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## What are Employers Looking for in Fresh Graduates in Nangarhar Province?

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**Abstract:** Afghanistan is a labour-abandoned country in which educated ones always tolerate unemployment; Nangarhar is a province where the workforce is more, whereas working opportunities are much more limited, so for a fresher to get their favourite job needs to strengthen their soft skills along with hard skills. If a fresher wants to get employers to hire them, they have to enhance their soft skills because soft skills are the basis for utilizing hard skills. Computer skills, English proficiency, Communication, and teamwork skills are highly emphasized by employers in Nangarhar province. This study aims to let fresh graduates know how to get their favourite jobs, what skills are important for them to enhance, and to get university students to focus on their soft skills along with their hard skills. This research is important for university students, graduates, academic centres and all organizations. This research guides graduate to enhance their important soft skills, which will help them in their favourite jobs. This research will get universities to focus on the soft skills of their students, which will give their graduates good job opportunities in the market. This study is conducted in the field. First, we targeted national and international organizations that employ more people; later on, I developed a questionnaire, collected data, and analyzed the data. As a consequence, employers in Nangarhar province emphasize communication skills, interview skills, English proficiency, and computer skills.

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**Keywords:** Skills, Soft Skills, Hard Skills, Employers

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### Introduction

In Nangarhar province, employees look for soft skills rather than hard skills; in this study, computer skills, English proficiency, communication skills, punctuality, leadership skills, teamwork skills, problem-solving skills, understanding of ethics, self-discipline, self-confidence, and research skills are aimed and diagnosed. A total of 66 people who are experienced and well-known professionals have answered my questionnaire, and they have rated computer skills first, which means that if you have graduated from any field, you need to have good computer skills, basically Windows, word, and Excel programs, along with computer skills your English proficiency should also be excellent, because most often written test, is in English and interviews are also conducted in English language, and the foremost point is English is the language of technology as well. On the other hand, the curriculum vitae of a fresh graduate is also much more important because it should meet the requirements of the position; the biggest problem with fresh

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graduates is their inappropriate curriculum vitae, so fresh graduates must apply with their most updated curriculum vitae, which will definitely help them in shortlist process.

### Literature Review

Regarding fresh graduates in December 2021, Al Asefer et al. (2021) added that 30 percent of graduates of Kuala Lumpur University passed an interview because of a lack of soft skills, no proficiency in English, and problems with cognitive skills. Meanwhile, Communication, problem-solving, teamwork, leadership skills, and time management skills are the key soft skills that should be developed in graduates. (Humburg et al., [2013](#))

Graduates of computer science programs often lack the skills that employers desire among software developers. These include, for example, weaknesses in the areas of collaboration, communication, and software testing. Further research can help to refine this list by providing insight into additional skills that are of rising or regional importance. This paper, therefore, presents a study aimed at uncovering desirable technical and soft skills for graduates of computer science in the Pacific Northwest region of the United States. Interviews of 11 employers, including both managers and recruiters, highlighted the prominent importance of skills related to web development, relational databases, and testing. Additionally, it spotlighted not only widely-recognized soft skills, such as those related to collaboration and Communication but also skills tied to personal attributes, such as innovating, coping with ambiguity and learning quickly. The results provide insights into what skills and personal attributes to include in a future survey of employers aimed at quantifying the importance of skills on this list. (Stewart et al., [2016](#))

Recent discussions with hiring managers on the experiences they've had when interviewing graduates resulted in me having an even stronger desire to serve as many young people as possible.

These hiring managers explained their frustrations and disappointments when interviewing graduates; a common response was around graduates not knowing how to sell themselves, lacking confidence/self-belief, and poor interview preparation. I listened, understood, and resonated – Firstly, as a graduate myself (2014), and secondly, as an ex-recruiter, having worked with graduate-level candidates for over three years.

Based on my recruitment experience and these recent conversations, I'm going to share some key points employers look for in graduates when hiring within their organizations. I hope these tips will improve levels of interview preparation, overall performance, and, of course, new job offers. (Christodoulou, [2021](#))

Meanwhile, in Tanzania, in 2015, research states that *the recruitment* process is one of the core functions of organizations, as the quality of recruited employees affects the performance and the survival of an organization. Following mass enrolment in Higher Education Institutions, the quality of graduates brings with it a debate on how corporate recruiters recruit graduates. The study examines recent recruitment processes and recruiters' search behaviour using a case study approach. Interviews were conducted with human resources managers in different sectors to find out how corporate recruiters recruit graduates. Study findings reveal that graduate recruiters use more formal recruitment channels than informal channels when searching for new graduates. Both formal and informal methods are used to select

potential applicants. There is a growing trend towards using assessment tests rather than academic qualifications during the screening process. The study established communication skills, attitude, curriculum vitae presentation and behavioral qualities as important aspects that influence recruitment decisions of graduates by corporate recruiters. Study recommendations and implications for graduates and Higher Education Institutions' stakeholders are provided. (Fulgence,, [2015](#))

### Objective of the study

1. To let fresh graduates know how to get their favourite jobs.
2. To let fresh graduates, know what skills are important for them to enhance.
3. To get university students to focus on their soft skills along with their hard skills.
4. To let universities, know what skills to focus on.

### Methodology

1. This study is conducted field-based.
2. For the very first time, we targeted national and international organizations that employed more people.
3. Later on, Google Forms was developed, and the link to the Google form was shared via email, WhatsApp, and other internet apps.
4. After sharing the Google form link, the respondents answered the questionnaire, and the data was collected from them.
5. When 66 respondents answered the questionnaire, the data was analysed and explained, with figures and Tables given below.

### Results And Discussions

What skills do managers look for in fresh graduates in Nangarhar Province? Actually, soft skills are more important than hard skills, according to the data I have collected, especially computer and English skills. So if someone is a fresher and wants to be hired, the very first step is to equip himself with soft skills, especially computer skills, and the English language.

Meanwhile, education documents and curriculum vitae of a fresh graduate are also the first and foremost step toward getting a job, so fresh graduates should not send the same CV for each position; fresh graduates are requested to update their CVs for each position.

If we have a look at the job opportunities in the whole of Afghanistan, we can clearly say that applicants are too much compared to the job opportunities because Afghanistan is a labour-abundant country; if we specifically come to Nangarhar province, we do have a high percentage of the educated population of Afghanistan, on the other hand, the vacancies are also rare. So the question arises of how a fresh graduate with no job experience can get a job, whereas more experienced ones are unemployed. The answer is simple: today, employers prefer soft skills to hard skills in Nangarhar province, so fresh graduates should enhance their soft skills along with their hard skills. On the other hand, if we see there are many soft skills, so which soft skill should a fresh graduate focus on the most to get his desired job? According to the data, computer skills are the key to getting a job in Nangarhar province; meanwhile,

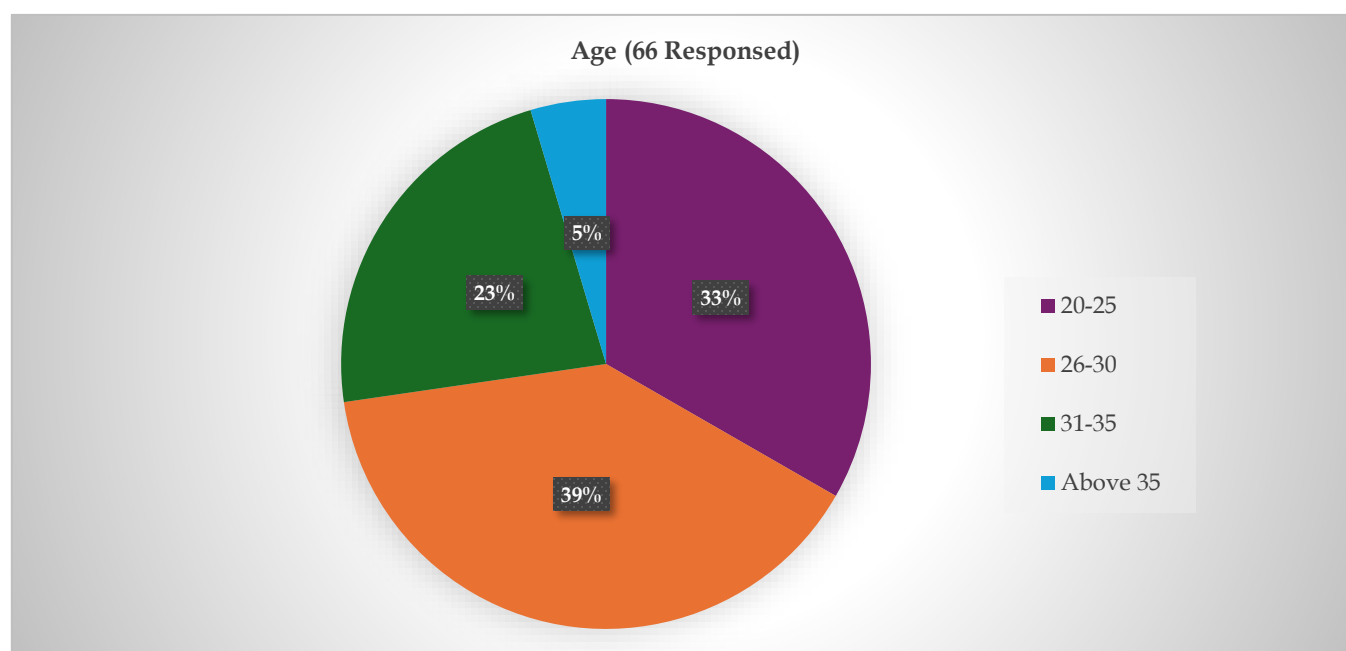
English fluency is also considered much. Along with these, what are some other skills that employers look for in a fresh graduate in Nangarhar province? Communication skills, both verbal and non-verbal, are very important because, in written tests, you need to have great writing skills, whereas, in the interview, you ought to have excellent speaking skills. At the same time, your posture and gestures should also be professional and fair. Leadership skills mean influencing others and getting them to make decisions that benefit you. Punctuality, teamwork skills, problem-solving skills, self-discipline, and self-confidence, as well as their education documents and GPA, are also important. Finally, research skills are also a factor which sometimes could be noticed by employers in Nangarhar province.

### The number of Respondents

When I developed my questionnaire in Google, I shared the link to my form with only those who have worked with the organization, especially in the human resources department; in consequence, a total of 66 individuals answered my questionnaire.

**Figure 1**

*The Age of the Respondents*

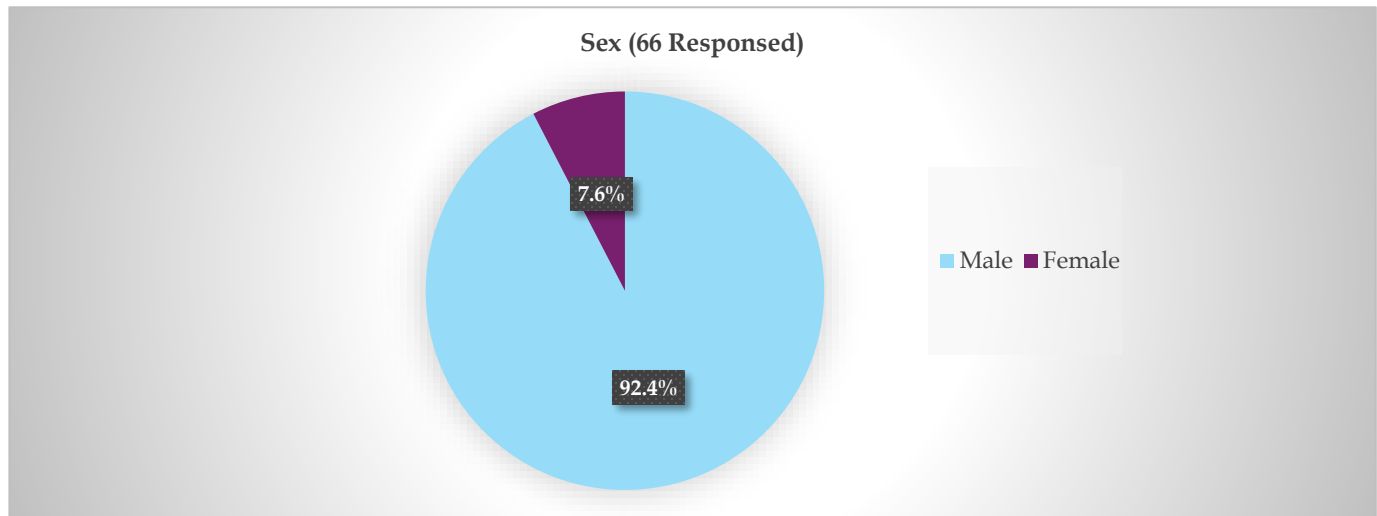


33.3 per cent of my Respondents are between 20-25, 39.4 per cent of my Respondents are between 26-30, 22.7 per cent of my Respondents are between 31-35, and 4.6 per cent of my Respondents are above 35.

**Comment:** as the low percent of my respondents are above 35 years old, the main reason is their amusement and not being familiar with technology, because I have tried my best and sent my questionnaire to all those who have well experience and have hired many people or who have been part of a panel of the interview, unfortunate their busy life and not being in touch with technology especially the employers of public organizations.

**Figure 2**

*The sex of my Respondents*

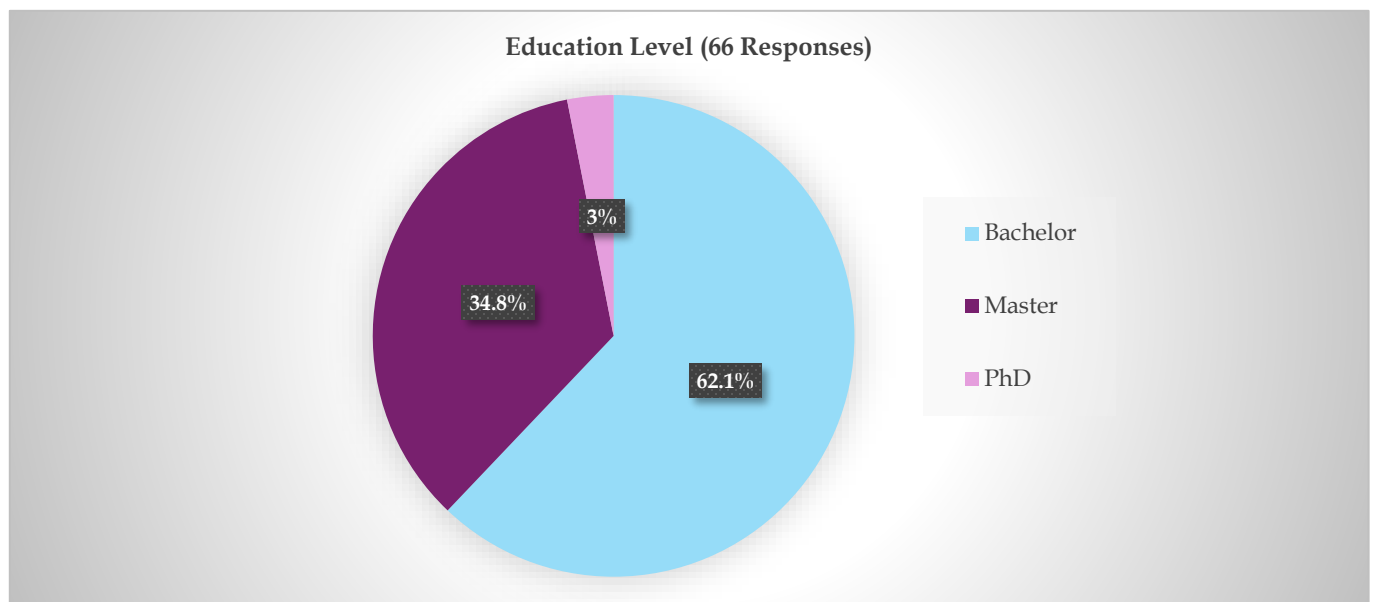


92.4 percent of my Respondents are male, while 7.6 per cent of my Respondents are female.

**Comment:** If we see in Afghanistan, for ages, females have not been equally positioned as males, which means that females are not highly educated to reach the positions in the Panels, but somehow we had many female Human resources managers in the governments of President Hamid Karzai and Mohammad Ashraf Ghani, as today they are not allowed to go out for jobs, so therefore only 7.6 percent of my respondents are females, and 92.4 are males.

**Figure 3**

*The education level of my Respondents*

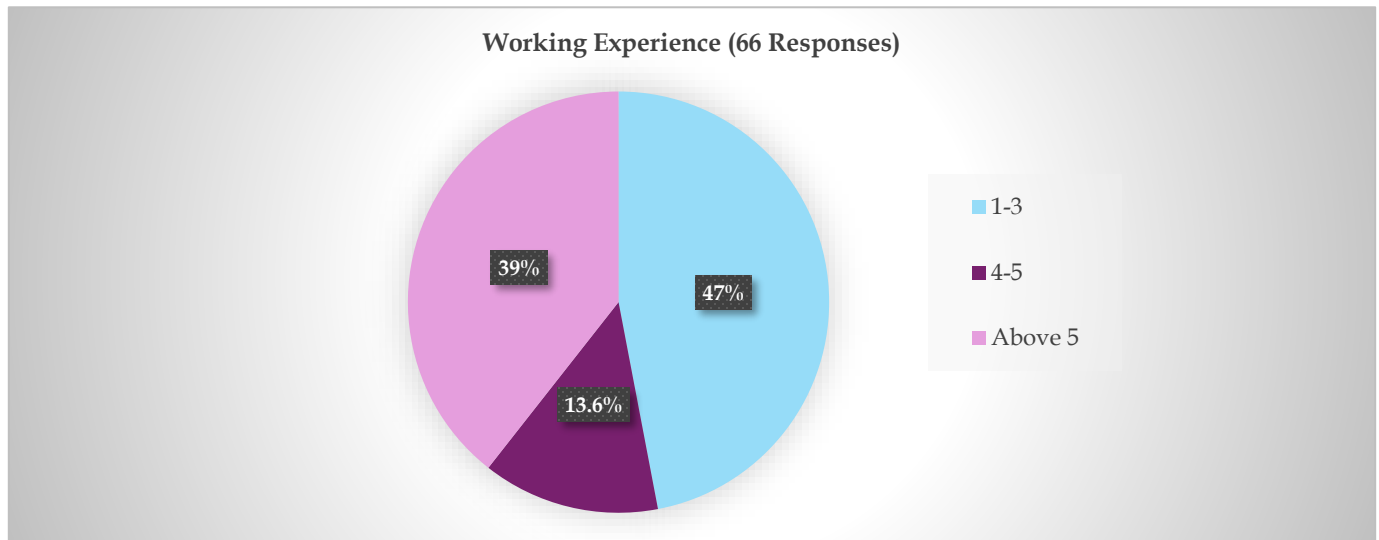


62.1 percent of my Respondents are bachelors, 34.8 percent of my Respondents are masters, while 3.1 percent of my Respondents are PhD holders.

**Comment:** since 2001, Afghans started to know the value of education, and meanwhile, the international community has also handed us poverty and economic problems. Having no master's degree or PhD degree, many facilitate inside Afghanistan. Therefore, a huge percentage of my respondents are bachelors.

**Figure 3**

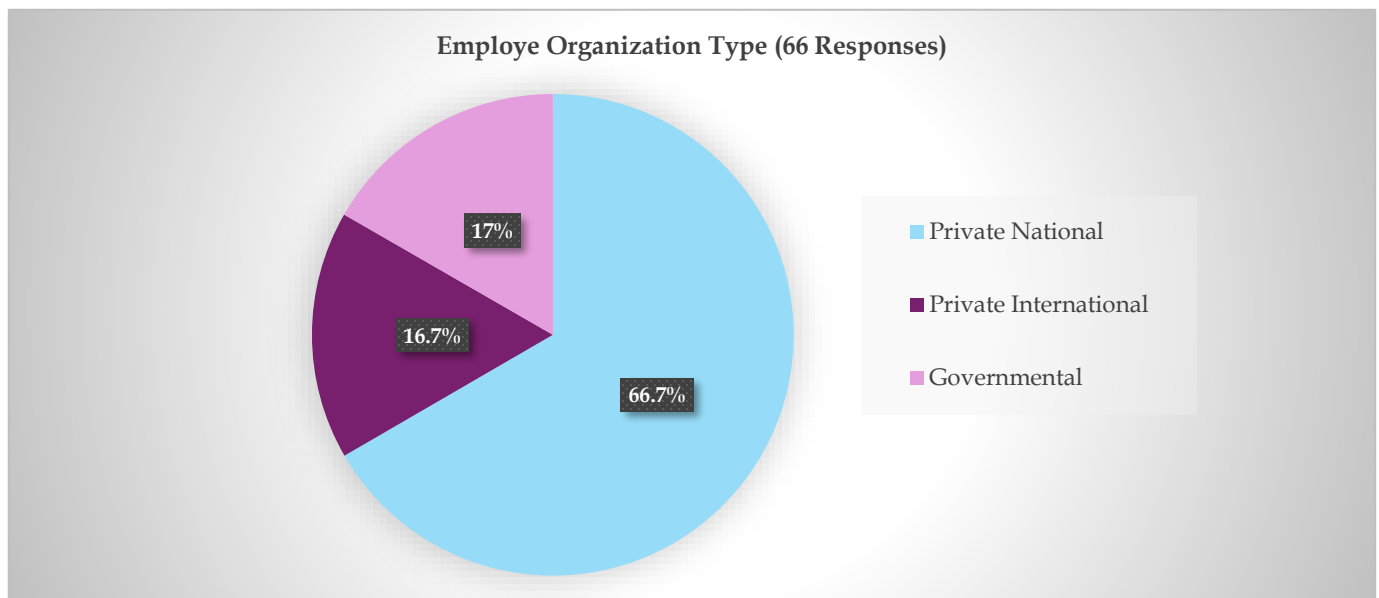
*The Experience of My Respondents*



Forty-seven percent of my Respondents have working experience between 1 – 3 years, 13.6 percent of my Respondents have working experience between 4 – 5 years, while 39.4 percent of my Respondents have above five years of working experience.

**Figure 4**

*The type of organization of my respondents*



66.7 percent of my Respondents are the employees of Private National organizations, 16.7 percent of my respondents are the employees of private International organization, while 16.7 are the employees of public organizations.

**Comment:** employers of international organizations are too busy, and meanwhile, they are not interested in such research because of their busy schedule; on the other hand, employers of public (governmental) organizations are not very much in touch with the internet and technology, and we do have so much paperwork in our public organization, so we do not have internet facilities as well, because of this the high percentage of my respondents are the employers of private national organizations.

**What skills are valued for a fresher to get a job in Nangarhar province**

**Table 1**

No	Question	Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	Communication skills of fresh graduates	52	45	2	1	0
2	English proficiency of fresh graduates	60	38	1	0	1
3	Computer Skills of fresh graduates	70	28	1	0	1
4	Punctuality of fresh graduates	25	223	30	20	2
5	Leadership skills of fresh graduates	40	24	17	18	1
6	GPA of fresh graduates	13	40	30	10	7
7	The facial expressions of fresh graduates	131	30	50	2	5
8	Written test of fresh graduates	45	40	12	2	1
9	Team working of fresh graduates	53	39	4	3	1
10	Problem-solving skills of fresh graduates	26	40	2	29	3
11	Honesty and understanding of the ethics of fresh graduates	50	30	6	10	4
12	Self-discipline and self-confidence of the fresh graduates	54	33	6	4	3
13	Interest and necessity of fresh graduates	28	50	11	11	0
14	Their Education documents and CVs of fresh graduates	60	26	10	2	2
15	Research skills of fresh graduates	22	50	12	16	0

**Analysis**

In the above figure, which includes 15 questions, 66 respondents have had their views, and their percentage is shown in the table above. The explanation is below:

**Regarding Communication Skills:** 52 percent strongly agree, 45 percent agree, 2 percent of my respondents are not sure, and 1 are disagreed.

It elaborates that 97 percent of my respondents agree, and they say that communication skills 97 percent help a fresh graduate to get his/her favorite job in Nangarhar province.

**Regarding English Proficiency:** 60 percent of my respondents strongly agree, 38 percent agree, one percent are not sure, and at the same time, one percent strongly disagree.

It states that 98 percent of my respondents agree and say that English language understanding helps a fresh graduate to get a job that he/she wishes, so we can say that 98 is a very high percentage, so

all graduates from any field and profession must focus and learn English, which will help them get their desire job.

**Regarding Computer Skills:** 70 percent strongly agree, 28 percent agree, one percent of my respondents are not sure, and at the same time one percent strongly disagree.

98 percent of the employers in Nangarhar province have graded computer skills first, as English proficiency is also 98 percent important and computer skills are also important, but if we have come to the differences between strongly agree percentage we can understand that computer skills are highly graded than English proficiency, because in computer skills 70 percent of my respondents are strongly agreeing while in English proficiency 60 percent of my respondents are strongly agreeing. In computer skills, a basic introduction to the computer, Windows programs, Word programs, and Excel programs are needed, so fresh graduates should focus on learning them first and then apply for their favourite jobs.

**Regarding Punctuality of Fresh Graduates:** 25 percent are strongly agreed, 23 percent agree, 30 percent are not sure, 20 percent disagree, and 2 percent of my respondents are strongly disagreed.

Fresh graduate's punctuality is not very important because punctuality is learnt through work, but the time coming to written tests and interviews shows the punctuality of a fresh graduate, so fresh graduates are advised to be present on time for written tests and interviews, which really mean in getting them hired. However, once they are hired, they must be much more punctual and on time and should meet their deadlines because their professional period should be testified positive, and a step toward their permanent contract should be taken.

**Regarding Leadership skills:** 40 percent are strongly agreed, 24 percent agree, 17 percent are not sure, 18 percent are agreed, and only 1 percent of my respondents strongly disagree.

Leadership skills are also very important for fresh graduates, 64 percent of my respondents agree with leadership skills. Leadership skills mean influencing others and working to solve problems, so employers in Nangarhar Province look for leadership skills also because an employee with leadership skills knows the value, prestige, mission, and vision of the organization and works hard to achieve the goals of the organization, and leads his/her team as well.

**Regarding the GPA of fresh graduates:** 13 percent of my respondents strongly agree, 40 percent are agreed, 30 percent are not sure, 10 percent disagree, and 7 percent of my respondents strongly disagree.

The grade point average is the average result of all your grades and is calculated on the 4-point grading scale.

GPA is 53 per cent important for fresh graduates, and more than half the percentage helps them get their favourite jobs. However, if we look at the disagreement percentage, 47 per cent of my respondents do not agree with the respondents. So, in consequence, I would better say that GPA is important but not as much as other soft skills because GPA helps a fresher in the shortlist, which encourages the Human manager to shortlist a fresher and give him/her a chance in the written tests.



**Regarding Facial expression of fresh graduates:** 13 percent strongly agree, 30 percent are agreed, 50 percent are not sure, 2 percent disagree, while 5 percent of my respondents are strongly disagreed.

The facial expression of a fresh graduate is also important, but it does not help a fresh graduate in the hiring process as much as we think because only 43 per cent of my respondents agree with this, whereas more than 50 per cent of my respondents have no clue about this. But I would rather say that clothes and a decent style of hair are focused and should be according to the culture of the organization. So, before going to the written test, fresh graduates should study and learn about the culture of the organization and dress accordingly. This really shows high professionalism and respect for the rules and regulations of the organization and makes a fresher person different from other applicants. Sometimes, when the scores of the applicants are at a certain level, such things are considered.

**Regarding written test of fresh graduates:** 45 percent of my respondents are strongly agreed, 40 percent are agreed, 12 percent are not sure, 2 percent disagree, while one percent of my respondents are strongly disagreed.

About the written test, 85 percent of my respondents agree, which is a huge percentage, and it really is the door to entering the interview; for fresh graduates, written test is tough work to pass because written tests have a section of applicable questions that are most often brought in written test to understand the level of knowledge of the applicant regarding doing his/her specific job, so all fresh graduates are requested to fully prepared themselves for written test, and before going to written test they have to take the advice of those who have worked in the same position and it will experience, so it will help a fresher to get a job.

**Regarding Team working skills of Fresh graduates:** 53 percent of my respondents are strongly agreed, 39 percent of my respondents agree, 4 percent are not sure, 3 percent disagree, and one percent of my respondents strongly disagree.

92 percent of my respondents have voted for the teamwork skills of a fresh graduate to be hired. From my point of view, teamwork skills can be understood after working in a team because such skills are scaled after the goals of a team, whether the goals are met or not, if the goals are reached, and every single participant of the team has their own role and responsibility in a team, so at the end of a mission we can understand the skills of each player of a team.

**Regarding Problem solving skills of fresh graduates:** 26 percent strongly agree, 40 percent are agreed, 2 percent are not sure, 29 percent disagree, while 3 percent of my respondents are strongly disagreed.

Problem-solving skills are a much-needed skill, especially while working in an organization, so fresh graduates need to learn how to solve problems. My respondents (62 percent) agree with problem-solving skills.

**Regarding Honesty and understanding of Ethics:** 50 percent of my respondents are strongly agreed, 30 percent agree, 6 percent of my respondents are not sure, 10 percent are disagreed, while 4 percent of my respondents are strongly disagreed.

Honesty and understanding ethics are highly rated by my respondents, 80 percent of my respondents are agree. Human managers are very experienced and can know the honesty level of the applicant during the interview. An understanding of ethics can also be gained by employers during the interview.

**Regarding Self-discipline and Self-confidence of Fresh Graduates:** 54 percent of my respondents are strongly agreed, 33 percent of my respondents are agreed, 6 percent of my respondents are not sure, 4 percent are disagreed, while only 3 percent strongly disagree with it.

Self-discipline means the ability to control your emotions and feelings and overcome your weaknesses. 87 percent of my respondents are agree and have voted self- discipline, which is much important, it can be understood during the interview while the interviewers ask some irritating questions and see whether the interviewee have patience or not.

Self-confidence means trusting your abilities, and self-confidence is the key to success; during an interview, self-confidence gives your confidence and gets it out of pressure, which is a crucial aspect for having a successful interview.

**Regarding the interest and necessity of the fresh graduate:** 28 percent are strongly agreed, 50 percent agree, 11 percent of my respondents are not sure and 11 percent are disagreed.

In Nangarhar province, employers look for the necessity of the applicants as well; it means that if the employers understand that a fresh graduate is in a tough situation and urgently needs a job so with other soft skills, they would give him/her a chance, but the question comes here that how to let the employers know your necessity? The answer is simple: during the interview, you can introduce yourself, so in this phase, let them know how much you need this job and what problems and necessities you have, which will definitely help you in your selection.

**Regarding the Education documents and CV of fresh graduates:** 60 percent are strongly agreed, 26 percent are agreed, 10 percent are not sure while 2 percent of my respondents are disagree, and 2 percent are strongly disagreed.

Education documents are the key to shortlisting, so if you are a fresh graduate, you need to know what the requirements of the job announced and if your education qualification matches so you can apply for that; sometimes in job requirements, a bachelor degree is required, so, if you are master or PhD they won't shortlist you because you are overqualified, and if the requirement is master degree and you are bachelor they won't shortlist you as well because you are disqualified, so the best way to be shortlisted is to mention and be as qualifies as required.

Curriculum Vitae is also very important, and it is the first step in getting a job. If you are well qualified and have excellent soft skills along with hard skills, but your Curriculum Vitae doesn't match the requirements, you can't be shortlisted. The main problem with fresh graduates is their Curriculum Vitae, as they have the same curriculum Vitae for each position in any organization, whereas each position has its own requirements, and you need to update your CV for it.

**Regarding Research Skills of fresh graduate:** 22 percent of my respondents are strongly agreed, 50 percent are agreed, 12 percent of my respondents are not sure and 16 percent are disagreed.

If we look at today's world improvements, we can understand that research has made all these possible. For a fresh graduate, research skills are also important. so fresh graduates should also try their best to be familiar with research.

## **Conclusion**

At the end of this study, I have come up with the below conclusion:

1. If you are a fresh graduate or university student, your skills are much more valued, and you have to enhance them before applying for a vacancy.
2. Computer skills are placed first for getting a job in Nangarhar province.
3. English proficiency is secondly very important for a fresh graduate to get a job in Nangarhar province.
4. Communication skills, teamwork skills, education documents, CVs, written tests and honesty and understanding of ethics are also very important portions and are considered.
5. Without soft skills, hard skills won't help a fresh graduate to get his/her favourite job.

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