THE ROLE OF ONLINE TECHNOLOGIES IN REDUCING MICRO-LEVEL BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENT GRADUATES

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International student graduates are critical to the global talent pool and play a significant role in host countries' economies and innovation ecosystems. While their academic and sociocultural adjustment has been widely studied, less is known about their long-term workforce integration, especiallyvia online technologies. This study addresses this gap by examining how international student graduates in Canada leverage online technologies to facilitate their entry and integration into the workforce. Specifically, this study examines the role of online technologies in reducing micro-level barriers to employment for international student graduates in the host country. This study employed a qualitative research design, utilizing thematic analysis of 24 in-depth, semi-structured interviews, to examine the workforce integration experiences of international MBA graduates from China and India. Our findings reveal that the studentswere highly resourceful and combined online and offline methods in their work integration. They frequently used online technologies, such as LinkedIn, Glassdoor, university job portals, and specific company websites, and utilized job alerts to find relevant work opportunities and AI tools to prepareand enhance application materials. They have also used offline strategies like cold outreach, job fairs, networking events, and referrals to complement their job search efforts.LinkedIn emerged as a particularly critical tool, enabling participants to access job postings, gain industry insights, connect with professionals, and build networks. Well-developed LinkedIn profiles allowed graduates to target specific industries and showcase their skills, experiences, and achievements, helping to overcome cultural and networking barriers. AI tools, such as Grammarly and Chat GPT, were widely used to reduce communication and language barriers, tailor resumes and cover letters and improve the quality of email communications.Despite these advantages, international graduates continue to face significant challenges at macro (e.g., labour market conditions, residency status), meso (e.g., employer attitudes), and micro levels (e.g., language proficiency, local experience, networks, cultural adaptability). While online technologies cannot address all these barriers, they help level the playing field, particularly for overcoming micro-level challenges such as building networks, understanding local job search norms, and gaining relevant work experience.Overall, international graduates demonstrated proactive and adaptive strategies, with 82% securing positions matching their qualifications and experience in their preferred industries. This study contributes to the literature by unpacking the specific digital strategies that support successful workforce integration and offers practical insights for policymakers and organizations aiming to enhance employment outcomes for international student graduates.

Brief biographies

Dr.Daniel Gulanowski is an Associate Professor of International Business at Carleton University. He has published in reputable peer-reviewed academic journals, including Human Relations, International Journal of Intercultural Relations, Asian Pacific Review, Review of International Business and Strategy, and Journal of International Technology and Information Management. In addition, his research has been published in several book chapters, and he has delivered more than 40 presentations at international academic conferences.

Dr.Hui Zhang is an Assistant Professor of International Business at Thompson Rivers University. She has published in reputable peer-reviewed academic journals, including Human Relations, International Journal of Intercultural Relations, Global Networks, Journal of International Migration and Integration, Personnel Review, and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion: An International Journal. In addition, she has delivered more than 20 presentations at international academic conferences.