

Incorporating corporate social responsibility into graduate employability

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Abstract

To remain sustainably viable in today's business environment, employers require appropriate skills to support their commitment to social responsibility. When recruiting skills, employers recognize that graduate attributes are essential indicators of the capability to render constructive workplace outcomes. Graduates need to develop these attributes to demonstrate their employability potential to prospective employers. However, existing employability capital frameworks do not include the graduate attributes needed to measure capability in corporate social responsibility (CSR) skills. The objective of this study was to determine which graduate attributes would support employability capability in CSR skills. Following a theoretical investigation, a mixed-method exploratory study was undertaken in South Africa's state-owned electricity provider to determine the employability attributes required by the organization in CSR management. The first phase involved a data collection survey, 302 managers and supervisors in South Africa's primary electricity provider rated a proposed 44 personal attributes linked to nine theoretical determined CSR skills and their importance in

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CSR management. In the second phase, the survey results were validated through a separate Delphi technique with three Human Resource Development experts. Confirmatory factor analysis found significant relationships between the tested attributes and the nine CSR skills. The findings could assist graduates in understanding the attributes they need to develop to be deemed employable for CSR performance. Furthermore, higher education institutions can include the results in curriculums to contribute to the development of CSR skills. Finally, the attributes and skills could be used to conceptualize a focused CSR employability capital, which employers can use to test employability potential.

KEYWORDS

corporate social responsibility, employability, employability capital, personal attributes, skills

INTRODUCTION

Globalization and technological advancement have touched the economic world in every facet. To face the new economic dispensation and associated societal disruption, appropriate skills have become a prominent commodity. The organizational need for appropriately skilled resources to face their dynamic operational environment gave birth to the term ‘employability’ as we know it today (Bridgstock & Jackson, 2019). An appropriate qualification is no longer deemed sufficient for employability as employers now also require graduates to demonstrate capability in the skills that would support their strategic intents and growth. The difference between graduate skills on offer and employer skills demand gives rise to the employability gap and graduate unemployment (McQuaid & Lindsay, 2005).

Globally, unemployment is described as the Achilles heel of governments based on its effect on the socioeconomic environments of nations. Unemployment is largely deemed a factor of skill mismatches and not, as historically, the absence of employment opportunities. Without suitably competent employees, organizations cannot face challenges and manoeuvre consistent market changes (Singh et al., 2016). The many policies and higher education institution (HEI) strategies to address the unemployment challenge posed little progress as the employability gap expanded. In fact, the South African setting is daunting, considering the high overall unemployment rate of 34.5%, with a youth unemployment rate for ages below 25 is 63.9% (2019—30%) and for the age group 25–34 years at 42.1% (2019—40.1%) (StatsSA, 2020, 2022). Reporting the highest youth unemployment in the world, the South African scenario depicts a narrative of significant concern to the government, HEI and employers alike.

HEIs’ attempt to match the graduate skills proposition with what they deem to be the employers’ skills needs (Boden & Nedeva, 2010). While various theories, constructs and

approaches have been postulated to establish appropriate employability curricula, Wilson and Marnewick (2018) report that HEI curricula still cover only approximately 30% of the employer skills demands. Pressured for appropriate skills, employers raised a strong call for graduates to display value-added soft skills that will assist them in manoeuvring the complex market and organizational environments (Cimatti, 2016). Accordingly, scholars turned their focus to establishing the fundamental technical and softer psychological personal attributes graduates should display to insert confidence with potential employers in their capability of future performance (Rothwell & Rothwell, 2017). These attributes are conceptualized and described as the capital required for employability (Tomlinson, 2017). The modelled capitals serve a dual purpose. On the one hand, it provides graduates with a framework of which attributes they should develop to be employable, and on the other hand, it assists employers with a baseline to assess future performance capability against their demanded skill requirements (Tomlinson, 2017). While this seems an easy quest, it is far from so.

Still struggling to find their feet in a globalized economy, organizations are yet again faced with significant environmental changes—global warming, societal imbalances and depletion of critical supply materials. Forced by these external drivers, the employers shifted focus to corporate socially responsible (CSR) practices (Osagie et al., 2016). The shift in focus was partially forced by legislative requirements directing some accountability for protecting the planet and people, but more so by societal resistance against organizations that abuse the ecosystems and cause harm. Pressure is mounting from the green and socially conscious consumers who direct their purchase power towards organizations that demonstrate sound governance and ethical business practices for a sustainable world regarding people, profit and the planet (Enikolopov et al., 2018). Consumer opinion is a major driver of corporate image and a leading factor in corporate CSR investment decisions (Yoon et al., 2006). In turn, CSR is the primary driver of consumer behaviour and loyalty (Wu & Lin, 2014). It is not surprising that research reports a direct link between CSR practices and organizational profitability (Flammer, 2015; Okafor et al., 2021).

The new-world consumer brings an interesting stake to the employability table. While the historic employability contract flowed between employers' graduate skill demand and supply position, the relationship can now be described as one of triangularity where the consumer demands the CSR skills, the employer facilitates, and the graduate supplies the skill.

Evidently, organizations recognize that merely implementing CSR legislation does not guarantee a sustainable market share. Consumers' demands require them to find new and innovative ways of thinking and skills to ensure loyalty, future economic and societal sustainability, sound reputation and brand management (Hur et al., 2014). In this triangular relation where corporate sustainability plays a major role, the following research question arises: Which personal attributes will demonstrate graduate potential in CSR skills to support graduate employability?

Notably, some work has been done to establish CSR-related skills. However, the associate personal attributes that would support CSR skill competency and indicate employability remains unclear and unresearched (Xing & Starik, 2017). In addition, current employability capital models fail to discuss the requisite CSR employability attributes. Hence, this article seeks to determine which graduate attributes will support employability capability in CSR skills. In commencing the research, organizational CSR skills are explored and identified from existing literature to form a reference base for the empirical determination of the associated employability attributes.

The exploratory study formed part of a broader employability skills study conducted in South Africa's state-owned electricity provider, Eskom. Kenny et al. (2015, p. 21) remark in their policy paper, 'Electricity supply is of supreme importance to economic growth and the well-being of all South Africans'. This is so not only in job creation but also in CSR management. Eskom produces electricity through nuclear, coal and water resources and is the largest emitter of pollutants in South Africa. The company acknowledges that its generation process waste has a dire impact on natural resources and communities' health, while the transmission networks impact bird life and the natural habitats of various animals. In addition, Eskom faces immense financial and production challenges with high debt levels, failing equipment and significant economic disruption through rolling power outages. Despite these challenges, Eskom declared its intent to enhance CSR contribution to support cleaner energy, economic activity, employment and maintaining the health and safety of all stakeholders (Eskom, 2021). CSR is deemed a major priority by the organization making the company most suitable for the investigation.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

In the next section, a brief theoretical background will be offered on employability, its associated graduate capitals, CSR and its related skills.

Employability

Many scholarly definitions are advanced to describe the concept of employability. For this article, the description of Wilton (2014) is deemed descriptive of the objective. Wilton postulates employability as the knowledge, skills and a set of personal attributes that are positively linked to future performance and relevant to the business requirements. Similarly, Matteson et al. (2016) present employability skills as a constituent of cognitive and noncognitive knowledge, attributes, behaviours and competencies. A broader perspective is offered by Holmes (2015), who equates sustainable employability as an outcome of success in the workplace, which is generated by applying the appropriate skills and displaying the required personal attributes.

Personal attributes, in turn, can be described as the personal contributions of the 'self' that makes an individual appealing to a heterogeneous range of employers (Boden & Nedeva, 2010) and create market value for graduates (Tomlinson, 2017). These attributes are referred to as employability capital and are what graduates need to demonstrate to potential employers as employability potential for future performance (Holmes, 2015; Williams et al., 2016). To broaden the understanding of employability capital, the next section will briefly give an overview of the driving concepts and theories that define it.

Employability capital

Described as a psychosocial construct, employability capital is described as the personal attributes that moderate employability skills (Peeters et al., 2019; Tomlinson, 2017). Both Myers and McCaulley (1985) and Goldberg (1993) drew early attention to the importance of

personality attributes and argued that success in life depends thereupon. This view is supported by several other works, that is, Jackson (2017), Clarke (2018) and Ngo et al. (2017), whose works confirm personal attributes as drivers of employability capital.

Drawing from earlier conceptual work, it is indicated that the development of employability capital followed a rather simplistic way where it was first linked to singular concepts and only in later years considered as a comprehensive set of capitals that collectively interact to support employability. Some of the earlier works of Bandura (1986) argued for self-efficacy, self-awareness and self-management in social set-ups as important attributes. K. Ryan (1986) expanded on this view and advanced emotional literacy, including the psychological constructs of duty, ethical and moral behaviour and fairness, as crucial organizational performance contributors.

In a first attempt to broaden the employability attribute scope, R. M. Ryan and Deci (2000) postulate that self-determination theory, which articulates human motivation, personality and social skills, is an important facet of employee success. Recognizing that job performance and success include interrelationships with other humans, the Goleman-Boyatzis model of emotional competency consolidated the attributes of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness and social skills into the concepts of emotional and social intelligence and deemed these intelligences as critical in employability success (Boyatzis et al., 2000). This view was supported by scholarly works like Abdolvahabi et al. (2012), who confirmed an empirical relationship between emotional intelligence and self-efficacy. Van Dyne et al. (2012) recognized the impact of globalization and diversity on the workplace environment and expanded the intelligence concept to cultural intelligence, which refers to the ability to sense, adjust, reason, and act suitably on social signs. Testing an 11-factor model of cultural intelligence, Van Dyne et al. (2012) found significant relationships between cultural intelligence, motivation, self-efficacy, motivation and awareness.

Fugate et al. (2004) attempted to consolidate the various established attributes into sets of capitals that, applied collectively, would interact to support employability. They found that the capitals of career identity, personal adaptability, and social and human capital would support employability. The well-known theory of psychological capital (Pscycap), as established by Luthans et al. (2010), describes what they termed meta-competencies in employability as hope, self-efficacy, resilience and optimism. In support, Anglim and Grant (2016) advance that Pscycap assist graduates in maximizing their abilities to respond to organizational challenges and adjust proactively to environmental demands during times of stress, change, and adversity. Donald et al. (2019) do not share the Fugate et al. view of separated capitals. They argue that employability capital equates with a single human capital and argue that it holistically incorporates scholastic capital, Pscycap, social capital, market-value capital, cultural capital and the skills associated with realizing employability potential. Peeters et al. (2019) disagree and argue that a single human capital alone is too simplistic and that the two concepts of human capital (individual attributes) and social capital (relational attributes) sufficiently describe employability capital.

Contesting both Donald et al. (2019) and Peeters et al.'s (2019) views, Tomlinson (2017) argues that human capital is a separate concept from the other types of capital and cannot be regarded as an umbrella term for all personal capitals. He presents graduate employability as an accumulation and arrangement of several collaborating forms of capital represented by hard and soft skills traits. His derived Graduate Capital Model presents employability capital as a mesosystem that proposes interrelations between the employability capitals of human, social, cultural, identity and PsyCap. It is in this combination of capitals that Tomlinson proposes graduate employability lies.

Presenting a brief overview of the Graduate Capital Model, it explains the harder concepts of knowledge, technical skills, qualifications and metacognitive skills like decision-making and

problem-solving as Human Capital. Emotional, social and cultural intelligence are consolidated into Social Capital and relates to the relationships, attitudes and values that govern human interactions that support workplace relations and economic and societal interests. In agreement with Van Dyne et al. (2012), the model further proposes the attributes of cultural knowledge, awareness and values as critical elements in cultural capital.

True to Cimatti's (2016) understanding that identity capital is the contribution of the 'self' to a positive work environment and organizational performance, the Tomlinson model links the concept of Identity Capital to self-esteem, self-efficacy, assertiveness, personality, self-control, locus of control, ethical behaviour, and emotional and entrepreneurial literacy. Tomlinson incorporates the works of Luthans et al. (2010) in the final element of the model, PsyCap, which represents the constructs of personal strengths and qualities of self-efficacy, optimism, perseverance, hope, willingness and resilience. The critical importance of PsyCap is highlighted by Tomlinson (2017) as it acts as the facilitator of a positive attitude and behaviour in the workplace. To bring focus to the development of the various capitals, Tomlinson et al. (2021) recently also developed a scale to measure graduate capability through the elements of the Graduate Capital Model.

In a recent Malaysian study, Abbasi et al. (2018) determined that employers require the attributes of interpersonal, listening, problem-solving, critical thinking, communication, leadership, self-management, analytical thinking, analytical and adaptability to demonstrate employability. Similarly, an explorative study in Bangladeshi by Hosain et al. (2021) found the attributes of academic performance, technical skills and problem-solving (human capital), communication (social capital), personality, leadership (identity capital), motivational skills (PsyCap) and teamwork (social capital) influence graduate employability.

The preceding theoretical investigation highlights the lack of a focused CSR capital construct, which, if included, could provide a more robust employability Graduate Capital Model for employers to use when considering graduates for employability. To solicit attention to the gap, the following section will give a brief theoretical overview of CSR, the importance of CSR for the organizations and the skills associated with CSR.

Corporate social responsibility

The World Business Council for Sustainable Development (1999), in Moir (2001, p. 21), define CSR as '[t]he continuing commitment by business to behave ethically and contribute to economic development while improving the quality of life of the workforce and their families as well as of the local community and society at large'. The definition argues that organizations have moved past the historical concept of CSR as a single outcome of regulatory obligations. The modern-day concept of CSR demands that organizations consider the interest of society and the environment by taking responsibility for the impact of their operational activities on their value chain, communities, and other stakeholders in a holistic manner (Hur et al., 2014). In agreement, Gladwin (2000) in De Witte and Jonker (2006) warns that a stable society should generate sustainability in all four primary constructs, namely ecological, material, human and social. He further advances that these four constructs, while separate in nature, complement each other as 'one's productive power is dependent on the others' availability'.

Carroll (2008) explains through the conceptual Hierarchy of CSR that organizations can successfully apply CSR management in these different constructs through their discretionary effort to be good corporate citizens, ethical decision-making and practices, legal compliance and economic profitability.

The Hierarchy of CSR and Gladwin CSR Capital Model advance CSR management as a holistic and integrated effort. Jitwasinkul et al. (2016), however, argue that CSR management is not an easy endeavour and warn that the causal relationships and continuous interactions between these CSR subsystems create a complex work environment that subsequently complicates CSR management. This complexity forces employers to recognize the importance of having a composite set of CSR skills to support economic and societal sustainability, reputation and brand management (Hur et al., 2014).

CSR skills and personal attributes

CSR skills can loosely be described as those skills required to support positive participation and outcomes in corporate organizational responsibility (Yasir et al., 2021). There is no shortage of scholarly evidence regarding what skills can be associated with positive CSR outcomes. Consideration of these works indicates that the skills base can be separated into (i) the skills required for CSR participation, (ii) skills associated with broader and societal responsibility and (iii) CSR system management skills.

The individual skills required for CSR participation are advanced by Salminen and Lee (2015) as planning, situation awareness risk assessments, problem identification and solving, risk mitigation, monitoring and management. As early as the 1980s, a study by Drabek (1987) recognized that the effectiveness of safety incident prevention settles predominantly in individuals' interpersonal attributes of self-regulation and self-control. In a more recent study, Chen et al. (2017) confirmed the relationship between resilience and successful stress-management attributes and highlighted stress-management skills as important in managing personal safety. An explorative study by Osagie et al. (2016) identified a range of personal attributes that would support individual CSR participation, namely, coordination, personality, self-regulation, patience and self-control values, ethics, commitment, reflection, innovation and flexibility. Likewise, Cooper (2018) highlights discretionary effort and persistence as indicators of the potential to go beyond the call of duty in terms of CSR participation. Bringing CSR closer to the employability concept, Saeed et al. (2019) concluded that positive CSR practices' outcome was only achievable when moderated and mediated by environmental knowledge and proenvironmental PsyCap.

Recent study findings highlight that a lack of appropriate personal attributes leads to human negligence, unsafe actions and safety incidents (Syamtinngum et al., 2018). The study result supports the earlier view of Waugh and Streib (2006) that the effectiveness of CSR incident prevention settles predominantly in individuals' interpersonal attributes. Therefore, Yasir et al. (2021) warn that developing the appropriate personal attributes to support efficient CSR management should be an organizational priority.

As indicated, CSR skills can also be grouped under the skills required to support collective positive CSR outcomes through social interaction and contribution. Walker et al. (2002) argue that CSR is a collective duty and that the skills of influence, risk and diversity management, protection and care for others, collaboration and network building will support CSR management. Walker's view is supported by Crichton et al. (2013), who list the attribute of care (being my brother's keeper) as an essential element in safety incident prevention. In line with the employability capital framework, scholars also recognize the vital role of emotional intelligence and interpersonal skills in safety performance (Sunindijo & Zou, 2013), leadership skills, situational awareness and sharing of lessons learned for continuous improvement

(Salminen & Lee, 2015) listening, facilitation, persuasion, communication, negotiation respect, social intelligence and willingness to learn and adapt as well as teamwork (Osagie et al., 2016) and reflection and continuous group learning (Serou et al., 2021) for the proactive CSR management

Peeters et al. (2019) argue that the attributes of systems thinking offer dimensional and value-added approaches to problem-solving, decision-making, risk management and continuous improvement to manage CSR systems. This view supports Kontogiannis et al. (2017), who, in addition, also advance system management skills and compliance with legislation and governance requirements as important.

While a theoretical link between personal attributes and CSR skills is clear, it remains uncertain which attributes the graduate would require to show potential to employers to ensure employability in CSR skills. This consideration then raised the research question: Which personal attributes demonstrate graduate potential in CSR skills to support graduate employability?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research design

A mixed-method research strategy was deemed the most suitable strategy to employ as it allows the combination of a single study's quantitative and qualitative data collection (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). By mixing these approaches, a more integrated and deeper understanding of the research problem can be obtained (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010). To execute the research, a concurrent transformative mixed method design was selected to conduct the empirical research in a two-step process. The concurrent transformative design considers all data as of equal value, provides methodological flexibility and allows for comparing quantitative and qualitative data during the analysis and interpretation phase (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011).

During the first data-collection process (Phase 1), a single questionnaire was used to collect the primary quantitative data concurrently with close-ended questions. Respondents were also asked to complete an open-ended question at the end of the questionnaire to give opinions and/or add additional attributes with a rank of importance. In the second data collection process (Phase 2), a qualitative Delphi method was employed to determine if (i) the manager's and supervisor's views of the required organizational attributes to support the CSR skills correlate to the Human Resource Development (HRD) experts' views and, (ii) if the HRD experts agree with the importance ranking and (iii) if the attributes support their associated CSR skills.

Sampling

For Phase 1, simple random sampling methods were used to invite 1063 managers and supervisors from a population of 1323, to participate in the study. Three hundred and two (302) responded, representing a response rate of 28.4%. The population was deemed fit based on their responsibility for appointing graduates, management of intern programs and their development. For Phase 2, purposive and snow-balling sampling methods were employed to recruit

eight subject matter experts within the HRD environment, of which only three participated in the study.

RESULTS

Phase 1: Quantitative research

To comply with the requirements of a stable set of factors that would reflect the construct under investigation, existing theoretical works were consulted to develop a measurement scale. Using the identified CSR skills in the preceding literature review, the researcher selected the nine skills of Situation Awareness, Personal Safety (individual skills required for CSR participation), Continuous Learning, Care, Influence (social interaction and contribution skills), Risk Management, Systems Approach, Continuous Improvement and Governance (system management skills). These skills have already been linked to employability through scholarly research (OECD, 2015; Osmani et al., 2015; UKCES, 2014). Hence, the selected skills were deemed sufficient to present a holistic CSR skill base to determine the associated personal employability attributes.

Permission could not be obtained from the study subject to conduct a pretest on the validity of the developed scale. To enhance the probability of scale validity and reliability, researched attributes from the works and/or existing scales of Osmani et al. (2015), OECD (2015), UKCES (2014), Coetzee (2014) and Caballero et al. (2011) were selected to derive questions that would test opinions on the attributes. Reliability and validity were tested on receipt of the completed questionnaires.

Respondents were asked to rate the 44 selected personal attributes associated with behaviours on the self-administered six-point Likert-type scale in terms of importance on a scale irrelevant to the employer to a critical employer requirement.

Three hundred and two responses were received. Most (75%) of the respondents were 40 years and older, indicating sufficient work experience. In total, 72% were male and 28% female. A high percentage of the respondents (76%) reported degree qualifications (47%), of which 53% held postgraduate degrees. This provided confidence that the respondents had a high level of insight into the problem to identify the personal attributes representing the theoretical, predetermined CSR skill categories.

While no new skill attributes were added to the open-ended questions, the opinions provided highlighted the organization's challenges experienced when dealing with inexperienced graduate interns in a high-safety risk environment.

The construct validity of the measuring instrument was established by conducting a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). A Spearman correlation analysis confirmed the reliability (correlation) of the selected CSR skill categories and their associated attributes. Scale reliability was confirmed with a Cronbach α coefficient of 0.998. The Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient indicated relationships between the attributes tested as $0.992 < \alpha < 0.995$ ($p < 0.05$), which signifies that both the scale and the attribute items have high internal consistency and that errors will not offset the measures.

Once the survey data had been received, cleaned, evaluated, and the demographics analysed, the list of the rated attributes (see Table 1) was restated in terms of the allocated modes, ranked and presented in a Delphi process to the HRD experts.

TABLE 1 CSR skills and their associated personal attributes (critical deemed attributes indicated by **)

CSR skills	Associated Attributes
Personal safety	Practice self-control **Take care of personal safety Capability to manage stress and fatigue **Is drug-free
Governance	**Comply with legislation **Comply with policies and procedures **Raises compliance, ethical or other issues **Uphold the ethics and values of the company and the workplace
Risk management	Practice risk identification and management Hazard mitigation approach
Situational awareness	Evaluate, consider and act, if necessary Communicates effectively Identify problems Involve specialist knowledge
Systems approach	Involve stakeholders Solve problems Do system-orientated planning Can make decisions Apply systems thinking Collaborate
Continuous improvement	**Preventative orientation Review current behaviours and processes Proactively evaluate systems and processes Continuously seek ways to limit potential incidents and hazards
Influence	Lead by example Offer social support Do networking Participate positively in teams **Practice personal integrity and values
Continuous learning	Collective learning through sharing of personal experiences Keep abreast of current events and practices Sharing of lessons learned Demonstrate organizational awareness
Care	Influence others positively Has a preventative orientation

TABLE 1 (Continued)

CSR skills	Associated Attributes
	Willingness to help
	Is proactive
	Practice leadership
	Is conscientious
	Demonstrate diligence
	Participate positively in teams
	**Acts as brother's keeper
	Make ethical decisions

Abbreviation: CSR, corporate social responsibility.

Phase 2: Qualitative research—Delphi process

Only three of the eight experts eventually participated in the process. Two of the members had postgraduate degrees in the human development field with a minimum of 20 years of experience. A training instructor had a technical diploma with a minimum of 30 years of experience in developing technical skills in students. All three-panel members were older than 50 years of age. These demographics confirm their suitability to participate in the process. After two Delphi rounds, concordance was reached between the panel members at a high degree with a *W* coefficient equal to 0.762. The agreement confirmed survey content validity (Schmidt, 1997).

A triangulation process was conducted to identify variances in the views of CSR critical attributes between the quantitative survey results and those of the HRD expert panel members. Of the 10 critical identified survey attributes, the experts did not agree with one attribute's ranking (is proactive) as critical but also deemed three 'very-important' survey ranked attributes as critical: governance, ethical behaviour and holistic systems decision-making. There were no significant differences observed between the views of the respondents and the panel. No skills or attributes were removed from the final list. The triangulation process was completed, and the 44 attributes were allocated to the nine identified skills based on the panel's final confirmed skills and attribute list, as indicated in Table 1.

The derived conceptual model was then subjected to descriptive and inferential statistical analysis.

INTERPRETATION OF PHASE 1 AND PHASE 2

Based on the mean, all nine CSR skills were determined as very important to the organization's CSR performance and success (with $4.55 < \text{mean} < 5.14$). Most of the tested attributes were identified as very important to the employer (80%). In comparison, 20% were considered important. Most respondents rated the following attributes as critical for CSR skills: preventative orientation, brother's keeper, compliance with all legislation, compliance with policies and procedures, raises compliance with ethical or other issues, upholding the ethics

and values of the company and the workplace, personal integrity and values, take care of personal safety and being drug-free. The top 10 attributes in terms of the mean are reported in Table 2.

A comparative analysis of the top 10 ranked attributes in terms of mode indicated that 80% of them are deemed critical. Only two, 'Involve specialist knowledge' and 'Self-control', were perceived as very important. It was, however, surprising that proactivity was only rated as an important attribute while preventative actions were rated as very important.

Significantly, the top 10 attributes identified were linked to governance and personal safety. Graduates should note that personal safety is deemed a critical CSR skill for employers, followed by governance compliance. It is indicative that employers expect employees to mitigate incidents by a commitment to personal safety. As expected, all attributes linked to governance are presented as critical to the organization. The attributes do not only relate to compliance but incorporate ethical behaviour.

The mean values of the top 10 selected attributes indicated little variation. The skills category of personal safety reported three attributes in the top 10. The mean values indicated that respondents perceived "Take care of personal safety as the most important attribute, closely followed by being "Drug-free". While 60% of the attributes linked to the Care skill were only rated as important, the 'Act as brother's keeper' attribute is deemed critical. This underlines the employer's view that CSR is not only an individual undertaking but a collective responsibility starting with the contribution of individuals. The governance skills category reported the most

TABLE 2 Top 10 attributes linked to CSR skill categories

CSR skill category	Top 10 attributes linked to CSR skill	Mean rank	Mean	Median	Mode	SD	Cronbach's α
Personal safety	Take care of personal safety	1	5.38	6	6	0.78	0.746
Personal safety	Drug-free	2	5.37	6	6	1.00	0.671
Governance	Raises compliance, ethical or other issues	3	5.27	5	6	0.82	0.780
Influence	Personal integrity and values	4	5.23	5	6	0.82	0.782
Governance	Uphold the ethics and values of the workplace	5	5.18	5	6	0.85	0.786
Governance	Compliance with policies and procedures	6	5.13	5	6	0.88	0.799
Situation awareness	Involve specialist knowledge	7	5.06	5	5	0.77	0.816
Personal safety	Self-control	8	5.04	5	5	0.76	0.827
Care	Preventative orientation	9	5.02	5	6	0.94	0.825
Governance	Compliance with all legislation	10	5.00	5	6	1.01	0.806

Abbreviation: CSR, corporate social responsibility.

attributes (4) of the top ten. This result indicates that the employer views ethical attributes and compliance as critical in CSR performance.

Sufficient evidence exists in scholarly works that support the relationship between employability skills and attributes (Masole & Van Dyk, 2016). Regression analysis was used to detect spurious relationships between the determined CSR skills and attributes. The R^2 statistic reported values between $0.1877 < R^2 < 0.2512$. Cohen (1988) suggests that R^2 values above 0.13 but less than 0.26 report a moderate relationship between the two variables. Based on these values, the relationships between the CSR skills and attributes cannot occur by chance alone and are deemed nonspurious.

CFA was used to determine the 'goodness of fit' of the derived attributes and the theoretical derived CSR skills. Using CFA analysis with varimax rotation, the factor scores matrix confirmed that the nine skills loaded as an individual primary skills category in CSR management. In addition, the analysis showed that all attributes were significantly related to the CSR skill construct they represented with $0.917 < KMO < 0.981$.

The component factor loadings in Table 3 show that the nine skill categories loaded very strongly to the attributes. The factor scores indicated that the skills contributed significantly to the overall CSR skill construct, with the lowest value contribution by 'Risk management' at $z = 0.550$. The highest contribution to the CSR skill construct was the skill of 'Care'. The observation could be the result of the large number of attributes linked to Care.

When considering the goodness of fit of individual attributes to their skill categories, the attributes' component factor loading coefficient (r) correlated moderately to very strongly. Ninety-five per cent of the individual attributes loaded very firmly on their individual skills categories, which supported a robust CSR skill structure. No attribute reported a correlation coefficient of $r < 0.25$, implying a solid fit. Accordingly, all attributes could be retained in their individual skills categories.

The factor scores coefficient (z) reported very low values, indicating that the attributes did not deviate much from their skill category mean. Therefore, all attributes contributed

TABLE 3 CFA results to confirm the employability attributes' fit to the CSR skills

CSR skill category	Skill factor loading coefficient (r)	Skill score coefficient (z)	Attributes allocated	Attribute factor loading coefficient	Attribute score coefficient
Care	0.927	0.142	10	$0.529 < r < 0.825$	$0.107 < z < 0.371$
Continuous improvement	0.859	0.131	4	$0.830 < r < 0.843$	$0.294 < z < 0.325$
Continuous learning	0.855	0.130	4	$0.689 < r < 0.718$	$0.155 < z < 0.376$
Governance	0.736	0.112	4	$0.615 < r < 0.826$	$0.255 < z < 0.352$
Influence	0.900	0.137	5	$0.530 < r < 0.794$	$0.150 < z < 0.304$
Personal safety	0.805	0.123	4	$0.690 < r < 0.718$	$0.363 < z < 0.376$
Risk management	0.795	0.121	2	$r = 0.909$	$z = 0.550$
Situation awareness	0.878	0.134	4	$0.659 < r < 0.843$	$0.290 < z < 0.371$
Systems approach	0.902	0.138	7	$0.624 < r < 0.839$	$0.150 < z < 0.201$

significantly to their individual skills categories. The measurement model results confirmed that the theoretically determined skills categories and associated attributes would support CSR management.

LIMITATIONS

Notwithstanding its contribution, the study has limitations that warrants consideration. This study was based on a single company view. Further research is required for broader applicability. While the goodness of fit analysis rendered a strong relationship between the CSR skills construct and attributes, the low participation in the Delphi concordance process (three instead of the initial eight requested) could mean that the results might not be fit for external generalization (Schmidt, 1997). However, the researchers are convinced that the identified CSR employability attributes can be applied to other companies and similar contexts, albeit limitedly. The potential of a triangular employability relationship between graduate, employer and green consumer warrants further research and conceptual development.

IMPLICATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

For organizations to stay relevant in a green-conscious and society-care-directed market, they must demonstrate a true commitment to social responsibility. In a highly competitive environment, organizations can simply not afford to appear nonchalant about ecological, human or societal care. Failing to convince society would see consumers defaulting to companies that share their value of responsible citizenship and care. It has become a critical organizational duty to recruit the appropriate skills to support CSR management. Graduates should clearly demonstrate the required attributes to support the ability of competence in CSR skills.

This article investigated which graduate attributes would support CSR skill competency and graduate employability. The research results confirm that the 44 derived personal attributes would be invaluable contributors to and indicators of potential capability in the nine identified CSR skills. The single most remarkable observation to emerge from the top 10 identified attributes is that CSR starts with individuals' personal contribution and commitment. This finding is underscored by the recent findings of Yasir et al. (2021) that CSR orientation predicts personal CSR commitment, which is seen as a predecessor of CSR participation. The conceptualizations were grounded in a broad base of existing employability theory and Graduate Capital Models, which confirmed personal capitals as drivers of graduate employability and the associated attributes. The approach resonates with other prominent scholarly works, specifically the Tomlinson Graduate Capital Model and other graduate employability research works (Clarke, 2018; Fugate et al., 2004; Peeters et al., 2019; Tomlinson, 2017).

Understanding what is expected from them as graduates to be deemed employable empowers graduates to take their future into their own hands. A contribution is then made to provide graduates with an attribute (capital) construct that can be used as a guide in the self-development of CSR skill capabilities.

One critical consideration is that theoretical conceptualizations should move from the written page, beyond the lecture room, into the work-integrated learning spaces and practices to optimize capability development (Jackson et al., 2017). To take the research agenda one step

further, research needs to focus on how educational institutions and organizations could collaborate to develop the identified attributes that would support CSR effectively. It is empirically confirmed by Jackson and Bridgstock (2021) that internship programs contribute considerably to graduate employability. However, the managers and supervisors highlighted the constraints of having to ‘baby-sit’ interns in a highly unsafe working environment. Focused development of personal safety responsibility might provide mitigation to this stated constraint.

This paper makes an important theoretical contribution by establishing a list of attributes that support CSR skills employability. Within each CSR skill, the CFA showed several support attributes. The results confirm that the established 44 attributes are important indicators of the associated CSR skills potential. In addition, the analysis shows strong associations between the skills and between the skills and their substructure. The results support a separate focused CSR or then a zero-harm capital, which can be developed for inclusion in an existing Employability Capital Model to provide a robust and comprehensive measurement tool for employers to measure employability for this critical aspect of its organizational success.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to privacy or ethical restrictions.

ETHICS STATEMENT

Ethical clearance was obtained for the information used in this manuscript. It was part of a PhD study at the University of the Free State. The ethical clearance number is UFS-HSD2019/0368/0506.

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