ACCOUNTING OPTION SPECIALIZATION DISCIPLINE AND EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS DEVELOPMENT OF GRADUATES; A CASE OF UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI

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A RESEARCH PROJECT SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION, SCHOOL OF BUSINESS, UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI

DECLARATION

I declare that this research project is my original work and has not been submitted for examination in any other university or institution of higher learning.

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D61/29079/2019

This research project has been submitted for examination with my approval as the university supervisor.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ACCA	Associate of Certified Chartered Accountants
CUE	Commission for University Education
GAAP	Generally Accepted Accounting Principles
HEIs	Higher Education Institutions
IASB	International Accounting Standards Board
ICPAK	Institute of Certified Public Accountants of Kenya
IESBA	International Ethics Standards Board of Accountants
IFAC	International Federation of Accounting
IFRS	International Financial Reporting Standards
IT	Information Technology
KASNEB	Kenya Accountants and Secretaries National Examination Board
PEVA	Professional Ethics Values and Attitudes
UON	University of Nairobi
MWDS	Mean Weighted Discrepancy Score

ABSTRACT.

In the context of ongoing technological advancements, evolving work processes, and worldwide institutional shifts, organizations in the globalized market endeavor to acquire capable and proficient workforce. To stay relevant in the current labour market, accountants need to broaden their fundamental expertise and comprehension of other competencies, owing to the advancements in proficiency and technology. Previous studies have indicated an association existing between employability skills development rate of graduate within the precepts of technical and professional training, professional ethics, values and attitudes. The objective of this study was to examine accounting option specialization discipline and employability skills development of graduates. The study was based on the signaling theory supported by resource input model and human capital theory. Primary data was collected by use of questionnaire. The participants of the study were final-year accounting students at the University of Nairobi due to their imminent completion of accounting education courses and subsequent transition into the accounting profession thus expected to have acquired the necessary employability skills during their collegiate years. Data collected was analyzed using descriptive analysis by use of mean and standard deviation as well as regression analysis to examine how the regressors related with the outcome variable at 5% significance level. The Social Packages for Social Science (SPSS) software was used for data analysis. The correlation results showed positive and strong association between technical skills training ($r = 0.888$, $p = 0.001$), professional skills training ($r=0.864$, $p=0.001$), professional ethics values ($r=0.722$, $p=0.001$) and employability skills development of University of Nairobi accounting graduates. Further, the results of the study indicated that with all factors held constant, the employability rate stood at 0.281 while professional skills training had a rate 0.356 effect on employability when all other factors are held constant, technical skills training had a rate 0.391 effect on employability when all other factors are held constant and professional ethics value had a rate 0.254 effect on employability when all other factors are held constant. The study recommends that graduates should not only be knowledgeable in their discipline, but also have important professional skills. Candidates that can combine technical expertise with great soft skills are highly valued by employers. The study was however limited by the scope as well as the period of the study. The study recommends similar study on a wider scope aiming at different higher education institutions and different specialization programmes.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the study

The need to enhance workforce capabilities in a volatile world has been amplified by various factors such as globalization, heightened competition, rapid technological advancements, the widespread availability of higher education, transformations in the accounting profession, the existence of a skills gap in the accounting field, and the evolution of knowledge in a highly digitized economy (Mainga et al., 2022). The accounting profession and practice have undergone noticeable transformation due to shifts in the global corporate environment (Carvalho & Almeida, 2022). The rapid pace of technological advancements and the subsequent obsolescence of knowledge have resulted in swift transformations in employment structures and skill requirements. The utilization of artificial intelligence in accounting has led to the automation of repetitive operations, resulting in a significant transformation of accounting practices. This technological advancement has brought about a revolution in the field of accounting (Bakarich et al., 2021).

The transition from GAAP to IFRS necessitates a heightened demand for accountants possessing proficient and adept abilities, owing to IFRS's emphasis on the application of principles rather than strict adherence to regulations (Kermis & Kermis, 2010). In the contemporary and ever-changing business landscape, accountants are required to possess not only technical expertise but also a profound command of soft skills, including but not limited to sound judgment, critical thinking and analysis, integrity and openness, and the ability to make truthful disclosures without sacrificing confidentiality (Leone, 2008). Prominent scholars in the field of accounting and professionals in prominent public accounting firms have increasingly advocated for the modification of accounting education to align with the prevailing conditions of the contemporary work environment. This adjustment is seen as a means to cultivate accounting professionals who are better suited to meet the demands of the present labor market (Beresford, 2005).

The issue of increasing graduate unemployment and underemployment has raised concerns among various stakeholders, including university administrators, employers, government ministries, and graduating students (Clarke, 2018; Romgens et al., 2020; Succi & Canovi, 2020). In light of Spence's (1978) signaling theory, which posits that individuals communicate their

level of work capability to employers through their educational credentials, employers have raised concerns regarding the skill set possessed by accounting graduates for entry-level positions and career progression (Azevedo, Apfelthaler, & Hurst, 2012; McMurray et al., 2016; Rosenberg, Heimler, & Morote, 2012). Given the presence of job prospects, scholars (Oluyomi & Adedeji, 2012; Agwu, 2019; Aboagye & Puoza, 2021) attribute the issue of unemployment to the inability of academia to produce graduates with the requisite competencies that align with the demands of the labor market (Tafuor & Enoch, 2022). There is a growing trend among firms to prioritize a highly educated staff that possesses the necessary skills to navigate the increasing complexity within the accounting profession. This has raised concerns regarding the quality of graduates emerging from the higher education system. The accounting profession has undergone a transformation from its traditional bookkeeping practices, necessitating the need for the enhancement and refinement of knowledge, skills, and competences (Chaplin, 2017). According to Becker (1993), education and training are regarded as the primary investments in human capital. Given the current circumstances surrounding the accounting profession and the expectations placed on recent graduates from tertiary institutions, it is reasonable to concur with the findings of other scholars that there may be a need to revise accounting curricula in order to address the unpredictable nature of the business landscape (Awotomilusi, 2022). “According to Chen and Tam (1997), the resource input model posits that the attainment of quality resources and inputs within an educational institution is crucial for the provision of quality education. This necessitates a harmonization between the accounting specialization discipline and the development of employable skills among graduates of higher education institutions (HEIs).

Consequently, it is imperative for every Higher Education Institution (HEI) to guarantee that its graduates possess the necessary skills and qualifications to be competitive in a dynamic job market upon completion of their studies. According to Diokno and Peprah (2021), it is essential for the courses included in a degree program to be congruent with the competencies demanded by the job market. Too far, there has been limited scholarly inquiry undertaken within Kenya's higher education institutions (HEIs) regarding the correlation between accounting chosen specialist discipline and the enhancement of graduate skill development. Ensuring alignment between the offerings of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and the current requirements of the job market is of utmost importance. Consequently, it is imperative that a student's learning experience during their university years encompasses the integration of a graduate's professional

abilities, technical skills, professional ethics, beliefs, and qualities. The objective of this study was to examine the significance of skill development within the current specialized accounting curriculum offered by the university, with the aim of determining its necessity for securing employment and addressing the existing knowledge deficit.

1.1.1 Accounting Specialization Discipline

Accounting, according to Mhlongo (2020) is one of the academic fields chosen by students because of the perceived capacity of accounting graduates to get instant employment. According to Jeacle (2008), the accounting field has gained in popularity among school graduates in recent years, despite the opinion by some that it is dull, monotonous, and less creative, and hence suited to the conservative.

The Commission of University Education's (CUE) accounting education program curriculum is frequently constructed in accordance with the International Education Accounting Standards Board's (IEASB) requirements. For International Federation of Accounting (IFAC) member bodies, an individual is considered to have completed an accounting program if he obtained initial professional development (IPDs) in technical competence, professional skills, professional ethics, values, and attitudes. In their simplest form, these IPDs refer to the hard and soft abilities, as well as the ethical maturity expected of accounting professionals (Tafuor & Enoch, 2022). As a result, it is reasonable to say that while determining whether an institution has generated a labor force to meet the needs of the accounting workplace, it is critical to analyze the three basic competences".

1.1.2 Skills Development

The term skills development typically encompasses the acquisition of productive capacities across many levels of learning and training, encompassing formal, non-formal, informal, and on-the-job settings (Sida, 2018). Skills development facilitates the ability of professionals to participate in their respective fields actively and effectively, while also providing them with the means to modify their competencies to address the evolving requirements of the labor market, particularly in an unpredictable setting. In the contemporary accounting employment market, it is imperative for practitioners to engage in ongoing learning and skills enhancement to maintain their professional relevance.

Subject-specific or technical knowledge alone is insufficient. According to Yorke (2006), the accounting profession necessitates the possession of various personal qualities, including responsibility, self-confidence, self-control, social skills, honesty, integrity, adaptability, flexibility, team spirit, punctuality, efficiency, self-direction, positive work attitude, cooperation, self-motivation, and self-management. According to Awotomilusi (2022), the statement suggests the emergence of a set of competencies that encompass expertise in a particular academic field, proficiencies related to the practical implementation of information, and adaptable generic abilities that enable individuals to efficiently navigate many professional environments. They can be categorized as technical talents, professional skills, and professional ethics, values, and qualities.

1.1.3 Accounting Option Specialization Discipline and Employability Skills Development

The increased availability of higher education has increased competitiveness for graduate-level jobs (CBI, 2009). Few university students already have work experience, either part-time or full-time, in addition to their education, such as work-study positions offered by UON. The emergence of novel models in the labor market has encouraged partnership between corporations and universities to supply higher education study programs. All these elements alter the environment for companies, universities, and students in satisfying the demands of all in order to ensure that graduates can compete with the best in our increasingly international market. It is critical that students gain significant transferable skills as part of their university experience since the benefits are tangible as HEIs strive to provide quality higher education.

However, diverse entities involved in the education system hold varying perspectives on the concept of quality higher education. The definition of quality higher education, as perceived by employers, encompasses the provision of knowledge and experiential learning opportunities, cultivation of personal attributes, fostering of ambition and creativity, development of critical thinking abilities, enhancement of interpersonal skills, proficiency in numeracy, and establishment of external connections with the industry. Conversely, students tend to associate quality education with the caliber of teaching methodologies (Mekonnen, 2021). Trainers, conversely, may evaluate the educational caliber by considering the substance of the courses (Dicker et al., 2018). The viewpoints of employers towards the worth and efficacy of an educational curriculum in relation to professional development and job-related responsibilities

(Storen, 2010). As a result, companies expect graduates to contribute more to the organization than just basic task performance. Thus, accounting option specialization discipline can be defined as training on accounting knowledge and skills linking graduates to the external industry capable of dealing with and anticipating change, as well as contributing to the achievement of the organizations employing the vision (Mekonnen, 2021).

Enhancing graduates' skills through the instruction of proficient competencies constitutes an integral aspect of the educational process within Higher Education Institutions (Yorke, 2003). Lee and Peter (1996) argue that the primary aim of higher education is to generate a competent workforce. Maripaz and Peter (2016) argue that higher education institutions (HEIs) must effectively address the changing demands of the labor market by equipping their graduates with the necessary skills to adapt to evolving conditions. The work preparedness of accounting graduates has been a subject of concern among employers due to a perceived deficiency in essential abilities and attributes (Krugz & De'Jager, 2019). Therefore, it was imperative to do this study in order to ascertain the level of preparation exhibited by graduates from the University of Nairobi in pursuing a career in accounting, specifically in terms of the skills acquired during their four-year academic program.

1.2 Research Problem

In the context of ongoing technological advancements, evolving work processes, and worldwide institutional shifts, organizations endeavor to acquire capable and proficient workforce. Governments, businesses, and policymakers commonly establish a correlation between employment rates and the extent of skills and competences that graduates have attained (Asonitou, 2015), accounting discipline can therefore not fail to be in this agenda. Because of the volatility in the global and domestic markets, accounting graduates should be prepared for a fast-changing world. The integration and incorporation of accounting core services into its associated disciplines have diminished the significance of traditional classroom financial reporting techniques, while the development of software solutions continues to solve various accounting difficulties on a regular basis. To enhance the quality of their services, accountants are required to broaden their fundamental expertise and comprehension of other competencies, owing to the advancements in proficiency and technology.

Given the widespread impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on various industries, many professions have become increasingly viable for remote work. Additionally, numerous risks and disruptions have emerged, necessitating a proactive approach to the prospects of accounting graduates. To mitigate these risks and maintain a competitive edge, it is imperative to integrate a broader range of graduate skills into accounting curricula. Accounting curricula should plan for and equip university students to respond to changing business conditions and handle problems they will face in both their professional and personal lives.

Over the years debates have been ongoing concerning accounting graduates' professional readiness for accounting obligations (Bui & Porter, 2019; Bayerlein & Timpson, 2017; Towers-Clark, 2015). Accounting graduates may find it challenging to enter the accounting profession if their accounting degrees are not aligned with the profession's skill standards. Nonetheless, properly aligning the skills may be difficult for HEIs because needs change at a rapid rate and it may be difficult to anticipate and handle the same developments in accounting discipline.

There is a prevalent disparity, both in a general context and specifically within the field of accounting, between the anticipated competencies and expertise that companies anticipate from prospective workers and the actual proficiencies demonstrated by applicants; accounting education effectiveness constraint gap and performance gap based on disparities in competences educators expect graduates to acquire and those employers perceive graduates possess (Atanasko, Tpreska, & Bosinovska, 2017). Nonetheless, when graduates advance in their careers, their perspectives tend to match with those of their employers, supporting the presence of the gap and enhancing their competence awareness (Bautista, Molina, & Ramirez, 2018). There is also agreement on how to bridge this gap: the (CBI, 2009) stipulates that all students should leave university with employability skills that match the needs of the workplace.

The phenomenon of fast evolving demands predominantly affects contemporary students, who are required to acquire competencies that would augment their employment prospects (Gammie et al., 2002). Prospective graduates possess a comprehensive grasp of the essential curriculum content imparted in university programs. The individuals in question are also the prospective professionals who will experience the enduring effects of the present alterations. Moreover, they often constitute the youngest participants with the most extensive timeframe when strategizing for their forthcoming endeavors (Tytti et al., 2023). The analysis of students' feedback regarding

the significance of specific skills is of utmost importance as their inclination to engage in studying or acquiring said skills can be influenced by their perception of their relevance (Kavanagh & Drennan, 2008). According to Bui and Porter (2010), the anticipation-performance discrepancy is influenced by students' perspectives on accountants, accounting work, and accounting courses.

Limited study has been conducted thus far on the topic of skill development specifically pertaining to accounting students or graduates. The existing body of research consistently indicates that students place significant importance on various professional skills and would greatly profit from additional cultivation of these skills throughout their academic pursuits. This is due to the prevailing observation that the essential skills in question are presently lacking in adequate development (Chaplin, 2017; Succi & Canovi, 2020; Dicker et al., 2018; Mekonnen, 2021). The study conducted by Kavanagh and Drennan (2008) examined the perspectives of accounting students and employer expectations about professional and technical competence. It is suggested that students should prioritize the acquisition of several essential professional skills alongside their usual technical knowledge. However, it is observed that many of these talents, which are highly regarded by both students and employers, are inadequately addressed within accounting schools.

Dolce et al. (2020) found that there is a partial alignment between students' judgments of professional talents, referred to as soft skills in their research, and the expectations of employers. Further investigation is warranted, particularly considering the escalating advancements in the field of accounting. Several studies (Afolabi, 2013; Teferi, 2015; Sithole, 2015) have found that employers expressed dissatisfaction with the products generated by academic institutions. The degree of development and associated productivity of graduates produced by Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) was found to be satisfactory by employers, as indicated by studies conducted by Lowden et al. (2011), Catalunya (2015), and Tudy (2017)

This lack of agreement in research findings and limited investigations in Kenyan HEIs, including UON, creates a knowledge gap that requires additional exploration. The goal of this research was to identify potential skill gaps and determine whether there are any skill areas that require further improvement in the accounting specialization discipline to assure accounting graduates' preparation for accounting work. This was accomplished by an examination of students'

perspectives on the importance of various abilities in their future accounting employment, as well as self-assessed academic success as measured by level of skill development during their undergraduate years.

1.3 Objective of the Study

The aim of this study was to investigate the influence of accounting option specialization discipline on employability skills development of graduates.

1.4 Value of the Study

The study aimed to increase understanding of how HEIs provide the labor market with the necessary manpower. It contributes to settling the debate over whether unemployment is caused by a lack of opportunities or a mismatch of talents to existing job openings. Furthermore, this would serve as a means of alerting colleges offering accounting education programs to assess the efficacy of their endeavors in meeting the demands of the labor market.

The results will help accounting educators and academic institutions offer accounting studies in Kenya to incorporate employability skills development in the business and accounting curriculum to better prepare accounting graduates to enter the accounting profession and at the same time meet the demands of the workplace. The examination of the interrelationships between the evolution of skill categories provides valuable insights for the training and development divisions of organizations in determining the specific skill sets that should be cultivated to enhance the acquisition of pertinent abilities.

The study also aimed at providing foresight to graduates on skills development and the imperative of ongoing education to enhance one's proficiency in the competencies demanded by the job market. This is especially in the current volatile and tech-savvy world.

The study also did seek to provide an avenue for further research on the current dynamic market environment and the role of higher education institution on further improvements required in the accounting specialization discipline.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an examination of both theoretical and empirical literature pertaining to the field of accounting and its impact on the enhancement of employability skills among graduates. The text concludes by providing a comprehensive analysis of the existing body of literature and highlighting the identified research deficiency.

2.2 Theoretical Literature Review

This section discusses theories and models that demonstrate the impact of accounting discipline on the development of employability skills required in the accounting profession. These theories are namely: Resource Input Model, Human Capital Theory and Signaling Theory.

2.2.1 Signaling Theory

According to Spence's (1978) theory of job-market signaling, individuals seeking employment communicate their level of competence to prospective employers by means of their educational qualifications. The employer-observable signals encompass the credentials acquired by applicants, such as education, training, and development. According to Spence (1978), it is suggested that employers should do a conditional probability evaluation of an applicant's potential productivity based on the signals exhibited by the candidate. The qualification possesses informational value since employers perceive it to be positively correlated with enhanced abilities, which are challenging for individuals with poor abilities to acquire. Consequently, the certification aids employers in effectively discerning the skills and abilities of their employees. Consequently, higher education is regarded as a significant factor in the indicators presented by prospective employees, particularly those seeking to pursue a career in accounting.

The possession of accounting education qualifications can serve as an indicator to an organization, signifying a particular level of competence that an individual may possess, thereby

mitigating the knowledge disparity. Based on this notion, it is imperative that the qualifications of prospective employees align with their aptitude for productivity. Instead of this idea, one may posit that the completion of an accounting school program by a graduate serve as evidence to an employer of their competence to fulfill any accounting-related job opportunity within the labor market (Tafuor & Enoch, 2022). Consequently, the inability of graduates, who have successfully obtained the qualifications, to meet the employer's expectations, as indicated during the initial hiring process, warrants an examination of the methods employed to acquire those credentials. Given the imperative for education and training to provide graduates with the requisite qualifications demanded by the contemporary labor market, it is justifiable to affirm the validity of the conclusion pertaining to the development of signaling theory. Based on the signaling hypothesis proposed in this study, individuals who have completed their education at higher education institutions (HEIs) possess credentials, specifically employability skills, that effectively convey their status as a 'qualified employee' with a notable level of industriousness to potential employers. Consequently, it is imperative for higher education institutions to address the information asymmetry inherent in signaling theory, thereby offering a genuine remedy to the scarcity of skilled professionals in the accounting field.

2.2.2 Human Capital Theory

According to (Becker, 1993), education and training are the most important investments in human capital in that individuals with higher educational levels earn more than those with lower educational levels. The economic prosperity of firms is supported by the human capital hypothesis, as it posits that investing in individuals via education and training yields advantageous outcomes. The quantification of economic expenses related to human capital, including the costs and benefits associated with training and education, poses challenges (Sweetland, 1996). Hence, the crux of the concept is in the proposition that enhancing the educational and training endeavors of employees yields elevated levels of expertise, decision-making capabilities, manual proficiency, and job effectiveness, thereby facilitating the prolonged existence of a corporation.

The economic stability of the firm relies on the active engagement of individuals, which is crucial for corporate expansion and the enhancement of personal income. According to White, Elliott, and Taylor (2016), the allocation of resources towards the enhancement of cognitive and

technical abilities among professionals can enhance their competitiveness, hence reducing employee turnover rates within organizations. Individuals who possess proficient interpersonal skills are capable of successfully accommodating and accommodating to both internal and external shifts within the professional setting (Matteson, Anderson & Buyden, 2016)

2.2.3 Resource Input Model

According to Cheng and Tam (1997), the concept of education quality is believed to be the inherent outcome of effectively attaining quality resources and inputs within an educational institution. Higher education institutions (HEIs) may feel obligated to pursue several objectives and comply with varied specifications and standards due to the pressure exerted by many stakeholder expectations.

The resource-input model posits that higher education institutions (HEIs) must possess limited and high-quality resources in order to effectively accomplish diverse objectives and deliver exceptional services within a constrained timeframe. Consequently, the perceived quality of education is seen to be an unavoidable outcome of an institution's ability to effectively utilize limited resources and inputs. This paradigm is appropriate if the links between input and product quality are evident (Cameron, 1986) and HEIs have limited resources to meet stated goals or conform to prescribed requirements.

2.3 Determinants

2.3.1 Professional Skills

Numerous national regulatory and professional entities have implemented pertinent competencies for accounting education within the realms of higher education and professional development. IFAC serves as the overarching international organization for the accounting profession on a global scale. However, in the specific context of Kenya, the regulatory authority responsible for advancing the standards and progress of the accounting profession is the Institute of Certified Public Accountants in Kenya (ICPAK). The collaborative efforts between the regulatory authority, KASNEB, and the recent memorandum of agreement with ACCA aid in the identification of subject-specific knowledge, cognitive abilities, and generic skills that are pertinent to the development of higher education programs in Kenyan higher education institutions (HEIs). The subject-specific abilities mostly revolve around technical knowledge and

alternative accounting methods in the areas of financial accounting, financial reporting, management accounting, financial management, auditing, and taxation (Atanasko, Tpreska, & Bosinovska, 2017).

The professional capabilities established as a norm for institutions of higher education exhibit a remarkable resemblance to the skills and competences stipulated by the International Federation of Accountants' International Accounting Education Standards Board (IAESB). The International Accounting Education Standards Board (IAESB) is responsible for formulating educational guidelines that aim to assist global professional accounting organizations in the development of professional education programs tailored for individuals desiring to become professional accountants. Furthermore, colleges can use IES to develop educational programs and accounting specialized option course curricula. The literature essentially covers the same abilities, while different authors group them differently. Gammie, Gammie and Cargil (2002) identified a number of general abilities that should be included and taught in a separate business accounting option specialized discipline course module.

2.3.2 Technical Skills

In general, technical skills are abilities or knowledge relevant to a certain career, discipline, or profession that may be learnt or taught relatively readily (Robles, 2012). Technical abilities are talents that enable an individual to execute a specific task in a certain field of work (Business Dictionary, 2015). The acquisition of these skills is vital for effective job performance and can be acquired through engaging in classroom discourse and assessment methods such as quizzes, tests, and examinations that validate the student's aptitude for the respective occupation (Diokno & Peprah, 2021). Students should develop technical skills to assess, document, and summarize transactions and economic events, as well as skills in producing and analyzing financial statements, analyzing operations, and making business projections.

Albrecht and Sack (2000) have identified many significant reasons that are anticipated to have an impact on accountants, owing to the instability observed in the labor market. These factors include technology innovation, the shift towards a global business environment, and the consolidation of power among a select group of investors. Numerous academic research has demonstrated that an increased dependence on information technology (IT) has the capacity to supplant a significant portion of the tasks and responsibilities formerly carried out by formally

qualified accountants and auditors (Crawford, Helliar, & Monk, 2011). Due to the rapid progress in information technology (IT), individuals in the fields of accounting and professional services will need to acquire a more comprehensive set of skills related to public practice. These skills encompass analytical thinking, interpersonal communication, negotiation, marketing proficiency, and a broader comprehension of corporate operations.

2.3.3 Professional ethics, values, and attitudes

Ethics can be understood as a set of moral principles or norms of conduct that govern acceptable and unacceptable behavior within the realm of human activity. It is a voluntary phenomenon (Ndeda, 2019). The nature of the work performed by accountants necessitates a significant emphasis on ethical principles. Shareholders, prospective shareholders, and other stakeholders who utilize financial statements heavily depend on these reports to make well-informed financial judgments.

The International Ethics Standards Board for Accountants (IESBA) has established and issued the Code of Ethics with the aim of serving the public interest. This code establishes a set of ethical standards and other authoritative statements that are of a high quality and applicable to professional accountants worldwide (IESBA, 2015). It details a set of key principles that accountants must adhere to. Firstly, it underscores the importance of integrity, stipulating that an accountant performing professional services must approach their work in a straightforward and honest manner. Secondly, the principle of objectivity is defined, asserting that an accountant's professional or business decisions should not be compromised by the bias of others, conflicts of interest, or undue influence.

The Code also emphasizes the significance of professional competence and due care. It requires accountants to uphold and regularly update their professional knowledge and skills to a degree that assures competent professional service to clients or employers. This must reflect current developments and conform to applicable technical and professional standards when providing professional services. Confidentiality is another crucial element addressed in the Code. It stresses that an accountant must respect the confidentiality of information obtained through professional and business relationships. Such information should not be disclosed to third parties without appropriate authority unless there is a legal or professional right or duty to do so. Furthermore,

this confidential information should not be exploited for personal gain, either by the accountant or third parties.

Lastly, the Code defines professional conduct, advocating that, accountants should comply with relevant laws and regulations. They should steer clear of any actions that could tarnish the reputation of the profession (IESBA, 2015). According to Jones (2014), the establishment of professional ethics, values, and qualities is deemed essential in undergraduate accounting programs. However, it is argued that this alone does not offer a comprehensive understanding of the expectations and demands placed on accounting graduates. The demonstration of abilities, qualities, attitudes, and behaviors enables the graduate to establish professional credibility with colleagues and clients, so facilitating career advancement. Based on the findings of Gammie, Gammie, and Cargil (2002), it is imperative for students to possess an understanding of the essential elements necessary for establishing professional credibility. Moreover, it is crucial to provide students with the chance to cultivate this competence through simulated responsibilities within a professional environment during their educational journey.

According to Howieson (2003), to maintain competitiveness, accountants are required to not only obtain specialized knowledge in a particular industry, but also possess comprehensive professional ethics, values, and attitudes. This enables them to effectively apply their specialized accounting knowledge within the broader organizational context and strategic framework. Bunney, Sharplin and Howitt (2015) argue that the language surrounding generic skills holds significant importance in the context of the emerging knowledge economy, as it transcends academic boundaries and extends to an international scale. Due to significant advancements in technology, the emerging knowledge-based economy necessitates the presence of graduates who possess adaptable mindsets and versatile generic skills. These individuals must be capable of inventing and adjusting to a constantly evolving work environment. The authors propose a methodology for incorporating and situating the cultivation of generic skills across the various accounting disciplines, spanning from introductory to advanced levels.

2.4 Empirical Review

The study conducted by Ismael, Ahmad, and Ahmi (2020) aimed to examine the attitudes of employers in Malaysia regarding the employability of accounting graduates. “The research employed content analysis as its methodological framework and utilized the International

Accounting Education Standards (IESs) to classify the skills into distinct functional domains. Based on the findings presented in the paper, it can be inferred that accounting graduates highly value a set of specific competencies in the professional environment, namely information technology, interpersonal, and personal skills.

The study conducted by Maali and Al-Atter (2020) examined the influence of the accounting curriculum on the demand in the Jordanian market. The objective of the study was to determine the alignment between the accounting courses offered by Jordanian schools and the prevailing market demand in Jordan, as well as to identify the specific skills and abilities that Jordanian enterprises anticipate from accounting graduates. The survey encompasses a sample of 25 public and private universities that offer accounting degree programs. The investigation revealed a significant discrepancy between the accounting courses offered in colleges in Jordan and the competencies acquired by students, as well as the demands of the job market. Based on the findings of the survey, it is recommended that Jordanian universities undertake a reevaluation of their existing accounting curriculum with the aim of aligning it more effectively with the requirements of the labor market.

In a study done by Clarke (2018), the author examined the concept of graduate employability and found that factors beyond the acquisition of skills and traits during the educational process also have a significant role in determining graduates' employability. The employability of graduates is influenced by various factors, including the reputation of the school they attended and the possession of pervasive skills. Pervasive skills encompass interpersonal and social abilities that encompass behaviors and attitudes that impact individuals' interactions with others, ultimately contributing to their success in professional settings.

A study was undertaken by Afolabi (2013) to investigate the requisite competencies for Nigerian graduates in the labor market. Based on a survey of 350 employers, it was found that employers place a high value on certain skills when it comes to the execution of accounting tasks. These skills include written communication, computer proficiency, awareness of global concerns, work-based experiences, interpersonal abilities, problem-solving skills, and leadership capabilities. Proficiency in spreadsheet and word processing applications was deemed essential for the effective execution of accounting tasks.

In their research, Damoah, Augustine, and Kwabena (2021) undertook a study aimed at examining the extent to which Ghanaian higher education institutions are preparing graduates with abilities that enhance their employability. The research findings revealed a deficiency in critical skills among graduate students. The analysis indicates a significant statistical disparity between the educational offerings in higher education institutions and the skill requirements of the sector.

In a study conducted by Garwe (2017), the focus was on exploring comprehensive strategies aimed at enhancing the employability of graduates in Zimbabwe. The objective was to identify specific activities that contribute to the improvement of graduates' employability and their subsequent achievements in their professional careers. The findings of the study indicated that the implementation of an academic curriculum specifically designed to fulfill the economic and social needs had the most significant impact. In a similar vein, providing students with exposure to the professional environment aids in the cultivation of a prosperous trajectory in both academia and the labor market. Based on the report's findings, it is recommended that the government should actively encourage internationalism by means of implementing scholarship programs. The primary objective of this initiative would be to expand the range of work opportunities available to graduates.

2.5 Conceptual Framework

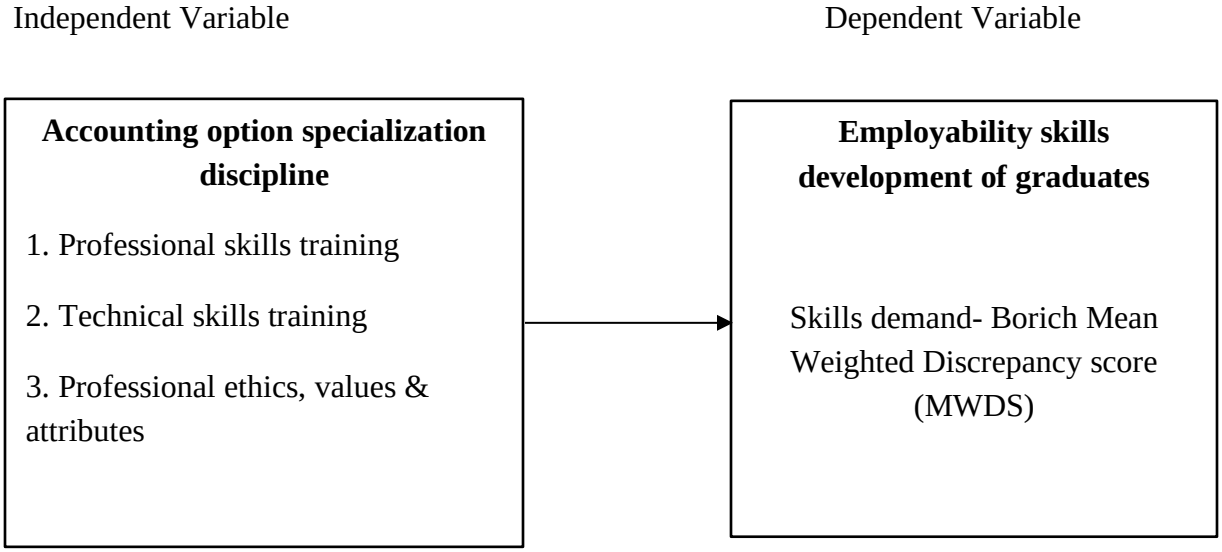

Figure 2. 1: Conceptual framework

2.6 Summary of Literature Review

The presented literature above depicts that there exist an association between the concept variables and its relevance to labour market requirement. Various theories and models have been put forward to facilitate understanding of the research including but not limited to the Resource Input Model, Human Capital Model and Signaling Theory.

Several literature reviews have been conducted to examine empirical studies that are relevant to the research objectives of this study. The absence of consensus in research outcomes regarding the discrepancy between the skills acquired by graduates and the requirements of employers, coupled with the distinctive nature of the accounting option specialization discipline, implies that prior findings may not accurately depict the suitability of accounting graduates for the demands of the accounting profession. The assessed empirical research focused on the fitness and employability of graduates across several academic disciplines. Accounting is characterized by its rigorous regulations, strict adherence to established norms, concepts, principles, and ideas that allow minimal, if any, deviations from standard practices. Consequently, the skill set demanded in accounting may not be commensurate with those necessary in other fields. Consequently, the findings obtained in fields other than accounting may exhibit disparities when compared to the knowledge and skills necessary for achieving success in the accounting discipline. However, there is a scarcity of research undertaken in Kenya on the subject matter being discussed. Therefore, to provide more reliable knowledge and address the existing gaps, this study focused specifically on the field of accounting option specialists.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the research design, the target population, the criteria for sample selection, the methods employed for data collecting, the methodologies utilized for data analysis, and the procedure followed for data analysis.

3.2 Research Design

Schumacher (2001) posits that research design encompasses a systematic approach to the selection of subjects, study venues, and data collection techniques with the aim of addressing research inquiries. The study employed a research strategy that combined descriptive and analytical approaches. The study employed descriptive research design to elucidate the pertinent facets of the accounting option specialization discipline and furnish comprehensive data on each relevant variable. Ratios and summaries were utilized to showcase the association between accounting option specialization discipline and the development of graduates' employability skills. The analytical research strategy was utilized to predict data on the substance and influence of accounting choice specialized discipline on graduate employability skills development using regression.

3.3 Target Population

The study population primarily consisted of 159 registered final-year accounting students of the different modules. The sample comprised of 130 students representing 81.7% of the total target population. According to Kavanagh and Drennan (2008), while assessing the opinion on skill development for an accounting career, students should be considered a major stakeholder group. According to Al Mallak et al. (2020), students play a crucial role as important stakeholders in the realm of accounting education, as they actively engage in accounting courses; thus, their perspectives on the subject are relevant.

Accounting students in their final year were utilized as a proxy for accounting graduates due to their imminent completion of accounting education courses and subsequent transition into the accounting profession and are thus expected to have acquired the necessary employability skills during their study program. As a result, it is the prospective graduates whose urgent services are required.

On the labor market, data collected from positions posted on online websites was studied because to provide inputs into what employability skills the jobs advertised demand, particularly in the accounting profession and practice.

3.4 Data Collection

3.4.1 Primary Data Collection

The study collected quantitative data through a survey questionnaire comprising three sections.

Section 1 required students to rate on a scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree the relevance and place of professional skills in accounting option specialization discipline with regards to graduate employability skills development of UON students.

Section 2 required students to rate on a scale ranging from excellent to below par statements on the quality of education in terms of technical skills imparted on students specializing in accounting option.

Section 3 required students to rate on a scale ranging from extremely important to low importance the level of significance of professional ethics, values, and attitudes of graduates in relation to employability skills development per IESBA code of ethics.

3.4.1 Secondary Data Collection

Data on the specific subjects offered by the University of Nairobi for Accounting Option specialization discipline was obtained from the University Website uonbi.ac.ke.

Online Websites (Brighter Monday, Fuzu & My Jobs Kenya) was used to obtain data on Job specific skills requirement as advertised by prospective employers for accounting professionals.

3.5 Data Analysis

The data obtained from responders was coded numerically. Ratings pertaining to professional skills, technical skills, and professional ethics, values, and attitudes was assessed through the utilization of a 5-point Likert scale, which was employed for analysis purposes that is, strongly agree to strongly disagree, excellent to below par and extremely important to low importance respectively.

The primary statistical methods for analyzing the findings were descriptive denoting (including means and standard deviations), as well as inferential statistics, (including independent t-tests and Pearson product moment correlation). The data collected from the respondents was analyzed using the SPSS statistical package.

3.6 Regression model

The study employed the following regression model.

$$\mathbf{Y= \beta_0 +\beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3}$$

Where, Y= Skills demand (Borich's MWDS)

β_0= Proportion of employability skills development not determined by accounting option Specialization discipline

$\beta_{1, 2, 3}$= Coefficient of predictor valuables

X_1= Professional skills training

X_2= Technical skills training

X_3= Professional ethics, values, and attributes

3.7 Diagnostic Test

3.7.1 Multicollinearity Test

Multicollinearity was used to test whether there is correlation between the variables. Multicollinearity tests are employed to ascertain the presence of linear relationships between two or more explanatory variables inside a regression model (Marenya, 2020). According to the findings of Robert (1967), the issue of multicollinearity does not pose a significant concern in the realm of academic research. Nevertheless, the presence of high degrees of collinearity poses a significant obstacle in the context of research modeling.

3.7.2 Normality Test

Normality test was carried out to evaluate whether data has a normal distribution. If the distribution of the sample follows a regular pattern, it can be inferred that the population exhibited a normal distribution, and the study results normal (Marenya, 2020). Shapiro-Wilk tests was used in the study. According to Razali and Bee (2011), the Shapiro-Wilk test has the

best power analysis for a given significance and can detect even little deviations from the null hypothesis. This test's null hypothesis is that the population is regularly distributed.

3.7.3 Hausman Test

The Hausman Test was employed to evaluate the null hypothesis that the model did not contain fixed and random effects. Additionally, it assessed whether the model could be estimated using the generalized least squares method. The null hypothesis was rejected for all regression models, thereby necessitating the utilization of fixed effects regressions (Beernink, 2018).

3.8 Test of Significance

To assess the importance of the model, the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and the F-test statistic were employed to determine the regression model's statistical significance. A t-test significance level of 5% will be used.

CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS, RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS.

4.1. Introduction.

Details about the study findings that were influenced by the research objectives are provided in this part of the paper. The study includes a descriptive statistical analysis as well as the results of the tests of the hypothesis. Arguments from earlier research are used to back up the discussed findings to show if they agree or disagree with findings from other researchers and theoretical frameworks.

4.1.1 Response rate

Table 4. 1: Response Rate

Questionnaire	Number	Percentage
Responded	108	83%
Non-Responded	22	17%
Total	130	100%

The study targeted 130 responses, but 108 responses were received and as a result 83% response rate was achieved. This corresponds to the threshold stated by Mugenda and Mugenda (2010) whereby a response rate with a minimum of 70% qualifies for analyses as well as drawing of conclusions.

4.2. Descriptive results.

Data can be made meaningful for better understanding by a variety of consumers using descriptive statistics which deals with the examination of data using the mean, median, and mode for central tendency, the variance and standard deviation for dispersion, and the kurtosis and skewness for the distribution.

Table 4. 2: Descriptive Statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness		Kurtosis	
				Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
Professional skills training	108	4.23	.928	-1.121	.231	1.348	.459
Technical skills training	108	4.27	.902	-1.112	.233	1.836	.461
Professional ethics, values and attitudes	108	4.72	.608	-3.702	.233	1.548	.461
Employability skills development of graduates	108	4.36	.618	-1.831	.231	1.827	.459

Based on the results obtained in Table 4.2, professional skills training (M=4.23, S=0.928), technical skills training (M=4.27, S=0.902), professional ethics, values, and attributes (M=4.72, 0.608) and employability skills development of graduates (M=4.36, S=0.618), the kurtosis and skewness coefficients indicated a normal distribution of each factor. A spectrum that has a higher peak beyond typical implies a positive value for the kurtosis. A form that is flatter than usual suggests a negative kurtosis, on the other hand. Like the skewness, the general rule is that the distribution is too peaked if the kurtosis is more than +2, Kamiya, et al., (2014).

4.2.1. Professional skills training.

The researcher examined the effect of professional skills training on employability skills development of graduate where means and standard deviations of the constructs were examined as shown in Table 4.3 below. An aggregate mean of 4.23 and standard deviation of 0.93 was obtained. This implied that on average, the proactive of institutions in training students to communicate effectively, effective time management, enhancement of programs of critical thinking and real-life problem solving among accounting students, analytical skills and creative thinking, leadership abilities and support by the institution was strongly agreed by the participants to have impact on employability skills development of graduates.

Table 4. 3: Descriptive Statistics on Professional Skills Training.

Elements	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
The institution is proactive in training students to communicate effectively.	108	4.15	.905
The institution is proactive in training students on effective time management	108	4.02	1.014
The institution has a program that enhances critical thinking and real-life problem solving amongst accounting students	108	4.01	1.081
Accounting curriculum has a program that enhances analytical skills and creative thinking	108	4.17	1.059
UON is taking the initiative in building graduate's leadership abilities through the program	108	4.28	.874
UON accounting program has a structure that supports interpersonal skills and teamwork.	108	4.39	.818
UON accounting program has a structure that supports class presentations and public speaking.	108	4.50	.837
UON accounting program has a structure that supports sound decision making.	108	4.18	.915
UON accounting curriculum is in line with the requirements of recognized professional bodies.	108	4.39	.852
Aggregate Means		**4.23**	**0.93**

4.2.2. Technical Skills Training.

On examining the effect of technical skills on employability skills development of graduates, the element of technical skills training had an aggregate mean of 4.27 and standard deviation of 0.90. The results implied that the responses agreed strongly to the elements having an impact on employability skills development of graduates. A standard deviation of 0.90 implied slight deviation of the individual means from the average mean i.e., actual results of the individual constructs or elements $\left(4.27 \pm 0.90 \equiv (3.37, 5.17)\right)$. The elements were coded as excellent {0-1.49}, good {1.50-2.49}, fair {2.50-3.49}, poor {3.50=4.49} and below par {4.50-5.0}. Hence, as shown in Table 4.4 below, all the elements were averaged between agreed and strongly agree.

Table 4. 4: Descriptive Statistics on Technical Skills Training.

Elements	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Financial accounting & reporting	108	4.54	.689
Financial management	108	4.57	.633
Taxation	108	4.31	.861
Auditing and assurance	108	4.48	.746
Risk management and insurance	108	4.39	.783
Statistics	108	4.34	.911
Accounting application soft wares e.g. MS word, MS Excel & Office Suite	108	3.77	1.278
Accounting ERP systems e.g. Business Central, MS Dynamics, Sage	108	3.79	1.294
Business Law	108	4.27	.913
Internal controls and corporate governance	108	4.38	.944
Aggregate Means		**4.27**	**0.90**

4.2.3. Professional ethics, value, and attributes.

Integrity (M=4.83, SD=0.541), objectivity (M=4.66, SD=0.615), professional competence (M=4.75, SD=0.613), professional due care (M=4.58, SD=0.674), confidentiality (M=4.78, SD=0.571) and professional behavior (M=4.74, SD=0.634) are the elements examined while evaluating the effect of professional ethics, values and attributes on employability skills development of graduates. Averagely, professional ethics, value and attributes had a mean of 4.72 and standard deviation of 0.61. The standard deviation implied a normally distributed response for each attribute as they were coded as: extremely important {0-1.49}, important {1.50-2.49}, neutral {2.50-3.49}, less important {3.50=4.49} and not important {4.50-5.0}. Table 4.5 below shows the results.

Table 4. 5: Descriptive Statistics on Professional Ethics, Values and Attributes.

Elements	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Integrity	108	4.83	.541
Objectivity	108	4.66	.615
Professional Competence	108	4.75	.613
Professional Due Care	108	4.58	.674
Confidentiality	108	4.78	.571
Professional Behavior	108	4.74	.634
Aggregate Means		**4.72**	**0.61**

4.3. Diagnostic tests

The diagnostic tests were used to determine whether the estimated model and the presumptions made about the data and the model are consistent with the recorded data. Running the diagnostic test was essential to determine whether the data was appropriate for linear regression. These tests include those for normalcy, heteroscedasticity, and linearity.

4.3.1. Multicollinearity test

In regression modeling, multicollinearity arises when multiple predictors are significantly interrelated, to the extent that they do not give distinct data in the regression model. If the degree of correlation between variables is strong enough, it can present issues when fitting and understanding the regression model, Harrell & Mark, (1996). Using the variance inflation factor (VIF) that measures the association and magnitude of the association among the independent variables. For the study, multicollinearity was used to test whether there is correlation between the variables by ascertaining the presence of linear relationships between two or more explanatory variables inside a regression model, Marenya, (2020).

Table 4. 6: Collinearity Statistics Coefficients.

Model	Collinearity Statistics	
	Tolerance	VIF
Professional skills training	.563	1.776
Technical skills training	.470	2.127
Professional ethics, values and attributes	.586	1.707

a. Dependent Variable: Employability skills development of graduates

As shown in the results in table 4.6 professional skills training (VIF = 1.776), technical skills training (VIF = 2.127) and professional ethics, values, and attributes (VIF = 1.707). A VIF of 1 indicates that there is no correlation, VIF between 1 and 5 indicates a moderation correlation while VIF greater than 5 indicates a strong correlation. Hence, the results indicated that there is a moderate correlation among the predictors as none of the VIFs greater than 5, implying multicollinearity did not affect regression modelling.

4.3.2. Normality Test.

The assumption of whether the data was normally distributed was carried. Shapiro-Wilk tests was used in the study where a value of <0.05 implies a significant deviation of data from normally distributed data. In conclusion, the significance values were all greater than 0.05, and thus the normality assumption had been met. The study rejected the H_0 and a conclusion was made that the data on both the dependent and the independent factors was normally distributed and as a result it helps predict dependent variable. The finding of the test is as shown below in Table 4.7.

Table 4. 7: Tests of Normality

		Kolmogorov-Smirnov[b]			Shapiro-Wilk		
		Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Professional skills training							
Employability skills development of graduates	Disagree	.260	2	.			
	Neutral	.163	13	.200*	.934	13	.384
	Agree	.101	40	.200*	.955	40	.113
	Strongly Agree	.223	51	.200	.858	51	.301
Technical skills training							
Employability skills development of graduates	Fair	.166	13	.200*	.921	13	.256
	Good	.112	42	.200*	.977	42	.555
	Excellent	.198	51	.200	.821	51	.275
Professional ethics, values, and attributes							
Employability skills development of graduates	Neutral	.260	2	.			
	Important	.172	16	.200*	.934	16	.284
	Extremely Important	.139	88	.200	.898	88	.829

**. This is a lower bound of the true significance.*

a. Employability skills development of graduates is constant when Professional skills training = Strongly Disagree. It has been omitted, technical skills training = Below Par. It has been omitted and Professional ethics, values and attributes = Not Important. It has been omitted.

b. Lilliefors Significance Correction

The results in Table 4.7 above indicated that the p-values obtained were greater than 0.05, and hence the normality assumption was met. This implied that the data was reliable on drawing conclusions for the linear regression modelling and findings reliable for conclusions.

4.4. Correlation analysis.

The researcher carried out the Pearson correlation analysis to determine the extent of the relationship that exists between the parameters.

4.4.1. Pearson Moment Correlation analysis.

This was done to determine the levels of relationship between the factors. A Pearson moment correlation is a value between -1 and +1 that indicates the strength of the relationship between two variables. A positive correlation value indicates a positive link, whereas a negative correlation value indicates a negative association. The Pearson moment correlation results are shown in Table 4.8 below.

Table 4. 8: Pearson Moment Correlation Results.

		Employability skills development of graduates	Professional skills training	Technical skills training	Professional ethics, values and attributes
Employability skills development of graduates	Pearson Correlation	1			
	Sig. (2-tailed)				
Professional skills training	Pearson Correlation	.864**	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000			
Technical skills training	Pearson Correlation	.888**	.652**	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		

Professional ethics, values and attributes	Pearson Correlation	.722**	.508**	.625**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	

***. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).*

As per the results in Table 4.8, professional skills training (r=0.864, p=0.000), technical skills training (r=0.888, p=0.000) and professional ethics, values, and attributes (r=0.722, p=0.000) depicts significant and strong positive association with employability skills development of graduates. This implies that with higher professional skills training of a graduate, it is associated with higher chances of employability of the graduates. The findings of the study are in line with the study conducted by Maali and Al-Atter (2020) where the scholar examined the influence of the accounting curriculum on the demand in the Jordanian market. The study indicated a strong positive association between accounting curriculum on the demand job where there was lower demand for the less trained graduates.

Technical skills training and employability skills development of graduates depicted a strong positive association which implies that with increase gain on the technical skills of a graduate, the employability rate increases. Sheldon & Thornthwaite, (2005) indicated a positive association between the skills a graduate gained and the market requirement for employers in different sectors. Hence, the findings of the study agree with scholar's findings. Also, Afolabi (2013) conducted a study to explore the required competences for Nigerian graduates in the labor market. According to a poll of 350 employers, companies place a high priority on particular talents when it comes to accounting task execution. Written communication, computer proficiency, global awareness, work-based experiences, interpersonal talents, problem-solving skills, and leadership qualities are examples of these skills. Expertise in spreadsheet and word processing tools was judged necessary for the efficient completion of accounting activities.

At 0.05 level of significance, the professional ethics, value, and attributes showed strong positive and significance association with employability skills development of graduates ($r = 0.722$, $p < .05$). Professional ethics which are the rules and principles that govern the specialization field, values and the characteristics are very vital in determining the career path of the graduate. Rowe & Zegwaard, (2017) argued that there is a strong relation between the conduct of graduate and the employability rates.

4.5. Regression analysis.

The regression analysis was used to determine the relationship that exists between the independent and dependent variables. The relationship among the study factors i.e., professional skills training, technical skills training, professional ethics, values, and attributes with employability skills development of graduates was examined using regression modelling and the results presented as shown in Table 4.9, 4.10 and 4.11.

Table 4. 9: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.693[a]	.652	.633	.027

a. Predictors: (Constant), Professional ethics, values and attributes, Professional skills training, technical skills training

The summary model findings display a model fit that shows how well the model equation fits the data. The R square was used to calculate the predictive strength of the research framework, which was found to be 0.652, indicating that changes in professional skills training, technical skills training, and professional ethics, values, and attribute for 65.2% of the variability in graduate employability skills development. Unknown factors outside of this study accounted for 34.8% of the variance.

The results of the ANOVA are presented in Table 4.10 below, which was performed to investigate the significance of the model used to investigate the effects of accounting option specialization discipline (professional skills training, technical skills training, and professional ethics, values, and attributes) on graduate employability skills development.

Table 4. 10: ANOVA Results

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	37.958	3	4.075	6.871	.001[b]
Residual	1.923	103	.019		

Total	39.881	106

a. Dependent Variable: Employability skills development of graduates

b. Predictors: (Constant), Professional skills training, technical skills training, professional ethics, values, and attributes,

The F-statistic, (F = 6.871, P = 0.001) demonstrated a statistically significant relationship between professional skills training, technical skills training, professional ethics, values, and qualities, and graduate employability skills development. As a result, the H_0 were rejected, and it was inferred that professional skills training, technical skills training, and professional ethics, values, and qualities all had a substantial effect on graduate employability skills development.

Model coefficients give unstandardized and standardized coefficients to explain the regression model's direction and to determine the level of relevance of the study variables. The results are shown in Table 4.11 below.

Table 4. 11: Regression Coefficients Results

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	.281	.113		2.479	.015
Professional skills training	.356	.021	.462	16.018	.000
Technical skills training	.391	.025	.465	14.740	.000
Professional ethics, values and attributes	.254	.030	.195	6.905	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Employability skills development of graduates

The regression equation generated from the regression coefficients in Table 4.11 above is as follows:

$$y = 0.281 + 0.356x_1 + 0.391x_2 + 0.254x_3$$

Where:

y = Skills demand (Borich MWDS)

x_1 = Professional skills training.

x_2 = Technical skills training; and

x_3 = Professional ethics, value, and attributes.

The data revealed that if all parameters (professional skills training, technical skills training, professional ethics, value, and attribute) were held constant at zero, the rate of graduates' employability skills improvement would be 0.281. Taking all other independent variables to zero, the findings suggest that a unit increase in professional skills training leads to a 0.356 rate increase in graduate employability skills development. This variable was significant since the p-value of 0.000 was less than 0.05, and the null hypothesis that professional skills training had no meaningful influence on the development of graduates' employability skills was rejected. This meant that there was sufficient evidence to support the hypothesis that professional skills training had a significant effect on employability skills.

The study also revealed that a unit increase in technical skills training resulted in a 0.391 unit increase in graduate employability skills development. The factor was significant since the p-value was less than 0.05. The null hypothesis was rejected, and it was concluded that technical skills training had a significant impact on the development of graduates' employability skills.

The study's findings also revealed that a unit rise in professional ethics, value, and qualities resulted in a substantial 0.254 factor change in the employability skills growth of graduates when all other factors were held constant or assumed to be zero. The p-value for professional ethics, value, and attributes was 0.000, which was less than 0.05, thus the null hypothesis was rejected, and it was found that professional ethics, value, and characteristics significantly influenced the development of graduates' employability abilities.

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS.

5.1. Introduction.

This chapter summarizes the primary observations and develops inferences based on the results obtained. It also gives some comments and proposals for future research.

5.2. Summary of findings.

The objective of the study was to investigate the influence of accounting option specialization discipline (professional skills training, technical skills training and professional ethics, values, and attributes) on employability skills development of graduates. Accounting graduates should be prepared for a fast-changing world due to the volatility in global and domestic markets. The integration and assimilation of accounting core services into its linked disciplines has reduced the importance of traditional classroom financial reporting methodologies, while software development continues to tackle numerous accounting problems on a regular basis. Because of developments in proficiency and technology, accountants are forced to widen their essential competence and comprehension of other competencies to improve the quality of their services.

The study employed a research strategy that combined descriptive and analytical approaches to evaluate the objective of examining the influence of accounting option specialization discipline on employability skills development of graduates. The study population primarily consisted of a majority final-year accounting students at the University of Nairobi.

Regression modelling was used to evaluate the objective of the study where the findings of the study indicated that all factors of the study i.e., professional skills training, technical skills training and professional ethics, values, and attributes had positive effect on employability skills development of graduates to a very great extent. It was found that accounting option specialization discipline had a significant relationship with employability skills development of graduates.

5.3. Conclusions.

The study concluded that there was a significant and positive effect of professional skills training on employability skills development of graduates. The null hypothesis that there was no significant effect of professional skills training on employability skills development of graduates was rejected and concluded that there was enough evidence against the null hypothesis. The

findings of the research are similar to the study conducted by Maali and Al-Atter (2020) where the scholar examined the influence of the accounting curriculum on the demand in the Jordanian market. The study indicated a strong positive association between accounting curriculum on the demand job where there was lower demand for the less trained graduates.

The study also concluded that there was a significant and positive effect of technical skills training on employability skills development of graduates. Therefore, the null hypothesis that there is no significant effect of technical skills training on employability skills development of graduates was rejected.

Professional ethics, values, and attributes was also concluded to have a significant and positive effect on employability skills development of graduates. Therefore, the null hypothesis of the study that there was no significant effect of professional ethics, value, and attributes on employability skills development of graduates was rejected.

5.4. Limitations.

Time constraints on meeting the tight timelines was a very big limitation to the study. Some research findings may be highly dependent on the timing and context in which they were obtained. They may not hold true in different circumstances. The funding, equipment, or personnel limited to the scope and quality of a study and findings from a single study that also may not be applicable to a broader population or different contexts.

5.5. Recommendations.

The development of employability skills among graduates is crucial in today's competitive job market. Professional skills training, technical skills training, and the cultivation of professional ethics, values, and attributes all play significant roles in enhancing graduates' employability. Therefore, the study recommends the integration of technical and professional skills into the curriculum. It is essential to integrate technical skills training with professional skills development. Graduates should not only be proficient in their specific field but also possess essential professional skills like effective communication, teamwork, problem-solving, and adaptability. Employers highly value candidates who can combine technical expertise with strong soft skills.

Also, professional ethics, values, and attributes are vital components of employability. Graduates should be equipped with a strong sense of integrity, responsibility, and a commitment to ethical decision-making. Institutions should instil these values through both coursework and real-world examples.

In conclusion, a well-rounded education that combines technical skills, professional skills, and ethical values & attributes is essential for developing graduates with high employability. By integrating these recommendations, educational institutions can better prepare their students for success in the workforce and contribute to their long-term career growth.

5.6. Suggestions for further studies.

The study suggests that prospective research be carried out wherein employability skills development of graduates' attributes are presumed as a mediation effect factor in the association between the specified factors that influence employability rate, since the universities differed in various attributes such as resources availability, environment, and existence to find out what they contribute towards the current factors effect on employability skills development of graduates. Also, future research can investigate more universities in Kenya and across the globe to determine if the findings of the study are replicable across the universities in Kenya and worldwide. Further research could be done with other specialization curriculum to see if the findings are comparable for generalization or unveil varying opinions.

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APPENDICES

Appendix I: UON Accounting Option Specialization Discipline Course Units

1. Communication Skills 2. HIV/AIDS and Instructions 3. Fundamentals of Financial Accounting 4. Introduction to Business 5. Principles of Micro and Macro-Economics 6. Quantitative Methods in Business 7. Fundamentals of Development & Its application to Kenya 8. Principles of Management 9. Fundamentals of Financial Management 10. Fundamentals of Information Systems 11. Principles of Operational Management 12. Principles of Management Accounting 13. Organizational Theory 14. Personal Finance 15. Risk Management and Insurance 16. Business Statistics 17. Principles of Internal Controls and Corporate Governance 18. Principles of Taxation 19. Financial Institutions and Markets 20. Management of Human Resources 21. Principles of Marketing	22. Fundamentals of Supply Chain Management 23. Operations Research for Management 24. Business Law 25. Organizational Behavior 26. Public Finance 27. Accounting and Reporting for Assets 28. Corporate Finance 29. Business Values and Ethics 30. E- Business 31. Accounting and Reporting for Equities 32. Cost Management 33. Financial Analysis and Forecasting 34. Strategic Management 35. Business Research Methods 36. Entrepreneurship 37. Accounting and Reporting for Specialized Industries 38. Auditing and Assurance Services 39. Corporate Financial Reporting 40. Tax Laws and Practices 41. Management Research Paper

Appendix II: Accounting Profession Job Requirements Data Collection

Skills set in accounting job required per online website advertisement.

Skill	**Brighter Monday**	**Fuzu**	**My Jobs Kenya**	**Total No of Firms**
Professional Skills				
Effective communication				
Time management				
Critical thinking				
Problem solving				
Analytical skills				
Creative thinking skills				
Teamwork				
Presentation and public speaking				
Decision making				
Technical Skills				
Financial accounting & reporting				
Financial Management				
Taxation				
Accounting software application				
ERP system know how				
Professional Ethics, Values and Attributes				
Integrity				
Objectivity				
Professional Competence				
Professional Due Care				
Confidentiality				
Professional Behavior				

Appendix III: Questionnaire to be filled by final year accounting students.

Dear Participant,

This questionnaire is intended to conduct a research study for partial fulfillment of the requirements of Master of Business Administration. The purpose of this study is to examine accounting option specialization discipline as a prerequisite for employability skills development of graduates. Any information provided by you is solely for academic purposes only and all responses you give would be treated with confidentiality. I would much appreciate, if you could kindly take a time to complete the attached questions.

Instruction: Please respond to each item by ticking (√) or crossing (×) in the box relating to the level of your agreement, quality, or importance.

Thank you for your kind participation

Section 1: Relevance and place of professional skills in accounting option specialization discipline with regards to graduate employability skills development of UON students.

	Strongly Agree	**Agree**	**Neutral**	**Disagree**	**Strongly Disagree**
The institution is proactive in training students to communicate effectively.					
The institution is proactive in training students on effective time management					
The institution has a program that enhances critical thinking and real-life problem solving amongst accounting students.					
Accounting curriculum has a program that enhances analytical skills and creative thinking.					
UON is taking the initiative in building graduate's leadership abilities through the program					
UON accounting program has a structure that supports interpersonal skills and teamwork.					
UON accounting program has a structure that supports class presentations and public speaking.					
UON accounting program has a structure that supports sound decision making.					
UON accounting curriculum is in line with the requirements of recognized professional bodies.					

Section 2: Quality of education in terms of technical skills imparted on students specializing in accounting option with regards to employability skills development.

	Excellent	**Good**	**Fair**	**Poor**	**Below Par**
Financial accounting & reporting					
Financial management					
Taxation					
Auditing and assurance					
Risk management and insurance					
Statistics					
Computer application soft wares e.g. MS word, MS Excel & Office Suite					
Accounting ERP systems e.g. Business Central, MS Dynamics, Sage					
Business Law					
Internal controls and corporate governance					

Section 3: Level of importance of professional ethics, values and attitudes of graduates in relation to employability skills development as per IESBA code of ethics."

	Extremely Important	**Important**	**Neutral**	**Less Important**	**Not Important**
Integrity					
Objectivity					
Professional Competence					
Professional Due Care					
Confidentiality					
Professional Behavior.					