interest and to be able to compete in the job market, having an elevated sense of self-perceived employability among university students has become a critical requirement in today’s world (Ergün & Şeşen, 2021). A high sense of self- perceived employability among university graduates also helps them tackle job insecurity and build confidence that they will be able to find an alternative employment opportunity if something goes wrong with the present one (Jackson & Wilton, 2016).

1.3 Statement of the Problem and Research Questions

Every year in Nepal, university students start worrying about their future job prospects after the completion of their education. Despite holding a master’s level degree, both natural and mostly social science graduates in the country grow dejected and exceedingly unsure about how to put their degree to use; they begin doubting on their potential and their qualifications. Many students after myriad of unsuccessful attempts at securing a job of their interest, settle for underpaid jobs that does not match their qualification level, others begin thinking about

leaving the country in search of a more valuable and sellable international degree and still others are forced to leave the country in search of foreign employment. This ever-growing problem of job insecurity in graduate students is not limited to just one person, one faculty or one geographical area in Nepal; this is the problem of entire Nepal and Nepali graduate students of almost every faculty.

And since it is a problem faced by almost all the graduate students of Nepal, like sociologist C. Wright Mills in his work “Sociological Imagination” explains, when a lot of people start experiencing the same problem at the same time, it is no longer an individual’s trouble or a problem, rather, it translates into a public issue that signifies crisis at an institutional level (Mills, 1959). Thus, this issue of graduate students in the country and also all around the world not being able to secure a proper job, is a public issue that needs to be studied through the vantage point of sociology. To understand this problem and later devise a solution for it, we first need to study factors that shape an individual’s self- perception of employability, because as mentioned earlier, having a high sense of self- perceived employability helps cultivate confident individuals who can successfully navigate the problems in the job market.

Therefore, this research has attempted to study both internal and external factors/elements identified by Rothwell et al. (2008, 2009) that shape students’ self- perceived employability. As introduced earlier, Rothwell et al. (2008, 2009) explain personal/internal elements to be the knowledge, abilities, disposition and a good job contact networks of the students; and by external elements, the brand strength of the universities that the students are studying in (Räty et al., 2019) and the state of external labor market and students’ knowledge of it can be understood. External labor market factors that can be studied in terms of credential inflation, vacancies, and the situation of demand for university graduates in that job market out of many things (Rothwell et al., 2008, 2009), has been studied under credential inflation and market demand for social science university graduates in this study.

Keeping these points in mind, the aim of this research was to study the impact of internal and external determinants in shaping self- perceived employability among social science students of Tribhuvan university. The researcher wanted to understand how employable students of social sciences faculty in Nepal believed themselves to be. Also internationally, as Álvarez-González et al. (2017) note, the literature concerning employability has often drawn from

employers' perspective of what an ideal employee should be. However, as Rätty et al. (2019) posit, only a marginal number of studies have examined employability from an individual's perspective. To add to that, the concept of self- perceived employability remains a new and a fairly un- researched concept in Nepal. So, this research has attempted to look into the self- perception of employability of Nepali university (TU) social science students and it has also attempted to add a country- specific insight to the global discussion of self- perceived employability.

Research Questions:

1. How does a strong cultural capital (in terms of academic knowledge, soft skills and abilities, disposition) and social capital (in terms of good job contact networks) boost self- perceived employability in students?
2. Whether there is relationship between the state of external labor market (in terms of credential inflation, demand for social science graduates in the job market) and students' self- perception of employability?
3. How does the reputation of the university that students are studying in affect their self- perception of employability?

1.4 Objectives of the Study

General objective:

To examine factors that shape self- perceived employability among social science students studying at university level

Specific Objectives:

To describe how social- cultural capital possessed by social science students of TU, Kritipur affect their self- perception of employability

To explore the relationship between the state of Nepali labor market and students' self- perception of employability

To explain whether the university brand strength shapes students' self- perception of employability

1.5 Significance of the Study

Given that graduates in Nepal like graduates all around the world have been facing job insecurity and problems related to employability, this study topic holds relevance and in spite of this being a graduate level academic research, it could add a country- specific insight to the global discussion of self- perceived employability. Since the concept of self- perceived employability remains a new and a fairly un- researched concept in Nepal, this research shall act as a stepping- stone for future students and researchers interested in topic related to employability perception. This quantitative study could also illustrate the confidence level of Nepali social science university students in transitioning to their professional lives after graduation. Furthermore, studying the effects of internal and external factors towards self- perceived employability can help future researchers identify problematic areas and devise a solution strategy accordingly. And since this study has covered a substantial range of topics associated to employability perception and higher- education in Nepal, the literature review can be of great help to future researchers. Finally, this study is an addition to researcher's knowledge base regarding higher education and job market in Nepal.

1.6 Operational Definition

For the purposes of this research, social and cultural capital of the students has been studied under internal factors that affect self- perceived employability; and income inequality, university choice and the state of Nepali labor market has been studied under external factors. Further clarification of what each of these terms comprise is listed as follows:

Cultural capital of graduate students: Academic knowledge and academic success (sound understanding of the subject matter, grades, reasoning skills), soft skills and abilities (teamwork, adaptability, problem solving, emotional intelligence, creativity, perseverance)

Social Capital of graduate students: good job contact network (connection with influential seniors, professors, and relatives in the area of their job interest)

State of Nepali Labor Market: Credential Inflation in the market, demand for social science graduates in Nepali job market

Economic Class and University Choice: Economic Condition of the student/ student's family and their university's brand strength/ reputation

Tertiary Education: Master's level University degree

1.7 Organization of the Research

Chapter I holds the introduction of the study which defines related topics of this study and sets the stage by providing context, lists research questions and objectives of the research, presents significance of the study, it also explains what each of the study variables mean for this research under operational definition section, and finally, it presents the organization of the research.

Chapter II is the literature review section which presents a detailed empirical literature review that analyses previous studies in order to support and help find answers to the research topic and it also demonstrates the need to conduct this research by identifying research gaps. This is followed by a conceptual framework that illustrates in a diagram, the relationship between independent and dependent variables. And further, it presents the hypotheses of this quantitative research and also the theoretical framework. Finally, it contains a section that lists from where the items/ questions in the survey questionnaire have been adapted from.

Chapter III is the research methodology section which states the nature of the research and in it, elaborates the reason for choosing quantitative study. This is followed by rationale of site selection, that covers geographical site and the social site. It then talks about the research design used by this study and explains why this design is used. It also sheds light on the universe of the study and the sampling procedures. Finally, this section ends with description of the techniques of data collection, the process of data analysis and the limitations of the study.

Chapter IV holds the factors affecting self- perceived employability and this chapter contains data presentation, analysis and discussions in relation to previous studies. First and foremost,

it presents the basic characteristics of the respondents in a bar- diagram or a pie- chart and describes it. Then it classifies the univariate data or items of each of the independent variables under a thematic title, its importance is discussed, the results are analyzed, and a discussion or a dialogue with the previous literature is presented. Similar process is carried out for the bivariate data and its cross- tabulation. As for the multivariate data, the causal relationship between the variables is explained. This chapter ends with the examination of self- perceived employability of respondents according to the three faculties selected for this study.

Finally, Chapter V is the summary and conclusion section which contains the summary of the whole research, in that, it contains the summary of introduction, objectives, hypotheses and the major findings. Finally, the study is concluded under a ‘Conclusion’ title, which presents objective- wise conclusion of the research.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Nepal's education system: Past to Present

After the promulgation of new and latest constitution in 2015, Nepal is now a federal democratic republic country with a multi- party system. For a long time however—1846 – 1951--- Nepal was ruled by Rana prime ministers under an autocratic Rana regime (Gaulee, 2014). Even though Nepal's first institution of higher education, Tri- Chandra College, was established in 1918 by then Rana Prime Minister Chandra Sumsher, during this 105 years of Rana regime, quality education was limited only to noble class (Gaulee, 2014). After the autocratic Rana regime was overthrown in 1951, Nepal that was isolated from the rest of the world till then, opened its doors to development aid and democratic aspirations in 1953 (World Bank, 2017 as cited in Laurent- Olive & Bourn, 2020).

Nepali public had just started getting access to education, when political history of Nepal further saw instability in the form of two 'People's Movements' and a Maoist insurgency that began from 1996 and lasted till 2005 (World Bank, 2017, as cited in Laurent- Olive & Bourn, 2020). During this period, education system of the country suffered greatly. Schools and colleges in urban areas were closed indefinitely, affecting the academic calendars and examinations, and those in rural areas were turned into battle- grounds (Gaulee, 2014). Maoist insurgency finally ended in a Comprehensive Peace Agreement in 2006, monarchy was dissolved for good in 2008 and Nepal was announced as a democratic republic nation (M. KC, personal communication, October 3, 2022).

With this, each successive government has worked to bring about substantial educational reforms and address myriad issues that act as a barrier to quality education (Takala, 2007, as cited in Laurent- Olive & Bourn, 2020). The constitution of 2015 has declared free primary and secondary education (Laurent- Olive & Bourn, 2020) and data shows that a significant number of children have been attending schools (LeVine, 2019, as cited in Pathak, 2020). Similarly, according to the data published by Ministry of Education, Science and Technology

(2020, as cited in Pathak, 2020), there is a whopping increase in the literacy rate among 15-24-year-old age at 88.6%.

Owing to the educational reforms over the years, the data in the Table 2.1 (Giri et al., 2020, p.122) below illustrates that a little more than half of the Nepalese in both 2018 and 2020 have said that there has been a positive change in the quality of education in both the public and the private schools. In 2020, 53.9 percent points of Nepalese expressed that they have seen positive changes in the quality of education in the public school, whereas 53.5% of them said the same for private schools. On the other hand, while only a marginal number of people have cited a negative change, slightly more than one- third of them have shared that they have not seen any significant changes in the educational arena in both public and private schools.

Table 2.1

Changes in the Quality of Education in Public and Private Schools

Year	Type	Positive Change (%)	Negative Change (%)	No Change (%)
2018	Public	53.6	6.3	35.6
	Private	57.3	2.2	36.7
2020	Public	53.9	6.8	34.2
	Private	53.5	2.3	35.9

Note. Adapted from “A Survey of Nepali People in 2020”, by Giri et al., 2020, p. 122. Retrieved from <https://asiafoundation.org/publication/a-survey-of-the-nepali-people-in-2020/>

Despite positive views of half of the Nepali people regarding the quality of education according to Table 2.1, more than one- third of Nepalese who see no changes in the educational arena (Giri et al., 2020), and also the large number of jobless graduates in Nepal prove that the existing education system of the country has not been able to produce skilled, internationally competent, and market sellable workforce who can enhance their social and economic condition (Gaulee, 2014; Pathak, 2020). Their educational qualifications notwithstanding, many young adults/ graduates are still unemployed. One of the main reasons for this according to Gaulee (2014) is that Nepali education system still follows a traditional, non- interactive teaching style that is disproportionately teacher- centric.

Along with this, Pathak (2020) also opines that the education system of Nepal still focuses on instilling “fear of failure and punishment” (p. 18) rather than encouraging students to be independent and creative thinkers. Starting right from primary school to higher level education, significant number of the schools and colleges in Nepal fail to groom their students to become interactive and critical thinkers. These schools and colleges rather focus on memorization and recitation.

Consequently, this kind of exam- centric education that values memorization over development of critical thinking skills, fail to produce internationally competitive labor force. The ‘soft skills or the ‘cultural capital’ like reasoning skills, practical application of theories, teamwork, adaptability, problem- solving, emotional intelligence, creativity, perseverance etc. (Hillage & Pollard, 1998) are core skill- set valued by employers, that all schools and universities should instill in their students. However, these soft skills/ internal elements that have also been identified as one of the most important factors for heightened self- perceived employability (Hillage & Pollard, 1998; Rothwell et. al, 2008, 2009) are actively suppressed by Nepali education system (Pathak, 2020).

2.1.1 Higher Education of Nepal

This lack of enhancement of soft skills or core skills in students is highly prevalent not only in schools but in universities too. As with the schools, in universities too, failure to change curricula, exam- focused education system and reliance in traditional, teacher- centric teaching style have been identified as one of the major reasons that obstruct development of core employability skills in Nepali graduates (Acharya, 2022; Gaulee, 2014; Pathak, 2020). Recently, Nepali universities have been attempting to move away from these traditional teaching styles by incorporating semester systems and by encouraging students to voice their opinions, but significant changes are yet to be seen.

Along with this, Acharya (2022) also mentions that this practice of adding new colleges and universities, without really working to enhance the quality of existing ones, is another problem of higher education in Nepal. Acharya (2022) further points out that with the involvement of both the government forces and other stakeholders alike, establishment of new universities has become more of a political agenda in Nepal. Because of mushrooming

colleges that fail to provide quality education, the graduates these colleges/ universities produce ‘do not have the knowledge and skill per the labor market requirement.’ (Acharya, 2022, p. 43).

In job market, employers in Nepal like everywhere else, look for staff who have the ability to build rapport with the clients i.e., they value workers with critical/ creative thinking and interpersonal skills; however, fresh university graduates in Nepal lack the confidence and the eagerness needed to accomplish tasks related to their qualifications (Pathak, 2020). Pathak (2020) further explains that this failure to provide skill- based practical education to high school and university graduates alike, either forces them to take up rather low- paying jobs that does not match their education level, or due to lack of confidence in themselves, they are compelled to take up jobs fit for unskilled- workers abroad.

Only if Nepali universities move away from ‘paper- pencil’ student assessment (Acharya, 2022) and focus on providing practical education like experiences of internship, focus on connecting new graduates with the alumnus (Acharya, 2022) and encourage their students to be creative, then higher education can produce competent workforce.

2.2 Self- perceived employability and its determinants

‘Employability’ is the set of qualities in an individual that increases their chances of securing a job, maintaining that job, and also obtaining a new one when necessary (Hillage & Pollard,1998). Self- perception of employability then is the self- confidence of an individual of being employable. And being employable for an individual depends upon what Rothwell et al. (2008, 2009) call internal and external elements.

Under internal elements that affect self- perceived employability, falls individual knowledge and skills (cultural capital) and ‘job search skill’ or access to ‘formal and informal’ social networks (social capital) possessed by students (Hillage & Pollard,1998, para. 12). Owing cultural capital like academic knowledge, and core- skills or soft-skills like self- management skills, communication, teamwork, initiative, self-discipline, problem solving skills, motivation out of many other skills, increases the chances of an individual in securing employment (Antonio & Tuffley, 2017; Hillage & Pollard,1998; Pathak, 2020) and so does having access to social networks. It is because, having a strong social capital can provide

individuals/ graduates with necessary information that can help them secure a job and also help them achieve their career goals easily (Ergün & Şeşen, 2021).

There are also external factors that affect or shape an individual's self- perception of employability (Ergün & Şeşen, 2021). Under external elements fall the economic conditions (Qenani et al., 2014, as cited in Ergün & Şeşen, 2021), the state of the labor market (Chou & Shen, 2012, as cited in Ergün & Şeşen, 2021), and the reputation or the brand strength of the university that the students are studying in (Cabarello et al., 2015, as cited in Ergün & Şeşen, 2021). Therefore, when examining the factors that determine the perceptions of employability, both internal and external elements need to be considered (Rothwell et al., 2008, 2009). In the following sections, literature related to cultural- social capital that falls under internal elements; and the state of the labor market and university brand strength that fall under external elements have been discussed.

2.2.1 Internal Elements: Cultural and social capital of students

Cultural Capital

Cultural capital is a concept that was introduced by French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu and is understood as one of his signature concepts. His theory on forms of capital— mostly cultural and social capital-- has been used as a theoretical base in both qualitative and quantitative research in the field of social sciences (mostly education and sociology) (Vryonides, 2009). Marks (2009) in his study explains that many empirical studies have examined and as the result have found substantial effects of cultural capital on the education and on the job-market outcomes of students/ graduates. Owing to previous studies like these, this research has examined the effect of cultural capital possessed by TU social science students on their self- perception of employability.

“What is Cultural Capital” (2019) reports that Bourdieu defined cultural capital to mean ‘familiarity with the legitimate culture within a society’, in that, familiarity with ‘high culture’. High- culture or a highbrow- culture (Lareau & Weininger, 2003) and highbrow status practices can be understood as elite or aristocratic families passing on their knowledge on dance, music, theatre, literature etc. to their younger generation (Lareau & Weininger, 2003; “What is Cultural Capital”, 2019). Elite families and parents passing on this kind of knowledge to their children has been associated with their children being able to gain

advantages in the educational process (Vryonides, 2009). Even though this is the origin definition of cultural capital, and has been used as the ‘dominant interpretation’ of cultural capital in the past decades, like Lareau and Weininger (2003) posit in their study, limiting the definition of cultural capital to mean familiarity with the highbrow culture is rather problematic and this kind of operationalization of the term is greatly inadequate (Sullivan, 2001, as cited in Vryonides, 2009).

Because of this, even though the origin of the term cultural capital was associated to being familiar with highbrow culture and highbrow status practices, Bourdieu himself in his explanation of cultural capital, further added three different dimensions that make up cultural capital. It encompasses the embodied state (languages, mannerisms, preferences); the objectified state (cultural goods, books, works of art); and the institutionalized state (qualifications, educational credentials) (Power, 1999; “What is Cultural Capital”, 2019). To add to this, today in the most recent works of several academics, the definition of cultural capital has come to include not only three forms of cultural capital as defined by Bourdieu, but also, technical (marketable skills), emotional (empathy, sympathy), national, and subcultural forms (“What is Cultural Capital”, 2019).

Based on this present definition of cultural capital then, the internal/ personal elements like individual knowledge, academic performance, team- work, problem solving, communication and emotional intelligence, creativity, passion, dependability, adaptability etc. (Antonio & Tuffley, 2017; Ergün & Şeşen, 2021; Hillage & Pollard,1998; Pathak, 2020; Rothwell et al.,2008), have been labelled as cultural capital for this research. When studying cultural capital, this research has put equal emphasis on both academic skills and on the above-mentioned work- related, marketable, core- skills of the graduates, because, as explained in the research by Antonio and Tuffley (2017), employers today not only look for strong marksheets in graduates, but also look at their core- skills and abilities to cope with the work-related environment. While academic skills should not be excluded from the study of cultural capital, it certainly should not be limited to it.

Research by Antonio and Tuffley (2017) further explain that even though cultural capital possessed by an individual has been linked to increased employability prospects, it has mostly been understood in the terms of academic credentials and knowledge. Education and

good academic credentials can open doors for wide- ranging employment opportunities mostly for middle-class families and has been known to help them climb up the economic ladder and to secure advantageous social positions (Ball, 2003, as cited in Vryonides, 2009). However, graduates who have not been prepared to handle a complex situation with a customer, who lacks leadership and teamwork skills, and who cannot build rapport with their colleagues are less desired over potential employees who have both academic credentials and other core- marketable skills.

Table 2.2 (Dayaratna-Banda & Dharmadasa, 2022, p.10) below has been extracted from a study conducted in Sri- Lanka, that specifically highlights how employees put a lot of value in students' marketable core- skills like time- management, adaptability, dependability, emotional intelligence, creativity, honesty, perseverance etc. The mean value and the ranks based on the mean values indicate that in addition to the academic knowledge and good marksheet of the potential employees, employers highly value core- skills and abilities like honesty, diligence, time- management skills, passion, initiative taken to do the job, emotional intelligence etc.

Table: 2.2

Importance that Employers Attach to Graduates' Core- Skills

Skill/Attribute	Mean	Standard Error	Median	Mode	Minimum	Maximum	Rank, Based on the Mean
Dependability	2.90	0.13	3	3	1	4	10
Honesty	4	0	4	4	4	4	1
Diligence	4	0	4	4	4	4	1
Risk assessment	2.69	0.08	3	3	2	4	12
Risk management	2.77	0.11	3	2	2	4	11
Time management	3.98	0.02	4	4	3	4	2
Decision making	3.58	0.07	4	4	2	4	4
Career planning	3.37	0.10	3	4	2	4	8
Initiative	3.46	0.07	3	3	3	4	5
Flexibility	3.42	0.07	3	3	3	4	7
Energetic	3.33	0.07	3	3	3	4	9
Passionate	3.77	0.06	4	4	3	4	3
Emotional intelligence	3.44	0.07	3	3	3	4	6

Note. From “An Economics Analysis of Employability and Unemployment of Humanities and Social Sciences Graduates in Sri Lanka”, by Dayaratna-Banda, O. G., & Dharmadasa, P. D. C. S., 2022, p.10. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1177/09715231221124714>

On a similar vein, for Nepali educational context too, Pathak (2020) explains that work-related core- skills desired by the employers go beyond just academic certificates and theoretical knowledge. Therefore, it is imperative not to focus only on academic qualification side of cultural capital, but also on the technical, emotional and other present forms of work-related cultural capital, if one wants to increase their chances of employability and also increase their self- confidence related to finding employment.

Finally, having and developing these work- related cultural capital not only help in securing an employment, but these core- skills/ soft- skills are also useful in a wide range of employment contexts. For instance, it is easier to build network and connections with adults with a similar cultural capital (knowledge and experience) and this connection can later help in securing high- paying jobs in the labor market (“What is Cultural Capital”, 2019). Talking about the influence of cultural capital in securing a good job in the labor market, Marks (2009) explains that the influence can be direct or linked to the academic qualifications and knowledge about the labor market.

Social Capital

As with cultural capital, Vryonides (2009) asserts that Bourdieu’s works on social capital and how possessing non- economic capitals like social and cultural capital can positively help with employability of the students has been studied by numerous scholars in both positivist and interpretivist fields in social sciences. Social capital for Bourdieu is, “the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance or recognition” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 248). In other words, social capital for Bourdieu refers to social networks and connections, that can help with attaining desired social status for individuals (Vryonides, 2009), through interpersonal or social connections like friends, colleagues, and others, made up of social exchanges, where favors are exchanged (Adler and Kwon, 2002, as cited in Bizzi, 2015).

Vryonides (2009) further explains that Bourdieu associated owning social capital to having good economic capital and that he was interested in studying how social capital with its relationships with other forms of capital worked to sustain social inequality. On the other

hand, Bourdieu was also interested in studying how social capital, in that, social connections and relationship with important persons outside the family, and through the family can help in attaining favorable conditions in the academic fields (Vryonides,2009).

The personal circumstances of an individual that includes social connections/ networks and a good economic capital possessed by one's family not only helps in academic pursuits, but it also helps in increasing the employability prospects of the students (Ergün & Şeşen, 2021). If one has a family that has a strong social capital and a good financial capital, this can positively influence students' willingness to grab job opportunities in the labor market (McQuaid & Lindsay, 2005, as cited in Ergün & Şeşen, 2021). Along with familial social capital increasing a student's willingness to seize the job opportunity, Vryonides (2009) states by summarizing a survey in Cypriot that students—a huge majority of 72.3%--- also expect their families with strong social capital to help them gain desired employment later on by talking to their connections, friends, and acquaintances, or on the other hand by allowing them to work in their family business.

Even though all the students expected some kind of help in gaining future employment through their parents' social capital, the students who were mostly likely to benefit were those whose parents held high- post jobs (Vryonides, 2009). The table 2.3 (Vryonides, 2009, p. 139) illustrates the ANOVA test data from a survey conducted in Greece in which the parents were asked to rate on the scale of 0 to 8, how strongly the social networks they possessed could help their children in their employment prospects later on. On the basis of Scheffe test comparisons, parents who fell in the “High professional/Managerial/ Administrative class” (Vryonides, 2009, p. 139) were more confident that their social networks could benefit their children in comparison to other groups of parents.

Table 2.3*Parental Help with Social Networks and Connections (Greece)*

	Mean	Std. deviation	F	Sig
Parental help with social networks and connections (0–8)				
High professional/managerial/administrative	6.93	0.929	9.289	0.000
Middle professional	5.44	2.359		
Lower middle	5.32	2.099		
Working/farming	4.99	2.359		
Not in paid employment	4.67	2.339		
Level of education I wish my child to reach (1–6)				
High professional/managerial/administrative	5.91	0.285	17.940	0.000
Middle professional	5.77	0.431		
Lower middle	5.64	0.565		
Working/farming	5.34	0.773		
Not in paid employment	5.49	0.692		
Level of education I realistically expect my child to reach (1–6)				
High professional/managerial/administrative	5.74	0.444	20.331	0.000
Middle professional	5.56	0.554		
Lower middle	5.30	0.716		
Working/farming	5.00	0.910		
Not in paid employment	5.03	0.995		

Note. From “Applying Bourdieu’s Concepts of Social and Cultural Capital in Educational Research in Greece and Cyprus”, by Vryonides, 2009, p. 139. In K. Robson, & C. Sanders (Ed.), *Quantifying Theory: Pierre Bourdieu* (pp. 129–140). doi:10.1007/978-1-4020-9450-7_10

Organizational theorist, Bizzi (2015) has also studied social relationships at work when studying social capital and its importance in the labor market. Organizational theorists like Bizzi understand social capital as ‘interpersonal relationships’ that makes individuals important in the organizations, because these interpersonal relationships and a good social network provides individuals with information (Bizzi, 2015), which is not just something that the individual gets through his/her connections, but this network also circulates information about him/her to other potential people and this multiplies their access to opportunities (Bizzi, 2015).

On the other hand, Young (2012) has also attempted to demonstrate the link between the social capital graduates possess and their workplace success later on, by elaborating that even though nobody is irreplaceable in the workplace, employees who have accumulated a high level of social capital (or interpersonal relations) by interacting with various important people

are the hardest to replace. Because employees like these can hold a proper conversation and network effectively and thus, can help other people by acting as a mediator in connecting two different important people (Young, 2012).

And because employees with a good social capital are difficult to replace as illustrated by the example above, this example and the also the studies above support the statement by Ergün and Şeşen (2021) that self- perceived employability of the individuals gets heightened with the help of strong social networks. A strong social network, just as the cultural capital possessed by graduates, can help them get desirable career opportunities and it can also help them advance in their careers (Ergün & Şeşen, 2021). They further add that this kind of beneficial social connections have a massive impact on the employment and also the career choice of individuals (Ergün & Şeşen, 2021).

Bizzi (2015) in a similar vein asserts that possessing a strong social capital helps workers in getting numerous career benefits like a higher pay, a promotion, or a better job altogether. Through the power of profitable interpersonal relationships, individuals can also negotiate their work conditions (Bizzi, 2015). All in all, like Jackson and Wilton (2016) also emphasize, a good social capital/ professional networking can immensely help improve career opportunities, and in turn, heighten the self- perception of employability in graduates.

2.2.2 External element: Labor Market and University Graduates

Talking about the external factors, self- perception of employability of the university graduates is also very much dependent on the situation, structure and on the features of the external labor market (Hillage & Pollard, 1998), in that, the demand for workers in the job market, competencies needed to acquire specific jobs, available job openings, professions with high demand for labor, employees' priorities (McQuaid & Lindsay, 2005, as cited in Ergün & Şeşen, 2021); and individuals' knowledge on the state of this labor market (Wittekind et al., 2010, as cited in Ergün & Şeşen, 2021).

One of the most pressing situations conspicuous in job markets all around the world is the never-ending supply of graduates who have acquired tertiary education, but a limited demand for workers in comparison to this supply, leading to high rates of unemployment among the graduate students (Jackson & Wilton, 2016). Antonio and Tuffley (2017) present a figure in

their study that compared to 84% of university graduates who used to land a full-time employment after four months of graduating in 2008, only 65% got this in 2017; and around 30% of young graduates between 15- 24 are unemployed. This rate of unemployment and underemployment is steadily increasing today. Because of this, students are studying for longer duration and getting more than one degree, in the hopes of acquiring specialized skills that can help them stand apart from their competitors and get a desirable job in the labor market (Antonio & Tuffley, 2017). Collins et al. (2019) explains this phenomenon as ‘credential inflation’, which is one of the two factors that has been studied under this section to understand the state of the labor market.

Another factor after credential inflation that has been studied under the state of external labor market that shapes students’ self- perception of employability, is the demand for social science graduates in the job market. Credential inflation is not the only phenomena that students need to battle in order to come first in the labor queue and secure desirable jobs in the labor market. The selection or the choice of degree has been presented as another equally important factor that has been known to affect graduates’ chances of employability in the labor market. Numerous research around the world have demonstrated that the labor market might be more favorable towards graduates from applied or technical subject, rather than students of Humanities and social sciences (Acharya, 2022; Collins, 2018; Dayaratna-Banda & Dharmadasa, 2022; Kalamatianou & Kougioumoutzaki, 2012; Moleke, 2010; Singh, 2006).

Furthermore, as mentioned earlier, the self- perception of employability is not only affected by the situation of the labor market, but it is also dependent on the knowledge that students possess about the state of this labor market. Jackson and Wilton (2016) assert that if students have a labor market awareness and understand what the job- market is looking for from potential graduates, they can work on themselves to build skills and qualifications needed to land a desirable job, thus increasing their self- perception of employability. In a similar vein, Hillage and Pollard (1998) have also explained in their research that when students are aware of the demands of the labor market, and when they can test the relevance of their core-employability skills in the job- market, they also become willing to undertake trainings to upgrade their skills.

Jackson and Wilton (2016) also assert that having knowledge about the state of the labor market and preparing oneself accordingly makes graduates resilient and teaches them the skills needed to survive in the competitive labor market where factors like credential inflation and limited demand is present. Also, a good preparation and cultivation of required core-marketable skills heightens the self- perception of employability in students and those with stronger employability perception lead a satisfied work- life and show greater organizational commitment ((De Cuyper, Bernhard-Oettel, Berntson, DeWitte, & Alarco, 2008, as cited in Jackson & Wilton, 2016).

Credential inflation

Collins et al. (2019) define credential inflation as “the rise in educational requirements for jobs as a rising proportion of the population attains more advanced degrees” (Preface to Legacy Edition section, para. 1). Credential inflation theory has been used by sociologists for a long time to study how overwhelming supply but limited demand of educated workforce devalues tertiary education qualifications possessed by graduates, leading them to stay in the education market for longer period in the quest of gaining higher and more sellable degrees (Araki & Kariya, 2022; Collins et al., 2019). In other words, as the scarcity of jobs intensifies in a highly technology- driven society (Collins et al., 2019), the struggle to come first in the labor queue and get desired job increases (Hinchliffe,1987). This means that people start acquiring more and more degrees which leads to credential inflation.

This phenomenon of credential inflation had begun much earlier in the US, but it has become relevant to the whole world since the past few decades (Collins, 2018). Collins (2018) explains both in his book, ‘The Credential Society’, originally published in 1979 and in his interview from 2018 that credential inflation in the US intensified in tandem with the complex technological advancements. Collins predicted in 1979 that as technological complexities increase, there will come a time--- not only in the US but all around the world-- - when the middle- class occupations will get replaced by robots. As the result of this, the jobs will become scarce and the remaining few positions will require highly skilled personnel, which will mean more competition and more students staying in the education market for longer years (Collins, 2018, 2019). And Hill (2020) adds that even after four

decades of making this prediction, Collins sees “nothing that overturns his conclusions published in 1979” (p. 69).

Owing to more students staying in the education market for a longer time, the world has seen a substantial growth of educational sector (school, colleges, universities). A data from Araki and Kariya (2022) reveals that by 2019, as much as 38% of people in OECD countries between the age of 25- 64 had already gained tertiary education. However, even though there is no denying that tertiary education certificates and a desirable job later on have a positive association, due to credential inflation, this association has considerably weakened (Araki & Kariya, 2022). Collins (2011,2018) gives an example of this by illustrating how a bachelor’s degree today is worthless because it cannot get people even a manager level job.

Similar instances can be seen in Nepali job market too. Three decades ago, in order to get an employment as a higher- secondary level teacher, a bachelor’s level degree would suffice, but now, seeing people with master’s level degree applying for this position is quite commonplace. To add to that, along with master’s degree, applicants also display that they have completed an M.Phil. course or that they have a second master’s degree in order to stand apart from their counterparts. This proves that when academic credentials get inflated, potential employees need to work rather hard to stand apart from their contemporaries and get recognized in the job market.

Be it in the developed nation or in the developing nation, aspiring employees are having a rather difficult time trying to find and secure a job that matches their level of academic qualifications (Antonio & Tuffley, 2017). 250,000 young graduates in Australia try to enter the workforce every year after completing their studies; however, the insufficient demand for workers in the job- market and credential inflation has caused large number of these students to remain unemployed or underemployed (Birell & Healy, 2013, as cited in Antonio & Tuffley, 2017). In the light of this, a decreased self- perception of employability in the majority of graduates is a common trend.

In the introductory paragraph of this section 2.2.2, it had been emphasized that it is not only the state of labor market that affects students’ self- perception of employability, but it is also dependent on their knowledge of it. Research by Tomlinson (2007, as cited in Antonio &

Tuffley, 2017) reveals just this, in that, the students know about the state of labor market in terms of credential inflation. Graduates themselves are very much aware that owing to credential inflation, value of their degrees has plummeted and that it is not going to be easy to secure graduate jobs that match their qualification level.

Only few of these young graduates maintain an idealized view of how employable they believe themselves to be, greater number believe that graduating to the labor market is going to be a difficult process, and therefore, they need to ‘optimize their credentials’ in order to be noticed in the job- market (Antonio & Tuffley, 2017). In a similar vein, Brown and Souto-Otero (2018) add that students realize that in order to secure a place for themselves in the job- market, they need to improve their educational qualifications, because the best jobs are given to the ones who have a strong academic qualification, plus, marketable core- skills of employability. And the bottom ranked graduates might very well become jobless.

Collins (2011) further adds that along with credential inflation, universities in the US have also been seeing “grade inflation, admissions inflation (students multiplying the number of schools to which they apply), recommendation inflation, and C.V. inflation (as academic job candidates add more and more details to their resumés)” (p. 242). And for some extent, this is true for Nepal too. But even though credential inflation is seen as a negative phenomenon that makes it challenging for the potential employees to obtain a job, Collins (2018, 2019) also posits that it can also act as a hidden welfare model. In that, when the modern technological society starts laying off paid workers from the middle-class job positions and rather investing on the robots, students will study for a longer time. And this necessity to study for longer years will keep the full- time students off the job market, and this will in a sense, protect them from the job insecurity. Plus, these students studying in a government funded institutions or parents funded private universities, keeps the capitalist economy running because credential inflation means more students studying for longer years, and this means jobs for teachers, payments for builders and suppliers and so on (Collins, 2018, 2019).

Demand for Social science students

Another factor after credential inflation that has been studied under the state of external labor market that shapes students’ self- perception of employability, is the demand for social

science graduates in the job market. As explained in the section above, owing to overwhelming growth of educational sector and large expansion in the supply of graduates for a limited number of demands in the job market, a huge number of fresh graduates have been facing unemployment and underemployment around the world. However, credential inflation is not the only phenomena that students need to battle in order to come first in the labor queue and secure desirable jobs in the labor market.

The selection or the choice of degree has been presented as another equally important factor that has been known to affect graduates' chances of employability in the labor market. Numerous research around the world have demonstrated that the labor market might be more favorable towards graduates from applied or technical subject, rather than students of Humanities and social sciences (Acharya, 2022; Collins, 2018; Dayaratna-Banda & Dharmadasa, 2022; Kalamatianou & Kougioumoutzaki, 2012; Moleke, 2010; Singh, 2006). Conversely, there are scholars who have pointed out that social science graduates have been and can do equally well in the job market (Allen, 1998; Pathak, 2020), and others who acknowledge that the situation of social science graduates may not be same everywhere (Dayaratna-Banda & Dharmadasa, 2022; Kalamatianou & Kougioumoutzaki, 2012; Moleke, 2010).

Singh (2006) defines social sciences and humanities as the field of study that aims to develop a systematic and a rational understanding of the human society. Disciplines like sociology, English, philosophy, history, economics, political science, anthropology, geography, psychology, law, language, arts, etc. fall under the field of social sciences and humanities (Singh, 2006). And disciplines like science, engineering, mathematics, business, information technology etc. fall under natural or technical subjects. Dayaratna-Banda and Dharmadasa (2022) have focused on the rising unemployment among social sciences graduates in Sri-Lanka and have presented a figure that shows that out of 50, 000 Sri- Lankan graduates who were unemployed in 2019, most of them were found to be from humanities and social sciences field. Only the exceptional few students in the social sciences have been known to succeed and take up the low number of jobs allocated for this field in the job market. And among all the different subjects under social sciences faculty, "2023 Best Social Science

Majors” (2022) has shared that the degrees in social- sciences like anthropology, sociology, psychology and criminal justice have a better scope in the labor market.

Dayaratna-Banda and Dharmadasa (2022) have linked rising unemployment of social science students and stagnant demand of social science graduates in the labor market to deficiencies in the course structure and curriculum in universities. The authors posit that the social science study design in Sri- Lankan universities is such that it only focuses on knowledge generation aspect, and completely disregards the development of core, market- sellable, technical skills that can help social science graduates secure jobs in the future (Dayaratna-Banda & Dharmadasa, 2022). The universities that teach social science students also lack “on- job training” or internship programs, and the English proficiency, which is a very important quality for South- Asian graduates to have, is also rather weak. To sum it up, the authors assert that “a number of factors including skills deficiency, occupational immobility, geographical immobility, technology change, a lack of sufficient jobs growth and various structural constraint” are other elements that cause social- science students to be less favored over students from applied fields in the labor market (Dayaratna-Banda and Dharmadasa, 2022, Abstract, para. 1).

In a similar vein, study of social- science graduates in the Indian labor market also shows that despite exponential growth in the colleges and universities that teaches social sciences and humanities, the quality of social science education has significantly decreased (Singh, 2006). The author explains that theory- based general education subjects do not really prepare students for challenges in the labor market. Singh (2006) explains that students in arts, law and education together make up the highest number of the total unemployed population in India. Singh (2006) further explains that only a handful of excellent students of social- sciences get employed right after graduation, while most of them stay in the education market for a longer period to make their credentials stronger and at times secure jobs through sheer perseverance.

Studies conducted in the South- African and the Greek labor markets also indicate a similar trend. Moleke (2010) acknowledges that demand for social- science graduates is not poor everywhere in the world and that there had been a rise in the demand for these graduates in the public sector of South- Africa between 1992 and 1996. However, the author further adds

that public sectors do not really create new jobs frequently, and jobs advertisements for public sector are mostly for graduates of health and education in South- Africa, because massive number of health professions leave the country and there is always a demand for teachers of science and mathematics.

The above statement of graduates from health sciences and education disciplines doing rather well in the South- African labor market has been illustrated through values listed in Table 2.4 (Moleke, 2010, p. 90). Only 5% of graduates who have studied health sciences experience unemployment, and only 8% find no jobs among graduates of education. Conversely, as much as 33% of the graduates from social sciences and applied humanities do not find employment in the South- African labor market.

Table 2.4

Unemployment in Different Fields of Study in South- Africa

Field of study	N	%
Natural & mathematical sciences	34	11
Engineering & other applied sciences	33	11
Health sciences	17	5
Business/Commerce	77	25
Education	26	8
Social science & applied humanities	102	33
Humanities	21	7
Total	310	100

Note. From “The graduate labor market”, by Moleke, 2010, p. 89. In M. Letseka, M. Cosser, M. Breier & M. Visser (Ed.), *Student retention & graduate destination: Higher education & labor market access & success.* (pp. 87-95). HSRC Press.

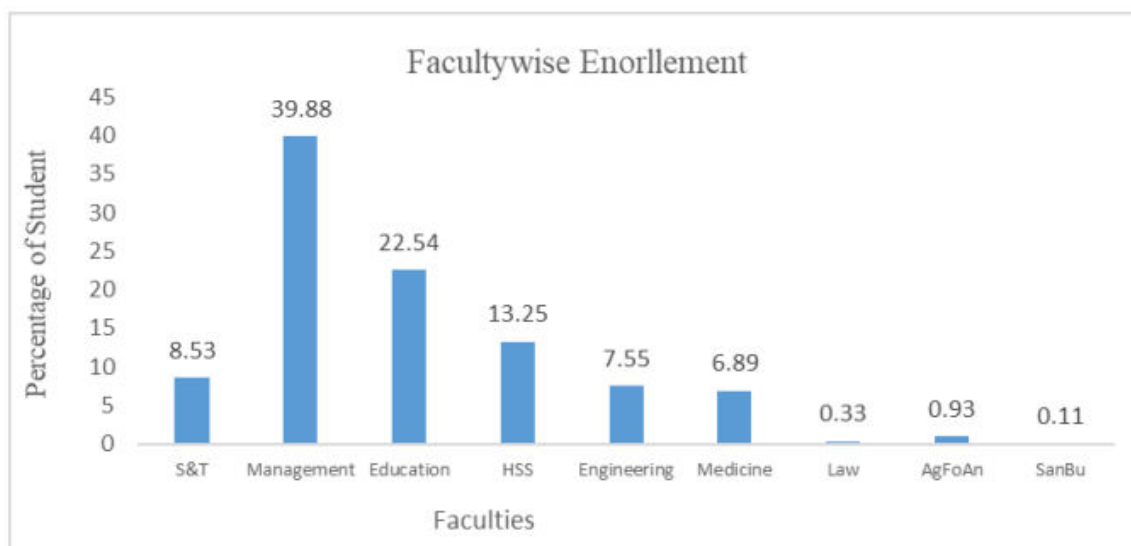
And Kalamatianou and Kougioumoutzaki (2012) in their study from Greece posit that graduates from ‘hard fields’ (scientific and applied/technical fields) which has male dominance, have performed a lot better than students from the general ‘soft- field’ like social sciences dominated mostly by women in the Greek labor market. The authors have used logistic regression models to find the relationship between degree choice, gender and employment prospects in the future. They have found out that the unemployment rates and incident of overeducation is particularly high among social science graduates and more females are unemployed than men within the same field of study (Kalamatianou &

Kougioumoutzaki, 2012). Also, authors mention that almost all social science graduates hold jobs that does not match their level of qualifications.

Similar is the case of Nepal and its social- science graduates too. Acharya (2022) illustrates in Figure 2.1 that in Nepal too, the proportion of students who choose to study the general or soft- subject like humanities and education at 38.79% is higher than that of students who choose to study science and technology. But then, the nature of the course and the employability prospect is quite low for social science subjects in Nepal according to Acharya (2022, p. 44). Similar conclusions have been drawn by Bhatta (2012) in his article, where he asserts that the ‘best quality’ students get enrolled in technical subjects in Nepal. And even though majority of students choose to study humanities, education and social sciences, the pass rates for this faculty are much lower, with education reporting the lowest pass rate of only around 10%.

Figure 2.1

Faculty wise enrollment of students in Nepal



Note. From “An analysis of student assessment practices in higher education of Nepal”, by Acharya, 2022, p. 44. *Molung Educational Frontier. Vol. 12.* 38-55.

The reasons for such a dire state of social- science graduates in the labor market around the world and in Nepal too, has been mainly attributed to the lack of core- skills enhancing education that could help the graduates in the labor market. It has also been linked to the

government's inability to increase the demand for highly skilled workers. All of this leads the students of social sciences to face a "job and skill mismatch" in the job market, in that, highly qualified/ overeducated graduates become underemployed (Dayaratna-Banda & Dharmadasa, 2022; Kalamatianou & Kougioumoutzaki, 2012).

Even though there is a wealth of literature like above that indicates that social- science graduates do not do very well in the job- market, there are scholars who hold a contradictory view too. Allen (1998) from the detailed analysis of census data of Canada concluded that university graduates from soft- fields are highly employable and find desirable jobs in the labor market. It has also been found that an overwhelming majority of social science graduates (72.5%) from the University of Botswana have jobs that match their qualification level (Ama, 2008, as cited in Kalamatianou & Kougioumoutzaki, 2012). Kalamatianou and Kougioumoutzaki (2012) have further stated that "Purcell and Elias (2006) found that the social science PhDs in UK, are satisfied with the type of job they are doing and the job's relevance to their training" (p.58). And finally, Pathak (2020) cautions that failing to recognize the importance of soft- fields like sociology, psychology, history, philosophy, ethics will produce a 'robotic' workforce, who severely lack critical thinking, imagination, and political transformation capabilities.

2.2.3 External element: Economic- Class and University Brand Strength

This section is first and foremost, interested in understanding how the status, power and economic class of student's family affects the choice and chance of students getting to study in a certain university. In other words, more than trying to explain the patterns of exploitation and domination like Marxists, the researcher is more interested in studying how status, power, skills and credentials of the parents, and also students', help shape their life- chances (An individual's life chances refer to their chances of "doing well" for themselves throughout life. This can include their life expectancy, educational attainment, finances, career, housing, health, etc. physical and mental health and more.) And secondly, this section has also presented—with the help of previous studies-- how the brand strength of the university that the students have chosen, the quality of education in this university, and the core- skills enhancement that they receive in the university, all ends up shaping their self- perception of employability.

Even though the researcher is mostly interested in accessing life chances like neo-Weberians, this section has also referenced works by neo-Marxists because for Neo-Marxists, just like the Neo-Weberians, there exists multiple intermediate classes between Bourgeoisie and proletariat (P. Bhatta, personal communication, 2019). Furthermore, Neo-Marxists are not very different than their Neo-Weberian cousins like John Goldthorpe, in the sense that neo-Marxists also disagree that there is a single middle class. Goldthorpe has empirically justified the existence of varied class in the modern society through his class schema which allocates individuals and families into social classes based on their occupations (Breen, 2005). Also, as Wright (2005) explains, both Weberian and Marxist class analyses are same in the sense that both of them study how the “rights and powers that an individual holds over the productive assets define the material basis of class relations” (p. 25). But where they differ is, Weberian class analysis is interested in figuring out how the rights and power an individual helps shape his/ her life-chances, while for Marxist class analysis, power and rights help structure patterns of exploitation and domination (Wright, 2005).

On how the economic-class, status, power and credentials of the students’ families help shape their life-chances like getting into a certain kind of university, Collins (2018) explains in his interview that the “correlation between parents' social/ economic class and children's education has not changed from the 1930s through the present” (para. 6), in that, children from well-off families always get into prestigious colleges/ universities. He elaborates this by narrating his experience as a Harvard student. Collins (2018) retells, that in Harvard he found students comparing between themselves who was richer and more elite than the other. He shares that what life as a student in Harvard made him realize is that education system is stratified because some universities were considered more prestigious than the other, and in these types of universities, except for the academically talented scholarship students like Collins, everybody else was from an elite family. He continues, going to Harvard meant that later on, one could go to universities like Stanford and Berkeley, and this Collins (2018) says, automatically meant that one would get hired in the top research facilities, and would be able to get the best jobs in the job-market.

Collins (2018) further adds that going to graduate schools like Berkeley and Stanford and later on being hired into the most prestigious research facility also made it possible for these individuals to work under, or rather, internship under the most talented scholars and famous professors, and this ultimately meant that the students ended up learning core- marketable skills through their universities. This according to Collins (2018), gives a major advantage to graduates and also helps strengthen their self- perception of employability. Collins (2018) has summarized this total process as, “The strongest predictor of a child’s future job is the education and the status/ power of his or her parents” (para. 14). On the similar vein, study by neo- Marxists Bowles and Gintis (1976, as cited in Anyon, 2011) have also explained that the economic class of the parents plays a major role in determining the kind of schooling students receive, and this quality of education that they receive determines what kind of jobs they get in the job- market later on.

Furthermore, in trying to study effect of the quality of schools/ universities in one’s job prospects later on, Anyon (2011) in her book ‘Marx and Education’ has attempted to test out a theory by Bowles and Gintis that the teaching- learning methods for different tiers of schools—working- class school, middle- class school, higher middle- class school, and affluent school --- show greatly contrasting results. Anyon (2011) found out that in working class schools, the teachers mostly focused on rote learning, and never encouraged the students to be creative and curious. They were mostly trained to follow directions. In middle-class schools, neatness in answers was valued over creativity; however, teachers often encouraged some decision- making on part of the students. Finally, in the higher middle class and the affluent professional schools, Anyon (2011) found out that creativity and independence were valued. Individuality of the students was respected in these schools and they were also never shouted at. Students were repeatedly asked to express and apply ideas and concepts of their own.

Similar to this empirical test carried out by Anyon (2011) on the theory by Bowles and Gintis, Collins (2018) has also confirmed this pattern to be true for university level. Collins (2018) explains that passing out from an elite graduate school and working under talented professors means that these professors prefer students who are critical. Professors from elite colleges encourage students to not agree with everything that they are being taught, rather

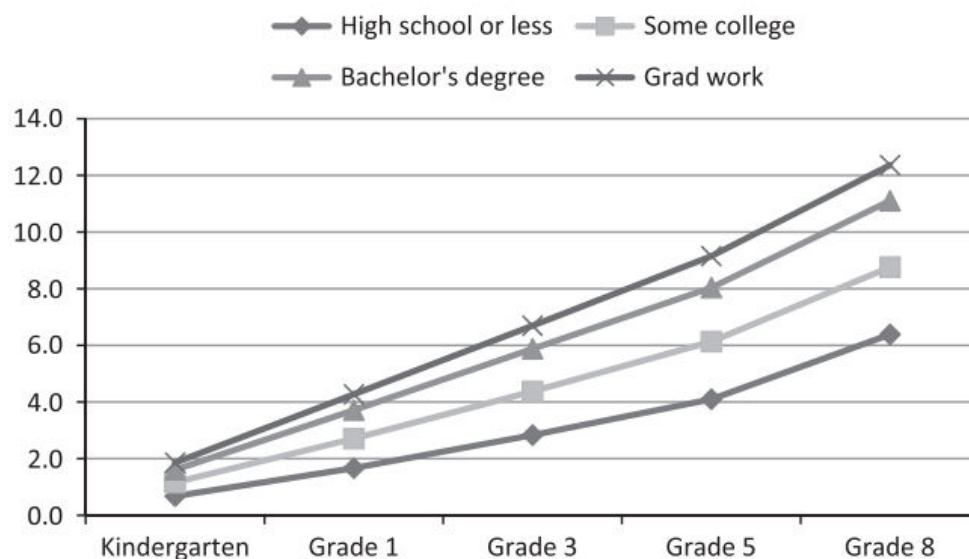
challenge the theories and attempt to come up with something new and also surpass their professors. (Collins, 2018).

Another study by Kinsler and Pavan (2011) has also empirically tested the effect of family income on the choice of university by students, and on their futures wages in the job- market. By using multinomial logistic regression models, the authors have proven an overall positive and significant effect of family's economic condition on college quality that students choose to study in. To have children receive quality education in today's time, parents' unfailingly need to be able to afford the ridiculously high educational costs, and because of this, Kinsler and Pavan (2011) worry that the current generation of graduates might not be getting the best quality education that can help them navigate the challenges in the labor market later on. This automatically means that students will have decreased self- perception of how employable they are.

Potter and Roksa (2013) on the other hand, have conducted a slightly different study, where they examine the importance of a family's socio- economic status in helping shape student's academic and core-skills even prior to joining schools. This study stresses that children from advantaged families with educated parents are brought- up differently in the sense that they get exposed to educationally- beneficial experiences in comparison to children from working- class families. Fig. 2.2 (Potter & Roksa, 2013, p. 1021) shows how children with more educated mothers are exposed to more creative and leisure time activities, resulting in their cognitive and social skills development. The study states that this cognitive and social skills development not only helps the kids do better in schools, but these activities train them to stand out and become competitive from a quite young age.

Figure 2.2

Mother's Educational Attainment and Exposure of Children towards Educationally Beneficial Activities



Note. From “Accumulating advantages over time: Family experiences and social class inequality in academic achievement”, by Potter, D., & Roksa, J., 2013, p. 1021. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssresearch.2013.02.005>

Now turning to the second and the most important priority of this section, the paragraphs that follow have discussed what previous studies have said about the relationship between university brand strength and the self-perceived employability of graduates. A study by Antonio and Tuffley (2017) has explained that the reputation of the university and strength of that university's degree certificate boosts self-confidence of students of being employable. In other words, reputation of the university is known to hold a lot of value for students seeking employment. Also, there are numerous other studies that have shown that employers give quite a lot of importance to the institutional rankings of the universities, and that the graduates from reputed universities have greater chances of being employed in comparison to their counterparts from lesser ranked universities (Antonio & Tuffley, 2017; Ergun & Sesen, 2021). The reason for this as explained in the preceding paragraphs is that reputed

universities have competitive curriculum and at the same time these universities also greatly focus on core marketable skills enhancement of the students (Ergun & Sesen, 2021).

But both, competitive curriculum and marketable skills enhancing education is greatly lacking in Nepali universities. When talking about the situation of universities in Nepal, their brand value, and the curriculum that they follow, almost all the studies complain that, in general, the quality of higher education in Nepal is deteriorating (Acharya, 2022; Bhatta, 2012; Gaulee, 2014; Pokharel, 2019). Be it private universities like the Kathmandu University or the oldest public institution in Nepal, the Tribhuvan University (TU), the trend has been such that graduates from Nepali universities cannot compete in the international labor market. In other words, Nepali universities have failed to produce manpower that can be absorbed by the labor market (Acharya, 2022; Gaulee, 2014).

Since this study has focused on the self- perception of employability of Tribhuvan University social science students and since it is the oldest public university of Nepal (established in 1959) where almost 80% of the students in Nepal study, the researcher here has emphasized on the strengths of TU, its brand strength, and the challenges of this university in terms of not being able to produce market sellable graduates. Tribhuvan University is “one of the largest universities in the world in terms of number of students and national coverage. At present, there are 11 universities and six health institutions that provide higher education in Nepal and TU alone contributes to 80 percent share in this. TU has gained rich experiences of running programs and handling a large number of students” (Pokharel, 2019, para. 1).

However, as is the case with many universities around the world, TU also has not been able to match with the fast pace of globalization and produce skilled manpower who can perform well in the labor market (UNESCO, 2018, as cited in Acharya, 2022). TU often gets blamed for being unable to produce workforce that is confident in finding jobs after graduation (Pokharel, 2019). According to different studies, a multitude of problems are responsible for TU’s inability to produce quality work- force. First and foremost, not just TU but every other university in Nepal focuses mostly on imparting theoretical knowledge and has given disproportionate importance to written examinations and grades obtained by the students (Acharya, 2022; Bhatta, 2012; Gaulee, 2014). Secondly, due to the rampant political

interference in the everyday affairs of TU, it has also failed to maintain its academic calendar and complete the course in time. This has caused the students to study for six years at times to complete a three-year degree! (Acharya, 2022; Bhatta, 2012). Moreover, TU also has not developed core- skills enhancing curriculum that can help produce workforce confident in their employability (Gaulee, 2014).

In order to make TU a vibrant institution that can match strides with this fast- paced global world, all the faculty, the staff and the students unanimously believe that TU needs to undergo a structural level transformation with the help of the government (Pathak, 2020). It needs to make necessary changes in the curricula, the examination and student assessment styles, and it needs to integrate research-based innovative education system that can help enhance wide range of market sellable skills in the students (Acharya, 2022).

Not just TU but every educational institution in Nepal needs to realize that the skills expected by employers in the job market goes beyond just academic dexterity, to include core- skills like teamwork, time- management skills, inter and interpersonal skills, emotional intelligence, adaptability, perseverance, enthusiasm etc. Therefore, institutions in Nepal must value creativity and innovation over three- hour year end exams (Pathak, 2020). Furthermore, as Gaulee (2014) asserts, TU should also prepare databases of alumni so that it can be used by the new graduates to develop beneficial job network. Finally, Nepali universities need to realize that learning is incomplete if students do not acquire the knowledge, skills, and competencies they need to excel in the job market. (Acharya, 2022).

2.3 Good English: An important factor in South-Asia

Along with the above-mentioned factors—CSC, SELM, and UBS--- that have been known to affect the self- perceived employability of university students/ graduates around the world, one other factor that can help heighten self- confidence of (specifically) South- Asian students in being able to get a desirable job in the labor market is their proficiency in English language. English language is frequently acknowledged as a "global language" or lingua franca, and it has taken center stage in teaching - learning process in South Asian nations. In south Asian countries, till today, being able to speak in English fluently is linked to being hired in desirable jobs in the labor market and it is also linked to higher- economic status.

Meganathan (2011) in his study has explained that in India, a high-quality education is still correlated with English language proficiency, thus parents enroll their children in private schools with the hope that they would become fluent in the language (Meganathan, 2011). Even though it has been a long while since India chose regional languages to be the medium of teaching- learning process in higher educational institutions, having a working knowledge of English is still considered as being a valuable asset in the university studies (Meganathan, 2011). However, Meganathan (2011) further goes on to say that the gap between "English language-rich" and "English language-poor" pupils has become even wider due to the disparity in the quality of English language teaching across different levels of schools and institutions.

In a similar study conducted in Pakistan, Shamim (2011) states that English language is still viewed as a "passport to success" and is also connected to "national economic progress " in Pakistan, as with other developing countries in south- Asia (abstract, para 1). Both wealthy and poor Pakistanis attempt to teach their children English, because they believe it will improve their life- chances- in matters of good job opportunities (Shamim, 2011). To add to this, the aid from development donor organizations is also used to increase the English proficiency of people and communities in the recipient country (Shamin, 2011) like Pakistan believing it to increase their labor market competency.

The Sri- Lankan study by Dayaratna-Banda and Dharmadasa (2022) introduced in the earlier sections, has also included English language proficiency as one of the most important soft- skills or core- skills valued by employers in the job- market. Table 2.5 (Dayaratna-Banda & Dharmadasa, 2022, p. 9), shows the results of the employers' feedback survey that tried to examine which core- skills are mostly sought in potential workers. The table shows that along with research skills, presentation skills, oral communication skills, computing skills etc., they also give a lot of priority to English language proficiency.

Table 2.5

Importance that Employers' Attach to Graduates' English Language Proficiency in Sri- Lanka

Skill/Attribute	Mean	Standard			Minimum	Maximum	Rank, Based on the Mean
		Error	Median	Mode			
English language proficiency	3.62	0.09	4	4	2	4	2
IT proficiency	3.52	0.08	4	4	2	4	4
Oral communication	3.77	0.06	4	4	3	4	1
Written communication	3.21	0.06	3	3	3	4	7
Presentation skills	3.23	0.10	3	3	2	4	6
Research skills	2.25	0.11	2	2	1	4	14

Note. Adapted from “An Economics Analysis of Employability and Unemployment of Humanities and Social Sciences Graduates in Sri Lanka”, by Dayaratna-Banda, O. G., & Dharmadasa, P. D. C. S., 2022, p.9. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1177/09715231221124714>

For some time now, as posited by Erling (2014), various researchers have also attempted to examine the relationship between English language skills and economic development statistically. These studies have revealed links between English language competency and the economic development of emerging nations (Erling, 2014). The author has also cited the famous work of François Grin, the study on English and economic value, which showed that in Swiss labor market, salary of the workers increased with the increased competence in English (Erling, 2014).

Finally, when the results of studies conducted with the workers in multinational companies, large industries, and universities was studied, it demonstrated a shared perception among employees and employers that English language proficiency provides a competitive edge in a challenging job situation (Erling, 2014), and thus, helps the workers stand apart from their competition. To add to this, the South Asian governments are also known to regard English language skills as an essential part of achieving growth which gives domestic companies a competitive advantage in the global economy (Erling, 2014).

2.4 Research Gap

As shown in the sections above, under factors that shape the self- perception of employability, possession of cultural and social capital of students and also their families; the state of the external labor market (studied under credential inflation and the demand for social science graduates in the market) and students' knowledge of it; and the effect of economic- class on the choice and chance of students getting to study in a certain university, plus, the role of choice of university and its brand strength/ reputation in shaping SPE has been studied. As can be seen, most of the studies on self- perceived employability that have been cited have been conducted by international scholars.

In the context of Nepal, the concept of self- perceived employability remains a new and a fairly un- researched concept. Even though studies of Pathak, Gaulee, Pokharel, and Acharya have covered the importance of core marketable skills in the job market, and even though there are national authors who have examined the situation of tertiary education in Nepal, the researcher to the best of her knowledge did not find studies that have directly talked about self- perception of employability of Nepali university students. So, this research has attempted to look into the self-perception of employability of Nepali university (TU) social science students and it has also attempted to add a country- specific insight to the global discussion of self- perceived employability.

Furthermore, internationally, as Álvarez-González et al. (2017) note, the literature concerning employability has often drawn from employers' perspective of what an ideal employee should be. However, as Rätty et al. (2019) posit, only a marginal number of studies have examined employability from an individual's perspective. Therefore, instead of solely focusing on the employer's views of an ideal employee, this study has attempted to study the self- perception of employability of the university students. Understanding the SPE of TU social science students can also help in illustrating the confidence level of Nepali social science university students in transitioning to their professional lives after graduation.

2.5 Conceptual Framework

Independent Variables

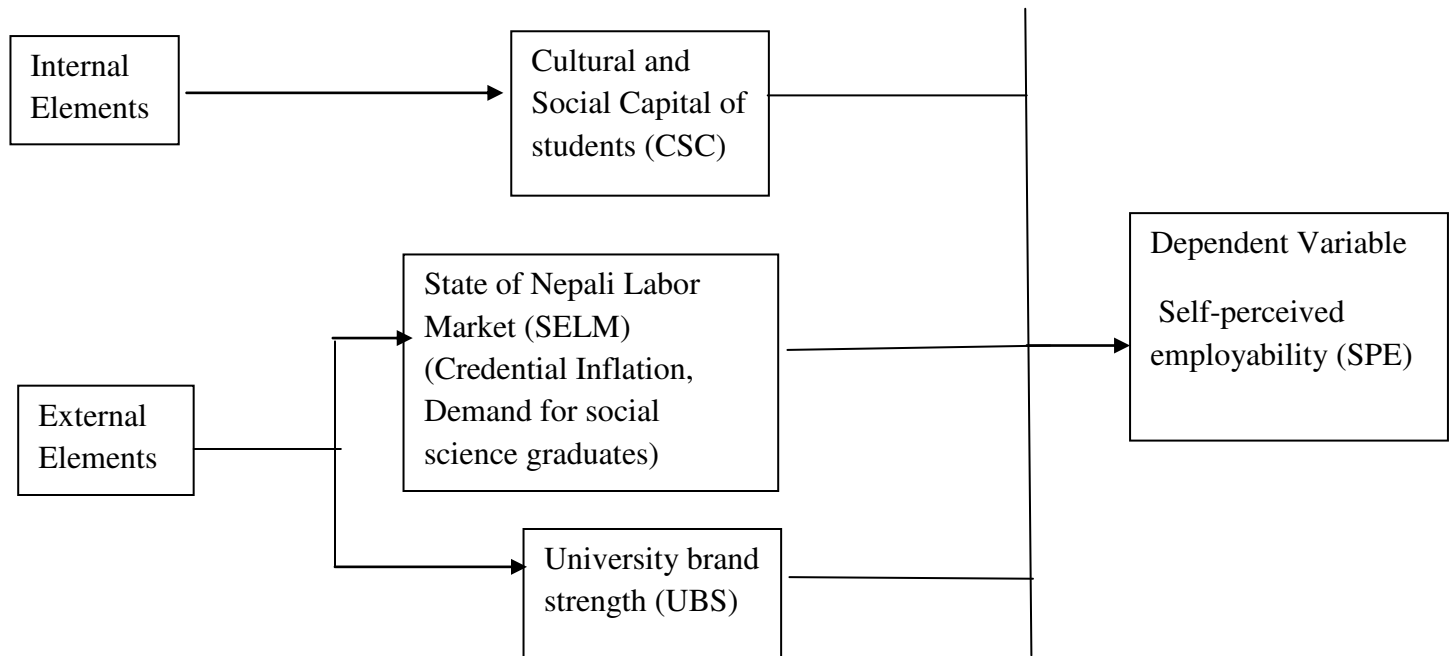


Fig 1: Factors affecting self- perception of employability (adapted from existing studies)

2.6 Hypotheses

In an attempt to evaluate the relationship between dependent and independent variables, this investigation has made use of correlation and regression models and has worked with six hypotheses listed below:

H1: Cultural- social capital of the students shows a significant positive correlation to their self- perceived employability.

H2: State of Nepali labor market shows a significant positive correlation to students' self- perceived employability.

H3: University brand strength shows a significant positive correlation to students' self- perceived employability.

H4: Cultural- social capital of the students affects their self- perceived employability to a significant extent.

H5: State of Nepali labor market affects students' self- perceived employability to a significant extent.

H6: University brand strength affects students' self- perceived employability to a significant extent.

2.7 Theoretical Framework

Pierre Bourdieu's Forms of Capital

Bourdieu, a French sociologist whose one of the primary concerns was to tackle the dichotomy between micro/macro or the agency/structure, has enriched sociology with many key theoretical concepts and one of them is his explanation of different forms of capital. Bourdieu has introduced "non-economic" forms of capital, such as social, cultural, and symbolic capital, to the classic understanding of capital, i.e., economic power, in his work "The Forms of Capital" (Bourdieu, 1986). His theory on forms of capital— mostly cultural and social capital-- has been used as a theoretical base in both qualitative and quantitative research in the field of social sciences (mostly education and sociology) (Vryonides, 2009).

Also, for a long time now, scholars all around the world have worked on quantifying major concepts of Bourdieu like his ideas of habitus and field and also the forms of capital. In 2009, a book by the title of 'Quantifying theory: Pierre Bourdieu' was also published where across 15 chapters, a group of experienced scholars from all around the world have worked on quantifying Bourdieu's theories. This study also has focused on measuring the cultural and social forms of capital quantitatively. Marks (2009) in his study explains that many empirical studies have examined and as the result have found substantial effects of cultural capital on the education and on the job- market outcomes of students/ graduates. Owing to previous studies like these, this research has examined the effect of cultural and social capital possessed by TU social science students on their self- perception of employability.

Bourdieu's idea of "cultural capital," according to Power (1999), refers to a person's social assets, such as their educational qualification, their intellect, speech pattern, talents, and

temperament, which encourage or assist with social mobility in a society with a rigid class structure. But initially Bourdieu is known to have defined cultural capital to mean ‘familiarity with the legitimate culture within a society’, in that, familiarity with ‘high culture’. High- culture or a highbrow- culture (Lareau & Weininger, 2003) and highbrow status practices can be understood as elite or aristocratic families passing on their knowledge on dance, music, theatre, literature etc. to their younger generation (Lareau & Weininger, 2003; “What is Cultural Capital”, 2019). Even though this is the origin definition of cultural capital, and has been used as the ‘dominant interpretation’ of cultural capital in the past decades, like Lareau and Weininger (2003) posit in their study, limiting the definition of cultural capital to mean familiarity with the highbrow culture is rather problematic and this kind of operationalization of the term is greatly inadequate (Sullivan, 2001, as cited in Vryonides, 2009).

According to Bourdieu (1986), cultural capital exists in three states: the embodied state, the objectified state and the institutionalized state. Agin (2018) explains that an embodied state is one in which knowledge is the product of "long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body" and is passed down through the generations. Examples of embodied cultural capital include one's family's methods of communication and the speech patterns one inherits from them (Agin, 2018). Agin (2018) further goes on to say that as embodied cultural capital is learned from a young age, it slowly turns into the 'basic habitus of a person', and children who grow up learning the dominant embodied cultural capital perform significantly well in the sphere of education later on. On the other hand, objectified cultural capital has been defined by Agin (2018) as the state that consists of the ownership of various forms of property, such as ownership of artwork, books, and scientific works, and finally, the institutionalized state is the state which consists of educational qualifications that is achieved by studying in educational institutions (Agin, 2018).

Social capital for Bourdieu is, “the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance or recognition” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 248). In other words, social capital for Bourdieu refers to social networks and connections, that can help with attaining desired social status for individuals (Vryonides, 2009), through interpersonal or social connections

like friends, colleagues, and others, made up of social exchanges, where favors are exchanged (Adler and Kwon, 2002, as cited in Bizzi, 2015). For instance, knowing or being affiliated to a prominent NGO (Ağın, 2018), an educational institution, or a corporation can help people build crucial social networks and links, it can foster a feeling of belongingness, and enhance other important factors that can assist in upward mobility in a class stratified society (Power, 1999).

As with cultural capital, Vryonides (2009) asserts that Bourdieu's works on social capital and how possessing non-economic capitals like social and cultural capital can positively help with employability of the students has been studied by numerous scholars in both positivist and interpretivist fields in social sciences. Vryonides (2009) further explains that Bourdieu associated owning social capital to having good economic capital and that he was interested in studying how social capital with its relationships with other forms of capital worked to sustain social inequality. On the other hand, Bourdieu was also interested in studying how social capital, in that, social connections and relationship with important persons outside the family, and through the family can help in attaining favorable conditions in the academic fields (Vryonides, 2009).

Finally, Bourdieu (1986) highlights still another type of capital, symbolic capital, which is made up of an 'actor's honor, reputation, and respect, and which influences the actor's social position and access to particular resources.' Bourdieu (1986) also points out that one type of capital can be converted into another, in that, if a person possesses economic capital (money, power), he or she can easily obtain social, cultural, and symbolic capital. Similarly, the symbolic and/or cultural capital of being a world-renowned painter can also be converted into economic power (Ağın, 2018).

Neo- Weberian ideas on Credential Inflation

Neo-Weberian approach refers to modifications to Weber's theories in the sense that neo-Weberian like Goldthorpe has empirically justified the existence of varied class in the modern society through his class schema which allocates individuals and families into social classes based on their occupations (Breen, 2005). While Weber only talked about the existence of multiple economic classes in the modern society, neo-Weberian have

operationalized this concept in terms of types of occupations and have studied life- chances of individuals based on this. Life- chances can be defined as an individual's chances of "doing well" for themselves throughout life. This can include their life expectancy, educational attainment, finances, career, housing, health, etc. physical and mental health and more.

When talking about neo- Weberian perspective on education or "credential inflation" specifically, Randall Collins is probably the best-known sociologist of education working in a neo-Weberian framework. Collins has studied how the economic- class, status, power and credentials of the students' families help shape their life- chances like getting into a certain kind of university. And further, how the overwhelming growth of educational sector and large expansion in the supply of graduates for a limited number of demands in the job market, causes credential inflation and consequently, forces a huge number of fresh graduates to become unemployed or underemployed around the world.

Credential inflation theory has been used by sociologists for a long time to study how overwhelming supply but limited demand of educated workforce devalues tertiary education qualifications possessed by graduates, leading them to stay in the education market for longer period in the quest of gaining higher and more sellable degrees (Araki & Kariya, 2022; Collins et al., 2019). In 1979, Collins published a book, 'The Credential Society', in which he extensively focused on the study of credentialism. Collins states that the phenomenon of credential inflation had begun much earlier in the US, but it has become relevant to the whole world since the past few decades (Collins, 2018). Collins (2018) explains both in his book, *The Credential Society*, and in his interview from 2018 that credential inflation in the US intensified in tandem with the complex technological advancements.

Collins predicted in 1979 that as technological complexities increased, there would come a time--- not only in the US but all around the world--- when the middle- class occupations would get replaced by robots. As the result of this, the jobs will become scarce and the remaining few positions will require highly skilled personnel, which will mean more competition and more students staying in the education market for longer years (Collins, 2018, 2019). And even after four decades of publishing *The Credential Society*, Collins asserts that he still does not see anything that contradicts his findings.

Collins (1979) also highlighted the US educational system as an example in his book to discuss how education was thriving in the US in the late 1800s and at the same time, there was a major influx of immigrants from eastern and southern Europe in the US. Ethnic immigrants and other groups gradually learned the value of education and how it could be used to compete against White Anglo-Saxon Protestants and achieve their level of status and economic success (Collins, 1979). Therefore, along with the technological advancements, this also caused credential inflation according to Collins.

Collins (1979) further explains that people were required to stay in the educational markets for a longer period of time to gain an advanced enough degree that could make them sellable in the market. And although Collins applied his theory only to the United States in his book in 1979, it can now be applied to the developing nations too. According to Dore (1976), in less-developed countries, the 'late development' causes more and more students to rapidly enroll in educational institutions, setting in motion the credential inflation at a swifter pace. Therefore, when studying the state of the Nepali labor market, this study has also studied the presence of credential inflation in the Nepali labor market.

Finally, an interesting point raised by Collins (1979) is that even though credential inflation has been seen as a negative phenomenon, it can also act as a hidden welfare- model and a Keynesian model, because when students stay in the labor market for a longer period of time, they will be saved from the problems of unemployment and along with students, the teachers, the builders and suppliers will also get to keep their jobs when more and more students continue to study owing to credential inflation.

Inequalities in education from neo- Weberian and neo-Marxist Perspective

Neo- Marxism is a variant of Marxism and there are three distinct versions; one type is interested in studying about how not just the base structure, but the superstructure can also affect the base structure, second type is interested in studying the World system and the breakdown of the global capitalist economy into core, semi- periphery and semi- periphery states, and the third version, is interested in studying about the class in contemporary capitalism (P. Bhatta, personal communication, 2019). And this third variant of Neo-Marxists differ from their classical counterpart-- the Marxists-- in the sense that unlike

Marxists, Neo-Marxists like Erin Olin Wright posit, and rightly so, that in modern concrete settings, we cannot study the society based on Marx's bourgeoisie and proletariat polarity. They conclude that there are intermediate or contradictory classes between the Bourgeois-Proletariat polarity, who do not adhere to the orthodox either-or idea of just 'owners of means of production' or 'workers'. These intermediate classes have strong credentials and are market sellable so they may not be owners but at the same time they are not dispensable workers either (P. Bhatta, personal communication, 2019).

This study is interested in understanding how the status, power and economic-class of student or their family affects this choice and chance of getting to study in a certain university. In other words, more than trying to explain the patterns of exploitation and domination like Marxists, the researcher is more interested in studying how status, power, skills and credentials help shape life-chances of students. And further, how the brand strength of the university that they have chosen, shapes their self-perception of employability. However, the researcher has also referenced works by neo-Marxists because for Neo-Marxists, just like the Neo-Weberians, there exists multiple intermediate classes between Bourgeois and proletariat (P. Bhatta, personal communication, 2019).

Furthermore, Neo-Marxists are not very different than their Neo-Weberian cousins like John Goldthorpe, in the sense that neo-Marxists also disagree that there is a single middle class. Goldthorpe has empirically justified the existence of varied class in the modern society through his class schema which allocates individuals and families into social classes based on their occupations (Breen, 2005). Also, as Wright (2005) has quoted British sociologist Frank Parkin, "Inside every neo-Marxist is a Weberian struggling to get out" (p.27).

Etzioni-Halevy (1987) has presented three points focused by Neo-Marxists in sociology of education: 1) educational disparities based on economic inequality; 2) how the ruling class uses education to reproduce class exploitation; and 3) how this goal is attained through a process called "hegemony" in which the ruling class persuades the exploited class to accept this reproduction as legitimate. Out of all these three points, this study has focused on the first point and has tried to describe the inequalities in education based on economic-class differences. For this, the study has focused on the work—*Schooling in Capitalist America*--by Neo-Marxists Bowles & Gintis (1976) who have analyzed the role of education in

perpetuating class inequalities and how different tiers of schools have a different teaching and learning methods.

Anyon (2011) in her book reviewed the work by Bowles and Gintis and stated that even though this theory of inequality in school and the difference in the teaching- learning process formulated by Bowles and Gintis (1976) is compelling, since there was no empirical evidence to support their theory, there was no way to tell how it would translate in the society. Therefore, Anyon (2011) decided to test their theory in school settings and to see if what they theorized would occur in real classrooms. For this, Anyon (2011) not only focused on the schools for affluent kids and the schools for working class, but, like true neo- Marxist who understands that the world today has a lot of intermediate classes, performed her research in five elementary schools namely, two working-class schools (kids whose parents held unskilled or semi- skilled jobs), a middle-class school (kids whose parents were a mixture of blue collar and white-collar workers and held occupations like public-school teachers, social workers, local doctors and town merchants), and two relatively affluent schools (kids whose parents were affluents professionals like highly paid cardiologists and surgeons, television executives or more advanced multi-national executives) (Anyon, 2011).

Anyon (2011) through her research found out some interesting differences in the teaching-learning process of these five elementary schools. In the two working-class schools, the author explains that the teachers greatly emphasized rote learning and direction following. The students here were never encouraged to be creative or curious (Anyon, 2011). On the other hand, in the middle-class school, children were still required to follow the rules, but teachers frequently pushed them to make some decisions on their own (Anyon, 2011). Anyon (2011) adds that in middle-class schools, originality and creativity were less valued over neatness in the answers. Finally, in the affluent professional schools, the author describes, pupils' originality was acknowledged creativity was praised and the individuality of the students was respected (Anyon, 2011).

Anyon (2011) in her book has also explained that the authors- Bowles and Gintis aimed to show how the standard of education somebody can afford for their offspring, considerably influences the development of a differentiated labor force in the future. The author has elaborated on this point and has mentioned how social class of one's families and community

typically determine the type of education one receives, and the abilities and character traits developed there prepare a child for an economic position in the workforce that is structured in the similar manner (Anyon, 2011).

2.8 Adaptations from theories, Rothwell's Employability Matrix, and previous literature

In order to study the effect of both internal and external factors on students' self-perception of employability, the researcher has incorporated ideas from theoretical framework listed above, adapted ideas from Rothwell's Employability Matrix, and also used relevant information from the literature review section.

In that, the questionnaire for this study has been formulated with the help of theoretical framework, past literature, and also by adapting questions or items from Rothwell's Employability Matrix. Nine out of fifteen items of the independent variables, CSC, SELM and UBS, are modified questions based on Rothwell's Matrix model. Remaining six questions/ items have been made on the basis of theoretical framework and previous literature on the study area. On the other hand, five items of dependent variable, SPE has been formulated on the basis of items of independent variables. Along with this, modified questions have been made relevant to the Nepali context and the objectives of the research.

Before giving a detailed explanation of what 15 items in the questionnaire are related to, Rothwell's Employability Matrix has been presented below.

Figure 2.3

Students' Self- Perceived Employability Matrix

	My University			
Self belief	1. My engagement with my studies and academic performance	2. My perception of the strength of the university's brand	3. The reputation my university has within my field of study	My Field of study
	8. My confidence in my skills and abilities	My ambition	4. The status and credibility of my field of study	
	7. My awareness of opportunities in the external labour market	6. My perception of the state of the external labour market	5. The external labour market's demand for people in my subject field	
	The state of the external labour market			

Note. From “Self-perceived employability: Construction and initial validation of a scale for university students”, by Rothwell et al., 2008, p. 3. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 73(1), 1–12. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2007.12.001>

To study the internal factors that affect self- perceived employability of university students, this study focused on theories of social and cultural capital associated with the works of French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu and all other relevant scholars mentioned in literature review section of the internal elements. Two of the five items are also modified Rothwell Matrix questions. The breakdown has been presented below:

CSC1: I am highly knowledgeable in my subject area i.e.; I have sound understanding of the subject matter, reasoning skills, theory- application capabilities etc. (Derived from: Pierre Bourdieu’s Forms of Capital that explains what make for cultural capital, and other relevant studies mentioned above.)

CSC2: I achieve high grades in relation to my studies. (Rothwell’s Matrix. ‘1a’)

CSC3: I possess most of the soft skills (teamwork, adaptability, problem- solving, emotional intelligence, creativity, perseverance) that are considered valuable in an employee. (Modified version of ‘7b’ in Rothwell’s Matrix).

CSC4: I know a lot of seniors and accomplished people who could help me get jobs after graduation. (Derived from: Pierre Bourdieu’s Forms of Capital that explains what make for social capital, and other relevant studies mentioned above in social capital section).

CSC5: I possess a good job contact network (rapport with seniors, connection with professors, relatives working in my desired career field) that will aid my career development. (Derived from: Pierre Bourdieu’s Forms of Capital that explains what make for social capital, and other relevant studies mentioned above in social capital section).

On the other hand, to study the effects of first external factor, i.e., to access the state of Nepali Labor Market, neo- Weberian ideas of Randall Collins on credential inflation was utilized and simultaneously, demand for social science graduates in Nepali job market was explored through modified questions based on Rothwell’s Employability Matrix model. The breakdown has been presented below:

SELM1: There is generally a strong demand for social science graduates in the Nepali job market at the present time. (Modified version of '6a' in Rothwell's Matrix).

SELM2: There are plenty of job vacancies in the geographical area where I will look for jobs after graduation. (Modified version of '6b' in Rothwell's Matrix).

SELM3: I can easily find out about job opportunities in the job market in my chosen field. (Rothwell's Matrix. '7a')

SELM4: I feel the need to get additional degrees such as MPhil or second master's degree after graduating. This master's degree will not be enough for my career. (Derived from Neo-Weberian theory of Randall Collins on credential inflation).

SELM5: I believe that getting more than one Master's degree translates to better jobs and a stable career. (Derived from Neo-Weberian theory of Randall Collins on credential inflation).

Lastly, to understand how income inequality dictates the process of university selection and how university's reputation affects students' self-perceived employability, neo-Marxist theories on inequalities in education was used. Along with this, Rothwell's Matrix Model and previous literature was also used. The breakdown has been presented below:

UBS1: I am proud to tell others that I am studying at this university. (Rothwell's Matrix. 'UC4')

UBS2: My university encourages me to be creative and discourages rote-learning. (Derived from theoretical framework, i.e., Neo-Marxist theories on inequalities in education).

UBS3: Even if there was a possibility to do so, I would not choose any other university over this. (Modified version of 'UC2, UC6, UC8' in Rothwell's Matrix).

UBS4: My university has an outstanding reputation in my field of study. (Rothwell's Matrix. '3b')

UBS5: Employers specifically target this university in order to recruit individuals from my subject area. (Rothwell's Matrix. '3a')

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Nature of Research

Self- perceived employability (SPE) of students is the confidence of students in themselves that they can secure a good job that matches their qualification level upon graduation, they can maintain that job, and also obtain a new one when necessary (Hillage & Pollard,1998). As explained in the literature review section, students can have a low, moderate or a heightened sense of SPE depending upon various internal and external factors like their cultural- social capital under internal elements (Antonio & Tuffley, 2017; Hillage & Pollard,1998; Pathak, 2020); and the state of external labor market, and the reputation or the brand strength of their university under the external elements (Ergün & Şeşen, 2021; Rothwell et al., 2008, 2009). Major focus of this research has been to scrutinize how these three factors shape the perception of future employability in TU students.

How these factors affect the self- perception of employability among students can be studied both qualitatively and quantitatively; however, in this study, the concepts have been measured quantitatively, particularly in ordinal scale. Instead of focusing on the stories or the narrative, the researcher wanted to carry out an empirical study with the help of indicators that could be measured statistically. Thus, correlation and causal relationship between independent variables (social cultural capital possessed by students, state of Nepali Labor Market, and university brand strength) and dependent variable (SPE) has been examined with the help of correlation and regression models. Furthermore, the researcher has adapted a theory- testing and a deductive approach that is concerned with developing a hypothesis (or hypotheses) based on existing theory, and then designing a research strategy to test the hypothesis.

Hence, the nature of the data is quantitative. However, the analysis of descriptive and inferential statistics has also been supported by qualitative assessments of existing studies. And since the respondents are Masters level social science students from the TU, the unit of analysis for this study is individuals.

3.2 Sources of Data

In order to obtain required data (which is the heart of the research), the researcher has relied on primary sources of data collection. As a primary source, the researcher has relied on survey questionnaire whose physical copy was provided to respondents in the university during the day of data collection itself. The survey questionnaire consists of a total of 34-items— 12 establishing demographic questions, a section with 2 questions dedicated to exploring student's university and degree choice, and 20 Likert scale items that has helped examine, describe and explain the relationship between independent and dependent variables. These 20 Likert scale items have been presented on a 5-point scale.

On the other hand, the researcher turned to secondary sources of data collection to understand the literature present in the topic of self- perceived employability. The researcher has taken help from different materials like book chapters, books, previous researches, theses, journal articles, newspaper articles, reports and webpage articles.

3.3 Rationale of Site Selection

Geographical Site

The test site for the study is central campus of the Tribhuvan University (TU) located in Kritipur, Kathmandu. Established in 1959 AD, TU is the first government funded institution for higher education in Nepal and is one of the largest universities in the world in terms of size. Spanning 154.77 hectares, it offers masters, MPhil and PhD courses for all science, management and humanities stream.

This test site was chosen because the researcher is also a student of TU central campus, therefore, the researcher is well- acquainted with the area and also the rules and regulations of the campus. Furthermore, as mentioned earlier, TU, the oldest public educational institution of the country, produces maximum number of graduates through various programs and colleges (both public and private) affiliated to it in all of 77 districts in Nepal. Hence, the researcher believed that understanding self- perceptions of employability of TU social

science students would provide an accurate picture of employability perceptions of social science university students from Nepal.

Social Site

Students for this study have been drawn from the central departments of Sociology, Psychology and English. These three faculties have been specifically chosen because out of at least 40 different subjects that come under social sciences, because among all the different subjects under social sciences faculty, “2023 Best Social Science Majors” (2022) has shared that the degrees in social- sciences like anthropology, sociology, psychology and criminal justice have a better scope in the labor market. And this seems to be true for the Nepali labor market too. Sociology, Psychology and English seem to be some of the most popular choices among Nepali students who choose humanities stream. The researcher wanted to examine self- perception of employability among three most popular social- science faculties in Nepal. However, it needs to be kept in mind how literature points out that the self- perception of employability of social science students, regardless of the faculties, is rather low in comparison to technical subjects like engineering, technology, business etc. (Acharya, 2022; Collins, 2018; Dayaratna-Banda & Dharmadasa, 2022; Kalamatianou & Kougioumoutzaki, 2012; Moleke, 2010; Singh, 2006).

3.4 Research Design

Looking at the research questions of this study, it is seen that the aim of this research is to find answers to the what, how and why questions related to factors that affect self- perception of employability. Due to this reason, the research has adopted a descriptive research design, which is followed by an explanatory research design. These research designs provide insights to what, how and why questions of the study.

First, descriptive research design has been used to better understand and describe the background characteristics and basic features of respondents, in that, univariate establishing questions like respondents’ age, their faculties, questions related to their/ their family’s economic status, questions that answer why they chose to study in TU and why they chose to enroll in their specific faculties have been presented in bar- diagrams, pie- charts, tables, and then these establishing questions have been described in the results section. Using descriptive

research design, the researcher has collected data, analyzed it and then presented it in an understandable manner.

Descriptive research design has also been used for bivariate data that looks at the correlation or the relationship between two variables. For instance, under correlation analysis, the relationship between social- cultural capital of the students and their self- perception of employability has been described. This process has been repeated for remaining two independent variables too. Using correlation model has helped in describing the magnitude and/or direction of a link between the said variables.

After describing the basic characteristics of the respondents and the correlation between the variables, this research has moved on to explain the causal relationship between the multivariate data i.e., causation between various independent variables with the dependent variable using regression model. Thus, explanatory research design is suitable here to test out the hypotheses. Explanatory research design and regression model has helped explain to what extent cultural- social capital, state of the external market, and the reputation of the university affect self- perception of employability of TU social science students of three selected faculties.

3.5 Universe and Sampling Procedure

Population of the study

Population for this study is the 340 social science students of 2nd and 4th semesters studying in Sociology, English and Psychology departments in TU, Kritipur. (Sociology= 2nd semester: 49 students, 4th semester: 51 students; English= 2nd semester: 64 students, 4th semester: 38 students; Psychology= 2nd semester: 55 students, 4th semester: 83 students).

2nd and 4th semesters were specifically chosen because 2nd semester students are students who are not entirely new to the university environment, and 4th semester students were chosen because they are the senior- most students who will soon be graduates.

Sample Size and Sampling Procedure

The sample size for this study is 102 respondents, in which, 26 students are from Sociology faculty, 40 students are from English faculty, and 36 students are Psychology faculty. The researcher had decided that a total of 100 sample size would be ideal for this study. However, during convenience sampling, 105 of the total respondents filled up the questionnaire, out of which 3 were discarded due to incomplete questionnaire. And finally, the researcher settled with a total sample size of 102 respondents from three faculties.

Talking about the sampling procedure, the researcher has used convenience sampling; however, the researcher has selected a random day to collect the responses of random students who were present on that day. First, the researcher had decided to conduct a systematic sampling, which is a type of a probability sampling method in which the samples are selected in a fixed periodic interval; however, due to the lack of full attendance of all the enrolled students of 2nd and 4th semester, and due the difficulty of finding all the students at the same time, the researcher changed the sampling procedure to convenience sampling. And despite using a convenience sampling method, the sample size of $n= 102$ is representative and justifies the sample size because for probability sampling, the sample size (n) of 96 is the minimum sample size requirement.

The researcher went to each of the three faculties and requested respective department heads to allow collection of required data from the students. After the clearance was obtained, the researcher went to each classroom of second and fourth semesters in three faculties and briefly explained the objectives of the research to the whole class. After which, the researcher shared physical copy of survey questionnaire to the respondents and collected the filled questionnaires afterwards. There were no major hurdles in collecting the said data.

3.6 Techniques of Data Collection

The researcher used survey questionnaire to collect the data. The questionnaire consisted of 34-items— 12 establishing demographic questions, a section with 2 questions dedicated to understanding student's university and degree choice, and 20 Likert scale items that helped us understand the relationship between independent and dependent variables, presented on a 5-point scale (1 being strongly disagree and 5 being strongly agree).

The respondents were first and foremost, informed of the research purposes. They were told that it is academic research that is trying to examine the level of self- perception of employability of students among these three faculties. They were convinced that this study could be a roadmap to understanding why students from social- sciences face the problems of not getting job according to their qualification after graduation.

Then the respondents were given assurances of data confidentiality. They were assured that identifying information, if any, would only be used by persons engaged in, and for the purposes of the research. Finally, the respondents were provided with a physical copy of the questionnaire during the day of data collection itself, which they filled up themselves and the researcher collected all the filled questionnaires after a few hours in the same day.

3.7 Process of Data Analysis

After collecting the filled survey questionnaires, the researcher checked responses and discarded incomplete and incorrectly filled questionnaires first. 105 of the total respondents filled up the questionnaire, out of which 3 were discarded due to incomplete questionnaire. And finally, the researcher settled with a total sample size of 102 respondents from three faculties.

Then the data was entered in SPSS software and necessary statistical calculations were conducted. For this research, the researcher used Spearman's Rank order under correlation for bivariate data and Multiple Linear Regression under Regression model for multivariate data.

Since the independent variables (social cultural capital possessed by students, the state of Nepali labor market, university brand strength,) and the dependent variable (self- perceived employability) are all presented in categorical order and ordinal scale i.e., 5- point Likert scale, using non- parametric test-- Spearman's rank order test-- under correlation is suitable.

And as per the objectives of the research, since this research has explained and predicted the role of socio-cultural capital of the students, state of external labor market, and university brand strength in shaping self- perceived employability, use of regression model is suitable. The research has used ordinal data, collected with the help of Likert scales, but this ordinal

data has been converted into scale/interval data by computing its mean and median; therefore, use of multiple linear regression is justified.

Regression Model:

We use multiple linear regression test when there is one dependent variable and more than one independent variables. In this case, there are three independent variables- CSC, UBS and SELM and one dependent variable, SPE. Hence, we perform this test in SPSS i.e.,

$$Y = a + b_1x_1 + b_2x_2 + b_3x_3$$

Here,

y = (median of) self- perceived employability (SPE)

a = constant

x₁ = (median of) cultural- social capital (CSC)

x₂ = (median of) state of external labor market (SELM)

x₃ = (median of) university brand strength (UBS)

b₁ = regression coefficient of CSC

b₂ = regression coefficient of SELM

b₃ = regression coefficient of UBS

After all the necessary calculations then, the result was described, analyzed, and explained. According to the descriptive and explanatory research design explained above, all the univariate data was described first to get a basic understanding of the respondent characteristics, then the relationship between the bivariate data was also described and analyzed and then finally, the causal relationship of the multivariate data was explained under the explanatory model. After which, findings from this analysis and similarities or the differences between the result of this study with previous literature was also presented, deriving the conclusions of this study.

3.8 Limitations of the Study

This research has attempted to tie a wide range of empirical studies and literature review with the primary data to provide a general picture on the research topic and it has paved way for

further research related to self- perceived employability in Nepal. However, as with any study, there are some limitations:

- Talking about the limitations of this study, it is an academic study that only focused on TU and on limited number of social science students from just three faculties (i.e., Sociology, Psychology and English). Therefore, the findings may not be very representative of the total social science students in different universities in Nepal.
- Secondly, since it is a quantitative study, probing could not be carried out. In future research, a mixed-methods design that integrates both qualitative and quantitative insights could provide a more complete picture of the research problem.
- Thirdly, due to the lack of regular classroom attendance of the respondents, convenience sampling was used. Even though the sample size of $n= 102$ justifies the sample size, in further research, systematic sampling method could be employed.
- Furthermore, a literature review section that studies in detail the structure and composition of Nepali labor market, could have made this study more country-specific.
- Finally, there may be presence of slight inherent biases in few of the items of survey questionnaire that have not been adapted from the Rothwell standardized questionnaire model, and also, as Rothwell et. al, (2008) has pointed out, when conducting a self-evaluation of one's marketability, there is always a place to doubt respondents' honesty.

3.9 Field Experience of the Researcher

Since I am a student of TU central campus and also chose to conduct my study in TU, Kirtipur itself, I did not face any major hurdles during the data collection process. I am well-acquainted with the area and also the rules and regulations of the university campus; therefore, I was able to convince the HoDs, teachers, and students to help me fill up my survey questionnaires. In my experience, most teachers and students of all three faculties—Sociology, Psychology, English—were greatly supportive of my endeavor; however, there were instances where some of the students were reluctant to fill up certain sections of the questionnaire.

CHAPTER IV

FACTORS AFFECTING SELF- PERCEIVED EMPLOYABILITY

4.1 Reliability/collinearity test with Cronbach's Alpha

If the value of Cronbach alpha is greater than 0.7 (in strict case, 0.7 for exploratory/ explanatory, 0.8 for pure/basic research and 0.9 for applied research), it can be said that the reliability level of items in the questionnaire is acceptable.

As shown in the Table 4.1, all independent variables or the factors that affect self- perception of employability (dependent variable), have 5 items each. Internal reliability for five items of CSC is 0.71, internal reliability for five items of UBS is 0.61, and the internal reliability for five items of SELM is 0.62. Similarly, dependent variable—SPE--- also has 5 items and the internal reliability of these 5 items is 0.67. And when reliability statistics was performed on all 20 Likert scale items, the alpha coefficient was shown to be 0.90.

These values of alpha coefficient show that the reliability level of items in the questionnaire is acceptable and reliable.

Table 4.1

Cronbach Alpha for Likert Scale Items

	Name of the Items	No. of Items	Cronbach's alpha
Independent variables	Cultural Social Capital (CSC)	5	0.710
	University Brand Strength (UBS)	5	0.610
	State of External Labor Market (SELM)	5	0.626
Dependent	Self- Perceived Employability	5	0.674

Variable	(SPE)
Total Likert Scale Items	20 0.900

4.2 Basic Characteristics of Respondents

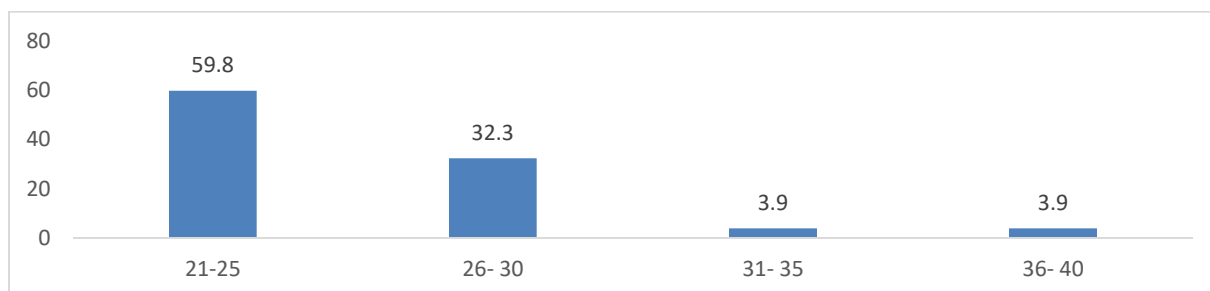
As suggested by the title, this section has described background characteristics and basic features of respondents, in that, univariate establishing questions like respondents' age, gender, their faculties and semester, question related to their parents' educational level, their economic status, and questions that answer why they chose to study in TU, Kritipur, plus, why they chose to enroll in their specific faculties have been presented in bar- diagrams, pie- charts and tables, and the results have been described.

Age of respondents

Respondents were asked to specify their age in order to find out students in which age- group mostly enroll in Master's degree in Tribhuvan University (TU). As can be seen, slightly more than half (59.8%) of the total respondents are aged between 21- 25 years. At second highest place, one- third (32.3%) of the respondents belong to 26- 30 age group. A small share of respondents at 3.9 percent points belong to 31- 35 age range and finally, the same percentage of respondents also belong to 36- 40 age group.

Figure 4.1

Age of the Respondents



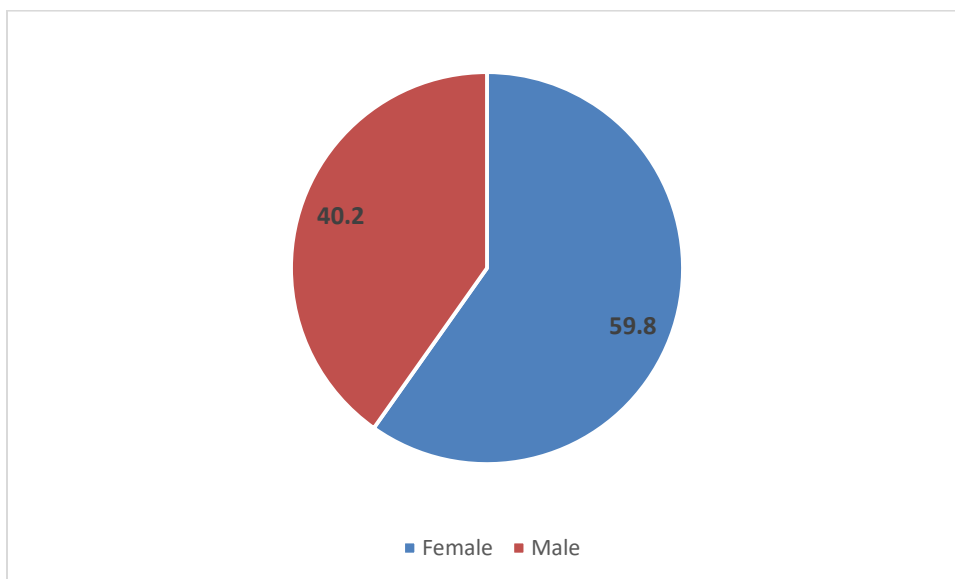
Note. Q1. Age (Base= 102)

Gender of Respondents

As illustrated by the Fig 4.2 below, most of the respondents who study in three of the chosen faculties—Psychology, Sociology and English—for this study are females i.e., 59.8% of the total respondents are females. Whereas, 40.2% of the total respondents are males.

Figure 4.2

Gender of Respondents



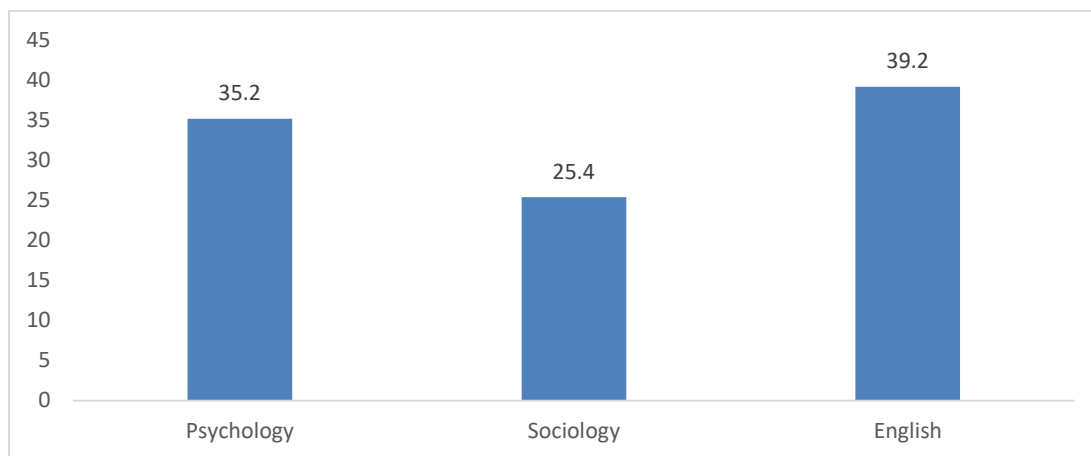
Note. Q2. Gender (Base= 102)

Faculties of Respondents

Fig 4.3 shows that a little more than one-third (39.2%) of the total respondents are from English faculty. 35.2 per cent points from Psychology department make up second highest respondents for this study and finally, a quarter (25.4%) of the respondents are from sociology department.

Figure 4.3

Faculties of Respondents



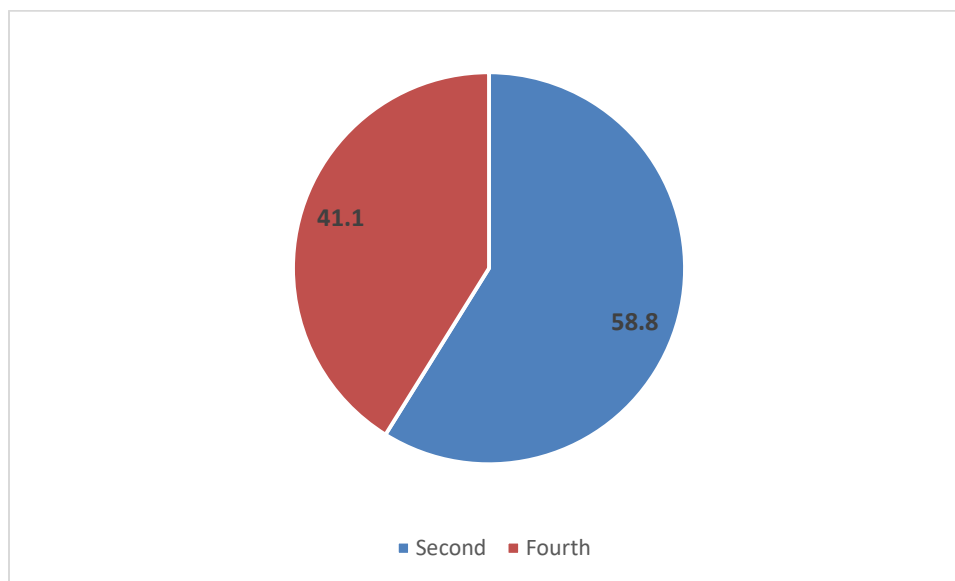
Note. Q3. Which Master's degree program are you studying? (Base= 102)

MA Semester of Respondents

For this study, students from two semesters, i.e., second and fourth, were chosen. Slightly more than half (58.8%) of the respondents are from second semester and the remaining 41.1 percent points of the respondents are from fourth semester.

Figure 4.4

MA Semester of Respondents



Note. Q4. Semester of Master's degree you are currently in: (Base= 102)

4.3 Identifying questions for Economic Status

Economic status of the respondents and their family has been identified in this section, in order to examine how the economic-class affects the choice and chance of students getting to study in a certain university. In tune with Neo- Weberian theorists like Randall Collins and Neo- Marxists like Eric Olin Wright, Samuels Bowles and Herbert Gintis, the results obtained from this section has been utilized to study how income class and power of students and their families helps shape their life- chances, in that, being able to enroll in working-class, middle- class, higher- middle class, or an affluent educational institution. And further, this information has also been used to describe the relationship between the brand strength of the university that they have chosen to study in and their self- perception of employability in the University Brand Strength section of this chapter.

Even though works of Neo- Marxists have been used a reference, the researcher is mostly interested in accessing life chances like neo- Weberians, and not the patterns of exploitation and domination like Marxists. The idea of neo- Marxist theorists, however, that there exist multiple intermediate classes between Bourgeoisie and proletariat, and the theory of Bowles and Gintis (1976, as cited in Anyon, 2011) that the teaching and learning methods in different tiers of schools/ universities are totally different because schools are made to be similar to work has been integrated later in the section of University Brand strength. In the same vein, ideas of Collins (2018) on how educational institutions are stratified, how Ivy league like top tier universities help students imbibe market- relevant advanced skills, and how this translates to better life- chances in the labor market and career for the graduates, has also be integrated in the University Brand Strength section later on.

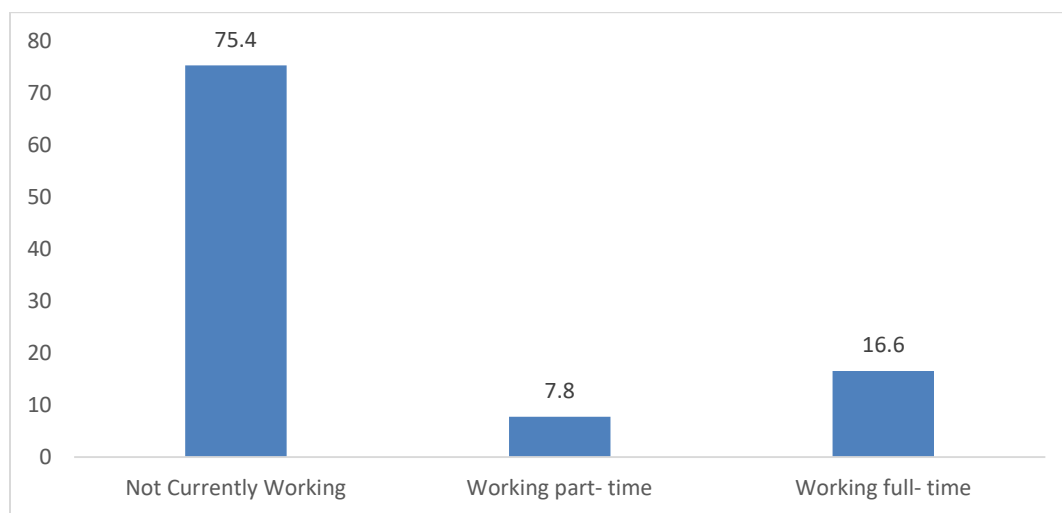
In order to identify the economic class of the respondents, they were asked series of questions related to their employment status, areas of expenditure from their monthly salary, their parents' educational level, if their parents send them money for monthly expenses, how they use their allowance, if they buy things after a careful consideration or if they splurge, and how they rank themselves economically in relation to their neighborhood.

Current Employment Status

When asked if the selected students work and study simultaneously, a whopping three-fourths (75.4%) of the respondents responded that they are not currently working, whereas, a total of 24.4% of the total respondents shared that they are either working part-time or full time. Among this percent, 16.6 percent points said that they work full-time and the remaining 7.8% of them shared that they work part-time.

Figure 4.5

Current Employment Status



Note. Q6. Current employment status: (Base= 102)

Areas of expenditure from monthly salary

24.4% of the respondents who shared that they are either working full-time or part-time, were further asked how they spend their monthly salary. As their top three responses, all of the working students said that they use their salary to pay their tuition fees, they use it to buy clothes and shoes and to buy personal care items. Except for this, 80% of 24.4% of the respondents said that they use their salary to travel or to go watch movies. And some of them also said that they spent it by buying electronic devices and on food and rent.

Table 4.2*Areas of Expenditure from Monthly Salary (in percentages)*

Spending of monthly salary	
University Tuition Fees	100
Clothing/ shoes	100
Personal care/cosmetics	100
Movies/ travel	80
Buying electronic devices	76
Food	72
Rent	68
Others	20

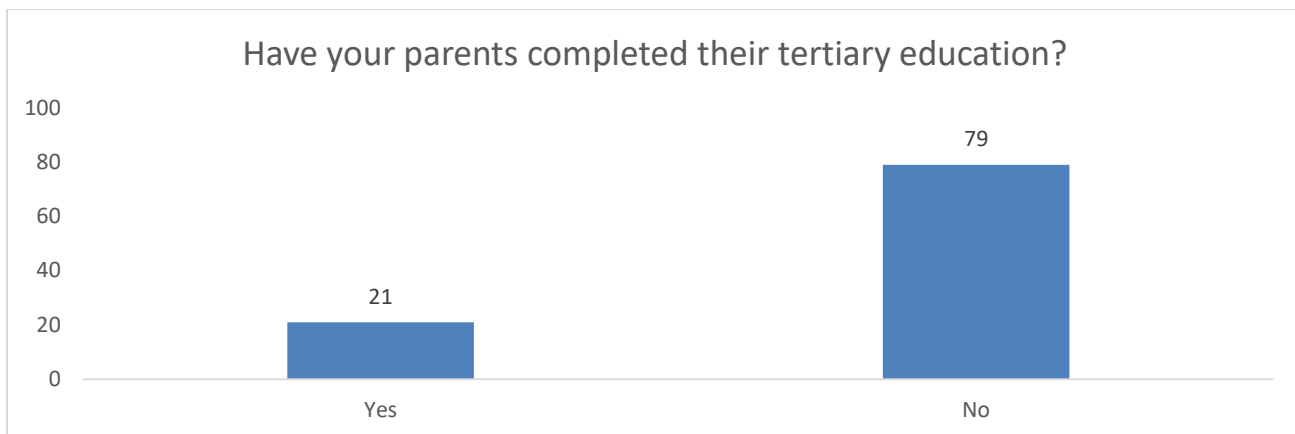
Note. Q7. How do you spend your monthly salary? (Multiple Response) (Base= 25)

Parents' Educational level

In order to figure out the educational level of the respondents' parents, they were asked if their parents have completed their tertiary education- meaning the university education. For this question, as much as 79% of the total respondents replied that their parents have not completed their tertiary education, while only 21% of the respondents said that their parents have completed their university level education.

Figure 4.6

Education Level of Parents



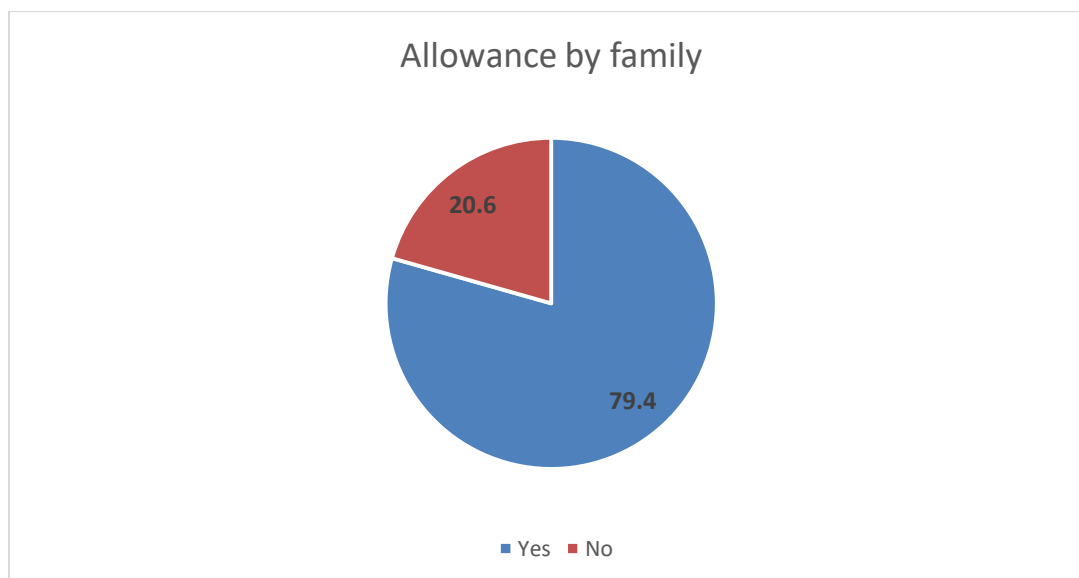
Note. Q8. Have your parents completed their tertiary (university) education? (Base= 102)

Allowance by family

All the respondents, regardless of them being currently employed or not, were asked if their family send them monthly allowance. As can be seen in the pie- chart below, more than three- fourths (79.4%) of the respondents said that their family gives them or sends them money for monthly expenses. The remaining 20.6% of them said that they do not get allowance from their family.

Figure 4.7

Allowance Provided by Family



Note. Q9. Does your family give you/ send you money for monthly expenses?

(Base= 102)

Monthly Allowance Expenditure

79.4% of the respondents who said that they get monthly allowance from their family were further asked to specify the areas where they spend their monthly allowance. As much as 60.5% of the respondents said that they use it to buy food. In the second place, 59.3% of the students shared that they use their allowance to pay their university tuition fees, and third highest share of respondents at 51.9 percent points said that they spend their allowance to pay rent.

Expect for these three basic necessities of a university students, around 50.6% of them said that they use it to buy clothes or shoes. And very small proportion of the respondents said that they use it to go to the movies/ travel (18.5%), or to buy electronic goods (13.6%).

Table 4.3

Monthly Allowance Expenditure by respondents (in percentages)

Monthly allowance expenditure	
Food	60.5
University Tuition Fees	59.3
Rent	51.9
Clothing/ shoes	50.6
Personal care/cosmetics	32.1
Movies/ travel	18.5
Buying electronic devices	13.6
Others	7.4

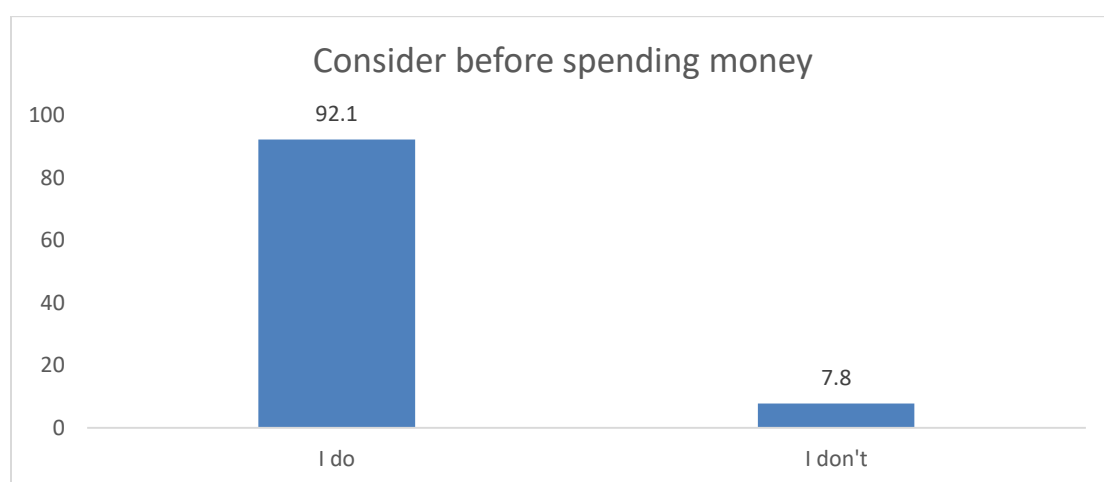
Note. Q10. How do you spend the monthly allowance given/ sent by your family? (Multiple Response) (Base= 81)

Splurging or careful consideration before spending money

In order to examine if respondents enjoy splurging or if they are frugal and economical, they were asked if they carefully consider before buying clothes/ shoes/ personal hygiene products. An overwhelming majority of respondents at 92.1% expressed that they buy goods only after a careful consideration, while the remaining 7.8% said that they do not do so.

Figure 4.8

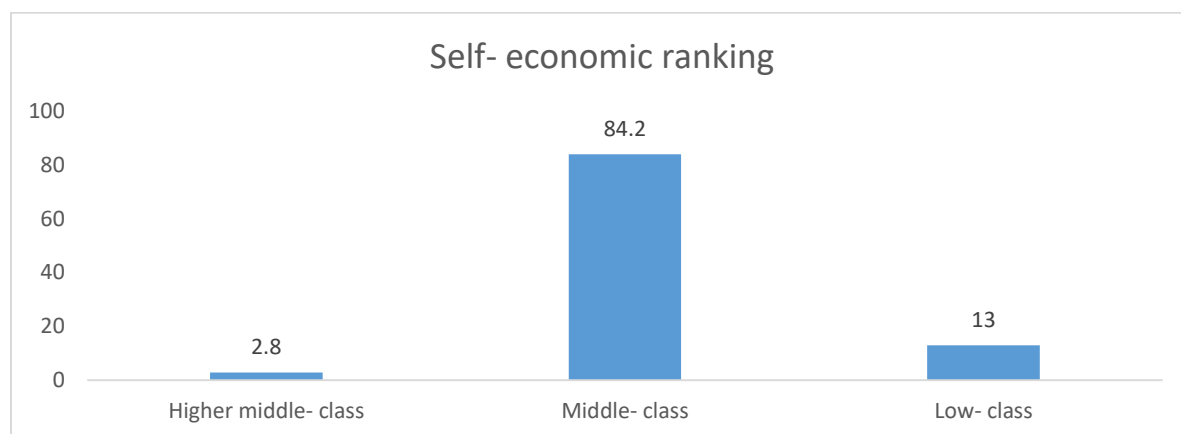
Consideration Before Spending Money



Note. Q11. Before buying clothes/ shoes/ personal hygiene products, do you carefully consider if you really need it? (Base= 102)

Self- economic ranking

Instead of asking the respondents which economic class they belong to, the researcher asked the respondents to self- rank themselves economically in relation to their neighborhood. The respondents were provided with four options to this question: High- class, higher middle- class, middle- class, and low- class. As much as 84.2% of the total respondents said that they belong to the middle- class family. 13% said that they consider themselves as belonging to the low- class family, and only 2.8% of the respondents said that they belong to the higher- middle class. On the other hand, none of the respondents cited that they belong to the high- class family.

Figure 4.9*Self- Economic Ranking by Respondents*

Note. Q12. How do you rank yourself economically in relation to your neighborhood? (Base= 102)

Citation of more than 75% of the total respondents that their parents have not gained tertiary level education; that the allowance provided by their family and also the monthly salary of the students who hold a job being used mostly on tuition fees, rent and food items; the fact that as much as 92.1 per cent points of the students carefully consider before spending money; and the results of the self-economic ranking (Middle- class: 84.2%, Low- class: 13%, and Higher middle- class: 2.8%), indicates that most students who choose to study in Tribhuvan University (TU) belong to the middle- class families.

TU is Nepal's first, oldest and largest (in terms of physical size) public university. It has provided affiliations to both public and private colleges of the country. Compared to studying in private TU affiliated colleges, studying in public TU affiliated colleges is a lot cheaper. Also, studying in the private colleges/universities is generally linked to getting better quality education. But amongst the public university/ colleges, students who choose to study in the central department of TU in Kritipur, not only study here because of their economic- class, but also because the teaching- learning process is considered to be better in Kritipur than in other TU affiliated public colleges. This belief that the central department, Kritipur is better in terms of faculty and the teaching- learning process compared to other TU affiliated public

colleges, and that “it is the most affordable” has been proven by respondents’ answers in the section below.

4.4 Understanding students’ university and degree choice

As mentioned above, the respondents were asked the reasons for choosing to study in the TU and also for choosing to study their respective subjects. Through these two questions, the researcher tried to figure out why students chose to study in TU (central department, Kritipur) out of 9 different universities in Nepal, in that, what kind of image they had of TU before joining it, and also what kind of expectations they had from TU. They were further asked why they chose to study social sciences out of different streams and why they chose to enroll in Sociology/ Psychology/ English specifically.

Reasons for choosing TU, Kritipur

Under reasons for choosing TU (Kritipur), a little more than half of the respondents (54.9%) said that they believed studying in TU (Kritipur) would help them reach their career goals and make them employable. A little more than one- third (39.2%) of them ticked ‘Others’ option and mentioned reasons like: there was no other option, because it is the most affordable university, TU is old and reliable, central department of TU gives quality education, wanted to experience studying in TU and supposed to be a good university but I am not sure.

As the third highest reason, 23.5% of the total respondents also shared that they joined TU because most of their friends decided to study Masters in TU. Finally, 16.6% of them said that they joined TU because their parents told them that this is the best university of Nepal.

Table 4.4*Reasons for Choosing TU (in percentages)*

	Reasons for choosing TU
Studying in TU, Kritipur would help me reach my career goals and make me employable	54.9
Others (Please Specify)	39.2
Most of my friends decided they would study Masters level in TU, Kritipur	23.5
My parents told me this is the best university of Nepal	16.6
Our college suggested we should join TU, Kritipur after bachelors	13.7

Q13. Why did you choose to study in Tribhuvan University? (Multiple Response) (Base= 102)

Slightly more than half of the 102 respondents from all three faculties expressing that they chose TU, Kritipur out of all other TU affiliated public colleges, because they believe studying in the central department, Kritipur would help them reach their career goals and make them employable, proves that Kritipur is better in terms of faculty and the teaching-learning process compared to other TU affiliated public colleges. On the other hand, 39.2% of the respondents who mentioned in 'Others' that they chose TU, kritipur because 'there was no other option' and because it is the 'most affordable university' further proves that economic- class of parents affects students' choice of university.

Reasons for choosing this degree

Under reasons for choosing to study their degree, slightly less than half of the respondents (48%) said that they chose it because they want to make their career in these specific fields. A similar percentage of respondents at 40.1% said that they chose it because they have

always been interested in their respective degrees. And as the third highest option, 29.4% of the respondents said that they chose this degree because they did not have any other option.

13.7 percent points of the respondents who ticked “Other” option wrote down reasons like: to get extra knowledge, to enhance my knowledge in understanding human nature, because psychology degree would be a plus point in my nursing fraternity, because there was no other option, and to help the society.

Table 4.5

Reasons for Choosing This Degree (in percentages)

	Reasons for choosing this degree
I want to make my career in this field	48
I have always been interested in Sociology/Psychology/English	40.1
Studying social sciences was my only option	29.4
Other (Please Specify)	13.7
My parents come from social science background	7.8

Q14. Why did you choose to study this degree? (Multiple Response) (Base= 102)

Numerous studies have presented the choice of degree as an equally important factor that has been known to affect graduates’ chances of employability in the labor market. Under the degree choice, as explained in the literature review, scholars around the world and also in south- Asia have found out that the labor market might be more favorable towards graduates from applied or technical subject, rather than students of Humanities and social sciences (Acharya, 2022; Collins, 2018; Dayaratna-Banda & Dharmadasa, 2022; Kalamatianou & Kougioumoutzaki, 2012; Moleke, 2010; Singh, 2006).

Despite this, out of numerous subjects in the Humanities and the social sciences field, Nepal’s country- specific trend has been such that subjects like Psychology, English,

Sociology, law are known to be better choices for students in terms of market sellability, than choosing subjects like fine arts, history, geography and such. And this has been proven true for international markets too. “2023 Best Social Science Majors” (2022) has shared that the degrees in social- sciences like anthropology, sociology, psychology and criminal justice have a good scope in the labor market.

4.5 Evaluating markers of self- perceived employability

Before looking at the relationship between the bivariate variables i.e., relationship of each of the three independent variables—Cultural- Social Capital (CSC), State of the External Labor Market (SELM), and University Brand Strength (UBS)--- with the dependent variable, Self- Perceived Employability (SPE), and before explaining the causal relationship between the independent variables and dependent variable, the researcher has described and analyzed each of the items of three independent variables in the following section.

4.5.1 Items of Cultural- Social Capital (CSC)

In this section, respondents’ views on their possession of cultural- social capital is examined. Five different questions/ items related to CSC were asked to the respondents and all the questions were presented on a on a 5- point scale, where 1 meant ‘strongly disagree’ and 5 meant ‘strongly agree’. All of the results computed through SPSS have been presented in tables below. Also, these tables have also shown the mean for each of the responses, which will help understand if the views of respondents are positive, negative, or modest regarding various questions.

Each of the items of CSC has been described under a separate thematic title, its importance has been discussed, its result has been analyzed and a discussion or a dialogue with the previous literature has been presented in the end for each of the 3 independent variables. The first 3 items, CSC1, CSC2, and CSC3 deal with examining the cultural capital possessed by students and the final two items, CSC4 and CSC5 are related to examining the social capital of students. What each of these items mean has been elaborated below.

Note: The total ‘Agree’ percentage has been attained by adding the values of ‘Agree’ and ‘Strongly Agree’. Similarly, the total ‘Disagree’ percentage has been attained by adding values of ‘Strongly Disagree’ and ‘Disagree’.

Knowledge in the subject area (CSC1)

Even though other forms of cultural capital like technical (marketable skills), emotional (empathy, sympathy), national, and subcultural forms (“What is Cultural Capital”, 2019), have been introduced in the present day to understand cultural capital of individuals, as mentioned in the literature review, this research focuses on both marketable core- skills (problem- solving, adaptability, teamwork, communication, emotional intelligence and creativity) and also academic skills (knowledge in the subject matter, good grades, reasoning capacity) when talking about cultural capital.

CSC1 and CSC2 have been designed to focus on institutionalized cultural capital like academic knowledge and academic credentials because as Lareau & Weininger (2003) stress, academic skills should not be excluded from the study of cultural capital. Even when employers today look for workers who hold a marketable core- skills, the importance of degrees and good grades, remain. This is true not only for the employers, but also for the graduates because research shows that academic abilities help individuals apply analytical abilities in various situations in life (Komulainen et al. 2012; Kurlin 2018, as cited in Rätty et al., 2019), and because of this, academic qualifications still make up a larger part of people’s social identity (Rätty 2015, as cited in Rätty et al., 2019).

According to Bourdieu, being knowledgeable in the subject area, or having a sound understanding of the subject matter, demonstrating reasoning skills, and being able to carry our theory- application in practical situations demonstrates academic intellect, which is one of the many markers of cultural capital. Therefore, based on the theoretical framework and previous literature in the study topic, ‘being knowledgeable in the subject area’ was included as one of the five items of CSC as CSC1.

Table 4.6*Level of Agreement/ Disagreement for CSC1 (in percentages)*

Item	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean/ Median
CSC1:	3.9	9.8	29.4	47.1	9.8	3.49/4.0

*Result computed through SPSS for CSC1(Base= 102)**(CSC1=I am highly knowledgeable in my subject area i.e. I have sound understanding of subject matter, reasoning skills, theory- application capabilities etc.)*

As seen in the table 4.6, in the first item, CSC1 of CSC, 102 respondents from three faculties-- Sociology, Psychology and English-- were asked if they are highly knowledgeable-- sound understanding of subject matter, reasoning skills, theory- application capabilities ---in their subject area. A little more than half (56.9%) of the respondents said that they agree to the statement while 13.7% of them said that they disagree.

Based on this result, the mean of the respondents was computed for CSC1. It was found to be 3.49 for CSC1 as presented in the table above. Therefore, according to the mean value, we can say that more of the respondents from three faculties agree to having a good knowledge in their subject matter.

Grades scored by students (CSC2)

As explained in CSC1, CSC2 has also been designed to focus on institutionalized cultural capital, in that, the importance of academic credentials/ grades in shaping a students' self-perception of employability. Having strong grades means that the students have the ability and the passion to read and understand various topics and also have the ability to retain information. Marks (2009) on the same elaborates, passion to read and frequent reading has been known to enhance memory power, comprehension, and the ability to remember information. And skills like these are also valued in an employee by the labor- market.

Table 4.7*Level of Agreement/ Disagreement for CSC2 (in percentages)*

Item	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean/ Median
CSC2	0	11.8	28.4	54.9	4.9	3.53/4.0

*Result computed through SPSS for CSC2 (Base= 102)**(CSC2= I achieve high grades in relation to my studies.)*

Therefore, in CSC2, the respondents were asked if they achieve high grades in relation to their studies. 59.8 percent points of respondents said that they do achieve high grades in relation to their studies. A little more than a quarter of the respondents (28.4%) said that they neither agree nor disagree to the statement and the rest said that they disagree.

The mean of respondents is at 3.53 for CSC2; hence, more of the respondents also agree to this statement.

Core- skills possessed by respondents (CSC3)

CSC3 has been formulated to examine how confident students are at possessing marketable, work- related core skills like team- work, problem solving, communication, adaptability, emotional intelligence, creativity, perseverance etc. (Antonio & Tuffley, 2017; Ergün and Şeşen, 2021; Hillage & Pollard,1998; Pathak, 2020; Rothwell et al.,2008). Since, in the present time where there are a lot of graduates with similar level of qualifications, but a mismatched number of desirable jobs (Antonio &Tuffley, 2017), along with strong academic credentials, possessing above listed core- skills is also massively important. Antonio &Tuffley (2017) have further stressed that employers today not only look for strong marksheets in graduates, but also look at their core- skills and abilities to cope with the work- related environment.

Therefore, while academic skills should not be excluded from the study of cultural capital, it certainly should not be limited to it. Potential employees who can handle a complex situation with a customer, who holds leadership and teamwork skills, and who can build rapport with their colleagues are more desired over potential employees who have good academic credentials, but lack core- skills like these. Because of the numerous studies like these that have highlighted the importance of including core marketable or technical and emotional skills in the definition of cultural capital, the researcher has included it as CSC3.

Table 4.8

Level of Agreement/ Disagreement for CSC3 (in percentages)

Item	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean/ Median
CSC3	2.9	9.8	18.6	51.0	17.6	3.71/4.0

Result computed through SPSS for CSC3 (Base= 102)

(CSC3=I possess most of the soft skills (teamwork, adaptability, problem solving, emotional intelligence, creativity, perseverance) that are considered valuable in an employee.)

In CSC3, the respondents were asked if they possess most of the soft skills-- teamwork, adaptability, problem solving, emotional intelligence, creativity, perseverance-- considered valuable in an employee. Slightly more than two- thirds (68.6%) of the respondents agree to this statement and 18.6 percent points of them disagree.

The mean for CSC3 is at 3.71; hence, greater number of respondents agree to the statement.

Familiarity with seniors and accomplished people (CSC4)

CSC3 and CSC5 are two items in the CSC that have been designed to test the social capital of the respondents. Numerous scholars in both positivist and interpretivist fields in social sciences have studied how possession of non- economic capitals like social capital also positively helps with heightening the self- perception of employability of students. CSC4 has

tried to examine if students have good links with their seniors and other people who have been successfully working in the job- market. Because having connections with them can help with attaining desired jobs in the job market.

And this connection with the seniors and other successful people could also be gained through family. The personal circumstances of an individual that includes social connections/ networks and a good economic capital possessed by one's family not only helps in academic pursuits, but it also helps in increasing the employability prospects of the students (Ergün & Şeşen, 2021). If one has a family that has a strong social capital and a good financial capital, this can positively influence students' willingness to grab job opportunities in the labor market (McQuaid & Lindsay, 2005, as cited in Ergün & Şeşen, 2021).

Table 4.9

Level of Agreement/ Disagreement for CSC4 (in percentages)

Item	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean/ Median
CSC4	23.5	38.2	23.5	11.8	2.9	2.32/2.0

Result computed through SPSS for CSC4 (Base= 102)

(CSC4=I know a lot of seniors and accomplished people who could help me get jobs after graduation.)

In CSC4, the students were asked if they know seniors and accomplished people who could help them get jobs after graduation. As much as 61.7% of the total respondents shared that they do not know seniors or accomplished people who could help them get jobs in the future. Almost a quarter of the total respondents do not hold an exact view for this statement and just a small share (14.7%) has said that they agree to the statement.

Furthermore, given that the mean response to the scale is only at 2.32 for CSC4, it reveals that majority of the students disagree to the statement and hold a negative view on having a good network with seniors and accomplished people.

Job contact network (CSC5)

In order to confirm the response of the respondents regarding their possession of social capital, they were once more asked if they possess strong job contact network. This time, the question included not only connection with seniors, but also rapport with professors, and possession of relatives who can help the students transition in their desired jobs easily and benefit their career development process.

Young (2012) has also attempted to demonstrate the link between the social capital (job contact network) graduates possess and their workplace success later on, by elaborating that even though nobody is irreplaceable in the workplace, employees who have accumulated a high level of social capital (or interpersonal relations) by interacting with various important people are the hardest to replace. Because employees like these can hold a proper conversation and network effectively and thus, can help other people by acting as a mediator in connecting two different important people (Young, 2012).

Table 4.10

Level of Agreement/ Disagreement for CSC5 (in percentages)

Item	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean/ Median
CSC5	27.5	37.3	18.6	10.8	5.9	2.30/2.0

Result computed through SPSS for CSC5 (Base= 102)

(CSC5=I possess a good job contact network (rapport with seniors, connection with professors, relatives working in my desired career field) that will aid my career development.)

Therefore, in CSC5, the students were asked if they possess a good job contact network--rapport with seniors, connection with professors, relatives working in their desired career field—and here too, majority of the students at 64.8 percent points said that they disagree to this statement. And as less as 16.7% of them agree to it.

The mean of 2.30 proves that most of the respondents disagree to this statement.

The responses for each of the five items in CSC reveal that most of the social science students studying in TU, Kritipur agree that they possess cultural capital that helps heighten sense of self- perceived employability, while on the other hand, majority of the students disagree to possessing the needed social capital.

4.5.2 Items of State of External Labor Market (SELM)

Along with the possession of cultural and social capital, self- perception of employability of the university graduates is also very much dependent on the state of the external labor market (Hillage & Pollard, 1998), and also dependent on individuals' knowledge on the state of this labor market (Wittekind et al., 2010, as cited in Ergün & Şeşen, 2021). Hillage and Pollard (1998) assert that students need to update themselves with the labor market information so that they can make informed decisions about the jobs available to them. Students also need to learn how to interpret the information that they have and later turn it into an asset that can help them navigate the labor market (Hillage & Pollard, 1998). And possessing knowledge about the state of the labor market, and being able to use this information means that students have heightened self- perception of employability.

As with the first independent variable CSC, again five different questions/ items were asked to the respondents and this time, it was related to SELM. These questions were also presented on a 5- point scale, where 1 meant 'strongly disagree' and 5 meant 'strongly agree'.

First three items, SELM1, SELM2, and SELM3, of the second independent variable SELM deals with examining the demand for social science graduates in Nepali job market according to students. And the final two items, SELM4 and SELM5, deal with understanding credential

inflation in the market through students' experience. What each of these items entail has been elaborated in the following paragraphs.

Note: The total 'Agree' percentage has been attained by adding the values of 'Agree' and 'Strongly Agree'. Similarly, the total 'Disagree' percentage has been attained by adding values of 'Strongly Disagree' and 'Disagree'.

Demand for Social Science Graduates in the market (SELM1)

The selection or the choice of degree is an important factor that has been known to affect graduates' chances of employability in the labor market. Dayaratna-Banda and Dharmadasa (2022) have focused on the rising unemployment among social sciences graduates in Sri-Lanka and have presented a figure that shows that out of 50, 000 Sri- Lankan graduates who were unemployed in 2019, most of them were found to be from humanities and social sciences field. Only the exceptional few students in the social sciences have been known to succeed and take up the low number of jobs allocated for this field in the job market.

In light of this, to study the situation of demand for social science students in the Nepali job market, this question was formulated. In SELM1, the respondents were asked if there is generally a strong demand for social science graduates in the Nepali job market at the present time. 37.3 percent points of the total students said that there is demand of social science students in Nepali job market. A similar percent of respondents at 34.3% said that they do not believe so and the remaining 28.4% of them did not hold any opinion on this regard.

Table 4.11

Level of Agreement/ Disagreement for SELM1 (in percentages)

Item	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean/ Median
SELM1	5.9	28.4	28.4	31.4	5.9	3.03/3.0

Result computed through SPSS for SELM1 (Base= 102)

(SELM1=There is generally a strong demand for social science graduates in the Nepali job market at the present time.)

Based on this result, the mean of the respondents was computed for SELM1. It was found to be 3.0 for SELM1 as presented in the table above. Therefore, according to the mean value, we can say that more of the respondents from three faculties think that there is generally a strong demand for social science graduates in the Nepali job market at the present time.

Therefore, even though literature in south- Asia and also all around the world have demonstrated that the labor market might be more favorable towards graduates from applied or technical subject, rather than students of Humanities and social sciences (Acharya, 2022; Collins, 2018; Dayaratna-Banda & Dharmadasa, 2022; Kalamatianou & Kougioumoutzaki, 2012; Moleke, 2010; Singh, 2006), this mean value for SELM1 signifies that at least this sample believes that there is a good demand for social science graduates in the labor market. And this could be because degrees in social- sciences like anthropology, sociology, psychology and criminal justice are believed to have a better scope in the labor market (“2023 Best Social Science Majors”, 2022).

Presence of Job Vacancies (SELM2)

Owing to overwhelming growth of educational sector and large expansion in the supply of graduates for a limited number of demands in the job market, a huge number of fresh graduates have been facing unemployment and underemployment around the world. To test if this is true for the Nepali job market too, the students were asked if there are plenty of job vacancies in the geographical area where they will look for jobs after graduation.

Table 4.12

Level of Agreement/ Disagreement for SELM2 (in percentages)

Item	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean/ Median
SELM2	4.9	31.4	31.4	30.4	2.0	2.93/3.0

Result computed through SPSS for SELM2 (Base= 102)

(SELM2=There are plenty of job vacancies in the geographical area where I will look for jobs after graduation.)

This question was also asked in order to understand if there is a good demand for social science graduates in Nepali job market. One- third (32.4%) of the respondents said that they agree to this statement. Slightly higher percentage of students at 36.3 percent points said that there are not a lot of job vacancies in areas they are looking for jobs after graduation. And the remaining 31.4% of them neither agree nor disagree to this.

This shows that slightly higher number of students disagree that there are plenty job opportunities related to social science subjects. And the mean value of 2.9 also proves this statement to be true.

Information about job opportunities (SELM3)

In SELM3, they were asked if they can easily find out about job opportunities in the job market in their chosen field. 31.4% of them said that they can do so. A similar percent of students at 30.4% said that they cannot easily find out about job opportunities in the job market in their chosen field. And the remaining 38.2% of them did not have an exact opinion on this matter.

Table 4.13

Level of Agreement/ Disagreement for SELM3 (in percentages)

Item	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean/ Median
SELM3	4.9	25.5	38.2	26.5	4.9	3.01/3.0

Result computed through SPSS for SELM3 (Base= 102)

(SELM3=I can easily find out about job opportunities in the job market in my chosen field.)

When the average value was computed, it was found to be 3.0. Even though this means that a greater number of students agree to this statement, looking at the percentage of respondents who have said that they agree (31.4%), and that they disagree (30.4%), it can be said that there is no significant difference between the share of respondents who either say that they agree or that they disagree.

Need for additional degrees (SELM4)

Due to the technological enhancements in the modern society (Collins, 1979, 2018), the employers start looking for highly qualified individuals with advanced and specialized degrees. When this happens, students all around the world start finding the need to study for a longer period of time and gain additional degrees. In case of Nepal, we can hear Masters level graduates talking about joining MPhil or second masters' courses to land better opportunities. This means that people start acquiring more and more degrees and stay in the education market for longer period in the quest of gaining higher and more sellable degrees (Araki & Kariya, 2022; Collins et al., 2019). And this leads to credential inflation.

Since presence or the absence of credential inflation in the labor market has been identified as another important signifier of the state of the labor market, that can affect self- perception of employability of students, SELM4 has focused on this.

Table 4.14

Level of Agreement/ Disagreement for SELM4 (in percentages)

Item	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean/ Median
SELM4	17.6	29.4	27.5	18.6	6.9	2.68/3.0

Result computed through SPSS for SELM4 (Base= 102)

(SELM4=I feel the need to get additional degrees such as MPhil or second master's degree after graduating. This master's degree will not be enough for my career.)

In SELM4, the students were asked if they feel the need to get additional degrees such as MPhil or second master's degree after graduating. 25.5% of the total respondents revealed that this master's degree will not be enough for their career and they do need to get additional degrees. 47 percent points of the respondents said that they disagree to this statement and that they think this degree will be enough. And the remaining 27.5% of the respondents neither agree nor disagree.

A mean response of 2.68 proves that a modest number of students disagree to this statement, in that, they do not think that they need to get additional degrees such as MPhil or second master's degree after graduating to further their career.

More than one degree and better jobs (SELM5)

Again, to confirm the respondents' views on the need for additional degrees, in SELM5, they were asked if they believe that getting more than one Master's degree translates to better jobs and a stable career. Majority of students at 41.1% said that they disagree to this statement, in that, they do not think getting more than one master's degree translates to better jobs. 33.3% of the respondents agree to this statement. And the rest had no opinion on this matter. A mean of 2.83 also tells that more of the students disagree to this statement.

Table 4.15

Level of Agreement/ Disagreement for SELM5 (in percentages)

Item	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean/ Median
SELM5	12.7	28.4	25.5	29.4	3.9	2.83/3.0

Result computed through SPSS for SELM5 (Base= 102)

(SELM5=I believe that getting more than one Master's degree translates to better jobs and a stable career.)

In all of the items of SELM, it can be seen that around one- thirds of the total respondents hold no opinion on the given statements, or that they have chosen not to answer these questions. Among the remaining percentages who have either said that they agree or disagree, looking at the results it seems that more of the respondents from three faculties believe that there is generally a strong demand for social science graduates in the Nepali job market at the present time; however, in contrast, half of them do not believe that they can easily find out about job opportunities in their desired field. Also, looking at the responses for items SELM4 and SELM5, it can be said that most of the students in this sample size of 102, do not think that there is credential inflation in the Nepali job market at the present time.

However, despite this kind of finding, previous literature, both international and south-Asian, have shown that graduates, specifically from social science faculties have been struggling to get employment (Acharya, 2022; Collins, 2018; Dayaratna-Banda & Dharmadasa, 2022; Kalamatianou & Kougioumoutzaki, 2012; Moleke, 2010; Singh, 2006). Furthermore, there are also studies that have shown that even though there is no denying that tertiary education certificates and a desirable job later on have a positive association, due to credential inflation, this association has considerably weakened (Araki & Kariya, 2022).

4.5.3 Items of University Brand Strength (UBS)

All five items in UBS have been formulated to examine how the respondents feel about studying in TU, Kritipur, and also to examine the teaching- learning style of central department of TU, Kritipur. All of these questions like how proud the students feel about studying in TU, if they would change their university given the choice, and if they believe that graduates from their disciplines are well sought by the Nepali labor market, helps understand the brand strength of TU.

Again, five different questions/ items were asked to the respondents related to UBS too. These questions were also presented on a 5- point scale, where 1 meant ‘strongly disagree’ and 5 meant ‘strongly agree’. Each of the items of UBS has been described under a separate thematic title, its importance has been discussed, its result has been analyzed and a discussion or a dialogue with the previous literature has been presented in the end.

Note: The total ‘Agree’ percentage has been attained by adding the values of ‘Agree’ and ‘Strongly Agree’. Similarly, the total ‘Disagree’ percentage has been attained by adding values of ‘Strongly Disagree’ and ‘Disagree’.

Pride towards one’s university (UBS1)

In UBS1, the total of 102 students from three faculties were asked if they are proud to tell others that they are studying in Tribhuwan University (TU). A little more than half of the total students at 53.9% shared that they are proud to tell others that they are studying at TU. One-fourth (25.5%) of the total respondents did not have an exact opinion on this statement and the remaining 20.6% of them disagreed to the statement.

The mean of 3.35 for UBS1 shows that most of the students agree to this statement.

Table 4.16

Level of Agreement/ Disagreement for UBS1 (in percentages)

Item	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean/ Median
UBS1	8.8	11.8	25.5	43.1	10.8	3.35/4.0

Result computed through SPSS for UBS1 (Base= 102)

(UBS1=I am proud to tell others that I am studying at this university.)

Teaching Style of the university (UBS2)

There are numerous studies that have shown that employers give quite a lot of importance to the institutional rankings of the universities, and that the graduates from reputed universities have greater chances of being employed in comparison to their counterparts from lesser ranked universities (Antonio & Tuffley, 2017; Ergun & Sesen, 2021). The reason for this is that, reputed universities have competitive curriculum, advanced non-teacher-centric

teaching style and at the same time these universities also greatly focus on enhancing core marketable skills of the students (Ergun & Sesen, 2021).

So, in order to examine the teaching- learning style of TU, the students were asked if TU encourages them to be independent, creative, critical and if TU discourages rote- learning.

Table 4.17

Level of Agreement/ Disagreement for UBS2 (in percentages)

Item	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean/ Median
UBS2	8.8	23.5	22.5	40.2	4.9	3.09/3.0

Result computed through SPSS for UBS2 (Base= 102)

(UBS2=My university encourages me to be creative and discourages rote- learning.)

In UBS2, 45.1 percent points of the respondents shared that they do believe that TU encourages creativity and discourages rote learning. The share of respondents who disagree to this statement are 12.8% less that those who agree to it at 32.3 percent points. And 22.5% of the total respondents neither agree nor disagree to this statement.

A mean response of 3.0 tells that slightly greater number of students at 45.1% believe that TU encourages creativity and discourages rote- learning.

Even though the studies by Collins, and also Bowles and Gintis has shown that the teaching- learning process is very different for different tiers of schools—working- class school, middle- class school, higher middle- class school, and affluent school, and although numerous Nepali authors have shown dissatisfaction with the teacher- centric, written examination- based teaching- learning process of TU, 45.1 percent points of this sample of students believe that TU does indeed discourage rote- learning.

Choice of University (UBS3)

Both neo- Weberians and neo- Marxists have linked economic- class of the students’ families to the choice and chance of students getting to study in a certain university. In Nepal, regardless of the university being a public or a private entity, figures have shown that both types of universities have not been able to produce an internationally competitive workforce. However, the general sentiment that “private universities deliver a better-quality education” remains.

In light of this, the respondents were questioned that if they were given the choice and the chance to study in any other university than TU, would they take it. In UBS3, similar share of respondents at 37.3% and 34.3% of the total sample size agreed and disagreed to this statement, respectively. While 28.4% of them did not have an exact opinion on this statement.

Table 4.18

Level of Agreement/ Disagreement for UBS3 (in percentages)

Item	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean/ Median
UBS3	13.7	20.6	28.4	32.4	4.9	2.94/3.0

Result computed through SPSS for UBS3 (Base= 102)

(UBS= Even if there was a possibility to do so, I would not choose any other university over this.)

It could be inferred on the basis of this result that students may choose another university to study in if it were an option. However, since probing was not possible based on the design of the study, 37.3% being the greater response, one might say that students would not choose to study anywhere else even if there was a possibility to do so.

University's reputation in their field of study (UBS4)

In UBS4, they were asked if their university has an outstanding reputation in their field of study. Slightly more than one-third (35.3%) of the respondents said that TU does have an outstanding reputation in their field of study. 37.3% of the total respondents shared that they neither agree nor disagree to this statement and 27.4% of the them disagreed to this statement. A mean of 2.9 explains that only a modest number of students agree to this.

Table 4.19

Level of Agreement/ Disagreement for UBS4 (in percentages)

Item	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean/ Median
UBS4	12.7	14.7	37.3	31.4	3.9	2.99/3.0

Result computed through SPSS for UBS4 (Base= 102)

(UBS4= My university has an outstanding reputation in my field of study.)

Employers and University Preference (UBS5)

Finally, in UBS5, the students were asked if employers specifically target students from TU for jobs in their subject area. Majority of the students at 45.1% expressed that they neither agree nor disagree to this statement. Just a minority of 20.6% agreed to this statement, and the remaining 34.3% disagreed to this. A mean of 2.7 and a lot of students stating 'neither agree nor disagree' shows that they are undecided in regards to this question.

Table 4.20

Level of Agreement/ Disagreement for UBS5 (in percentages)

Item	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean/ Median
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	disagree					
UBS5	15.7	18.6	45.1	18.6	2.0	2.73/3.0

Result computed through SPSS for UBS5 (Base= 102)

(UBS5=Employers specifically target this university in order to recruit individuals from my subject area.)

Greater number of students have said that they are proud to tell other that they study in TU. But the question remains if they are proud to be an individual pursuing tertiary education or if they are proud to be a TU student. A good number of students also believe that TU's teaching- learning approach is such that it encourages creativity and discourages rote-learning. But for the remaining 3 of the UBS questions, the mean of less than '3' reveals that most of the students hold a modest view for three out of five statements or the items, related to the final independent variable UBS.

For all remaining three questions, significant number of respondents chose to reply with "neither agree nor disagree". They were reluctant to answer if they would switch universities if given the option. Only 8% more students than the share who disagreed, shared that TU has an outstanding reputation in their field of study, and finally, a mean of 2.7 and 45.1% of students stating 'neither agree nor disagree' to item UBS5-- Employers specifically target this university in order to recruit individuals from my subject area-- shows that students are undecided in regards to this question.

4.6 Relationship of each independent variable with SPE

Bivariate data is a set of two variables that are dependent on each other. Bivariate analysis is thus performed in order to examine if there is a relationship between two different variables. For this study, the researcher has tried to examine if there is a relationship between three different independent variables—CSC, SELM and UBS—to the dependent variable SPE.

For this, the researcher has performed a non- parametric correlation test (Spearman's Rank order correlation) test to examine if the variables have some kind of relationship with each other. In this test, if the value of correlation coefficient 'r' is a '0', it means that the variables

are not correlated or that they do not have any relation. On the other hand, the correlation coefficient of 0.3 to 1 (either positive or negative) indicates that there is some degree of correlation between the tested variables.

Note: The items in dependent variable, SPE, are common for all three independent variables. These are: **SPE1:** Because of my good academic record, I am generally confident that I will get a good job, **SPE2:** Because I have core- skills (teamwork, adaptability, problem- solving, emotional intelligence, creativity, perseverance) desired by employers, I am generally confident that I will get a good job in the future, **SPE3:** Because of my strong job contact network, I am generally confident that I will get a good job and establish my career, **SPE4:** After graduating from TU, Kritipur, I know I will get a good job in my area of interest , **SPE5:** I am optimistic about getting jobs in Nepali job market after graduation.

4.6.1 Relationship between CSC and SPE

The confidence of being able to find a desirable job in the field of interest after graduation, the ability to maintain it, and further change it when necessary has been termed as self-perception of employability (Hillage & Pollard,1998; Rothwell et al., 2008, 2009). As explained in the literature review section, the internal elements, cultural and social capital, possessed by students have been known to greatly impact their self-perception of how employable they believe themselves to be.

Cultural capital, that is made up of the embodied state (languages, mannerisms, preferences); the objectified state (cultural goods, books, works of art); and the institutionalized state (qualifications, educational credentials) as defined by Bourdieu, plus, the recent addition of technical (marketable skills), emotional (empathy, sympathy), national, and subcultural forms (“What is Cultural Capital”, 2019), i.e., team- work, problem solving, communication and emotional intelligence, creativity, passion, dependability, adaptability etc. (Antonio & Tuffley, 2017; Ergün & Şeşen, 2021; Hillage & Pollard,1998; Pathak, 2020; Rothwell et al.,2008), possessed by the students/ graduates has been linked to increased employability prospects in the labor market. Empirical research on cultural capital has mostly studied the institutionalized state of cultural capital.

However, both international research and also research by national author like Pathak (2020) has explained that work- related core- skills desired by the employers go beyond just academic certificates and theoretical knowledge. Therefore, it is imperative not to focus only on academic qualification side of cultural capital, but also on the technical, emotional and other present forms of work- related cultural capital, if one wants to increase their chances of employability and also increase their self- confidence related to finding employment.

Along with the cultural capital, the social networks or the possession of social capital is also another equally important internal element that shapes students' self- perception of employability. Social relationships solidify when favors are exchanged through the interpersonal connections like friends, colleagues, and other important people (Vryonides, 2009). Not only social capital possessed by the students but also a strong social network of the parents has been known to heighten students' chances of finding desirable jobs later in the job market (Ergün & Şeşen, 2021; Vryonides, 2009).

Based on such rich literature that has shown the impact of cultural and social capital on students' self- perception of employability, the researcher wanted to test CSC's significance in the self- perception of employability of TU social science students. For this the researcher attempted to study the correlation between CSC and SPE of the social science students of TU, Kritipur.

The Table 4.21 is a summary description that depicts the correlation between all CSC items and dependent variable SPE. The items in CSC are: **CSC1:** I am highly knowledgeable in my subject area i.e. I have sound understanding of subject matter, reasoning skills, theory- application capabilities etc, **CSC2:** I achieve high grades in relation to my studies, **CSC3:** I possess most of the core skills (teamwork, adaptability, problem solving, emotional intelligence, creativity, perseverance) that are considered valuable in an employee, **CSC4:** I know a lot of seniors and accomplished people who could help me get jobs after graduation, **CSC5:** I possess a good job contact network (rapport with seniors, connection with professors, relatives working in my desired career field) that will aid my career development.

Table 4.21

Summary description of Non- parametric Correlation between CSC and SPE

Variables	SPE1	SPE2	SPE3	SPE4	SPE5	Spearman's Correlation coefficient/ TM
CSC1	.580	.550	.440	.240	.225	
CSC2	.490	.548	.403	.223	.164	
CSC3	.502	.515	.394	.283	.240	
CSC4	.318	.386	.399	.318	.426	
CSC5	.442	.368	.445	.199	.465	
Spearman's Correlation coefficient/ TM						r= 0.667

Note. Summary description table for CSC and SPE has been obtained by compiling the SPSS output from researcher's computation

Before finding out the spearman's correlation coefficient 'r' from the average/ median of these two variables, the researcher tried to check the correlation between each of these 10 items of the two variables. It can be seen that between all of the items, there is significance and they have a moderate to low, positive correlation. Also, when median of cultural social capital and median of self- perceived employability of the total sample size (102) was calculated and when spearman's rank order correlation test was run, it could be seen that the spearman's correlation coefficient ($r= 0.667$) is significant ($p= 0.000 < \alpha=0.01$) at 0.01 level of significance. This value of r indicates that there is a moderate positive correlation between cultural social capital of the students (CSC) and their self- perception of how employable (SPE) they believe themselves to be.

The positive value of r also shows that values of both the variables tend to increase or decrease in tandem. In other words, if students believe that they have low cultural and social

capital, their self- confidence in being employable is also low and if there CSC is high, their SPE is also high. In this study, since a moderate positive correlation has been seen for these two variables, it can be said that students possess a moderate level of cultural- social capital, and thus, their self- perception of employability is also moderate.

4.6.2 Relationship between SELM and SPE

Talking about the external elements that shapes the self- perception of employability of the university graduates, it is also very much dependent on the situation, structure and on the features of the external labor market (Hillage & Pollard, 1998), also on individuals' knowledge on the state of this labor market (Wittekind et al., 2010, as cited in Ergün & Şeşen, 2021). When talking about the state of the labor market, one needs to remember the availability of job openings in the labor market, the demand for educated workers in the job market, the qualities and specificity of qualifications required in the workers, and employees' priorities in the potential employee (McQuaid & Lindsay, 2005, as cited in Ergün & Şeşen, 2021). Furthermore, students also need to be aware of this situation of the external market, such that, they can utilize this information to maximize their chances of securing a job after graduation (Hillage & Pollard, 1998). And possessing knowledge about the state of the labor market, and being able to use this information means that students are self- confident about being employable.

In order to understand the state of the Nepali labor market and also to access students' knowledge of it, this study has incorporated two things: Credential Inflation and the demand for social science graduates. Students today have been studying for longer duration and getting more than one degree, in the hopes of acquiring specialized skills that can help them stand apart from their competitors and get a desirable job in the labor market (Antonio & Tuffley, 2017). Collins et al. (2019) has explained this phenomenon as credential inflation. Credential Inflation can be seen in Nepali job market too. Today, in order to get a job in Nepal, along with master's degree, applicants also display that they have completed an M.Phil. course or that they have a second master's degree in order to stand apart from their counterparts. This proves that when academic credentials get inflated, potential employees need to work rather hard to stand apart from their contemporaries and get recognized in the job market.

Another equally important factor that paints the picture of the state of the external labor market is the demand for social science graduates in the job market. Credential inflation is not the only phenomena that students need to battle in order to come first in the labor queue and secure desirable jobs in the labor market. The selection or the choice of degree has been presented as another equally important factor that has been known to affect graduates' chances of employability in the labor market. Numerous research around the world have demonstrated that the labor market might be more favorable towards graduates from applied or technical subject, rather than students of Humanities and social sciences (Acharya, 2022; Collins, 2018; Dayaratna-Banda & Dharmadasa, 2022; Kalamatianou & Kougioumoutzaki, 2012; Moleke, 2010; Singh, 2006). However, subjects like sociology, psychology, economics, criminal justice, and English are subjects within social sciences, that are known to do slightly better in the labor market.

So, in order to examine if the self- perception of students gets affected by the situation of Nepali labor market and students' knowledge of it, the researcher has performed a spearman's correlation test between SELM and SPE.

Table 4.22 is a summary description that depicts the correlation between all SELM items and dependent variable SPE. The items in SELM are: **SELM1:** There is generally a strong demand for social science graduates in the Nepali job market at the present time, **SELM2:** There are plenty of job vacancies in the geographical area where I will look for jobs after graduation, **SELM3:** I can easily find out about job opportunities in the job market in my chosen field, **SELM4:** I feel the need to get additional degrees such as MPhil or second master's degree after graduating. This master's degree will not be enough for my career, **SELM5:** I believe that getting more than one Master's degree translates to better jobs and a stable career.

Table 4.22

Summary description of Non- parametric Correlation between SELM and SPE

Variables	SPE1	SPE2	SPE3	SPE4	SPE5	Spearman's Correlation/ TM
SELM1	0.517	0.480	0.337	0.378	0.321	
SELM2	0.420	0.470	0.409	0.420	0.299	
SELM3	0.349	0.458	0.480	0.321	0.382	
SELM4	0.257	0.165	0.293	0.400	0.173	
SELM5	0.332	0.207	0.290	0.267	0.354	
Spearman's Correlation/ TM						r= 0.669

Note. Summary description table for SELM and SPE has been obtained by compiling the SPSS output from researcher's computation

The correlation between of all items in the second independent variable, state of external labor market and dependent variable self- perceived employability was also tested. Here too, as can be seen from the table above, the value of 'r' between 0.165 to 0.517, shows that there is significance and they have a moderate to low, positive correlation.

When median of state of external labor market and median of self- perceived employability of the total sample size (102) was calculated and when spearman's rank order correlation test was run, correlation coefficient (r) of 0.669 was obtained. This shows that the spearman's correlation coefficient (r= 0.669) is significant ($p= 0.000 < \alpha=0.01$) at 0.01 level of significance. This value of r indicates that there is a moderate and a positive correlation between the state of external labor market and the students' self- perception of how employable they believe themselves to be.

The positive value of r shows that the values of state of external labor market and students' self- confidence in being employable increases or decreases together. In other words, when

the state of the external labor market and their knowledge of it increases or decreases, their self- confidence in being able to find jobs in the future also increases or decreases respectively.

4.6.3 Relationship between UBS and SPE

Before examining if there is correlation between the university brand strength and the self- perception of employability among the TU social science students, it is necessary to revisit how both neo- Weberians (Collins) and neo- Marxists (Anyon, Bowles, Gintis) have linked economic- class of the students' families to the choice and chance of students getting to study in a certain university. The result of the section that was designed to figure out the economic- class of the respondents who choose to study in TU showed that the parents of more than 75% of the total respondents have not gained tertiary education, that students mostly spend their monthly allowance in rent, food and tuition fees, and as much as 84.2% consider themselves as belonging to the middle- class family proves that students who choose to study in TU belong to middle- class families.

Collins (2018, 2019) and Bowles & Gintis have asserted that education system is stratified and that the teaching- learning methods of different tiers of schools/ universities differ are different. In the study by Anyon (2011), she has found out from her empirical study that the teachers in the middle- class schools value neatness in answers over independence and critical thinking. That unlike in working- class schools, some decision making on part of the students is entertained here but for most part, the teaching methods are highly teacher- centric. And the teaching- learning process of TU has been known to be traditional and teacher- centric indeed (Acharya, 2022; Bhatta, 2012; Gaulee, 2014; Pokharel, 2019).

In Nepal, regardless of the university being a public or a private entity, figures have shown that both types of universities have not been able to produce an internationally competitive workforce (Acharya, 2022; Gaulee, 2014). Both, competitive curriculum and marketable skills enhancing education is greatly lacking in Nepali universities. When talking about the situation of universities in Nepal, their brand value, and the curriculum that they follow, almost all the studies complain that, in general, the quality of higher education in Nepal is deteriorating (Acharya, 2022; Bhatta, 2012; Gaulee, 2014; Pokharel, 2019). Be it private

universities like the Kathmandu University or the oldest public institution in Nepal, the Tribhuwan University (TU), Nepali universities have failed to produce manpower that can be absorbed by the labor market (Acharya, 2022; Gaulee, 2014).

However, the general sentiment that “private universities deliver a better-quality education” remains. Because despite TU being Nepal’s first, oldest and largest (in terms of physical size) public university, TU is often blamed for not being able to match with the fast pace of globalization and produce skilled manpower who can perform well in the labor market (UNESCO, 2018, as cited in Acharya, 2022). TU often gets blamed for being unable to produce workforce that is confident in finding jobs after graduation (Pokharel, 2019). Problems like TU giving high importance to just theoretical knowledge and not the core-skills enhancing curriculum, rampant political interference and disproportionate importance to written examinations, are some of the most pressing problems of TU.

Therefore, in this section, the researcher has tried to document the sentiments of students regarding TU’s brand strength and if it affects their self- perception of employability. Table 4.23 is a summary description that depicts the correlation between all UBS items and dependent variable SPE. The items in UBS are: **UBS1:** I am proud to tell others that I am studying at this university, **UBS2:** My university encourages me to be creative and discourages rote- learning, **UBS3:** Even if there was a possibility to do so, I would not choose any other university over this, **UBS4:** My university has an outstanding reputation in my field of study, **UBS5:** Employers specifically target this university in order to recruit individuals from my subject area.

Table 4.23

Summary description of Non- parametric Correlation between UBS and SPE

Variables	SPE1	SPE2	SPE3	SPE4	SPE5	Spearman's Correlation/ TM
UBS1	0.506	0.462	0.221	0.193	0.316	
UBS2	0.323	0.310	0.150	0.306	0.215	
UBS3	0.401	0.506	0.446	0.221	0.292	
UBS4	0.496	0.490	0.365	0.336	0.464	
UBS5	0.444	0.340	0.322	0.241	0.457	
Spearman's Correlation/ TM						r= 0.624

Note. Summary description table for UBS and SPE has been obtained by compiling the SPSS output from researcher's computation

Similarly, table 4.23 illustrates the correlation between of all items in independent variable University brand strength (UBS) and dependent variable Self- perceived employability (SPE). It can be seen that between all of the items, here too, there is significance and they have a moderate to low, positive correlation.

Further, when median of university brand strength and median of self- perceived employability of the total sample size (102) was calculated and when spearman's rank order correlation test was run, correlation coefficient of $r= 0.62$ was obtained. This means that spearman's correlation coefficient ($r= 0.624$) is significant ($p= 0.000 < \alpha=0.01$) at 0.01 level of significance. Based on the criteria listed earlier, the value of r i.e., 0.624 indicates that there is a moderate and positive relationship between university brand strength and students' self- perception of employability. The positive value of r also shows that values of both the variables tend to increase or decrease in tandem, as was the case with two prior bivariate variables above.

4.7 Causal Relationship between CSC, SELM, UBS and SPE

Next, a multiple linear regression test was carried out to investigate further the extent to which three independent variables effect the self- perception of employability of students ,in that, through multiple linear regression, it has been studied to what extent three independent variables, cultural- social capital of the students, the state of the external labor market, and the brand strength of the university they are studying in influences the self- perception of employability in students.

Table 4.24

Causal Relationship between CSC, SELM, UBS and SPE

Coefficients ^a						
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			
1	(Constant)	.711	.229		3.101	.003
	MedianCSC	.373	.084	.400	4.467	.000
	MedianSELM	.358	.077	.377	4.666	.000
	MedianUBS	.133	.098	.129	1.347	.181

a. Dependent Variable: MedianSPE

Note. SPSS output for multiple linear regression (Source: Researcher's Computation)

In this research, we are looking at the role of cultural social capital of the students, students' university brand strength, and state of external labor market on their self- perception of employability. The independent variables, CSC, UBS and SELM explain 60.8 per cent ($r^2=0.608$) of the effect/change in student's self- perceived employability. Also, the value of $R=0.780$ i.e., 78% proves that the questionnaire is reliable and these three factors/ independent variables explain SPE. Further, since the fitted model to explain the role of CSC, UBS and SELM is on SPE is significant at $p=0.000 < \alpha=0.01$, we can predict it.

Among factors selected for this study the CSC (median) has a significant positive effect on the self-perceived employability among students. The regression coefficient of median CSC (.373) tells us that the self-perceived employability is shaped 0.373 times higher by CSC.

Therefore, CSC has positive role in shaping self-perceived employability among social science students of Tribhuvan University. Similarly, the second factor, SELM (median) also has a significant positive effect on the self- perceived employability among students. The regression coefficient of median SELM (.358) tells us that the self- perceived employability is shaped 0.358 times higher by SELM. Therefore, SELM also has positive role in shaping self-perceived employability among social science students of Tribhuvan University. Finally, the third and the last factor, UBS (median) also shows a significant positive effect on the self- perceived employability among students. The regression coefficient of median UBS (.133) tells us that the self- perceived employability is shaped 0.133 times higher by UBS. Therefore, UBS too has a positive role in shaping self-perceived employability among social science students of Tribhuvan University.

Further, looking at the values of the standardized beta (β) in Table 4.24 and comparing which independent variable out of the three—CSC, SELM, and UBS—has the strongest relationship with the dependent variable, we can see that CSC at $\beta = .400$ has the strongest relationship with SPE, followed by SELM at $\beta = .377$, and lastly UBS at $\beta = .129$.

Thus, it can be concluded through this research that the social- cultural capital of students, the state of the labor market, and their university's brand strength all play a significant positive role in shaping TU social science (Psychology, English, and Sociology) students' self- perception of employability. Moreover, the highest value of standardized beta for CSC at .400 also proves that for this sample of TU students at least, their possession of cultural- social capital highly affects and has the strongest relationship to their self- perception of employability. In other words, based on the regression analysis, it appears that students' cultural- social capital has a substantial effect on their self-perception of employability.

4.8 Self- Perceived Employability of respondents according to their faculties

National and international literature both have indicated that students studying technical subjects like science, medicine, engineering, business and such are known to do better than the social science and humanities students in the labor market sciences (Acharya, 2022; Collins, 2018; Dayaratna-Banda & Dharmadasa, 2022; Kalamatianou & Kougioumoutzaki, 2012; Moleke, 2010; Singh, 2006). However, what is also true is the fact that not all social

science students around the world are unemployed (Dayaratna-Banda & Dharmadasa, 2022; Kalamatianou & Kougioumoutzaki, 2012; Moleke, 2010). Moreover, within the social science and humanities faculty, students choosing to study subjects like sociology, anthropology, psychology, criminal justice, law and English have been known to do rather well in the labor market than those who take up fine arts, geography, and history (“2023 Best Social Science Majors”, 2022).

And Nepal’s country specific trend has been such that students mostly choose to study psychology, English and sociology, because the students of psychology have been finding jobs as mental health personnel, the students of English easily get teaching and other ESL jobs, and the students of sociology are sought after in the field of development and research by I/NGOs. As long as the students do well in their academics and cultivate the necessary core- marketable skills, the best ones get good jobs.

So, in this section, among these three most labor market successful subjects in Nepal, the researcher wanted to study students from which faculty have the highest self- perception of employability.

Table 4.25

Respondents of Different Faculties and Their SPE

Report			
MedianSPE			
Which master's degree program are you studying?	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Psychology	3.5278	36	.94070
Sociology	3.1923	26	.89529
English	3.4000	40	.70892
Total	3.3922	102	.84615

Note. SPSS output table obtained from researcher’s computation

Looking at the mean of all three faculties in Table 4.25, we can see that psychology has the highest mean (3.52) among three faculties. This seems to suggest that students of psychology have highest self- perception of employability when compared to students of Sociology and English. However, when an ANOVA test is run as shown in Table 4.7.2, it can be seen that

the value of $p = 0.307$ is greater than alpha 0.05 and this proves that there is no significant difference between the means of all three faculties.

Table 4.26

ANOVA

MedianSPE

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	1.703	2	.852	1.194	.307
Within Groups	70.611	99	.713		
Total	72.314	101			

Note. ANOVA output table obtained from researcher's computation

No significant ($p = .307 > \alpha = 0.05$) difference between the means of all three faculties means that the level of self- perceived employability among the students of Sociology, English, and Psychology is similar for this sample.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

5.1 Summary

One of the most pressing problems conspicuous in job markets all around the world is the never-ending supply of graduates who have acquired tertiary education, but a limited demand for workers in comparison to this supply, leading to high rates of unemployment and underemployment among the graduate students (Jackson & Wilton, 2016). Correspondingly, the situation of Nepali students/graduates is such that as soon as they complete their Master's level degree, they start worrying about their job prospects. Nepali students of all faculties-- technical and mostly Humanities and Social Sciences-- grow dejected and exceedingly unsure about how to put their degree to use and consequently, they begin doubting on their potential and their qualifications. To doubt on one's potential of being able to navigate the challenges in the labor market (Jackson & Wilton, 2016) and being unconfident about progressing in the labor queue, is having low self- perceived employability.

Taking into consideration this ever- growing problem of job- insecurity and decreased self- perception of employability in students/ graduates, just like other countries, it is also important for Nepal to study the factors that have been known to shape an individual's self- perception of employability. Studying these factors can help the stakeholders take necessary steps later on to improve the condition of these factors and ameliorate this problem of decreased self- perceived employability in students. Álvarez-González et al. (2017) borrow from social cognitive career theory by Bandura and assert that heightened self- perceived employability “influences career related interests and choice behavior” (para. 18) in individuals and helps increase self-assurance at finding a job. Therefore, this research has studied the situation of self- perceived employability in the TU social science students by focusing on three different internal and external determinants (Rothwell et al., 2008, 2009) that have been known to shape self- perception of employability in university students.

Under internal elements that affect self- perceived employability, this study has focused on the individual knowledge and marketable core- skills (cultural capital), and ‘job search skill’

or access to ‘formal and informal’ social networks (social capital) possessed by students (Hillage & Pollard, 1998, para. 12). And under external elements that affect self- perceived employability, this study has focused on the state of the labor market and students’ knowledge of it (Chou & Shen, 2012, as cited in Ergün & Şeşen, 2021), and on the economic condition and the brand strength of the university that the students are studying in (Cabarello et al., 2015, as cited in Ergün & Şeşen, 2021). The general objective of this study was to examine the factors that shape self- perceived employability among Nepali university students. And the specific objectives were to describe if and how cultural- social capital possessed by social science students of TU, kritipur affect their self- perception of employability, whether there is relationship between the state of Nepali labor market and students’ self- perception of employability, and to explain whether the university brand strength shapes self- perception of employability of TU (kritipur) social science students.

This quantitative study has moved forward with six hypotheses to test the correlation (Spearman’s Rank correlation) and causal relationship (Multiple Linear Regression) between the three independent variables—Cultural- Social Capital (CSC) of students, State of External Labor Market (SELM), University Brand Strength (UBS)—and dependent variable Self- Perceived Employability (SPE). The hypotheses are: H1: Cultural- social capital of the students shows a significant positive correlation to their self- perceived employability, H2: State of Nepali labor market shows a significant positive correlation to students’ self- perceived employability, H3: University brand strength shows a significant positive correlation to students’ self- perceived employability, H4: Cultural- social capital of the students affects their self- perceived employability to a significant extent, H5: State of Nepali labor market affects students’ self- perceived employability to a significant extent, and H6: University brand strength affects students’ self- perceived employability to a significant extent. Also, even though the research design follows an empirical, deductive and a quantitative design, the analysis of descriptive and inferential statistics has also been supported by qualitative assessments of existing studies.

Major Findings for Internal elements—Cultural and Social Capital (CSC)

Theory on forms of capital— mostly cultural and social capital—by Pierre Bourdieu has been used as a theoretical base in both qualitative and quantitative research in the field of

social sciences (mostly education and sociology) (Vryonides, 2009). Many empirical studies have examined and as the result have found substantial effects of cultural and social capital on the education, on the job- market outcomes and on self- perceived employability of students/ graduates. The items in the questionnaire for testing possession of cultural capital was formulated such that it focused on the possession of institutionalized cultural capital like academic knowledge and academic credentials and grades secured by the students, and at the same time, the researcher added items that also focused on examining the possession of core marketable skills like time- management, adaptability, dependability, emotional intelligence, creativity, honesty, perseverance etc., because as explained in the research by Antonio and Tuffley (2017), employers today not only look for strong marksheets in graduates, but also look at their core- skills and abilities to cope with the work- related environment.

The test results indicated that in regards to the possession of institutionalized cultural capital like academic knowledge and obtained grades, slightly higher number of respondents cited that they have good knowledge in the subject matter (mean= 3.49), and that they receive good grades in relation to their studies (mean= 3.53). When asked if they possess most of the soft/ core skills like teamwork, adaptability, problem solving, emotional intelligence, creativity, perseverance etc., valued by an employer, a mean of 3.71 replied that they do possess these qualities. The aggregate finding of possession of cultural capital reveals that a higher number of social science students studying in TU, Kritipur agree that they do possess cultural capital that helps heighten sense of self- perceived employability.

Under social capital, the researcher formulated questionnaire items such that it would demonstrate if the students have a good job network. Social capital for Bourdieu is, “the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance or recognition” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 248). In other words, social capital for Bourdieu refers to social networks and connections, that can help with attaining desired social status for individuals (Vryonides, 2009), through interpersonal or social connections like friends, colleagues, and others, made up of social exchanges, where favors are exchanged (Adler and Kwon, 2002, as cited in Bizzi, 2015). The personal circumstances of an individual that includes social connections/ networks and a good economic capital possessed by one’s family not only helps in academic

pursuits, but it also helps in increasing the employability prospects of the students (Ergün & Şeşen, 2021).

The test results for possession of social capital indicated that as much as 61.7% of the total respondents shared that they do not know seniors or accomplished people who could help them get jobs in the future. Similarly, when the students were asked if they possess a rapport with seniors, connection with professors, or if they know relatives working in their desired career field, majority of the students at 64.8 percent points said that they disagree to this statement. The mean of 2.30 proves that most of the respondents disagree to this statement. The aggregate finding of social capital reveals that majority of the students disagree to possessing the needed social capital that can boost their self- confidence of finding desirable jobs in the future.

Further, when the correlation test was run for median of cultural social capital and median of self- perceived employability of the total sample size (102), it was seen that the spearman's correlation coefficient ($r= 0.667$) was significant ($p= 0.000 < \alpha=0.01$) at 0.01 level of significance. This value of r indicates that there is a moderate positive correlation between cultural social capital of the students (CSC) and their self- perception of how employable (SPE) they believe themselves to be. The positive value of r also shows that values of both the variables tend to increase or decrease in tandem. In other words, if students believe that they have low cultural and social capital, their self- confidence in being employable is also low and if there CSC is high, their SPE is also high. In this study, since a moderate positive correlation has been seen for these two variables, it can be said that students possess a moderate level of cultural- social capital, and thus, their self- perception of employability is also moderate.

Major Findings for External element— State of External Labor Market (SELM)

Talking about the external factors, self- perception of employability of the university graduates is also very much dependent on the situation, structure and on the features of the external labor market (Hillage & Pollard, 1998), and also on individuals' knowledge on the state of this labor market (Wittekind et al., 2010, as cited in Ergün & Şeşen, 2021). Out of many elements through which the state of the labor market can be studied, this study has

focused on the credential inflation and on the demand for social science students in the Nepali market.

Credential inflation theory developed by Neo- Weberian, Randall Collins, has been used by sociologists for a long time to study how overwhelming supply but limited demand of educated workforce devalues tertiary education qualifications possessed by graduates, leading them to stay in the education market for longer period in the quest of gaining higher and more sellable degrees (Araki & Kariya, 2022; Collins et al., 2019). In other words, as the scarcity of jobs intensifies in a highly technology- driven society (Collins et al., 2019), the struggle to come first in the labor queue and get desired job increases (Hinchliffe, 1987). This means that people start acquiring more and more degrees which leads to credential inflation. Similar instances can be seen in Nepali job market too. Three decades ago, in order to get an employment as a higher- secondary level teacher, a bachelor's level degree would suffice, but now, seeing people with master's level degree applying for this position is quite commonplace. This clearly shows that when there is credential inflation in the job market, and when students need to make sure that they can stand out in the competitive labor market, inability to do so leads to decreased self- perception of employability.

Therefore, to test if respondents believe that there is credential inflation in the Nepali labor market, the respondents were asked if they feel the need to get additional degrees such as MPhil or second master's degree after graduating. A mean response of 2.68 proves that slightly higher number of students disagree to this statement, in that, they do not think that they need to get additional degrees such as MPhil or second master's degree after graduating to further their career. Further, when they were asked if they believe that getting more than one Master's degree translates to better jobs and a stable career, majority of students at 41.1% said that they disagree to this statement, in that, they do not think getting more than one master's degree translates to better jobs. 33.3% of the respondents agree to this statement. And the rest had no opinion on this matter. Aggregate finding reveals despite the literature saying otherwise, at least this sample of students of social sciences from TU, Kiritipur do not think that there is credential inflation in the Nepal labor market.

Another factor after credential inflation that has been studied under the state of external labor market that shapes students' self- perception of employability, is the demand for social

science graduates in the job market. Numerous research around the world have demonstrated that the labor market might be more favorable towards graduates from applied or technical subject, rather than students of Humanities and social sciences (Acharya, 2022; Collins, 2018; Dayaratna-Banda & Dharmadasa, 2022; Kalamatianou & Kougioumoutzaki, 2012; Moleke, 2010; Singh, 2006). Not only south-Asian literature but national studies have also shown that the proportion of students who choose to study the general or soft- subject like humanities and education at 38.79% is higher than that of students who choose to study science and technology. But then, the nature of the course and the employability prospect is quite low for social science subjects in Nepal according to Acharya (2022, p. 44). Similar conclusions have been drawn by Bhatta (2012) in his article, where he asserts that the ‘best quality’ students get enrolled in technical subjects in Nepal. And even though majority of students choose to study humanities, education and social sciences, the pass rates for this faculty are much lower, with education reporting the lowest pass rate of only around 10%.

In this light, to test the situation of demand for social science students in the Nepali labor market and if the students are well informed in this matter, the researcher for this section formulated items that asked the respondents if there is generally a strong demand for social science graduates in the Nepali job market at the present time. A mean of 3.0 indicates that more of the respondents from three faculties think that there is generally a strong demand for social science graduates in the Nepali job market at the present time. Therefore, even if the literature says otherwise, this sample of respondents believing that the demand is good for social science students may be because the degrees in social- sciences like English, anthropology, sociology, psychology and criminal justice are believed to have a better scope in the labor market (“2023 Best Social Science Majors”, 2022).

But then again, when the respondents were asked if there are plenty of job vacancies in the geographical area where they will look for jobs after graduation, 31.4% of them had no view on this matter and slightly higher percentage of students at 36.3 percent points said that there are not a lot of job vacancies in areas they are looking for jobs after graduation. Also, when they were asked if they can easily find out about job opportunities in the job market in their chosen field, the average value was found to be 3.0. Even though this means that a greater number of students agree to this statement, looking at the percentage of respondents who

have said that they agree (31.4%), and that they disagree (30.4%), it can be said that there is no significant difference between the share of respondents who either say that they agree or that they disagree.

Further, when the correlation test was run for median of state of external labor market and median of self- perceived employability of the total sample size (102), correlation coefficient (r) of 0.669 was obtained. This shows that the spearman's correlation coefficient ($r= 0.669$) is significant ($p= 0.000 < \alpha=0.01$) at 0.01 level of significance. This value of r indicates that there is a moderate and a positive correlation between the state of external labor market and the students' self- perception of how employable they believe themselves to be. The positive value of r shows that the values of state of external labor market and students' self- confidence in being employable increases or decreases together. In other words, when the state of the external labor market and their knowledge of it increases or decreases, their self- confidence in being able to find jobs in the future also increases or decreases respectively.

Major Findings for External element— Economic class and University Brand Strength (UBS)

Second external factor that has been studied to understand the self- perceived employability of the TU social science students is the University Brand Strength. In this section, firstly, the effect of status, power and economic-class of student's family on their choice and chance of getting to study in a certain university has been explored. More than trying to explain the patterns of exploitation and domination like Marxists, the researcher is more interested in studying how status, power, skills and credentials of the parents, and also students', help shape their life- chances (for this research, their chances of getting to study in a top tier university and later, being able to find a desirable employment). And secondly, this section has also presented—with the help of previous studies-- how the brand strength of the university that the students have chosen, the quality of education in this university, and the core- skills enhancement that they receive in the university, all ends up shaping their self- perception of employability.

On how the economic- class, status, power and credentials of the students' families help shape their life- chances like getting into a certain kind of university, Collins (2018) explains

that education system is stratified because some universities are considered more prestigious than the other, and in these types of universities, except for the academically talented scholarship students like Collins, everybody else was from an elite family. Going to universities like Stanford and Berkeley, Collins (2018) says, automatically means that one will get hired in the top research facilities, and will be able to get the best jobs in the job-market. On the similar vein, study by Bowles and Gintis (1976, as cited in Anyon, 2011) have also explained that the economic class of the parents plays a major role in determining the kind of schooling students receive, and this quality of education that they receive determines what kind of jobs they get in the job- market later on.

Anyon (2011) has found out that in working class schools, the teachers mostly focus on rote learning, and never encourage the students to be creative and curious. They are mostly trained to follow directions. In middle- class schools, neatness in answers is valued over creativity; however, teachers often encourage some decision- making on part of the students. Finally, in the higher middle class and the affluent professional schools, Anyon (2011) has found out that creativity and independence are valued. Individuality of the students is respected in these schools and they are also never shouted at. Students are repeatedly asked to express and apply ideas and concepts of their own.

Similar to this empirical test carried out by Anyon (2011) on the theory by Bowles and Gintis, Collins (2018) has also confirmed this pattern to be true for university level. Collins (2018) explains that passing out from an elite graduate school, and working under talented professors means that these professors prefer students who are critical. Professors from elite colleges encourage students to not agree with everything that they are being taught, rather challenge the theories and attempt to come up with something new and also surpass their professors. (Collins, 2018).

Therefore, in order to understand how economic class of the parents causes students to choose a certain university, the respondents were asked a few questions related to their spending habits, their parents' educational level, if they get allowance, and how do they rank themselves economically in relation to their neighborhood. Citation of more than 75% of the total respondents that their parents have not gained tertiary level education; that the allowance provided by their family and also the monthly salary of the students who hold a

job being used mostly on tuition fees, rent and food items; the fact that as much as 92.1 per cent points of the students carefully consider before spending money; and the results of the self-economic ranking (Middle- class: 84.2%, Low- class: 13%, and Higher middle- class: 2.8%), indicates that most students who choose to study in Tribhuwan University (TU) belong to the middle- class families.

TU is Nepal's first, oldest and largest (in terms of physical size) public university. It has provided affiliations to both public and private colleges of the country. Compared to studying in private TU affiliated colleges, studying in public TU affiliated colleges is a lot cheaper. Also, studying in the private colleges/universities is generally linked to getting better quality education. But amongst the public university/ colleges, students who choose to study in the central department of TU in Kritipur, not only study here because of their economic- class, but also because the teaching- learning process is considered to be better in Kritipur than in other TU affiliated public colleges. This belief that the central department, Kritipur is better in terms of faculty and the teaching- learning process compared to other TU affiliated public colleges, and that "it is the most affordable" has been proven by respondents' answers in which they cited that they chose to study in central department TU because they believe it has the best faculty amongst all other public institutions and that it is the most affordable.

However, as Anyon (2011) has found out from her empirical study, even though unlike in working- class schools, some decision making on part of the students is entertained in middle- class institutions, but for most part, the teaching methods are highly teacher- centric. And the teaching- learning process of TU has been known to be traditional and teacher- centric indeed (Acharya, 2022; Bhatta, 2012; Gaulee, 2014; Pokharel, 2019). In Nepal, regardless of the university being a public or a private entity, figures have shown that both types of universities have not been able to produce an internationally competitive workforce (Acharya, 2022; Gaulee, 2014). Both, competitive curriculum and marketable skills enhancing education is greatly lacking in Nepali universities. Be it private universities like the Kathmandu University or the oldest public institution in Nepal, the Tribhuwan University (TU), Nepali universities have failed to produce manpower that can be absorbed by the labor market (Acharya, 2022; Gaulee, 2014).

Despite this, the general sentiment that “private universities deliver a better-quality education” remains. Because despite TU being Nepal’s first, oldest and largest (in terms of physical size) public university, TU is often blamed for not being able to match with the fast pace of globalization and produce skilled manpower who can perform well in the labor market (UNESCO, 2018, as cited in Acharya, 2022). TU often gets blamed for being unable to produce workforce that is confident in finding jobs after graduation (Pokharel, 2019). Problems like TU giving high importance to just theoretical knowledge and not the core-skills enhancing curriculum, rampant political interference and disproportionate importance to written examinations, are some of the most pressing problems of TU.

So, to understand if these narratives about TU is true and to test out if respondents’ self-perception of employability got affected based on the university brand strength of TU, a section titled UBS with five items in it was formulated. A little more than half of the total students at 53.9% shared that they are proud to tell others that they are studying at TU. But the question remains if they are proud to be an individual pursuing tertiary education or if they are proud to be a TU student. Around 45.1% of students also believe that TU’s teaching-learning approach is such that it encourages creativity and discourages rote-learning. When asked if given the choice, would they change their university, similar share of respondents at 37.3% and 34.3% of the total sample size agreed and disagreed to this statement, respectively. While 28.4% of them did not have an exact opinion on this statement. When asked if their university has an outstanding reputation in their field of study. Slightly more than one-third (35.3%) of the respondents said that TU does have an outstanding reputation in their field of study. 37.3% of the total respondents shared that they neither agree nor disagree to this statement and 27.4% of the them disagreed to this statement. Finally, in UBS5, the students were asked if employers specifically target students from TU for jobs in their subject area. Majority of the students at 45.1% expressed that they neither agree nor disagree to this statement. Just a minority of 20.6% agreed to this statement, and the remaining 34.3% disagreed to this.

Further, when the correlation test was run for median of state of university brand strength and median of self-perceived employability of the total sample size (102), correlation coefficient of $r = 0.62$ was obtained. This means that spearman’s correlation coefficient ($r = 0.624$) is

significant ($p= 0.000 < \alpha=0.01$) at 0.01 level of significance. Based on the criteria listed earlier, the value of r i.e., 0.624 indicates that there is a moderate and positive relationship between university brand strength and students' self- perception of employability. The positive value of r also shows that values of both the variables tend to increase or decrease in tandem, as was the case with two prior bivariate variables above.

Result of Multiple Linear Regression

Next, a multiple linear regression test was carried out to investigate further the extent to which three independent variables effect the self- perception of employability of students, in that, through multiple linear regression, it has been studied to what extent three independent variables, cultural- social capital of the students, the state of the external labor market, and the brand strength of the university they are studying in influences the self- perception of employability in students.

Among factors selected for this study the CSC (median) has a significant positive effect on the self-perceived employability among students. The regression coefficient of median CSC (.373) tells us that the self-perceived employability is shaped 0.373 times higher by CSC. Therefore, CSC has positive role in shaping self-perceived employability among social science students of Tribhuvan University. Similarly, the second factor, SELM (median) also has a significant positive effect on the self- perceived employability among students. The regression coefficient of median SELM (.358) tells us that the self- perceived employability is shaped 0.358 times higher by SELM. Therefore, SELM also has positive role in shaping self-perceived employability among social science students of Tribhuvan University. Finally, the third and the last factor, UBS (median) also shows a significant positive effect on the self- perceived employability among students. The regression coefficient of median UBS (.133) tells us that the self- perceived employability is shaped 0.133 times higher by UBS. Therefore, UBS too has a positive role in shaping self-perceived employability among social science students of Tribhuvan University.

Further, looking at the values of the standardized beta (β) and comparing which independent variable out of the three—CSC, SELM, and UBS—has the strongest relationship with the

dependent variable, we can see that CSC at $\beta = .400$ has the strongest relationship with SPE, followed by SELM at $\beta = .377$, and lastly UBS at $\beta = .129$.

Thus, it can be concluded through this research that the social- cultural capital of students, the state of the labor market, and their university's brand strength all play a significant positive role in shaping TU social science (Psychology, English, and Sociology) students' self- perception of employability. Moreover, the highest value of standardized beta for CSC at .400 also proves that for this sample of TU students at least, their possession of cultural- social capital highly affects and has the strongest relationship to their self- perception of employability. In other words, based on the regression analysis, it appears that students' cultural- social capital has a substantial effect on their self-perception of employability.

5.2 Conclusion

Today the world has a never-ending supply of graduates who have acquired tertiary education, but a limited demand for workers in comparison to this supply, leading to high rates of unemployment and underemployment among the graduate students (Jackson & Wilton, 2016). In order to be able navigate the challenges present in this labor market, more students are staying in the education market for longer years in the quest of gaining higher and more sellable degrees (Collins, 2018, 2019). However, academic qualifications are not the only quality that employers today are looking for in potential workers.

In today's highly competitive job market, young adults are expected to cultivate core- skills and qualities apart from their academic qualification (Ergün & Şeşen, 2021; Hillage & Pollard, 1998; Pathak, 2020), that set them apart from their contemporaries and make them more employable. Along with their core- skills or cultural capital, to get jobs, social capital, state of the external labor market and the brand strength of the university have also become equally important. A proper combination of all of these elements helps increase the self- perception of employability in students/ graduates.

The aim of this research, therefore, was to study how and if these above- mentioned factors that have been known to affect the self- perception of employability in university students, also affects the self- perceived employability of TU social science students. In accordance with the objectives of this study, firstly, the relationship between cultural- social capital and

the self- perceived employability was studied. When the correlation test was run for median of cultural social capital and median of self- perceived employability, spearman's correlation coefficient of $r = 0.667$ was obtained. This value of r indicates that there is a moderate positive correlation between cultural social capital of the students (CSC) and their self- perception of how employable (SPE) they believe themselves to be. From this result, it can be concluded that TU social science students possess a moderate level of cultural- social capital, and thus, their self- perception of employability is also moderate.

Secondly, when the correlation test was run for median of state of external labor market and median of self- perceived employability of the total sample size (102), correlation coefficient (r) of 0.669 was obtained. This shows that the spearman's correlation coefficient ($r = 0.669$) is significant ($p = 0.000 < \alpha = 0.01$) at 0.01 level of significance and this value of r indicates that there is a moderate and a positive correlation between the state of external labor market and the students' self- perception of how employable they believe themselves to be. The positive value of r shows that the values of state of external labor market and students' self- confidence in being employable increases or decreases in tandem.

Thirdly, when the correlation test was run for the median of state of university brand strength and median of self- perceived employability, a correlation coefficient of $r = 0.62$ was obtained. This value of r i.e., 0.624 again indicates that there is a moderate and positive relationship between university brand strength and students' self- perception of employability too. Further, looking at the values of the standardized beta (β) in the multiple linear regression output table shows that CSC at $\beta = .400$ has the strongest relationship with SPE, followed by SELM at $\beta = .377$, and lastly UBS at $\beta = .129$.

Having a good cultural capital, both academic (reasoning and critical skills, plus, grade) and the marketable core- skills like team- work, adaptability, emotional intelligence, ability to build rapport with the clients, perseverance etc. means that these individuals have higher chances of getting employed than their counterparts. Similarly, possession a good social network or connections with accomplished people, professors, seniors and relatives not only helps in academic pursuits, but it also helps in increasing the employability prospects of the students. And an increased employability prospects automatically means that these individuals possess elevated self- perception of employability.

Furthermore, the situation, structure and on the features of the external labor market (Hillage & Pollard, 1998), in that, the demand for workers in the job market, competencies needed to acquire specific jobs, available job openings, professions with high demand for labor, employees' priorities (McQuaid & Lindsay, 2005, as cited in Ergün & Şeşen, 2021); and most importantly, individuals' knowledge on the state of this labor market (Wittekind et al., 2010, as cited in Ergün & Şeşen, 2021) also plays a major role in shaping students' self-perception of employability.

Finally, as Alessandri et al. (2006) have mentioned, university's rank and its brand strength also play a significant role in assuring students of their future employability. As has been explained by the study by Antonio and Tuffley (2017), the reputation of the university and strength of that university's degree certificate boosts self-confidence of students of being employable. In other words, reputation of the university is known to hold a lot of value for students seeking employment. The reason for this is that reputed universities have competitive curriculum and at the same time these universities also greatly focus on core marketable skills enhancement of the students (Ergun & Sesen, 2021).

Since the study results for TU social science students indicate that all three dimensions—CSC, SELM and UBS—have a significant positive relationship with SPE, it can be concluded that as argued in theories by Bourdieu, Collins and as shown by other existing empirical studies, CSC, SELM and UBS having a significant positive relationship with SPE is true in the context of Nepal too. Also, given this relationship, stakeholders working to better the condition of these dimensions may produce a highly confident workforce that can compete and secure a desirable job not only in the national market but also international market. Working to better the conditions of both internal and external factors that affects the self-perception of employability could stop Nepali university graduates from being exceedingly unsure about their qualifications, might stop them from doubting their potential, and it might also stop them from leaving the country in search of sub-par foreign employment.

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Annex

Questionnaire

Factors affecting Self- Perceived Employability among Tribhuwan University Humanities and Social Science Students

This research will be conducted exclusively for academic and learning purposes. The research shall try to collect information regarding factors that affect employability perception among TU social science students.

This questionnaire will be treated as strictly confidential. Identifying information will only be used by persons engaged in, and for the purposes of the research. Therefore, maximum participation is encouraged in order to make the research reliable and representative.

BACKGROUND CHARACTERISTICS

1. Age:
2. Gender
 - Male
 - Female
 - Others
3. Which Master's degree program are you studying? (अहिले तपाईं कुन विषय पढ्दै हुनुहुन्छ?)
4. Semester of Master's degree you are currently in (अहिले तपाईं कुन सेमेस्टरमा पढ्दै हुनुहुन्छ?):

5. Name and location of the college from where you completed your bachelor's degree

(तपाईंले bachelor's गर्नुभएको कलेजको नाम र ठेगाना):

.....

6. Current employment status (के तपाईं अहिले कुनै काम / जागिर गर्दै हुनुहुन्छ?):

Not currently working (please move to question no. 8)

Working part-time

Working full-time

7. How do you spend your monthly salary (तपाईं आफ्नो तलब कसरी उपयोग गर्नुहुन्छ)?

(Tick all that apply)

University tuition fees

Rent

Food

Clothing/ shoes

Personal care/Cosmetics

Buying Electronic devices

Movies/travel

Others

8. Have your parents completed their tertiary education?

Yes

No

9. Does your family give you/send you money for monthly expenses (के तपाईंको

परिवारले तपाईंलाई मासिक पाकेट खर्च दिनुहुन्छ वा पठाइदिनुहुन्छ)?

Yes

No

10. How do you spend the monthly allowance given / sent by your family (परिवारले

दिएको मासिक पाकेट खर्च तपाईं कसरी उपयोग गर्नुहुन्छ)? (Tick all that apply)

University tuition fees

Rent

Food

Clothing/ shoes

Personal care/Cosmetics

Buying Electronic devices

Movies/travel

Others

11. Before you buy clothes/shoes/personal hygiene products, do you carefully consider if

you really need it (लुगा/जुता आदि किन्नु अगाडी के तपाईंलाई ती सामाग्रीहरु साँच्चै

आवश्यक छन् कि छैनन् भनेर सोच्नुहुन्छ?):

I do

I don't

12. How do you rank yourself economically in relation to your neighborhood?

High- class

Higher middle- class

Middle- class

Low- Class

UNDERSTANDING STUDENT'S UNIVERSITY AND DEGREE CHOICE

13. Why did you choose to study in Tribhuwan University? (तपाईंले master's degree

पढनका लागि TU नै किन रोज्नुभयो?)

(Please tick all that apply)

My parents told me this is the best university of Nepal (आमाबुवाले TU नेपालको सबैभन्दा राम्रो विश्वविद्यालय हो भन्नुभएकोले)

Most of my friends decided they would study Masters level in TU (धेरै साथीहरू TU नै पढ्ने भएकाले)

Our college suggested we should join TU after bachelors (bachelor's degree पढेको कलेजले TU पढ्ने सुझाव दिएकोले)

Studying in TU would help me reach my career goals and make me employable (TU को पढाईले मलाई रोजगार योग्य बनाउने भएकाले)

Others (Please Specify)

.....

14. Why did you choose to study this degree (तपाईंले Sociology/Psychology/English

विषय नै किन पढ्न रोज्नुभयो?)

(Please tick all that apply)

I have always been interested in Sociology/Psychology/English (पहिले देखि रुचि भएकाले)

My parents come from social science background (मेरो आमाबुवाले पनि समाज विज्ञान कै विषय पढ्नुभएकोले)

I want to make my career in this-- Sociology/Psychology/English--field (मलाई यही विषयमा career बनाउन मन भएकोले)

Studying social sciences was my only option (अरु कुनै विकल्प नभएकाले)

Other (Please specify)

.....

EVALUATING MARKERS OF SELF- PERCEIVED EMPLOYABILITY AND CAREER CHOICE

Internal Elements:

Cultural and Social Capital

15. I am highly knowledgeable in my subject area i.e. I have sound understanding of subject matter, reasoning skills, theory- application capabilities etc.

(मलाई मेरो विषय मा गहिरो ज्ञान छ--- म पढाएका कुरा राम्ररी बुझ्छु, बुझेका सिद्धान्तलाई लागु गर्न सक्छु, म सँग तर्क गर्न सक्ने क्षमता छ)

Strongly disagree Disagree Neither agree nor disagree Agree

Strongly agree

16. I achieve high grades in relation to my studies

(म परिक्षा मा राम्रो अंक / GPA प्राप्त गर्छु)

Strongly disagree Disagree Neither agree nor disagree Agree

Strongly agree

17. I possess most of the core- skills (teamwork, adaptability, problem solving, emotional intelligence, creativity, perseverance) that are considered valuable in an employee

(म सँग एउटा कर्मचारीमा हुनुपर्ने सबैजस्तो सीप छ जस्तै सृजनशिलता,समस्या समाधान गर्नसक्ने कौशल , हार नमानी निरन्तर प्रयास गर्न सक्ने क्षमता, भावनात्मक कुशलता, परिस्थिती अनुसार आफुलाई परिवर्तन गर्न सक्ने क्षमता आदि)

Strongly disagree Disagree Neither agree nor disagree Agree

Strongly agree

18. I know a lot of seniors and accomplished people who could help me get jobs after graduation

(Graduation पछी मलाई जागिर लगाइदिन सक्ने senior र अरु सफल व्यक्तिहरूसँग मेरो राम्रो चिनजान छ)

Strongly disagree Disagree Neither agree nor disagree Agree

Strongly agree

19. I possess a good job contact network (rapport with seniors, connection with professors, relatives working in my desired career field) that will aid my career development

(जागिर लगाइदिन सक्ने व्यक्तिहरूसँगको चिनजानले मलाई मेरो career बनाउन मद्दत गर्नेछ)

Strongly disagree Disagree Neither agree nor disagree Agree

Strongly agree

External Elements:

State of external labor market

20. There is generally a strong demand for social science graduates in the Nepali job market at the present time

(अहिले नेपाली job marketमा सामाजिक विज्ञान पढेका मान्छेहरुको धेरै माग छ)

- Strongly disagree Disagree Neither agree nor disagree Agree
 Strongly agree

21. There are plenty of job vacancies in the geographical area where I will look for jobs after graduation

(मैले काम गर्न खोजेको भौगोलिक क्षेत्रमा मेरो विषयसँग सम्बन्धित job vacancy धेरै छन्)

- Strongly disagree Disagree Neither agree nor disagree Agree
 Strongly agree

22. I can easily find out about job opportunities in the job market in my chosen field

- Strongly disagree Disagree Neither agree nor disagree Agree
 Strongly agree

23. I do not feel the need to get additional degrees such as MPhil or second master's degree after graduating. This master's degree will be enough for my career.

- Strongly disagree Disagree Neither agree nor disagree Agree
 Strongly agree

24. I believe that getting more than one Master's degree does not necessarily translate to better jobs and a stable career

- Strongly disagree Disagree Neither agree nor disagree Agree
 Strongly agree

University brand strength

25. I am proud to tell others that I am studying at this university

(म TU को विद्यार्थी भएको कुरा सबैलाई गर्वकासाथ भन्छु)

- Strongly disagree Disagree Neither agree nor disagree Agree
 Strongly agree

26. My university encourages me to be creative and discourages rote- learning

(मेरो विश्वविद्यालयले घोकन्ते विद्या भन्दा सृजन्शिलतालाई प्रोत्साहित गर्छ)

- Strongly disagree Disagree Neither agree nor disagree Agree
 Strongly agree

27. Even if there was a possibility to do so, I would not choose any other university over this

(TU बाहेक अरु कतै पढ्ने विकल्प भएतापनि म TU मै पढ्छु)

- Strongly disagree Disagree Neither agree nor disagree Agree
 Strongly agree

28. My university has an outstanding reputation in my field of study

(मेरो विश्वविद्यालयमा मेरो विषय नेपालमै सबैभन्दा राम्रो सँग पढाइन्छ)

- Strongly disagree Disagree Neither agree nor disagree Agree
 Strongly agree

29. Employers specifically target this university in order to recruit individuals from my subject area

(रोजगारदाताहरुले पहिला TU बाटै sociology/psychology/English पास गरेका विद्यार्थीहरुलाई जागिर दिन खोज्छन्)

- Strongly disagree Disagree Neither agree nor disagree Agree
 Strongly agree

SELF- PERCEIVED EMPLOYABILITY

30. Because of my good academic record, I am generally confident that I will get a good job and establish my career

- Strongly disagree Disagree Neither agree nor disagree Agree
 Strongly agree

31. Because I have soft- skills (teamwork, adaptability, problem solving, emotional intelligence, creativity, perseverance) desired by employers, I am generally confident that I will get a good job and establish my career

- Strongly disagree Disagree Neither agree nor disagree Agree
 Strongly agree

32. Because of my strong job contact network, I am generally confident that I will get a good job and establish my career

- Strongly disagree Disagree Neither agree nor disagree Agree
 Strongly agree

33. After graduating from Tribhuvan university, I know I will get a good job in my area of interest

(TU बाट पढाई सकीएपछी चाहेको जस्तो जागिर पाउँछु जस्तो लाग्छ)

- Strongly disagree Disagree Neither agree nor disagree Agree
 Strongly agree

34. I am optimistic about getting jobs in Nepali job market after graduation

- Strongly disagree Disagree Neither agree nor disagree Agree
 Strongly agree