Are there factors affecting perceived employability of graduates that has been involved in student associations?

-Exploring the potential relationship between perceived employability and student associations

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Abstract
This thesis aims to find the factors that affects perceived employability of graduates that been involved in student associations. In addition, finding the potential relationship between perceived employability and student associations. We are applying a mixed method approach on our research, with the usage of both interviews and a survey as well a theoretical framework consisting of previous literature regarding the components of the topic. The reasoning behind a mixed method approach was to be able to create a triangulation and cross-check the answers. Overall, the research points out the potential positive relationship between student associations and perceived employability and factors found through the data collection. Leadership is one category that was highlighted in the primary data, but not found in theory. Therefore, we suggest further research about leadership and its effect on employability as well as its relationship to student association.
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1 Introduction

1.1 Introduction to the topic

How difficult is it to get a job after graduating from university and what does it take to increase one’s employability rate in order to obtain the job you are looking for?

Ideas and thoughts like this went through our minds when finishing our last year of our master’s degree at university. The competition is high and ambitious students are everywhere, everyone transitioning into the labor market, competing for similar positions at the same firms. How employable are you?

It is stated that the labor market has become more and more individualized and therefore gives a person more responsibility when it comes to his or her own career, both managing it and developing it while staying competitive on the labor market (Kinnunen, Mäkikangas, Mauno, Siponen, Nätti (2011). Kinnunen et al (2011) emphasize the importance of finding employment both internally at a company and externally in the labor market. According to Puhakka, Rautopuro, Tuominen (2010) the discussion about employability and graduates have been going on for centuries, and the topic has revolved about if university is meant to prepare students to find employment afterwards or if the goal is to assist students with an opportunity to grow intellectually, socially and personally which could lead to better opportunities career-wise.

We have investigated the sense of perceived employability, what it is, how you can increase it and most importantly, how you can obtain it. By applying our research on a university level, we have investigated student associations and what one’s involvement in them can give you as a student. In simplified words; what will you gain from being a part of a student association? We want to see if a student’s involvement in an association has a relationship with the factor/factors that perceived employability consists of. We are using the term perceived employability throughout the thesis rather than just the word employability, the reasoning behind this lays within the concept of employability and its three perspectives (Kinnunen et al, 2011). Employability can be seen at a national workforce level which relates to different governmental policies, it can also be seen as within human management that reflects upon employability as a human resource strategy, or lastly, it can be seen as the personal perspective that focuses on how someone believes their employment options are. We have decided to look deeper into the individualized perception of employability and how people are perceiving themselves on the labor market, therefore perceived employability.

For the research of this thesis, we are using previous students/graduates who have attended Jönköping International Business School, which means that the emphasis in the thesis regards business students of a Swedish University. Jönköping International Business School is a part of Jönköping University with five faculties that argues having approximately 2000 international students each year (Ju.se, 2017), which means that our study potentially reaches out to graduates from different nationalities and backgrounds.
1.2 Background

It has been shown that students with higher education is increasing and the result is graduates’ awareness of that their academic results are not enough when searching and applying for a job (Pinto & Ramalheira, 2017; OECD, 2017). According to Pinto & Ramalheira (2017) that is why the topic of employability have become more distinct and important, previous experiences such as work and extracurricular activities are emphasized to play a major role when reaching out on the labor market. Employability has become an important subject since the number of graduates has increased these past years, which is a result of the high competition on the labor market which has generated the need for people to specialize (Kostoglou & Adamids, 2010). According to them, that is something that has created a priority of obtaining employability and becoming employable.

With more graduates competing for similar jobs it is beneficial to expand your resumé beyond a university degree. There are the classical ways, internships and part-time jobs, that separates one graduate from the next. In addition, Clark, Marsden, Whyatt, Thompson & Walker (2015) found that alumni at Lancaster university saw it beneficial to use involvement in extracurricular activities when job searching, because today a degree might not get you an interview let alone offered a position.

Prior research has concluded that student associations are similar in structure and behavior to companies (Roulin & Bangerter, 2013), therefore, we argue that there is a need to focus on student associations. Since companies and student associations can share characteristics it could be beneficial to be involved in a student association during university studies.

The sampling of previous studies has either been from students who are about to graduate (Qenani, MacDougall & Sexton, 2014; Alvarez, Lopez & Callabero, 2017), employers who have employed graduates (McMurray, Dutton, McQuaid & Richard, 2016; Chhinzer & Russo 2018) or are graduates themselves and graduates out in the workforce with work experience (Clark et al., 2015; Pinto & Ramalheira 2017; Teijeiro, Rungo & Freire 2013). The last segments regarding graduates is what we found most relevant, since their grasp on employability is founded in their own experience of becoming employed. By taking the graduates perspective, we want to be able to convey what made the graduates employable within a context that is easily relatable for current students. Therefore, current students can realize what parts of their involvement that increases their employability.

It has also become more important for business schools to produce graduates with higher employability, as criticism has been directed towards them for detaching from business by emphasizing theory over practice (McMurray et al. 2015). Student associations offer an opportunity for students to work in practice without having to detach too far from their studies. The benefit lies in the similarity of student associations to companies in their hierarchy, roles and responsibility, and organizational structure (Roulin & Bangerter, 2013).

There is at this moment in time limited research done on solely student association involvement. Student associations in Sweden exist at most universities, while they have various levels of participation (see figure in appendix 7), there are many students that choose to involve themselves during their studies. From a survey on 50 of Sweden’s universities on average 42% of students are involved in student associations in Sweden (Arnft, 2017).
Universities already has the function of providing skills and experience for students to become a productive member of society, but as argued above there is a tendency to focus on theory over practice. While employers value work experience in graduates they are less inclined to provide chances for students to gain work experience than before (McMurray et al. 2015). Therefore, it is not certain that students will receive the needed work experience. It is important that business schools further invest in opportunities for students as “There clearly is a place for high-quality internships and work placements to develop students’ confidence and skills and relate academia to the world of work.” (McMurray et al. 2015, pp 125). There is research that argues how universities has a responsibility when it comes to ensure their students are obtaining certain knowledge and skills which could make them employable (Puhakka et al, 2010).

We decided to focus on employability based on involvement in student associations in Sweden, in contrast to prior research that was conducted in other European countries. These studies look for the effect of involvement in extracurricular activities to perceived employability (Clark, Marsden, Whyatt, Thompson & Walker, 2015; Roulin & Bangerter, 2013; Pinto & Ramalheira, 2017). Contrary to other researchers who have grouped student associations within extracurricular activities we detach from extracurricular activities and focus on student associations. As mentioned, student associations are common at Swedish universities and as stated by Puhakka et al, (2010) schools should take on more responsibilities when preparing their students for the labor market, students associations could be a potential tool for helping students to obtain skills and experience contributing to their employability, which is what we want to investigate.

1.3 Problem

Research indicates that people become student because “they wish to increase their employment prospects” (Puhakka et al, 2010, p47). However, being a student can be difficult, struggling with maximizing your time at university while searching for a job of high merit can be a difficult task and we want to help simplify the process by looking into what make someone more employable. From our own experience students fail to make the connection what experiences and involvement in student associations can contribute to making them more employable after graduating. Thereby, by investigating the outcome of one’s involvement in student associations, we hope to create guidance for new students. Who are trying to navigate their first time at university as well as throughout their time at university, spent under the influence by multiple factors in how to act and what to do in order to reach a job after graduation.

1.4 Purpose

Our purpose is to find the factors that affects perceived employability of graduates that been involved in student associations. In addition, finding the potential relationship between perceived employability and student associations.

1.5 Aspiration

Our aim is to create an understanding for perceived employability and identify factors that students can develop through their student association involvement that affects their opportunities on the labor market after graduating. By conducting this research, we hope to help new students at
universities realize how they could, through student associations, maximize their employability after graduating. The research investigates and examine the potential relationship of perceived employability and involvement within student associations. We hope that this research can contribute to deeper insights in what would make someone more employable when applying for a job, that is by providing a research about perceived employability after attending university and have been involved within a student association.

1.6 Definitions

1.6.1 Perceived employability

In our thesis we are referring to the term perceived employability and it merits an explanation as to what we regard it to be. We side with Vanhercke, De Cuyper, Peeters & De Witte (2014) that perceived employability is based on the perception of individuals about gaining and maintaining employment. This means that two individuals with similar skills may differ in their perceived employability.

1.6.2 Student associations

As student associations can differ from each school we want to specify what they are in the context of the study. The reason for student associations is laid out as catering to the student’s university experience regarding internationalization, educational quality, career opportunities and hosting events. In our study we investigate Jönköping International Business school student association (JSA) which maintains relations with associations in charge of such as career fairs and planning the kickoff for freshmen (JIBS student association, n.d).

The JSA works as an umbrella under which several other associations operate and has supervision over them. The other student associations vary in length of commitment from several years to months but generally has a turnover rate of one year regardless of the association. These student associations operate with a hierarchy and with task or role delegation, which could be associated with how companies are structured a notion supported by Roulin & Bangerter (2013), suggesting that the student associations at JIBS are similar to those of the study. Student associations can also be referred to as extracurricular activity and focuses on different student organizations that involves voluntary work from students.

1.6.3 Students/Graduates

Within the thesis we will use the terms graduates and previous students. These terms have the same meaning which is aiming on explaining someone’s previous attendance at a university and who today is not a student and is working. Graduates is a term usually used for students that have finished and completed their studies; they have received a degree. Which fills the criteria what we are researching within, since we are aiming to look into the stage after graduation, people’s employability on the labor market.

1.6.4 Skills

There are skills that are transferable and personal which are required for almost everything and anything, such as; communication skills, information, numerical which can be referred to as key skills.
Then there is another level of skills which refers to vocational skills, which are skills required for specific jobs and occupations, in other words, skills that is not general and as easy so transfer as key skills (Puhakka et al, 2010). Lastly there are skills associated to specific jobs and therefore are qualified as job-skills that is particular and individual for different firms and companies.

1.7 Delimitations

The scope of the study will only encompass business graduates who have been involved in student associations as we have the most insight into the operations of student associations at JIBS. Our thesis will only focus on student associations in Sweden and at Jönköping university and while it may not be fully transferable to other countries we intended to share enough about information about the workings of the student associations to make it relatable.

Overall, this thesis does not aim to define employability as such, instead is referring to perceived employability and as researchers are still ambiguous about the definition we focus on the factors contributing to perceived employability.

Previous research regarding perceived employability has a coverage about what field the previous students are working in and if it is aligned with their degree. However, our thesis does not take into consideration what employment the graduates have when processing and analyzing the data from the interviews and survey. Therefore, there won't be a link between someone's current occupation and their education. Since we have respondents from 2008 we have a large spread of participants, however we do not intend to make a distinction based on graduation year.

2 Theoretical framework

2.1 Introduction of theoretical framework

The theoretical framework will provide you with an insight within the research field and concepts that are related to the research topic which can be linked to perceived employability and student associations. Firstly, we explore employability, and the term perceived employability that mainly consists of skills. Through our framework we have found the following keywords: employability, perceived employability, extracurricular activities, academic performance, work experience, time management, networking, responsibility and soft skills. In our theoretical framework we aimed to find out which possible factors that has a significant effect on employability. Other authors in the field has researched based on extra-curricular activities instead of our focus on student associations, although some of the authors include student associations in the extra-curricular activity term. We also identified that researchers strive to define a measure for employability, however there is no mainstream measure in use.

2.1.1 Employability

What is employability? There are several different ways to define the term and its meaning. Most researchers agree that there is no unanimous definition (Pinto & Ramlaheira, 2017; Chhinzer & Russo, 2018; Rothwell, Herbert & Rothwell, 2008) indicating that employability is not fully explored and that its meaning lays within people's and organization's objectives and perceptions. Employability is a concept that is highly desirable and essential for both people as well as organizations,
it has been stated that the characteristics of employability can contribute to beneficial outcomes for businesses since it fosters innovation to mention one of all contributions (Stoffers, Van Der Heijden, Jacobs, 2018).

Furthermore, employability is described as the likelihood of being employed and focuses on the psychological construct contributing and building one’s personal characteristics that increases chances to get a job, however employability refers to both finding a job as well as obtaining and keeping a current job (Pinto & Ramalheiro, 2017). It has also been described as “The ability to gain initial employment, to maintain employment, and to be able to move around within the labour market” (Puhakka et al, 2010, pp 47).

However, the perception of employability could give an edge in the search for jobs since it can present the graduate as more confident (Qenani, Macdougall & Sexton, 2014). Furthermore, Qenani et al (2014) argue that the responsibility falls on students to ensure their decisions throughout their studies are reflected positively when presented to employers, this responsibility is manifested in self-management. Self-managing career behavior increases self-confidence according to their results.

The results from Chinzer & Russo’s (2017) study suggest that professional maturity has the most weight for employers when considering employability of graduate students. Their study includes some of the most common factors associated with employability such as academic achievement, soft skills and general mental ability. As mentioned above, student associations have similar characteristics to companies (Roulin & Bangerter, 2013), which we argue could develop professional maturity even before entering the workforce.

Employability consist of skills, understandings, achievements and personal attributes that contributes to a person being more employable and even successful within the work they are performing (Ali Ali, 2017). This thesis focuses on graduates, however, it is important to remember that employability is not just applicable on graduates, instead it is a concept that needs to be carried out throughout someone’s carrier their entire life. Research has shown that skills within employability can be categorized, there are academic skills, thinking skills such as reasoning, learning, creativeness, problem solving and decision making. There are also personal abilities such as self-control, efficiency, confidence, motivation, self-management (Ali Ali, 2017). Overall, these skills can be obtained throughout different learning platforms, one of those is stated being university and gives therefore graduates an advantage on the labor market when competing with their employability.

Moreover, it is has become more important for business schools to produce graduates with higher employability, and criticism has been directed to them for detaching from business by applying more theory over practice (McQuaid & Richard, 2015). That is one of the reasons why the topic of employability has been claimed to be in need of more research as well as how to further apply it in different settings. Consequently, research claims that employability aim to fulfil as well as acquiring the different competencies that might be needed alongside with the creation of work at the most optimal way (Stoffers et al, 2018). The difficulty with defining what kind of competences that leads to one’s employability level is that the term employability lays within the result of personal capabilities, conceptions, personality, attitudinal and motivational factors (Stoffers et al 2018). Therefore, research has tried to conceptualize the levels of employability that often is individual; “its five
dimensions include: (1) occupational expertise, (2) anticipation and optimization, (3) personal flexibility, (4) corporate sense, and (5) balance” (Stoffers et al, 2018, pp 5). This research goes hand in hand with research done about skills and the development of skills that leads to employability and how someone can use obtained skills words their employability level (Ali Ali, 2017).

An interesting take on employability comes from the definition in Mason, Williams & Cranmer (2009), article, where they refer it to as work readiness. As compared to many other researchers that attribute it to a probability of gaining and maintaining employment. Universities also have been forced to respond to agendas pushing for more opportunities for work experience within the course content.

Overall, the important aspects of the characteristics of employability is the knowledge about social, motivational and cognitive features that plays a major part of the integration of all factors regarding employability which can result in both internal and external opportunities to gain a job, in addition obtaining and retaining the job (Stoffers et al, 2018). Internal and external opportunities is referred to as jobs either within a company that one is employed at or jobs at other companies as well as any job when not being employed. This is all connected with the out-come-based view that consist of the factors of self-perceived employability and someone’s perceived chances to get employed, which has been proven to lay within the competitiveness within someone that is needed in order to survive in the climate of today’s high competitive and difficult labor market (Stoffers et al, 2018).

Besides the self-conceptualization of employability and the self-perceived aspect of the term employability, the term has been linked to well-being and confidence and how its effects on how someone believes their chances as well as opportunities of getting employed and possessing the characteristics of the term (Creed, Hood and Shi Hu, 2017). The awareness of the many different features and definitions as well as components of employability helps explain the complexity of the term and the several angles one can perceive it from.

By using simplistic measures of employability such as the reputation of institutions or obtaining a job in a timely manner after graduation, it removes focus from the propensity for employment of students. In social science there is rarely a practical connection with specific employment. Thereby an imperfect measurement for development of graduate employability. A graduates’ timely employment after higher education can be affected by events prior to their degree (Harvey, 2001). This furthers our argument for not using a measurement for employability as compared to perceived employability which although subjective will not be as simplistic.

Researchers are trying to develop an overall measure for employability, however what holds meaning to a student is the employability for that individual student. Tomlinson (2007) further argues that employability is subjective. From a sample of high achieving middle class students in higher education Tomlinson (2007), the author saw a trend that students no longer believe that their degree will secure them employment, instead they tried to develop strategies and desirable traits linked to employability.

While employers value work experience in graduates they are less inclined to provide chances for students to gain work experience (McMurray, Dutton, McQuaid & Richard, 2016). Therefore, it is important that business school further invest in opportunities for students “This research has
indicated that business schools could do more to increase the employability of their students and graduates. There could be additional resources put into innovative forms of careers services.” (McMurray, Dutton, McQuaid & Richard, 2016, pp 124).

It is suggested that self-confidence is the key influencer to graduates perceived employability and affects other predictors for employability, such as generic skills, personal characteristics and perception of labor market (Álvarez-González, López-Miguens & Caballero, 2017).

2.1.2 Perceived employability (PE)

The topic perceived employability has gotten acknowledged among researcher and has started to be studied, it has especially been studied alongside with the concept of temporary work and the insecurity of not having a full-time job. However, perceived employability (PE) is still a fairly under researched topic, one key aspect of PE is that it consists of the focus from a person’s valuation of certain circumstances and relates to transaction stress theory and therefore well-being and other health inferences (Kinnunen et al, 2011). There is research indicating that well-being at work would contribute for someone to have an overall better health and mental well-being resulting in them being highly employable, overall life satisfaction and work engagement can be positively related to PE (Kinnunen et al, 2011).

Perceived employability can be a good indication as to the labor market position of an individual as it can take many factors under consideration (Vanhercke, De Cuypere, Peeters & De Witte, 2014). These factors are both external, regarding labor markets and demographics, and internal, referring to self-confidence, generic skills and ambition an individual possess (Rothwell et al. 2008; Álvarez-González, López-Miguens & Caballero, 2017; Batistic & Tymon, 2017). A problem with perceived employability is that is does not dictate why an individual would regard themselves as having weak employability, nor what can specifically be done to correct it (Vanhercke, De Cuypere, Peeters & De Witte, 2014).

Since perceived employability comes from the individual it is also important to understand what affects perceived employability. According to Berntson, Sverke & Marklund (2006) an important assumption is that perceived employability is connected to human capital. In their study they find that education and competence development are positively related to perceived employability. Further they report that individuals with more stimulating work environments had higher perceived employability. Based on their definition of perceived employability as obtaining new employment, market fluctuations had an impressive effect, in this case positive due to moving from recession. Their contribution strengthens the argument for external pressure on perceived employability.

2.1.3 Skills/Soft skills

The concept of employability consists of different skills. Skills can be defined as different attributes someone can learn and obtain from different experiences, there are skills within several fields and topics, and can be everything from problem-solving to computer skills, these are skills that gives qualification to execute something as well as transfer those attributes to others and different settings (Ali Ali, 2017). Skills is a term that can be used as skills or soft skills within different levels and subcategories describing the characteristics of the skill itself. In our thesis we mainly used the term skills or soft skills.
According to Pinto & Ramalheira (2017) skills is a factor contributing to the success of employability, along with people looking proactively for opportunities to learn and develop. It is important to remember that research indicates that depending on the stakeholder the relevance of skills and competencies vary, however there are other skills that are emphasized in research, such as adaptability, flexibility and commitment (Pinto & Ramalheira, 2017).

As previously mentioned, some studies indicate that there are three levels of skills; (1) key skills; transferable skills that can be made personal. Example communication and information, (2) vocational skills; focuses on skills connected to certain occupations and fields, (3) and job specific skills; this is skills that mainly is associated with certain firms and can differ from company to company. Among the three categories of skills, studies have shown that the key skills which are the general ones, are the skills that most companies consider increasing a candidate’s employability. According to Puhakka et al., (2010), skills such as teamwork and social skills, problem solving skills, communication skills, organization and cooperation skills and information skills are the most needed forms of knowledge and skills for graduates, these are skills that are highly transferable.

Soft skills are transferable (Robles, 2012) and could be linked to key skills as they are referred to as personality traits, goals motivations, preferences and these are predictors for success in life and programs developing these skills are beneficial. These skills are usually not measured effectively by tests such as IQ, grades and standardized achievement tests as they only imperfectly can reflect personality traits (Heckman & Kautz, 2012).

As there are many suggestions to what skills fall under the term soft skills there is an article by Robles (2012) that gives an insight into the soft skills being regarded as useful in today’s workplace. The two most important were integrity and communication, followed by courtesy, responsibility and interpersonal skills. Skills are intangible and “determine one’s strengths as a leader, facilitator, mediator, and negotiator” (Robles, 2012, pp 457). Soft skills should therefore be regarded as important skills to possess for an individual seeking employment today. Without them the individual would be at a disadvantage compared to those who possess them. As mentioned earlier these skills are transferable between jobs, however it is also important to understand that hard skills, technical skills, differ from soft skills and will not guarantee success in more than entry level jobs (Laker & Powell, 2011). As soft skills are often reflected in an individual’s personality and are therefore always present, even though they are harder to develop and change than hard skills. With practice and time hard skills can be learned, whereas that is not as evident with soft skills (Robles, 2012).

Other authors found evidence that important soft skills are “working effectively with employees and customers, setting a positive example, displaying honesty / commitment and developing creative solutions to problems” (Weber, Finley, Crawford & Rivera, 2009, pp 359).

The need for graduates to learn how to manage their time is a trait that has been reviewed by researchers as a way of increasing graduate employability. Under the umbrella term generic skills, we found that time management was called for in more recent articles. As deemed a sub-factor to generic skills, Chhinzer & Russo (2018) provided that time management accounted for a sizable portion of their un-coded comments from open ended comments in their sample. Hence, they conclude that future employability models should include time management, as
existing models lacks it. However, Chhinzer & Russo (2018) does not take a stand on how an individual should improve their time management.

A study by Clark et al (2015) with 620 graduate respondents showed that time management skill was more likely developed through employment or through their degree rather than through extracurricular activities. Initially contradicting the aim of our thesis. Though, Clark et al. (2015) had divided the respondent by graduation years and interestingly the later graduates (2001-2010) reported that they were more likely to develop time management, among other skills, through extracurricular activities. The respondents also reported that they believed their class of degree was not negatively affected by extracurricular activities. Instead extracurricular activities were compensating for poor degrees (Clark et al. 2015; Pinto & Ramalheira, 2017). Additionally, there is evidence that extracurricular activities not only compensate but in combination with high grades has the largest effect on personal organization and time management (Pinto & Ramalheira, 2017). It also shows that overall being involved in extracurricular has a strong effect on personal organization and time management.

There is a general understanding that generic skills in combination with specific skills are the factors that improve graduate employability (Teijeiro, Rungo & Freire, 2013). In their article, Teijeiro, Rungo & Freire (2013) found that as a graduate’s accomplishments are in line with the requirements of the firm their employability increase. Furthermore, they suggest that personality characteristics and non-transferable competencies are important compared to the instrumental competencies that are taught in higher education.

2.1.4 Extracurricular activities (ECA) / Student associations

Firstly, let’s discuss the concept extracurricular (ECA). They have been proved contributing to a student’s qualification on the resume among academic qualifications (Pinto & Ramalheira, 2017). By participating in ECA’s it may transmit student’s obtained skills on to the labor market and the workplace. The importance lays within the student’s management of acquired experiences and skills as well as how the potential employer is distinguishing and valuing those attributes (Pinto & Ramalheira, 2017).

According to Clark et. al (2015) extracurricular activities can develop most of the skills that are deemed related to employability; instead it is more important how this is portrayed to employers. They further argue that the skills gained are often generic. However, they can be used in unexpected ways if the person does not possess the technical skills needed. Research also shows that suggestions on how graduates can develop and obtain skills that can lead to higher employability is, through extracurricular activities and internship programs which might improve a person’s skills (Ali Ali, 2017).

At Swedish universities there is a student union, also named Studentkåren, which is an association that attempts to make students time at university both exciting and meaningful (Ju.se, 2017). Jönköping University which is the university that our research is taking place at, there is a broad variety of associations that students can get involved in, from music and theater to foreign policy and finance, there are several organizations that can contribute to student’s feelings of togetherness and belonging as well as learning development (Ju.se, 2017). Hobbies, interests, passions, and ideas are reasons
behind the different associations and that is why most universities has student associations but also why they might different from one school to another.

An important part of any professional’s life is to expand a network obtain resources, contacts, information and support. The benefits of an extensive network affect both internal and external perceived employability positively, and those who have much to gain from this are students (Batistic & Tymon, 2017). However, the type of access to networks makes similar individuals have different perceptions about their employability (Vanhercke et al. 2014). To gain access to networks a student can benefit from learning networking behavior, which can be taught through extra-curricular activities (Batistic & Tymon, 2017). Students involve themselves in extra-curricular activities for various reasons, they are grouped as internal and external motives. Networking falls under external motives as it attracts students to the extra-curricular activity for the sole reason, compared to internal motives that are intrinsic desires to get involved (Roulin & Bangerter, 2013a; Roulin & Bangerter, 2013b).

### 2.1.5 Academic performance

When looking into academic performance, graduates tend to compete with grades which also can be referred to as GPA, grade point average. This is a measurement for students, as well as universities to use at a competitive level since it is easy comparable (Pinto & Ramalheira, 2017). Previous research shows how a higher GPA creates a resume with better evaluation and therefore creates a higher probability for the student to get an interview, a higher GPA can also affect a person's salary and employment. Higher grades can indicate that a student is motivated, have communication skills and intelligence which can lead to employer’s interest when finding a candidate for a job. The reasoning why a higher GPA would indicate a higher intelligence level is the indication of graduate’s cognitive ability creating value and quality that could reflect on future employment and job performance (Pinto & Ramalheira, 2017).

According to Pinto & Ramalheira (2017) both extra-curricular activities and academic performance has a positive effect on employability, in combination with each other they are positively associated with perceived employability. Interestingly a graduate’s academic performance that is high but has no ECA participation is nearly equivalent to a graduate that has poor academic performance but high participation in ECA when comparing employability skills. These results suggest that involvement in ECA combined with academic performance is effective in differentiating graduates (Pinto & Ramalheira, 2017).

Even though there is research saying that academical performance and one’s GPA matters in recruitment processes, there is research implying that more and more employers are putting less emphasis on someone’s academic achievements and instead are looking at skills, attributes that graduates has (Edvardsson Stiwen & Gaio Alves 2010). It is even being said, that future prospects about how academical achievements will mean less and less could affect educational institutions such as universities, if they are not adapting to the skill obtaining/attribute obtaining labor market that we are surrounded of today.
2.1.7 Responsibility

Students have the ultimate responsibility for their grades during their university studies, however, the responsibility of student employability has increased. A study by Qenani, MacDougall & Sexton (2014) shows that proactively taking responsibility for your university experience to fit your career goals were positive for students. The authors label it self-managed career behavior, by which the students overlook their options to make positive future decisions, which was connected to self-responsibility. This type of behavior would then lead to increased perceived employability.

As mentioned above the responsibility of individuals to align themselves with what is regarded as employable has increased. Individuals need to develop competencies and their human capital, through education, to be recognized as employable by employers (Chhinzer & Russo, 2018; Moreau & Leathwood, 2006).

In an article by Teijeiro, Rungo & Freire (2013) they surveyed both companies and graduates on their perception of needed competencies. The results from a large sample showed a mismatch between what competency companies required highest, responsibility at work, and to what extent graduates acquired it.

There are contrasting views of how students best improve their responsibility, Qenani, MacDougall & Sexton (2014) concludes that the main determiner for self-responsibility is internships. While Clark et al. (2015) argue that students can improve their responsibility by involvement in committees as most frequently cited skill from their study. Also, other extracurricular activities reported improved responsibility.

With research pointing toward lack of inequalities for graduates based on social and economic factors there is a belief that the responsibility falls on the individual graduate regarding employability. The underlying argument is the focus on individual skills and attributes (Moreau & Leathwood, 2006).

3 Methodology

3.1 Research philosophy

The first step was to identify a research philosophy that we applied on the research, philosophies are often referred to as ontologies (Williamson, 2002). Ontology is a term that explains the becoming and existence of something, in simplified words; reasoning / comparison / thinking and the perception of things according to someone (Dudovski, 2018). Therefore, it lays the ground for the thesis so that the reader and writers are aligned in what philosophy is applied on the research. Therefore, it can help understand the decision making as well as analysis, conclusion and arguments. Furthermore, ontology is what is true, in regard to how the writers are viewing society and the world, in business research it is explained as the science of being and how reality is dealt with, it focuses on a research objectiveness or subjections (Dudovski, 2018).

This thesis takes on the perception on interpretivism, which can be explained as research that is subjective and is socially constructed, the reality and truth might change as well as there is an existence of multiple “truths”. The reasoning why this thesis takes on an interpretivist view is since we are investigating the term of perceived employability which is a term that is constructed with an
individual perspective and perception and therefore, both multiple “truths” can exist and the concept is subjective. Subjective is a notion that refers to how something occurs in someone’s mind, it possesses the characteristics of individuality and personality which indicates someone’s own opinions, attitude and experience. Since we are researching to find people’s perception of how they perceived their involvement in student associations to finally lead towards the thesis purpose of factors of employability and how they can be obtained, one can argue how the research itself takes on the view of interpretivism.

It is arguable to say that we as writers are taking a part of the observational part of the research since we are applying our research on the university we both are attending as well as how one of us have previously been a part of a student association at the university we study at, Dudoviski (2018) states that the view of interpretivism includes involvement in what is being observed. The “Human interest” is another factor of interpretivism that are one of the main drives, as well as finding general understandings of a certain situation or concept. In this thesis we adapt that by trying to get people’s comprehensions in regard to what factors made them employable, secondary data in terms of previous literature, we are creating an understanding for the concept of employability and the factors contribution towards it.

Furthermore, within research philosophy there is another concept besides ontology that is called epistemology. As we previous stated, ontology is what is true, epistemology is about the methods finding those truths, it is the concept of knowing (Dudoviski, 2018). There are several categories of thinking; intuitive knowledge, authorization knowledge, logical knowledge and empirical knowledge. Let’s look into the different knowledge categories, according to Dudoviski (2018) intuitive knowledge is knowledge that can be created on faith, beliefs and intuition, the feelings of a human play a major role. Authoritarian knowledge is knowledge that count on information which has been gained from research papers, supreme powers, books and experts and so forth. Logical knowledge is the formation of non-existing knowledge that is built on logical reasoning. Empirical knowledge is impartial information and facts that has been recognized and can be displayed.

It is very common that researcher apply and integrate all of the different knowledge categories (Dudoviski, 2018), which we have through the usage of previous literature, previous student’s perspective and perception of employability and their involvement in student associations as well as our own empirical data in terms of the survey and interviews. Moreover, using the view of interpretivism it attempts to focus on the specific details of a certain circumstances and places in addition to the subjective meanings and lastly motivation behind different actions (Dudoivski, 2018). By being aware of the different knowledge categories and their meanings we have been able to easier know what to look for when gathering our data. Intuitive knowledge is represented throughout our research by the personal beliefs and opinions of our participants, both in our survey and our interviews, which plays a major role in the interpretation of the topic employability as such. Authoritarian knowledge is what the knowledge that our research was created from, by investigating the topic and field employability we could narrow down previous literature to the specific area we wanted to research. Empirical knowledge is as intuitive knowledge, linked to our primary data, which we use for our analysis and conclusion. It gives us more of a “hands-on” approach to the research.

We believe that through our research we are searching for the subjective standpoints within the participants, which lead us to a result of which potential factors the participants consider being
important for employability. Since we mainly focused on understanding a topic with the help of social and experience settings where we have taken people’s thoughts, concerns and problems into consideration, which is in alignment with the view of interpretivism where there can be more than one truth, which we believe in (Dudoivski, 2018).

3.2 Research approach

There are three different approaches one can use for one’s research, deductive, inductive and abductive, where the most commonly used approaches are deductive and inductive. Firstly, our research is using the data collected to explore and identify a phenomenon, to seek for patterns and finally create a concrete framework while generating assumptions by interviewing previous students accompanied by a survey where the participants gave their perception on the term perceived employability. According to Dudoivski (2018) these mentioned steps is an inductive approach, which we are aligned with and are carried out throughout the thesis. Moreover, the aim lays within the formulation of the research questions and the objectives that will be accomplish throughout the research. We are searching for the factors contribution to perceived employability and after that testing to see which impact student associations has on those factors (Dudoivski, 2018).

Contrary to the testing in a deductive approach we have not formalized a hypothesis to reject or accept, built from a field of research. Instead we aimed to use tests to identify which factors affect perceived employability of graduates who have been involved in student associations. The research field has not focused on student associations, though researchers have found factors when testing similar concepts. While we found inspiration about what might affect the graduates perceived employability we set out to find our own pattern to explain what affects perceived employability. Hence, we argue that we explore the way factors affect perceived employability and how one can see a clear inductive approach when testing if the student associations could be considered more of a hypothesis, the testing refers to the way we identify if there are factors affecting perceived employability. We refer to chapter 3.x for further explanation of our testing.

(Dudoivski, 2018, p68)

To further emphasize the process of inductive reasoning and the approach we have taken on, we have displayed a figure showing how observations and tests, leads to pattern. Thereafter, theory and conclusion can be drawn and create assumptions about the objective we are looking for, which is perceived employability (Dudoivski, 2018). Inductive reasoning is usually built on the premises of
scarcity of existing literature regarding the topic, and as stated in our background as well as in our theoretical framework that there is lack of a high volume of literature about employability as a whole. Neither the potential affect student associations can have on employability, which makes it evident how this research undertake an inductive reasoning. It generates into the creation of hypothesis rather than having a hypothesis from the beginning that one would want to test. Our research leads up to literature through observations that can create a hypothesis which according to Williamson (2002) is how inductive reasoning is done.

Furthermore, inductive reasoning is a bottom-up approach which indicates how researchers start with researching the chosen topic in order to collect both data, literature and other observations (Dudoivski, 2018), which we have applied by finding and identifying different aspects of employability. Ultimately, we tried to concentrate on individual beliefs and experience hoping to be able to construct alternative paths by providing research to potentially guide and help new students to maximize their employability rate. It is said that by understanding dynamics, flexibility, emergence and robustness one is using an inductive reasoning on one’s research (Dudoivski, 2018), which we do since we are looking into how perception and perspectives are formed, both our interviews and our survey is created to give the respondents their point of view, and their experience, making us able to create explanations.

3.3 Research design

This thesis takes on an inductive reasoning and as Collis & Hussey (2013) states, inductive reasoning is to locate general patterns which our purpose “find factors that affects employability of graduates that were involved in a student association” tried to do.

When choosing a research design, it is commonly described by the three categories; descriptive, exploratory and explanatory which will provide with a general plan in how the research question will be answered (Saunders, et al, 2009).

One group of research design is exploratory research, which as the name itself states, tries to explore different narrow aspects within the field of research, however it is not trying to deliver a complete conclusive answer to the question and one should be aware how change of direction might occur (Dudoivski, 2018). Furthermore, it refers to a process where the aim to generate and get insights about certain circumstances and situations, which we do by investigating a potential relationship between factors of employability and involvement in student associations. By exploring the topic of employability, it lead our research to explore the different factors that potentially constructs the meaning of employability. We consider our thesis to be aligned with an exploratory research design.

As explained in the beginning of the thesis, the topic of employability is still within a field of small quantitative research and is still relatively unexplored with neither defined problems or benefits. Exploratory research design is suitable for this kind of research since the design commonly applied on research where problems have not fully been evolved or defined (Dudoivski, 2018). Regardless, exploratory research design can help to determine the nature of a problem and create better understanding without providing certain evidence. What becomes important when having an exploratory research design is how the researchers need to be willing to alternate the direction of the thesis as
result from empirical findings and other new insights occur. Throughout our thesis we have had to change direction while maintaining our aim and focus of the research. Despite us hoping to be able to provide some sort of guidance to future new students with our research, we have limit ourselves to apply the research to one university and therefore give room for future research to further investigate and explore our chosen topic and field. Dudoivski (2018) states leaving room for research in the future is a part of the exploratory research design, by giving room for future research, other researchers can take on other research designs such as explanatory research design that focuses more on finding one particular answer to what they are looking for.

According to Williamson (2002), exploratory research can be useful for a theory-creating stage of any researches and is usually focused on a qualitative research method, aiming to explore phenomenological fields of studies. Since the focus of this thesis lays within understanding employability due to participating in a student organization, an exploratory study is appropriate, an exploratory study in order to search for insights and “what is happening” (Saunders, et al, 2009, p139).

Ultimately, this thesis undertakes an exploratory research design since it provides us with flexibility and possibility to change, which is important when there is scarcity within the chosen field of studies. Even if it is stated that there are limitations to exploratory research design such as the size of population is usually not high enough to create valuable research, we think that even though our research can’t target or represent an entire population, we hope to provide insights and enlighten the topic perceived employability and suggest further research.

3.4 Research method

Our thesis is using a mixed method, where we conducted both in-depth interviews as well as a survey. Mixed methods are referred to as when a research is using both a qualitative and a quantitative approach when collecting data and in the analyzing process (Saunders, et al, 2009).

Research methods is divided into two types of research; quantitative and qualitative research. Where quantitative research refers to as a description of numbers, resolving problems, infers, the overall emphasis lays within the collection of data and its interferences (Dudoivski, 2018). Qualitative research on the other hand can be described as research funded in feelings, emotions, words, non-numerical elements which cannot be analyzed through different mathematical techniques (Dudoivski, 2018).

We are investigating a concept that is considered to be relatively unexplored, which made us decide to create a mix method research where we combined both a quantitative and a qualitative research in order to get insights and clarifications that are both quantified in addition to the personal perspectives.

By using a mixed method, we hoped to get clarifications that can complement one another. With the usage of a qualitative research we were able to reach narrow specific information that was required for us to understand the term perceived employability and its factors as well as getting individual inputs from previous students, this is an advantage of using a qualitative method (Dudoivski, 2018)). However, by using a quantitative method we got the opportunity to reach out to a larger
mass and therefore generate a large quantity of data at the same time keeping the participants anonymous which can be beneficial when aiming to get trustworthy answers (Dudoivski, 2018).

Since we were aware of the potential pitfalls with each of the different methods we wanted to ensure a gathering of different data and observations so that we could provide different viewpoints to our reader along with creating a stronger analysis. Disadvantages with quantitative research regards the depth of the data and how difficult it is to get deeper insights when using that method, and a disadvantage with qualitative research is both potential bias as well as the time consumption needed to complete the data collection (Dudoivski, 2018). Although there are pitfalls with different research methods we aimed to understand our topic through applying a mixed research method.

According to Williamson (2002) combining quantitative and qualitative methods are to cross-check and make a reliable analysis by using the strengths of the two methods offset the weaknesses of each. This is possible with usage of triangulation which refers to the practice of both questionnaires and interviews (structured/unstructured/semi-structured). Another benefit of a mixed method approach comes from confirming similar outcome from various sources of data, thereby showing that findings did not depend on the source of data. Mixed methods will work against limiting the kind of data you are able to produce from your study by complementing for example quantitative and qualitative, as generally one type of data will only produce one type of knowledge (Small, 2011). Therefore, we are applying this approach, by combining both qualitative and quantitative methods to ensure that the data produced is both confirmative and complementary.

3.5 Data collection

Throughout our thesis we have implemented a mixed method research which means that we are combining a quantitative method with a qualitative method. Both data collection methods have taken place at Jönköping International Business School (JIBS). As mentioned in the beginning of the thesis (section 1), we have stated that both writers were students at JIBS which is a contributing factor to the choice of university where the study is taking place. Furthermore, this school is one of the highest ranked international business schools in Sweden (Ju.se, 2018) and our study takes place in Sweden. However, the data is collected from previous students at JIBS, which means that the participants of our research can both have different nationalities as well as current work-location that spread over the country or internationally. In appendix 1 you can find our sample frame for the participants we have in our research. As shown, we are putting emphasis on that the previous students have graduated. However, we are not considering within what field or position the participants has, this is beyond the scope of our research. The mixed method research is taking shape and form of a survey questionnaire and in-depth interviews. In the subsections below, you will find detailed information about the two different data collections. Both collections included full anonymity for the respondents and is of high priority, this is to exclude any exposure of the respondents. Moreover, the questions in the interviews and survey will be explained, you can find the interview questions in appendix 4 and the survey questionnaire in appendix 8. To conclude, the main data collection will be through a survey - questionnaire, that is conducted throughout the thesis but with a triangulation of the usage of in-depth interviews to compare answers as well as analyze the different observations.
Conducting interviews was the first step in the method part of the research, by having interviews we believed they could create a first in-depth impression and insights about the topic, thereafter the construction of a survey was done with a proper questionnaire based on the interviews that had been executed. This approach was useful since it helped us save time along with getting the information we wanted to create deeper understanding of the previous student’s experiences. Since we started to do the interviews it was important to reach out to the correct and suitable participants, we used the purposing sampling approach and with the help of our sample frame (appendix 1).

3.5.1 Interviews

Our in-depth interviews have open-ended questions and participants were purposively selected to focus the interviews direction while creating an understanding about the topic. The participants are graduates chosen because they had all been involved in student associations, however we had an intentional spread of participants among the student associations at Jibs and the graduates were currently employed. Purposive sampling, this approach can be used when it feels preposterous to select random samples, as well as when it’s crucial and of high importance to include specific groups in a sample. Using this approach, one can create a foundation of its pre-stage of research and build a larger understanding of the field/topic (Williamson, 2002). Using a semi-structured interview style at this stage enables a possibility of exploring the topic and gaining insights from the respondents creating awareness about the proposition. Semi-structured interviews can cross-check the previously collected data and ensure the possibility to compare answers among the respondents as well as giving freedom to the respondents to elaborate their answers while still having a reference frame of questions, which can result in a validated and stronger analysis of the research (Williamson, 2002).

We have created an interview guide (appendix 2), that is linked to the usage of in-depth interviews (Saunders, et al, 2009). The guide consists of guiding principles how the interviews was going to take place, this was to confirm the consistency throughout the interviews and the same prerequisites as well as the goal of the interviews regarding time and language to mention a few. Hence, error in translation can be avoided and prevent the participants to feel stressed when considering the time aspect of the interview. Furthermore, the preparation was essential when conducting interviews, aspects such as level of knowledge, level of information shared to the interviewee, appropriateness of location, appearance of the researcher, nature of the opening comments, approach to questions, are all aspects that was considered while pursuing the interview (Saunders, et al, 2009). Appendix 3 provides the information all participants are given beforehand, were themes of the interviews was brought to the interviewee’s attention (Saunders, et al, 2009). Overall, this letter was provided to create a complete agreement and comprehension between us as researchers and the interviewees. It allowed us to show transparency which is a crucial part when creating credibility for a thesis (Collis & Hussey, 2012).

The interview consists of open-ended questions which gave the respondents a chance to describe and define their response as well as provide an extensive answer, this may lead to the exposition of attitude or other facts (Saunders, et al, 2009). We took on a semi structure style on the interviews due to the open-ended questions and direct topics we want to investigate, as well as give the interviewee a possible chance to elaborate and therefore create questions along the way (Collis & Hussey, 2013). According to Collis & Hussey (2013) semi-structured interviews are good when trying to understand personal constructs and the respondent’s world, which we aimed to do by exploring the
perception of their involvement and experience in a student association. However, some questions will be under the influence of probing questions, which according to Saunders, et al (2009) are questions exploring into the significant research topic and one is therefore searching for further explanations to the asked questions. The interview questions can be found in appendix 4.

Some would argue that there are many questions in our interview form and therefore not a semi-structured interview. Nevertheless, since we conducted in depth interviews we tried to get a deeper insight in the topic and their experiences, which resulted in many questions. There was still room for the participants to elaborate their thoughts and for us to ask follow-up questions. Furthermore, as you can see in the interview form with questions (appendix 4) we concluded our interviews with asking how the respondents would conclude the interview. By having a question as such, we could conclude if “their message” came across properly, as well as making sure that the theme of the interview was clear. According to Saunders et al (2009), it is important to consider a conclusion of the interview while confirming the aim of the interview, which is an argument that backup the reasoning why we have a concluding question. To be able to have suitable questions targeting the aim of our research we did two test interviews with participants that suited the sample frame and our overall requirements. The test interviews gave us insights in how the respondents acted to certain questions, how our questions came across and prepared us for details in how to perform a good interview. However, the answers and overall comments from those interviews did not lay the ground of the final interview form, instead it helped us develop or clarify certain areas of our research. Both test interviews were audio recorded, but not transcribed since we do not use them for our analysis or conclusion. Lastly, those participants are not a part of the final interviewees and were strictly used to comprehend and gain knowledge for us as researchers along with getting us familiar with the interview setting.

The final interviews were audio-recorded with the perks letting researchers focus on listening and asking questions, it is “Accurate and unbiased recording is provided” (Saunders-, et al, 2009, p341) as well as the possibility to find direct quotes. When it comes to location and meeting of the interviews one should keep in mind the fragile setting of an interview and especially when there are two interviewers and one interviewee, the dynamics can change as well as being affected (Collin & Hussey, 2013). Therefore, we chose to give the interviewee’s the options of either doing phone interviews or face to face.

The table below displays the completed interviews and information about how they were obtained as well as the time spectra, graduation date and their nationality. Nationality and graduation year is not variables that is considered in the overall research and we did not seek to verify that in the survey, however, we are showing the nationalities of the interviewees to show full transparency of the data collection.
Table 1. Interview details.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewee</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Setting</th>
<th>Graduated</th>
<th>Nationality</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>52 min</td>
<td>Face to face</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Swedish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>40 min</td>
<td>Phone</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Swedish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>38 min</td>
<td>Phone</td>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Swedish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>50 min</td>
<td>Phone</td>
<td>2014</td>
<td>Swedish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>46 min</td>
<td>Phone</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Swedish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>44 min</td>
<td>Face to face</td>
<td>2018 - Jan</td>
<td>American</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We have conducted six semi-structured interviews in our qualitative research. The reasoning behind the choice of having six interviews to begin with is based on literature stating when having semi-structured, in-depth interviews that has participants from a non-probability sample, 5-25 interviewees is suitable (Dudoivski, 2018). That is the main reason why we started out having six interviews and the reasoning why we ended up with a total of six interviews, and did not include more, is due to the “mindset” of when getting the same result over and over again one can argue that new insights and observations are not likely to occur (Saunders, et al, 2009). After the last interview we came to the conclusion that the overall answers from the interviews where leading towards the same reflection, summary and answers which made us certain that more than six interviews was not needed for our research.

3.5.2 Survey

We used a survey as the second step of collecting data. At this stage, interviews have already been accomplished and a survey was sent out to the alumni network, as well as directly to former project managers of Jibs student associations. The aim was to obtain 200-300 replies and the survey was sent out to previous students from Jönköping International Business School (JIBS). To reach out to suitable candidates for the survey we have created a “requirement list” to narrow down the sample size of all students at JIBS. A requirement list can also be referred to as a sampling frame which indicates elements that are important for the sample group (Williamson, 2002). The requirement list goes hand in hand with the concept of screening, a process of chosen candidates to the survey, which Collis & Hussey (2014) refers to a process where you narrow down the sample by giving the example of people buying a certain product, which in our case would be linked to students that have been involved in a student association.
Previous researchers have successfully utilized the alumni network to retrieve their empirical findings. The use of the alumni network is a screening method since it will only include former student of a university. We used the alumni network since it has a good reach and as mentioned above will screen the sample. This would not limit it to those involved in student associations, however would reach them in-directly. The use of purposive sampling continued in the survey process, compared to deliberately choosing the respondents we opted to choose the group that would receive the survey. Inspired by the success of previous studies in utilizing the alumni network we also chose to survey the alumni network. As mentioned earlier a reason for purposive sampling is to include specific groups (Williams, 2002). However, the alumni as a group is a gateway to a sub group which is alumni who were involved in student associations. By introducing it as a survey on student association involvement we hoped to reach the sub group within the alumni. By using simple control questions in the questionnaire, we could later exclude data that was not in the scope of the thesis. The respondents got a short introduction to the topic of the thesis before conducting the survey. While not revealing too much information as to skew their view on the topic, when respondents are expected to be positive to the topic they would then answer more to the extremes (Dawes, 2008).

Though we did not have unlimited access to the alumni network as previous studies has had, we were allowed to send it to student that graduated in 2016-2017 as well as 2008-2009, through the person responsible for contact with alumni the alumni network at Jibs would have been able to reach out to around 6000 alumni (Staberg, personal communication, Jan 31, 2018). Therefore, the segment 2010-2015 could not be reached for surveying, which would have covered all the years we aimed for. During the time we were writing the thesis the alumni had an active survey from Times Higher Education (THE), therefore our survey would divert their attention from it, which was undesirable according to the alumni contact person.

As mentioned before we had to work around the THE survey regarding our data collection, because there were no official records of who had been in the student associations in the past, as a proven method was not fully accessible to us. We approached the problem with a snowball method to find project managers of previous years to aid in distributing the survey. Due to the involvement one of the authors of the thesis had in student associations we had the knowledge that social media was utilized as a common platform in most years. Where groups were created to get an overview of the operations and for communicative reasons, this was identified as a potential source of data for our thesis.

In order to complement the lack of alumni we reached through the network we decided to distribute it closer to the source. By contacting the president of Jibs student association, which then has different associations within it, we got the names of those who were active project managers. Thereafter we snowballed, through social media, from the active project managers to the one before them as far back in time as we could. They were then asked to help in the distribution of the survey to those who were active during their year as project manager. What helped a lot is that one of the authors have through their involvement established a social connection to many of those asked to help.

Asking project managers for private information like an e-mail address or a phone number could infringe on possible respondent’s privacy. This could possibly breach the trust between the project manager who holds the private information and those who have been under their management. As
further explained in section 3.5.2 we have chosen this method of data collection as complementary to the limited alumni network outreach as part of a snowballing method. The student population involved in associations is easiest identified by those who were in those association, due to lack of involvement records.

Since the research investigates and examine the potential relationship of employability and involvement within student associations, we examined students with a history of involvement within student associations at JIBS as well as other fundamental elements to narrow down the population group as well as the research (See appendix x3).

When it is hard to track the entire population, snowball sampling method is common it will branch out from initial contacts to the desired population (Saunders et al., 2009). To determine who the initial contacts for the snowballing method will be you set up criteria for inclusion, thereafter ask them to refer you to others who match the criteria (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015. Our criteria lead us to snowball from the project managers outwards to those who have been involved in the student associations. When selecting the snowballing method there are possibilities for bias as the initial contacts could refer to similar minded candidates (Saunders, 2009). Since our snowballing method branches out from the project manager and the selection criteria is involvement in the same student association we find that bias should have limited impact.

There is already research indicating that extra-curricular activities can be beneficial for your employability (Clark et al. 2015; Dacre Pool & Sewell, 2007; Pinto & Ramalheira, 2017), therefore we argue that the quantitative research would potentially add insights to the field. As our contribution is to single out student associations from the grouping of extra-curricular activities and provide evidence that that alone has a significant effect as well. As there still is a debate about a reliable measure for employability in general we see perceived employability as a proxy for employability. While it cannot be equated with a measure it will give an indication as to how employable the graduate is.

To best capture the opinion of a respondent through a survey you can use rating questions, a typical tool to measure rating questions is the Likert scale. Where the respondent is presented statements to which they must answer to which degree they agree, disagree or have no opinion (Saunders 2009). However, statements where the respondents only are asked whether they agree or disagree miss out on the magnitude of agreement or disagreement (Easterby-Smith et al., 2015). A Likert scale usually has between a four to seven-point scale (Saunders, 2009), this gives the research the ability to measure from the extremes to the moderate and even those without opinion (Easterby-Smith, 2015).

The survey was designed with a survey tool called esMaker which is provided to students by Jönköping university, where you can customize your survey to fit your needs. We decided to use matrices of Likert scale questions, these were grouped together in categories in accordance as a Confirmatory factor analysis dictates. In the program you are then able to publish the survey, we chose to get an open link that would lead the respondent to the survey webpage.

We adopted the Likert scale for our survey to be able to capture the opinions of our respondents, however we had to choose between a 5-point and 7-point Likert scale, as those are the most common. If researchers expect a general positive outcome from the data a 5-point scale compared to a 7-point scale should have more answers towards the positive end and the 7-point could have a
broader distribution on the positive side (Dawes, 2008). Our expectation was that the respondents would have had a positive experience from their involvement in student associations, this could then normalize their answer by reducing their bias. Eutsler & Lang (2015) found that a fully labeling the rating scale will reduce bias as well as error in the responses because respondent can differentiate the ratings from each other. Also having a fully labeled scale would reduce the extreme response style, which happens when respondents choose the extremes of the rating scale to a higher degree (Weijters, Cabooter & Schillewaert, 2010). Our scales had labels for all increments, the reasoning behind is to make it very clear what is meant with each notch in the rating scale.

Our questions were designed in five different categories: networking, time management, soft skills, responsibility and perceived employability. These were areas that was mostly emphasized in previous literature, however in the interviews we found an additional category: leadership. Appendix 8 shows the survey questions.

3.5.2.1 Response rate

Because our respondents had to fit certain criteria we had a small population to draw samples from, which made a high response rate essential. Since the increased use of internet-based surveys researchers exposes potential respondents to frequently for surveys, therefore respondents will be less likely to participate (Keusch, 2012). To counteract the non-response rate researchers should issue a pre-notification informing respondents that a survey will follow (Dilman, 1991; Keusch, 2012), we applied and adopted this method when contacting the project managers to increase their response rate to our survey. Therefore, making them more likely to aid us in distributing the survey.

To increase the likelihood of the respondents completing the survey it is beneficial for response rate to have a shorter compared to longer survey (Deutskens, De Ruyter, Wetzels & Oosterveld, 2004), completion drops already after two pages (Heerwegh & Loosveldt 2006). Our survey was therefore limited to a single page so that the respondent quickly is aware of the survey length. Further, monetary incentives would counteract response rate drop in lengthy surveys (Deutskens et al. 2004; Yammarino, Skinner & Childers, 1991), therefore to maintain a high response rate for a longer survey we could have used monetary incentives. However, as students we felt unable to provide monetary incentives. Respondents are also less likely to discontinue the survey if the survey has a professional design to it (Keusch, 2012). With that in mind we chose to use the official logo of the school as well as the survey distribution program provided by the school, while making it clear when posting the survey that this is part of a master thesis.

After ensuring that the initial send out of the survey has followed the above-mentioned criteria to increase response rate, it is highly recommended that researchers follow up with another distribution (Yammarino et al. 1991; Dilman, 1991; Keusch 2012, Deutshens et al. 2004). Dilman (1991) suggests several follow ups over a seven-week period, the first being a postcard one week after the initial mailing. First, we understood that distributing a survey by physical mail does not apply, however we see the use of several follow ups. Though in the internet era potential respondents may be subjected several surveys in short periods, therefore continuous distribution can be seen as spam and affect the survey negatively (Keusch, 2012). Second, as online content has a quick cycle Deutshens et al. (2004) argue that follow up should be done in one week rather than two. By following the procedures suggested by researchers we hoped to increase our response rate.
Because of the snowball method applied as well as surveying a population we were unable to present a percentage response rate as is otherwise advisable. Under the process of writing the thesis we found out that there are an estimated 150 students involved in student associations this year (O. Heiska, JSA president, personal communication, 15 May 2018). This means that we potentially reached 600 students through the mails to alumni as well as another 200-300 from the snowball method. There is no practical method to find out our response rate on that estimated population although it is presumably low, which speaks to the difficulty of reaching this population.

3.5.3 Secondary Data

The secondary data, in terms of literature consisting of peer-reviewed articles, which has been used for the thesis is obtained mainly through Scopus and web of science. Appendix 5 shows a chart of the most frequently used words/topics from articles.

Our selection of supporting literature has been grounded in peer reviewed articles. Going through the peer-review process will establish the quality and relevance of the article and is considered the most important source of information (Easterby-Smith et al. 2015). We utilized two databases at our disposal through the Jönköping University network, Web of Science and Scopus, both which have extensive search alternatives. Through these we were able to find relevant articles to support our claims in the thesis.

In Web of Science there is an index called impact factor to infer a rating to a journals credibility, the sum of any two years citations is divided by the sum of articles, which would equal the impact factor the year after those in the calculation. Further Easterby-Smith et al. (2015, pp 311) gives a benchmark “Journals with impact factors over 3.00 are generally considered ‘world class’; those between 1.5 and 3.0 are seen as very good international journals; those between 0.5 and 1.5 respectable international journals; and those below 0.5 are in danger of relegation”. Given the benchmarks set out by Easterby-Smith et al (2015) we agreed to adhere to a threshold of 1.0. In their book Easterby-Smith et al. (2015) refer to Web of Knowledge, however it is now known as Web of Science.

The other database is Scopus and uses their own metric called CiteScore, where the sum of any consecutive three years citations is divided by the sum of articles the same years, which would equal the CiteScore the year after those in the calculation (Scopus, 2017). As both metrics are built on the same calculations only that Scopus has three compared to two years, we apply the Easterby-Smith et al. (2015) scale to CiteScore as well as our threshold.

While we had an agreed threshold, we understand that not all articles that are noteworthy can be published in the journals that have high scores. Therefore, the second threshold we established was for citations of the articles we use in the thesis. Articles should have at least 10-20 citations to be considered a contribution to the field of research. However, we also understood that there is more complexity to it, as recent publications may have low citations, as do narrow articles. Thus, the threshold was more seen as a guideline.
To obtain the supportive literature necessary for our thesis we had to find the articles or books that fall under two criteria: importance and relevance. An article or book that is deemed central to the field of research is categorized under importance, while relevance is categorized as researchers that complement the line of argumentation in your work (Easterby-Smith, 2015). With that in consideration, each article that does not fall into the recommended threshold for journal score had to be scrutinized in accordance to importance and relevance to our thesis. Through discussions with a university librarian Gunnarsson (personal communication, 31 Jan 2018) we further understood the importance of not ruling out an article based on journal scores. He argued that the relevance to your thesis can justify low citations by asking yourself why you choose it and what consequences it has for the thesis.

In addition to peer-reviewed articles we required accurate information about organizations or specific statistics, for example about the overall involvement in student associations in Sweden, we turned to what is called “grey literature” this regards publications governmental of non-governmental bodies (Easterby-Smith, 2015, pp 14). However, this information is used to provide context for the reader and not used as a basis for the findings of the thesis.

3.6 Data analysis tool

3.6.1 Interviews

We have used NVivo as our analytical tool for the interviews in order to provide easy accessible summaries and takeaways from the interviews. NVivo gave us the opportunity to use our transcripts from the interviews and create a visible network with links between them with the intention of drawing conclusions and overall assumptions from the data that has been collected.

According to Dudovskiy (2018), showing and identifying themes, patterns and different kind of relationships is important when the purpose is to achieve a valuable analysis for one’s qualitative research. One suggested software program to attain this is by the usage of NVivo, which is a highly recommended and used program when it comes to qualitative research (Dudovskiy. 2018). NVivo is a software program that helps to organize, retrieve and store the collected data which enables one to work more efficiently and back up all the findings with evidence, the software program can import different kinds of data; from audio content to notes and emails (NVivo, 2018). The program helps to understand the possible complexity about a subject and can help to explore and discover more by creating advanced data management through visualization tools, overall, enable one to see the big picture of diverse data (NVivo, 2018).

Therefore, we used NVivo as our analytical tool for the interviews with the intention of provide easy accessible summaries and takeaways from the interviews. NVivo gives us the opportunity to use our transcript interviews and create visible connections with links between them in order to draw conclusions and overall assumptions of the data that’s been collected. Furthermore, we decided to use a software program instead of a manual analysis since manual analysis with coding and pattern seeking is considered being outdated and time consuming with a high level of intense labor work (Dudovskiy, 2018).
3.6.2 Survey

This research is a quantitative research, in terms of a survey, with the objective to reach a target group of 200-300 participants.

The findings from the research was analyzed through the framework of confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), which is commonly used in social researches that aims to create an understanding of the findings while creating a high reliability (Harrington, 2009). The procedure as such is used as a statistical tool that can verify and explore different variables from the research, by using latent variables, both exogenous and endogenous, one can build a statistical explanation from the outcome (Harrington, 2009).

3.6.2.1 Structural equation modelling

The term structural equation modelling (SEM) is an umbrella term for several statistical techniques, one of which is the CFA used in this thesis. We will discuss general guidelines that apply in SEM and therefore to our CFA.

Most SEM programs uses maximum likelihood (ML) estimation as well as most structural equation models including the CFA. It is a statistical principle that will calculate the parameter estimates. In a model that is measured according to statistical requirements and is correctly specified, ML estimations will increase the likelihood of estimators being representatives of the population parameters when increasing the sample size (Kline, 2007). In most programs these estimations are calculated simultaneous (Kline, 2007).

We found a guideline to determine the required sample size applicable to any model. Based on the number of parameters, effects of estimates from our data, in a model and its ratio to the sample size you can determine if the sample size is large enough. It is called the N:q rule, with which an ideal sample size is calculated by a 20:1 ratio, with 10 parameters you would need 200 cases. A ratio below 10:1 will decrease the trustworthiness of the results (Jackson, 2003).

While a small sample size of <100 in SEM is usually considered flawed, an exception is if the population is restricted in size to the hundreds or thousands. It relies more on the likelihood of representing all likely members of the population (Barrett, 2007).

The main reason why we have chosen this framework is to navigate through the empirical findings while analyzing it, is due to the framework’s feasibility of examine unidimensional factors such as intrinsic versus extrinsic as well as interpersonal characteristics (Harrington, 2009).

Two variables are considered in SEM, observed and latent variables, where the observed variables represent the data collected. In our case that comes from the Likert scale type survey that was issued to our respondents. Observed variables are either ordinal, categorical or continuous (Kline, 2011). The Likert scale used in the study is an ordinal categorical scale, meaning that it has an internal order (Easterby-Smith et al. 2012), however in a CFA the Likert scale is assumed to be continuous (Kline, 2007).

The other variable in consideration is the latent variable, which when used in SEM is treated as a continuous variable. They are used to reflect a seemingly unobservable continuum and resemble the factors or hypothetical constructs that this thesis aimed to establish (Kline, 2007). As a researcher you would use observable variables as proxies for constructs and are referred to as indicators, “An
example is the construct of intelligence. There is no single, definitive measure of intelligence. Instead, researchers use different types of observed variables, such as tasks of verbal reasoning or memory capacity, to assess various facets of intelligence.” (Kline, 2007, pp 9).

The used technique of measuring a factor in CFA is a multiple-indicator measurement, when applying this technique, a researcher presents multiple indicators underlying a single factor (Kline, 2007). Before setting out to design the model for a CFA the researcher should define the factors that are intended to be measured as well as the observable variables meant to measure the factor (Easterby-Smith et al. 2015).

When first setting out to construct a model for SEM, the researcher should specify the model that they intend to use. It is the most important step since it will assume that the model holds. Second, the model must be identified to work within the computer program as to arrive at unique parameter estimates for all parameters. This is important because otherwise it will not produce a good result no matter the sample size. Third, you select the measures and collect the data for them. Fourth, determine the fit of your model unless there is a good fit, the model should be re-specified. Once the model has a good fit it can be used to find estimates to explain the data collected (Kline, 2007).

The estimates for the parameters in the model should be interpreted to investigate whether they are meaningful or not, as a good model fit will not ensure good estimates. As good fit as the model may have there could be other models that are equivalent, therefore an explanation as to why that model is superior to another is required. For the final stage the researcher is expected to report the results in a written report (Kline, 2007).

3.6.2.2 Amos

The statistical tool we used to analyze our data is called Amos, which is a program made by Microsoft. It has been specifically produced to be used for SEM and is one of eight tools researchers commonly use (Kline, 2007).

The covariance of a model in CFA is displayed by a two-way arrow from one variable to another, covariance is indicated in the unstandardized solution, thereafter in the standardized solution the same sort of arrows display correlation. For independent variables the two-way arrows show covariance between variables but not why they covary. As for the dependent variable the two-way arrow connects two variables and will indicate why a researcher believes they covary, in addition to how they covary to the independent variables. An advantage of this method of graphically displaying the model is that the parameters, the arrows connecting independent and dependent variables, are easily distinguished (Kline, 2007).

3.6.2.3 Model fit

The simplest model test statistic used in SEM is the model chi-square test, which tests the exact fit hypothesis of the model meaning it should not differ from the population covariance. It is mostly used for large samples and if the p-value ≥ 0.05 you confirm that the model is consistent with population covariance, thereby you would not reject the exact fit hypothesis. Though with it proven there is still no certainty that it is the correct model (Kline, 2007).

In addition to the model chi square test there are other tests that are commonly used by researchers, root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), goodness-of-fit index (GFI) and comparative fit index (CFI). A combination of the tests mentioned above tests your model in separate ways. RMSEA tests if the model is overly complex (Kline, 2007), GFI tests if the model fits better than
compared to no model at all (Jöreskog, 2004) and CFI relative improvement in fit over a base model (Kline, 2007).

There are rules of thumb for the above mentioned tests where:

- When RMSEA is ≤ 0.5 the model is considered to have good fit according to the test.
- Having a GFI on 1 indicates the optimal fit (Kline, 2007), however over 0.95 is generally not recommended (Schreiber, Nora, Stage, Barlow & King, 2006).
- The CFI value should be ≥ 0.9.
- With these rules of thumb, we aspired to ensure our model had a good fit with the data.

3.7 Time horizon

The time horizon informs about the timeline for the research which is in aligned with the creation of objectives and the aim of the research, as well as the overall time management (Dudoivski, 2018). We had approximately four months to write the thesis and as Collis & Hussey (2014) states, time is of high importance when studying your masters. That is why we took planning into high consideration and through seminars during the semester have we been able to create personal deadlines and milestones in order to create a schedule that is maintainable and easy to execute. When it comes to time horizons, Saunders et al. (2009) describes the normal time approach to a research as cross-sectional since it is a research project undertaken a certain amount of time, a time constraint. Which is applicable to our four months’ time frame due to the course of a master thesis.

When being under time pressure it is important to plan and schedule your time in an efficient matter which can result in more effective work and that is why we among many things, create a GANTT chart. This enabled us to create an overview of the weeks of work that laid ahead of us (week 4-22). Collis and Hussey (2014) states that using a GANTT chart is beneficial in several ways when doing research, it keeps track on where you are at and where you want to be, and what needs to be done along with what needs to be achieved. However, a GANTT chart is usually a complex matrix and that is why we included our main tasks in our GANTT chart, to easier keep track on what we considered was the crucial parts. The chart includes different mandatory deadlines which is a result of the research being a dissertation as well as our own deadlines containing a word count. What is not visible in the chart is details within the deadlines, both the mandatory and our own, for example the green ones that is the word deadlines contained details about what parts/sections and chapters that needed to be completed by then.
Moreover, since we are two authors of this research we created minor weekly meetings in order to have reconciliations and to ensure we kept up with our time plan. Monday, Wednesdays and Fridays started every week with a morning meeting going through our checklist for each meeting. This lead us to have control over the work that was completed. Another major aspect of our time planning and management was how we used real-time documents through google drive which made us certain on what sections had been completed and where either of us could keep working. Besides scheduled meeting, we had a consistent daily contact.

3.8 Trustworthiness

3.8.1 Credibility

As for the definition we turned to Collis (2015, pp 172), who claim “Credibility is concerned with whether the research was conducted in such a manner that the subject of the inquiry was correctly identified and described”. This is improved by researchers immersing themselves within the subject over an extended period, while triangulating with various sources or methods of data collection and continuous feedback from peers.

The thesis is provided with an interview guide, information letter to the interviewee, interview questions and a sample frame to mention a few, to ensure that the research has prepared for possible problems and errors. To create a high credibility for this thesis, we have through the NVivo program been able to analyze our interviews and create displays in terms of word frequencies and charts showing word and theme distribution of the interviews. Showing transparency and therefore accuracy is important in order to obtain high credibility (Collis & Hussey, 2014). When being able to display your data collection thoroughly one can create credibility (Collis & Hussey, 2014), that is why we are using both statistical evidence showing correlations as well as the NVivo program to give the reader chance to see the data collection that has been done.

In our thesis we have adopted triangulation, using multiple methods of data collection will improve credibility (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Shenton, 2004). The reasoning behind triangulation is that one method of data will verify the findings of the other, as Lincoln & Guba (1985, pp 305) mentions “No report was credited unless it could be verified by another person”. The different methods are then able to make up for the limitations of the other as well as getting the benefits from both (Shenton, 2004).

During the process we have had seminars with fellow students and a tutor, who provided feedback on our work throughout the entire process. The thesis was our only academic focus during the semester which meant we could gain deep knowledge about the subject. We saw this as improving our overall credibility.

3.8.2 Reliability

Firstly, Saunders et al. (2009) stress the importance to confirm reliability and validity in research. Reliability relates to the notion of consistency, and according to Kirk & Miller (1986) reliability lays within the extent if the measurement process results in the same findings no matter when and how the process is completed as well as the consistency of the findings, while reducing the risks of
getting replies wrong and show transparency (Saunders, et al, 2009). To ensure as high reliability as possible we have used audio recording while conducting the interviews, in conjunction with cautiously written notes in order to transcribe as precise as possible. By having the interviews in English, we avoided language error in translation.

Furthermore, Saunders et al (2009) discusses the factor of transparency within reliability, which is how the researcher show their collected data and are transparent with it. To achieve transparency, we have displayed the interview questions in an appendix as well as the survey, tables and graphs as summaries of the collected data. We aimed to explain how we have treated our data, through the collection and analysis process, therefore disclosing the data for readers in terms of how we used it. However, to get the data as reliable as possible with validity taken into account, one should take certain features in to consideration; planning process, approach to questioning, appropriate usage of questions and different questions, recording the data (Saunders et al, 2009). To ensure we had appropriate questions we created two test rounds of interviews and a test survey with different layouts to make sure of its accuracy.

When it comes to the CFA that is applied on our survey there is reliability measures to follow. For researchers to ensure quantitative reliability in their measure it is crucial to have a score for reliability, as well as having good scores since low reliability scores makes statistical tests redundant. The score represents how much random measurement error there is in the sample. A common score is the Cronbach’s Alpha which measures the internal consistency of responses for the items in a measure. To determine a good score there is a rule of thumbs as described by Kline (2007, pp 70) “Generally, reliability coefficients around .90 are considered “excellent,” values around .80 are “very good,” and values around .70 are “adequate.” If rXX < .50, most of the observed score variance is due to random error, an unacceptable amount of imprecision in most research”. It is also important to report the reliability scores of the samples (Kline, 2007). Furthermore, there is validity measures to follow as well when it comes to CFA. When determining score validity, the research is conveying robustness of the conclusion made by the scores. Scores for validity is gathered in the umbrella term construct validity, which tells the researcher if the scores measure the constructs they aimed to do. Since constructs are not observable variable they can only be measured from the indicators and scores attributed to them. As there is no true test for construct validity there are different methods of doing so. The one applied in this thesis is convergent validity, it is achieved by measuring the intercorrelation of the variables attributed to the construct is at least of moderate magnitude (Kline, 2007).

3.8.3 Transferability

Collis & Hussey (2014) argues that transferability is if the results can be functional in another context or situation with similar generalizations. As well as providing a thick description so that other researchers can understand the context, keeping in mind information deemed undesirable by us can provide context for other researchers (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Shenton 2004). We have accomplished this by informing where the interviews took place and a detailed explanation of how the interviews were conducted. As well as, explaining, who the participants in the survey are and how and why they were chosen for this research. We have given a sample frame in the appendix that describes what our requirements are for a person to participate in our survey.
3.8.4 Confirmability

The authors as researchers must intend to reflect the answers of the participants rather than convictions of the researchers themselves. Shenton (2004) further argues that triangulation significantly reduce the researcher bias, subsequently the findings are more likely to reflect the respondents.

3.8.5 Dependability

To ensure dependability the researchers should disclose the processes of the study in full so that future researchers are able to repeat to work, not necessarily arriving to the same result (Shenton, 2004). This can be achieved writing a detailed research design, explaining exactly what was done during respondent interactions and reflecting on the effectiveness of the chosen processes (Shenton, 2004). We have followed the three-step suggestion mentioned to show dependability in our study.

3.9 Ethics

According to Williamson (2002) it is inconceivable to avoid ethics in any research and is the core behind actions and values for any research. In general ethics is the appropriate behavior one has when conducting research (Saunders, et al, 2009), which for us is something we highly emphasize as important and have been taken into consideration throughout the thesis, for example by briefing the interviewees beforehand about the topic, purpose of the interview as well as the protection of their anonymity. In appendix x6 you can find “the Missenden code of practice for ethics and accountability” (Collis & Hussey, 2014 p 31).

Furthermore, we have ensured that the participation in both our survey and interviews has been fully voluntarily, by not pressuring any participant to be involved. Since we have used a non-probability, purposive approach to find our sample group to our research we message our interviewees in an early stage to request their participation, this was in order for us to ensure they did not feel pressured and that we could reach out to others if they declined. The same went for the survey, the way we found our distribution channels we planned our time carefully over a longer period of time so that it would not create stress on the ones helping to distribute our survey. Moreover, by making sure that no harm happened to the participants, as well as their safety of both privacy, confidentiality and anonymity occurred we could stay aligned with given guidelines of ethics in research (Dudoivski, 2018). The associations that the interviewees been involved in is censored throughout the research, and the participants in the survey is not required to neither leave their name or any other personal information. As can be seen in the section data collection and empirical findings we have given explicit explanations and descriptions for how we implemented and completed our research, which is a sign of transparency and a part of ethics (Dudoivski, 2018).

4 Empirical findings

4.1 Interviews

This section is to present the findings from the interviews displaying different figures to be able to show the results. The findings are focusing on the participants involvement in student associations and their main impressions and takeaways. In addition, how they believe their involvement in a student association contributed to personal growth and how employable they became. We asked the
participants on their recruitment experience and how they outlined their involvement in an association as well as how the recruiter emphasized different experiences. Through the interviews we could narrow down different aspects about their experience in a student association and what they said related to literature about employability. In appendix 3 we have provided you with the interview questions, however, it is important to remember it was semi-structured interviews which means that more questions have potentially been added in the interviews depending on the responses.

The first step was to identify categories that was discussed the most during the interviews. Different categories have been created through the transcriptions. The categories that occurred is the result of the overall emphasis on student associations and experience. Appendix 9 provides graphs for each interview, showing the different categories. The identified categories were; learning, developed soft skills, leadership, time management, communication, delegate, find a job, creative, hours spent in student association, soft skills, experience, networking. However, the order of the categories is not a reflection of its frequency. We have displayed a table showing the main category from each interview. The table illustrates the parts of the interviews that was the most discussed and can indicate the perceptions of the interviewees. However, this do not set the tone or importance from the interview when it comes to the main takeaways. This is strictly to illustrate the most discussed category from each respondent.

Table 2. Main categories from interviews.

| Interview 1 | Leadership |
| Interview 2 | Experience |
| Interview 3 | Experience |
| Interview 4 | Soft skills |
| Interview 5 | Learning |
| Interview 6 | Experience |

Furthermore, to get an overview from the interviews we have displayed a shortened extract from the excel document with word frequency from all six interviews. It helps indicate the accurate and narrow findings from the interviews. Word, length, count, weighted percentage and similar words are provided in the table.

Table 3. Word count for all interviews.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Length</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Weighted Percentage (%)</th>
<th>Similar Words</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>positive</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>2.42</td>
<td>effect, effective, expert, experts, good, honest, practical, practice, practicing, serious, skills, felt good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>experience</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>1.64</td>
<td>experience, experiences, feel, feeling, feelings, feels, gaining, know, lived, received, learned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>involved</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>1.54</td>
<td>affected, asked, asking, demanding, engagement, interest, interested, interesting, involved, involvement, involves, involving, need, needed, participation, regarding, required, requires, take, takes, taking</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Nevertheless, minor adjustments have been done in the development of the word frequency table, we censured minor hollow words to avoid explanatory and “talking-words” and our own questions and comments from the word count. However, with just minor adjustments we still identified words that aligned with the takeaways/categories from the interview and did therefore not adjust the word frequency table any further. As a result, relatively low percentages are shown in the table.

Positive, experience and involved were the three most used words in different the interviews. All participants considered their participation as something positive and something that included them in different social groups which to them was a personal gain by combining project work with positive and fun aspects.

P2 “I had a lot of ideas, over time you get more experience” The positivity was firmly connected with the personal gains, in relation to the networking and social scenery that took place. Networking was one of the main categories from the transcripts and P4 “I gave me contacts, we were able to write our thesis with a company through contacts through the association” P6 “I could use my experience from xxxx as well as learning from my mistakes” the self-reflection and learning opportunity was evident for all the participants. The more we discussed the more topics was covered by the interviews, both communication and relationships building, P2 “I like to build relationships”, P1 “Important to listen first to everyone so everyone can speak their mind, and open communication is important”. Communication and problem-solving in the different projects of student associations was something most interviews agreed they had experienced and depending on your role in association communication became vital.

Personal growth was also linked to both experience and the positive takeaways from involvement in student associations, P5 “You can challenge yourself”, as learning experience student associations could challenge the participants to grow themselves, both in terms of skills and other personal attributes: P4 “Did contribute to knowledge and insights”, P1 “I learned a lot about myself specially how to handle people and how to start working in a project environment”.

One of the main takeaways from the interview is how the participants talked about experience, and to get hands-on experience by being involved in a student association. Since student associations takes place at university, theoretical experience is provided and among our interviewees it was evident how important they considered projects within the associations were, in order to gain experiences beside part-time jobs and education, P2 “Important to be a part of committees to get other knowledge more practical knowledge than just theoretical”. However, no parallels were drawn or linked between academic learnings and the project learnings from student associations, the interviewees did not state they used theory from school, besides finding interests within different subjects and therefore participating in a student association. We consider it important to highlight the respondent’s emphasis on getting hands-on experience by being a part of a student associations, since they indicated that the experience itself gave them the opportunity to develop certain skills. P5 “To get hands on experience” P6 “Experience I can apply on real life cases” P3 “Being able to be hands-on” P1 “Feeling proud to have accomplished something”.

The experience as such which the respondents discussed was related to both personal opinions on how to spend your time at university as well as having fun and meeting new people. These aspects were the main reasons and motivation why the participants would recommend new students to be involved in a student association. The importance for us to know why and if the respondents would
recommend new students to be involved in an association is to see if there were more reasons and motivation behind one’s involvement than the participants themselves know, P2 “I wanted a learning experience and needed something practical since the program I attended did not have any internships”. As stated in the beginning of the thesis, we hope to help new students navigate their time at university along with maximizing their time at university which is why it is important to see if the interviewees would recommend being involved, since we are exploring the topic of perceived employability and what can lead up towards that, P5 “I think that it is a really good experience, the planning part and the parts afterwards when you look at everything you have done was this good was this bad how to do it better next time and then you have been a part of the whole process that is something is really good”. The majority of the reasons and motivations behind getting involved laid within internal beliefs of the social spectra that student associations can provide, the potential to network as well as the experience as such.

Within the term experience, we can find soft skills and learning, which was two major categories covered in the interviews, see table 4.1, P4 “Leadership experience”, leadership, which also is one of the main categories are connected with both experience and learning as well as soft skills, P1 “I think that there need to be two kinds of leaders within a team to balance out, if the manager would not have been strict, I would have had to be stricter.” Leadership could be considered a skill, and was discussed throughout all interviewees, reflection about how the interviewees themselves would be as a leader as well as how they had perceived leader within student association, P2 “The leaders now were very focused on the goals. It’s good to see different perspectives”.

Another important takeaway from the interviews is how all the participants in one way or another discussed how through their involvement in an association felt responsibility for the operations. Most comments about responsibility was in regard to how the participants felt obligated to perform in another way compared to their studies which enabled them to perform at their best at most times. Being responsible for others performance or having the obligation to complete something when other people are depending on it was what was emphasized and the underlying meaning; reliability. P6 “With money comes responsibility, we had to create a brand, we had to look professional, we could not look like a group of students” P4 “It takes time to realize you have responsibility”

The category hours aim to determine the time spent on student associations, P3 “It really depends on the role you have in the project and when it was, up and down with how much time”, it was important to locate how and why the participants spent the time they did on their involvement. In addition to how much time was spent on other activities, school and more. The importance lays within how student associations could have affected the students’ studies, both in a positive or a negative way and therefore affected the overall experience of their involvement.

4.2 Survey

Firstly, in order for us to display the findings from our survey, we want to clarify matters that has affected the overall graphs and tables. As stated, we decided to use a CFA to apply on our survey and when using a CFA there are certain restrictions and guidelines one needs to follow. Since our aim was to reach a participant level between 200-300 and ended up with 75, this complicated the process of applying CFA on our research. Of the 75 participants we could use 56 to our CFA due to the criteria that a participant had graduated and have been a part of an association, see appendix 1. However, since this was the chosen method for our research, to complete a survey and apply CFA, we decided to stay on track with the plan and execute it, with reservation of its limitations and pitfalls due to the low participation level. It is important to be able to show reasons for
what other equivalent models there are compared to the one chosen in a CFA, though it will be difficult to follow that step we have created a simple CFA model. Since we developed a simple CFA model there are likely few equivalent models that explain the relationships in our data.

The low participation level could have been avoided if there would not have existed a time restriction and the choice of a CFA was implemented due to previous researcher's method of research and their results. Although we were aware of the time restriction, we applied methods to enable us to get enough answers to the survey by creating multiple plans how do distribute the survey and how often we could and would send it out. Through transparency of our findings and open discussion of the results we decided to still include the CFA and explained throughout the display of findings from the survey.

4.2.1 CFA

Below you will find our model for the CFA that we have used for our thesis, the aim of the CFA is to test if factors that are hard to measure on their own. They can be measured with questions that are categorized together to measure the factor. The factors we measured are “Soft skills” (SS) and “Perceived employability” (PE) and we measured them with the rectangles SS1, SS2, SS5, and PE3, PE4, PE5 respectively. Under the model you can find the questions that belonged to each rectangle and were used in our survey to measure the factors. The double-sided arrow connecting the factors show if there is a correlation between them and we found one at 0.07, this was not statistically significant.

Model 1

SS1 - During my involvement in a student association I developed my creativity.

SS2 - During my involvement in a student association I developed my initiative taking

SS5 - During my involvement in a student association I developed my leadership.

PE3 - The skills and abilities that I possess are what employers are looking for.

PE4 - I am generally confident of success in job interviews.
PE5 - I feel I could get any job so long as my skills and experience are reasonably relevant.

Even though the correlation between PE and SS was not statistically significant, the questions in our survey did accurately measure our factors and the questions in the model had the best factor loadings. The SS factor was mostly measured by creativity, initiative taking and leadership skills, which overall indicates that those were the skills most participants obtained or developed throughout their involvement. Furthermore, the questions that measured PE was possessing desired skills and abilities, feeling confident in job interviews and that their experience and skills are sufficient for any relevant job.

The model observed above is one of four models for the factors listed in the data collection. However, this model was chosen because it had the best factor loadings and model fit to our data. Additionally, it had the best alignment with the interviews and our theoretical framework. See appendix 11 for the other models, which also follow the simple CFA model, these did not have acceptable model fit and are therefore not included in our display of the empirical findings from the survey.

4.2.1.1 Table 4

Table 4 shows how well the questions measure the factors SS and PE as in the model above where the same numbers are displayed by the arrows going from the factors to the questions. Additionally, you can see the standard errors (SE) that explain if our data has a spread similar to the entire population, given that the value is low like ours. We report both the standardized and unstandardized factor loadings, however focus on the standardized estimates as they can be interpreted without having to keep the scale of the questions in mind. Since other researchers may use a different numbered Likert scale we chose to focus on standardized estimates for easier comparison (Easterby-Smith et al. 2015). These factor loadings show the effect of soft skills and perceived employability respectively from the questions listed above. A benchmark for factor loadings of > 0,7 is to be considered good (Kline, 2007).

4.2.1.2 Table 5

In table 5 we present model fit statistics which tells you if the model used for our thesis fit the data from our survey that were tested in our research. The first three rows combined shows the results for a model chi square score, where the first row is the chi square statistic, the second is degrees of freedom and then p-value. It tests the exact fit hypothesis of our model and if you accept the hypothesis, as we do due to a p-value of >0,05, it indicates that the chosen model has a good fit with the data. Next, we present the GFI test and as the value gets closer to 1 it indicates best fit, and our score of 0,939 shows it has a good fit. The CFI test compares our model’s hypothetical improvements in fit to a baseline model and the value should be ≥0,9, with our value we can determine our
model to be better than a baseline-model. Lastly, Our RMEA tests show whether our model is too complex, a value of ≤0,5 indicates good fit. As shown in our RMEA score is 0,87 and exceeds 0,5 indicating that our model is too complex to explain the data, this can be related to the low level of participation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fit Indexes for Confirmatory Factor Analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fit statistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CMIN</td>
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<tr>
<td>df</td>
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<tr>
<td>p-value</td>
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<tr>
<td>OFI</td>
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<tr>
<td>CFI</td>
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<tr>
<td>RMSEA</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

4.2.1.3 Table 6

In table 6 we present the Cronbach’s Alpha for the questions used to measure each factor. The results show how related the questions are to each other and is expected to be high since they are supposed to be categorized together. Scores >0,8 are considered high. This shows that our questions would have been suitable to use as a measurement tool if the participation level was higher.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cronbach’s Alpha for Items in Confirmatory Factor Analysis</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Factor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rehearsal</td>
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<tr>
<td>Perceived employability</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.2.2 Average Likert scale scores

As seen in appendix 8, the survey is categorized into five matrixes. In appendix 10 you can find five graphs showing the different average distribution results from the survey, the answers are from 1-7, with 1 being strongly disagree and 7, strongly agree. Down below is a display of a table showing the average Likert scale score per category. This table is to provide the reader will full transparency of the findings.
Table 7. Average Likert scale scores.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Matrix</th>
<th>Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Networking</td>
<td>5,7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Time management</td>
<td>4,8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Soft skills</td>
<td>5,5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Responsibility</td>
<td>5,5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Perceived employability</td>
<td>5,5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total average</td>
<td>5,4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Four out of five categories equaled agree in terms of getting a result with 5,5 or above on the scale. Which can be an indication that the participations of the survey did see a relationship between their involvement in a student association and the five categories. As stated, the different categories forming the matrixes is a result of previous literature about perceived employability and student associations as well as the results from the interviews. The total average is 5,4 which represents “slightly agrees”. However, networking, soft skills, responsibility and perceived employability scores closer to 6, representing “agree”.

As indicated, time management was the lowest scored category, the result would suggest that out of the five categories, time management was not the most relevant one. In addition to that, the participants balanced school: their grades, and student associations. Contrary, networking was the category with the highest average score, 5,7, representing it as the category which what the participants took as their main positive takeaway from their involvement.

5 Analysis

We have structured the analysis with first an analytical perspective on our qualitative data to follow up with an analytical perspective on our quantitative data. The order of the analysis is based on the method behind the research and in the order we collected the data. Thereafter, we are concluding the analysis with an integration of the two analyses making parallels in addition to displaying supporting facts from the two data collections.

5.1 Analysis of the interviews

It has been argued that employability consists of skills, achievements, understandings and attributes which leads to how employable someone is and how they will perform successfully on the labor market (Ali Ali, 2017). Soft skills, and learning was two of the main categories from the interviews and is in alignment with the literature. It was evident that all interviewees saw learning opportunities towards different knowledges within the associations and how the experience within the association had contributed positively. Since skills contains both reasoning, learning, creativity, as well as motivation and self-management (Ali Ali, 2017) we had the opportunity to explore those areas within the interviews. P2 “How to deal with people” P5 “Taking initiatives”
“Solving problems along the way when those occurred”, these are quotes from the interviews strengthening the arguments of the self-management and learning opportunities given through involvement in the student associations according to the interviewees. As Ali Ali (2017) mention that motivation is strongly connected with employability and that is why our research included the reason behind why the interviews applied and attended university in the first place. In addition, why the interviewees got involved in student associations as well as what time they spent on their involvement and why. The answers of these questions gave us insights on how motivated the interviews were. In an article that argues for motivation’s importance for employability Stoffers et al (2018) indicates how motivation is linked to self-perception and self-confidence while obtaining new knowledge. All the interviewees stated that the main reason why they attended university was to gain a job or a career afterwards. Furthermore, Ali Ali (2017) says that motivation can be fostered at university and students need to stay motivated throughout their studies. It is arguable to say that there is a link between the interviewee’s motivation and reasoning why they attended university and motivation which acts as a factor of employability. In addition, how involvement in student associations has been proven to increase skill obtaining and development which leads to employability (Pinto & Ramalheira, 2017).

However, exploring the reasons why the interviewees had involved in a student association, it was not linked to future prospects or their resumes and in accordance with the results of Roulin & Bangerter (2013) that motives are mostly internal. Nevertheless, Stoffers et al (2018) states that social and motivational features leads up to employability and most of the interviewees got involved in student associations due to the social aspects, having fun and gaining friends as well as networking. Our research therefore, shows and confirm the positive aspects of being involved in a student association. Moreover, what become evident is that the reasoning behind the interviewees involvement were not to increase their employability rate a future job prospect. Therefore, we could see a lack of connection between the understanding of the beneficial outcomes and being involved in a student association. Networking, which was mentioned as a reason to be a part of a student associations can be linked to literature as a positive effect on employability. According to Batisite & Tymon (2017) it is beneficial to learn networking behavior and create an extensive networking which leads up towards employability. Furthermore, they argue that networking behavior can be obtained and taught in student associations and extra-curricular activities. However, this was not evident for the interviewees beforehand, and a possible lack of information about the benefits of student associations is obvious again.

Rothwell et al. (2008) says that self-confidence and self-management is vital for employability. Self-management, as one of the interviews said; P1 “I learned a lot about myself”, is in regards to both the ability to learn in addition to being able to self-reflect and evolve as a person, both developing and obtaining skills as well as other practical experience. Ali Ali (2017) states that the development of skills and how those obtained skills are used indicates a higher successful employability rate. Therefore, we argue that there is a connection between previous literature and the findings from the interviews, in how learning outcomes have led to higher self-confidence in how to obtain skills and evolve as a person. The result of this is a potential positive beneficial outcome since Ali Ali (2017) have argued that self-management is of high importance when it comes to increase one’s employability rate. Self-management can focus on how someone is increasing different skills and attributes, and the awareness of communication and other aspects such as problem solving and arguments.

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Furthermore, all interviewees stated how important it was to get hands-on experiences, experiences that went beyond theory that were obtained from their studies. Multiple aspects from the interviews contained emphasis on the experience itself that the involvement in a student association had consisted of. Experience in a positive term was one of the main takeaways from the interviews, with a focus on both personal gains in addition to how development of knowledge and learning occurred. Experiences beyond education has become important since practical experiences is highly recommended (McQuaid & Richard, 2015). Therefore, it is clear that the positive view that the respondents had on the experience of being a part of a student association is validated by literature and the interviews. Even though Ali Ali (2017) claims that academical skills is one component of employability, it helps to emphasize the importance of adding more than practical skills and student associations could be an answer of what to add. It becomes clear that motivation, self-efficacy combined with skills and attributes is the key to employability according to Robles (2012). Some of the skills that where specified in the interviews is in relation to the literature. These skills are networking and time management. It is evident that time management is crucial for students when planning and distribution their time as university (Chhinzer & Russo 2018).

Other skills that were takeaways from the interviews were leadership, delegation and creativity. One quote is P5 “Being able to be creative and have the freedom to pursue my ideas” which indicate the importance of being able to be creative as well as P3 “Voicing my opinions”; which connects back to self-management and self-reflection and creativity. P4 “Use past knowledge and apply on a real case, as well as having an interest for the topic”. Creativity is one of the skills that can foster employability (Ali Ali, 2017) and becomes an important aspect when people want to get empowered and take initiatives. We draw the conclusion that student associations provide platforms for creativity which can lead to problem solving and initiative taking. Leadership skills was connected with how the interviewees perceived project managers or how they themselves had been as leaders and the importance of being able to delegate or take directions when someone else delegates. However, leadership is not connected to literature and its arguable that it might set the tone of what some interviewees considered being important in projects or at workplaces, but not connected to employability as such.

5.2 Analysis of the survey

Firstly, looking at the CFA, the survey shows, there is a positive correlation between soft skills and perceived employability, as it is not significant we cannot conclude there to be one, however the data indicates it. Once again, to achieve a significant correlation we would have needed a larger sample size/respondents level. In our analysis we argue that due to the low participation level in the survey, we have not been able to correlate all the different categories in the survey. However, the skills that was discovered having significant role in the correlation was: initiative taking, creativity and leadership skills. Creativity can be linked to literature, where Ali Ali (2017) states that creativeness is of importance when it comes to skills fostering employability. In addition, initiative taking can also be referred to creativity, and the freedom of being able to make own decisions and put ideas in to actions, which was likely that the respondents thought. Nevertheless, literature that links leadership skills with the potential of increasing one’s employability rate is lacking. The result of leadership being a highly important skill lays within the perception of the respondents. Therefore, it is likely to say that there is a lack of literature about the topic of leadership in regards to perceived employability and student associations.
We argue that creativity and initiative taking can be obtained or developed from involvement in student associations. Which argues for a potentially positive effect towards seeking jobs looking for those attributes or skills. Weber et al (2009) argues for how creativity can lead towards many beneficial outcomes, such as problem solving, and other solutions needed which centrals towards employability.

Furthermore, the tables summarizing the average scores from each category indicates that the asked questions positively received by the participants, see appendix 9 or the table in section 4.2.2. All scores above 4 represents a positive response to the categories and questions. The indication that the participations have a positive outlook on the different categories linking to their overall perception of their involvement can be related to literature. Kinnunen et al (2011) say that well-being in different work groups and projects can foster employability. The participants’ answers in the survey may suggest that there is a positive reflection of their involvement and its connection to well-being and how they enjoyed themselves in the projects, which could indicate a potentially positive parallel to employability.

The questions in the survey are connected to different factors of perceived employability and therefore, we argue for a potential positive relationship between involvement in student association and employability. The participant’s answers are positive towards how their involvement in a student association has helped them either develop or gain different skills and other attributes. Looking at the last category which perceived employability with an average score of 5,5 where the questions focuses on how the participants review themselves at recruitment processes. The score is positive and between slightly agree and agree, which could indicate a self-confidence within the participates. Self-confidence is proven to be a component of employability (Rothwell et al. 2008; Álvarez-González, López-Miguens & Caballero, 2017; Batistic & Tymon, 2017), therefore, we argue for a positive link between the participants in the survey and self-confidence leading to employability.

The average score from the survey is 5,4 out of 7, which is relatively high on the scale. Moreover, the only category with least positive average score is time management. Time management is a skill under the umbrella term of generic skills that is positive for employability (Chhinzer & Russo 2018). However, throughout the survey it is not evident that time management was enlighten by the participants and we cannot state a positive potential confirmation from the survey. Nevertheless, we believe this could indicate that the questions were asked partly in relation to the participants’ studies; grades. It is important to remember that the main reason for students attending university is to obtain a degree, and grades representing one’s knowledge since GPA’s has played a major part in students resumes (Pinto & Ramalheira, 2017). Therefore, we believe that time management factor indicates no positive relation to student association and did not contribute with something positive/good towards it. However, the response does not consist of a negative average score, which indicates that student association do not interfere with student’s grade negatively either.

5.3 Analysis of the interviews and survey joint together

One of the strongest aspects and takeaways from the interviews were how the interviewees had been able to develop or gain different kind of skills and attributes throughout their involvement in a student association. Skills are a vital part of employability (Pinto & Ramalheira 2017) which could indicate that student associations are beneficial for employability. However, it was not as evident in the survey result due to the non-significant correlation in the CFA. It is arguable that reason is the lack of respondents.
Moreover, when looking at the other statistical displays it indicates average scores from the categories that are positive since they are above 4. Soft skills has an average of 5.5. These scores help illustrate a positive link between the survey result and the interview result in regard to obtaining skills from the associations leading towards employability. Therefore, the CFA stands alone in its results and we looked to the average score from each category of the survey and could thereafter see potential relationship between the interviews and the survey in regards of positivity towards skills. As Ali Ali (2017) states, skills are one of the components of employability. Hence, we stress the importance of skills and how to develop and obtain them. Involvement in a student association might imply that there is a valuable exchange between skill obtaining and increasing your employability rate.

Networking was one the most evident category from the survey with the highest average score and was one of the main topics from the interviews. From this we can argue that networking can potentially be gained from student associations. In addition, literature states how networking is important for one’s employability (Batistic & Tymon, 2017) which emphasis the relevance of networking. Networking was the matrix with highest average score, and this could potentially indicate how student associations function as a social gathering scenery which gives a positive result on the participants. Furthermore, networking is one of the main topics within the theoretical framework and it reflect on someone’s ability to be social and network with others, which can be important when looking at perceived employability. That is why we argue that networking is a positive takeaway from student associations, although it was not presented through the CFA.

Experience was the main category covered in the interviews and can be linked to the survey in terms of categories that refers back the participants’ understanding of their overall involvement. Skills, networking and responsibility point towards a likely relationship between the survey and interview in favor to experience. When it comes to responsibility, there are several perspectives of its meaning and the findings from our research compared to theory have therefore differences as well as similarities. Experience consist of different components such as learning, achievements, skills and attributes (Ali Ali, 2017) which all are components to employability. It becomes clear that a possible correlation between the survey data and interview data can be done though the view of skills and experience. Therefore, we claim that it is discussable that student associations can provide these components and learning opportunities for students and lead to employability. However, what is not explored enough to make general statement is the potential correlation between other experiences besides student associations that can lead towards a potential relation to employability.

Overall, even if the CFA cannot help showing significant correlations between the different factors and categories from the survey, there is positive indications which we hoped can display a potential outcome from the correlation if the participation level would have been higher. From the average score, we found that it was positive relations, a score between “slightly agree” and “agree”, with reservation of no average scores “strongly agree” can be found. Nevertheless, it is evident that the survey created mainly positive answers, and combined with the survey, it is safe to state that the participants in our research has a positive view point of their involvement. According to Kinnunen et al (2011) positivity and wellbeing of projects and work tasks is important when trying to achieve high employability rate. Positive was one of the most frequently used words and areas from the interviews, adding that aspect with the overall answers from the survey being above 4 with an average of 5.5; there could be a reasoning behind the positive benefits of student associations. In addition,
it is apparent that previous literature is aligned with most findings from the research, and Ali Ali (2017) mentions the importance of positive well-being in projects. However, once again it is crucial to mention the lack of correlations from the CFA that would have been able to justify or deny the positive correlations compared to only having the average scores from the survey linked to the interviews.

There is a likelihood of alignment between some quantitative and qualitative data. Potential alignments between the primary data and the secondary data occurred among some components of our research. To easily display a few of the potential alignments as well as lack of alignments we have created this mini table down below.

| Table 8. Potential alignment of theoretical framework and findings. |
|------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Interviews             | Survey            | Theoretical framework |
| Experience             | Experience        | Experience        |
| Soft skills            | Soft skills       | Soft skills       |
| - Initiative taking    | - Initiative taking | - Initiative taking |
| - Leadership           | - Leadership      | - Leadership      |
| - Creativity           | - Creativity      | - Creativity      |
| Networking             | Networking        | Networking        |
| Responsibility         | Responsibility    | Responsibility    |

The table displays that multiple areas were covered in the different data collections, primary and secondary which indicates a positive relationship majority of the primary data. While also displaying the effect of triangulation in our thesis. Positive experiences and soft skills in terms of both learning, developing, obtain were evident through the research. What the table displays is how the theoretical framework had links between both the survey and the interviews. However, in the survey and in the interviews other components and topics were discovered that could not be linked explicitly to the theoretical framework. As displayed, leadership is the only category which has no theoretical data, however, both the interviews and survey covered the topic of leadership.

**6 Discussion**

When it comes to perceived employability it has been evident throughout our theoretical framework and our primary data that, as stated in the beginning of the thesis; it has an individual perspective and is a complex concept. However, the more information and data gathered about the topic it enables a closeup on how the concept is built, developed and what it consists of.

Firstly, when analyzing the differences between the survey result and the interviews’ result they both showed positive responses from the participants, however the response where more positive in the interviews. A reason behind this could lay within the process of in-depth interviews, where we as interviewers are trying to gain deeper knowledge and understanding of the participant’s reasoning. Meanwhile, in a survey, the respondents might answer quickly, and not take equal time to
reflect as they would in an interview, as well as we as researchers can’t challenge the participations reasonings. In addition, through interviews the interviewers can uncover what someone is thinking and have an open and deep discussion. According to Williamson, (2002) this is one of the benefits when doing semi-structured interviews, it enables the researcher to explore deeper levels of understandings. It is arguable that this is one of the reasons why the interviewees themselves started to realize their personal growth through involvement in a student association.

Even though we could not obtain a significant correlation trough CFA between student associations and employability, we argue that there are indications pointing on a positive correlation nonetheless, with exception of the non-significance. We want to stress that the results from our primary data indicates a positive correlation and relationship between perceived employability and involvement in a student association. With that said, we want to stress the acknowledgement of why we believe there is a positive relationship between the two. Even though soft skills are correlated at a level of 0.07 to perceived employability there is aspects of it from the interviews and survey responses that indicates other components of employability.

Moreover, the skills and attributes as well as other traits which employability consists of can be obtained or developed during involvement in associations since projects are introduced and pursued. Nevertheless, it is safe to say that those attributes, skills and other traits could most likely be obtained through other experiences as well. That aspect is not something that our research has focused on, however, we do want to bring attention to this matter since it played a vital part of the actual outcome of the research. Moreover, we want to emphasis the factors leading to someone’s employability consists of different components that can be obtained through involvement in student associations. However, it does not exclude the possibility that the outcome would have been the same, looking into graduates that had pursued a part time job during their studies. Therefore, we argue that it is the components and factors as such that is important to locate and obtain/develop to be able to display them for a recruiter. Rather than the actual reason why and how you obtained them. In addition, we want to emphasize that another main takeaway from our research with the positive relationship between the categories/factors and student associations, is that the experience as such is positive. According to Ali Ai (2017), well-being of someone can in long term generate employability and plays therefore a role in how positive something is perceived. moreover, a positive experience could be beneficial for student even though it would not lead to higher employability or any other outcomes. It is worth arguing that positive experiences lay within the beholder and could generate in experiences that one can bring with them to future scenarios.

Nonetheless, the indication from the research imply that involvement in a student association and perceived employability has potential benefits from student associations and a potential sign as a way to obtained and increase employability. This reasoning could help new students with motives for why one should get involved and participate while studying. We want to emphasize, as we mentioned in the beginning, a way for students to maximize their time at university if their end goal is to get employed and become more employable.

We want to stress that our research shows a relatively positive link between student associations and perceived employability. However, we want to highlight the components of perceived employability in the research. These components can most likely be obtained and experience elsewhere than strictly student associations. According to Ali Ali (2017), skills and abilities is a part of perceived employability which could indicate the importance of them but not the importance in how you obtain them,
which leaves room for interpretation. Furthermore, if a student can identify these learning opportunities somewhere else it can lead to the same result as if involvement in a student association had taken place. However, our research does indicate a potentiality of obtaining certain skills, and according to Clark et al (2015), skills have been proven to be thought in student associates.

Lastly, the factors that could be identified throughout the research is experience, and since this research focuses on student associations, the experience we refer to, refers back to student associations. The overall positive perception of involvement in student associations, lead us to networking, skills and its learning opportunities throughout the experience. Therefore, we argue that, skills, learning and knowledge as well as practical experience is the main takeaways from the research. Overall, competence and knowledge are according to Berntson et al (2006) components of perceived employability and skills has been showed have a large impact on employability (Ali Ali, 2017). We want to argue for the potential relationship between perceived employability and student associations, in terms of how student associations can function as a scenery where perceived employability components can be obtained.

Throughout our empirical research the soft skill leadership reoccurred as an important take away from the graduates. It was one of the main themes of the interviews and while less evident in the quantitative findings it was still present in the CFA. We argue that obtaining leadership traits is beneficial and our interviewees had a chance to obtain them in their student association, P2 “I could practice being a leader”, P5 “Develop or adapt your leadership”. Generally, we got the impression that there was a clear presence of leaders in the student association and our interviewees acknowledge the benefits of them, P3 “Important with leaders”, P1 “good with creative leaders, so we could brainstorm” and P4 “Good to have a leader in an organization, a team is never stronger than its weakest link” as well as P6 “I’m a leader that thinks – how can we do things better?”.

One of the authors of the thesis has been involved in student associations and have therefore own perceptions of the experience and what benefits and learning outcomes that was observed. One of those observations was developing leadership skills through student associations since several roles included a leader role. We reason that, within one semester of attending the university a student could have a formal leadership position in a student association, as most associations had both a president and vice president. Which could be a hard achievement to match during an internship or extra job. Even if a student was unable to obtain a leader position there were occasions where many other roles required leadership and thereby developing the skill. In the scope of this thesis we argue that we have presented data pointing in the direction of these benefits while not excluding how they could arise elsewhere.

7 Conclusion

We argue that the beneficial aspects of one’s involvement in student associations can lead to positive components when applying for jobs along with opportunities at the labor market; other words, increase one’s perceived employability. However, we have left room for interpretation of both the interviews and survey by displaying as much material as possible and not excluding the dialogue and discussion how other experiences beside student associations can contribute positively to perceived employability.
Our research findings direct our assumption that it is possible to obtain and develop skills, attributes, and other components of perceived employability in student associations. The main findings and potential relationships in our research is experience and skills which has a positive outline on perceived employability.

The research purpose aimed to search for factor that affect perceived employability of graduates that been involved in a student association as well as potential relationships between perceived employability and student associations. With the purpose in mind we have been able to narrow down potential factors and potential relationships between perceived employability and student associations. Overall, the experience of being involved in an association had been positive and according to the participants in our research they indicate a positive relation between their involvement and recruitment process. Therefore, we argue that student associations provide factors affecting perceived employability as well as a platform where to obtain, learn and develop those factors. The factors are mainly different skills. Furthermore, we argue that it is possible the platform itself is the most important when it comes to obtaining certain skills etc., and therefore, students associations would not be the only platform where a link between it and perceived employability could occur. Instead, it is one of the potentially identified platforms where factors and relation towards perceived employability can be established.

Lastly, through our research we have found that the topic of leadership was lacking in previous theory in regard to perceived employability and student associations. In addition, leadership was an important factor according to the participants of our research, claiming the importance, as well as how the learned and obtained leadership skill within student associations.

7.1 Contributions

We hope that our research has shed light on the topic of perceived employability, and its meaning, as well as the relationship towards student associations and the factors behind it, which can help new students at university. What we mean with helping new students, is helping to navigate the options and maximize their time while trying to get the best possible prospects when entering the labor market. The competition is high, and universities need to help their students become more employable and therefore more compatible. Moreover, our research could also be beneficial for universities trying to ensure as well as enable students to get practical experience in addition to theoretical experience without relying on external internships or trainee positions. In addition, we hope that student associations could more easily market themselves, which can lead to different associations branching out or getting started, through help of universities helping to spread the word about their existence.

Overall, this research aimed to reach new students that want guidance on how to become more employable, along with getting insights about student associations as well as finding out past students’ experiences in regard to associations.

Lastly, we hope that the enlightenment about leadership and its potential effect on perceived employability can contribute to future research.

7.2 Limitations

Firstly, regarding the survey, we want to address the issue of the uncertainty that the same respondent answered one or multiple times since the approach of reaching out to participants could not
prevent this error to potentially happen. This error is something we have taken into consideration and brought up in the section of “delimitations”. Another potential error with our approach of reaching out to respondents is ensuring if they have graduated or not, however, this is something that every respondent filled out in the end of the survey which simplified the process for us to screen out the participants that did not fulfill our sample frame. Another aspect considering the survey is the outcome of respondents that participated, our research aimed to reach a sample size of 200-300 precious students. However, due to time restriction of a master’s thesis as well as the population being hard to contact, we could not fulfill the aim of participants and ended up with less than hoped for. The low participation level also prevented us to complete full correlations between the factors in our CFA. However, we have been transparent with the results, findings and the participation level which leads towards a trustworthy result, despite full completion of CFA.

The second limitations that will be mentioned is to address the matter of the author’s background and experience, as one of us has had a high involvement level in a student association and have thereby a possible bias standpoint. Since we were students at the same university and used this university to collect our data for both our interviews and survey, the chosen university presents a possible bias in our research approach. It is worth mentioning that the thesis is written by two Swedish authors and therefore is taken on a Swedish perspective and writing style as well as reflections.

We do recognize this thesis as having high standard due to its quality and its clarifications regarding trustworthiness, nevertheless, there are some limitations and shortcomings in our research. Limitations and shortcomings can contribute to less credible research; however, we want to emphasize on transparency throughout the research to still create high quality.

The study takes place in Sweden with participants who studied in the city of Jönköping due to Jönköping University that is located in that town. Even if one could argue that the spread of the participants is high since not all participants are Swedish nor originally from Jönköping. Time and potential to research a larger spread was not manageable and therefore the study is narrowed down to one university in one city. Therefore, based on this limitation one could argue how this research only is applicable for students attending Swedish universities.

Regarding the interviews, we are aware that the interviews are conducted both by phone and in a face to face settings and can therefore produce variation in the results, however, this was a chosen action by creating options for the interviewee to decide what suited them best as well as felt most comfortable. Since the interviews are pursued by two interviewers we know that the dynamics can change, and the interviewee can feel that they want to answer “the correct” or “acceptable answer” (Collin & Hussey, 2014).

7.3 Suggestions for future research

We think it is important to suggest future research within the topic, since the topic of employability is becoming more and more present on the labor market and some guidance is needed to simplify the understanding of it. Since student associations are available at most universities in some form, it is interesting to investigate the impact and potential contributions along with benefits that can come from involvement.
Firstly, we would highlight that our research could be applied in a larger magnitude with a larger sample size, to get a broader insight into the topic. The larger sample size could be beneficial for both the survey as well as the interviews. Additionally, a larger sample size for the survey would enable researchers to complete a full CFA and get significant correlations covering the topic. Another aspect could be regarding the usage of more than one university as well as using more or other students than business students to see differences or similarities based on faculty.

Secondly, a different viewpoint on the research could be applied, aiming to find the perceptive from recruiters and not previous students, to gain insights from employers looking for new talents to their companies. This kind of insights could contribute to create knowledge of what attributes/skills a recruiter is seeking and then potentially create opportunities or sceneries for those attributes / skills to be obtained or developed while studying at university.

Lastly, we would recommend to do further research about the topic leadership and its effect on perceived employability.
8 References


Dawes, J. (2008). Do data characteristics change according to the number of scale points used. *International journal of market research*, 50(1), 61-77.


Appendix 1

Sample frame for participants of survey and interview

- Former student at JIBS
- The participant will have to distinguish if they graduated or not/have their degree or not
- Currently employed
- Been involved in a student organization
- Wanted to be recruited/find a job after graduating
Appendix 2

Interview guide

"Characteristics such as sex, age, race, social class, manner of dress and speech may play a part in whether a respondent will consent to be interviewed, and on their level of cooperation during the interview" (Williamson, 2002, p245).

This interview guide will enable the researchers to ensure coherent interviews with the participants in order to reach high validity since it enhance the credibility of an interview (Saunders, et al, 2009).

- Location: Formal location, example: Jönköping University
- Language: English, to avoid any transcript errors due to language translation
- Recording: The interviews will be audio recorded; location, time and date, background (Saunders, et al, 2009)
- Consent of possibility to audio record
- Time: 45-60 min
- Themes
  - Experiences and takeaways from:
    - Involvement in student associations
    - Recruitment process
    - Development of skills
  - Employability
Appendix 3

Letter to the interviewee

Dear interviewee,

This letter is to inform you as a participation about the background to the interview you soon will take part of. The questions will be regarding your participation level and involvement within a student organization at Jibs. Questions about your experience and overall takeaways is of our interest and will therefore be questioned. Themes of the interview is in regard to student organizations, and what you as a participant experienced and possible learning outcomes, overall this will lead to the topic of employment/recruitment process.
Appendix 4

1. What is your current workplace?
   a. What position do you have?

2. What was the reason why you started university?
   a. Did you wanted to be recruited/find a job afterwards?

3. Have you graduated?
   a. And if so, when?

4. What student association where you involved in?
   a. Why this association?
   b. Did you have any other ones in mind?
   c. Why did you get involved?
   d. How much, time wise were you involved and why?
      i. Compared to others in the group

5. What official role did you have in the student association?
   a. Why?
   b. What was needed for that roll?
   c. Did you have an unofficial role in the student association?

6. How important was it for your student association to have a leader?

7. Did you realize in what ways other leadership styles could be effective?
   a. Did you realize what characteristics that were needed for leadership?

8. Could you identify any challenges that occurred and how you solved them?

9. Were there any disagreements and how did you resolve them?
   a. See other’s perspectives

10. How was feedback communicated within the group?

11. How was the communication within the group?
    a. Did you use any special programs (software) or channels to communicate?

12. How did you communicate to the public about your student association?

13. Did you feel you were able to be creative?

14. How did you make your voice and ideas heard?

15. How did you manage time when it comes to studying vs student association?
    a. Could you apply any knowledge from your school courses upon the student association?

16. What did you take with you from being a part of a student association?

17. Can you apply your experience from a student association on to your current job today?

18. When you applied for jobs after graduating, what skills did you mentioned you possesses?
    a. How did you obtain them?

19. How much emphasis did the recruiter put the fact you had been involved in a student association?
    a. Which of your experiences did the recruiter ask most about?
       i. What was of most interest, rank ex: voluntary work, work experience, involvement in student associations

20. Would you recommend new students at Jibs to be involved in a student association?
    a. Why/why not?
21. What is your main takeaway from being a part of a student association?
   a. Positive/negative
   b. What did you learn?
   c. What do you think someone in general would learn by being involved within a student association?

22. With this interview in mind, how would you conclude the topic of the interview?
Appendix 5

Keywords from chosen articles and its frequency
Appendix 6

“The missenden code of practice for ethics and accountability

1. All universities should have an institutional ethics and accountability panel or committee
2. Staff, students and the local community should have representation on the committee
3. The committee should take advice from those with a professional expertise in ethics
4. The committee should vet all substantial donations, sponsorships and funding that the university applies for or is offered
5. The committee should inter alia ensure that all sources of funding for any research carried out in the university's name are acknowledged in all publications
6. Where the committee accepts a case for limitation on the freedom to publish it should attach an explanatory note to this effect
7. The brief of the person within the university with responsibility for attracting external third mission funding should have a strong ethical element
8. The university’s policy on intellectual property rights should be disseminated as widely as possible by case studies and be made an integral part of job induction and training programs
9. Sponsored research should bear a full share of the institution’s infrastructure costs
10. The right of academic staff to publish research findings should be primary consideration of any contract between industry and academia. Commercial considerations should never be allowed to prevent the publication of dinings that are in the public of interest or which add significantly to the body of knowledge in a field
11. The university should retain the rights of staff to publish without hindrance except where a specific written provision has been made with the agreement of all parties - to include all research students, research assistants and assistant staff involved. This should be explicitly mentioned in all staff contracts.
12. Those obtaining sponsorship for research should not be given undue favour in promotion decisions.
13. Universities should declare details of all investments.
14. Universities should consider the creation of a register of interest for all members of the university.” (Collis & Hussey, 2014, p31)
The figure shows participation in student associations in percentage for the 50 universities that answered a survey made by (Amft, 2017).
Hello and thank you for participating in the survey!

The survey regards experience from involvement in student associations and its effect later on when trying to find employment. It should take about 10-15 minutes to complete. The entries will be used for a statistical analysis, not be singled out, and you fill them out anonymously.

### Matrix 1/2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Slightly disagree</th>
<th>Neither disagree or agree</th>
<th>Slightly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I made contact with students I otherwise would not have met during my studies.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>I made contact with professionals I otherwise would not have met during my studies.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I got more comfortable introducing myself to new people.</td>
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<tr>
<td>It became easier to branch out to new people because I was in a student association.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I learned to adapt myself to different people and social contexts.</td>
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<td>I created long-term contacts because I was part of a student association.</td>
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### Matrix 2/2

<table>
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<th>Slightly disagree</th>
<th>Neither disagree or agree</th>
<th>Slightly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I was not stressed about my studies and everyday life because I was involved in a student association.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>I felt like I had free time when I was in the student association.</td>
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<tr>
<td>My grades were positively affected because of my involvement in the student association.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I planned my time for both the student association and studying to ensure I would manage both.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I prioritized my studies over my student association involvement.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matrix 3/5</td>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Slightly disagree</td>
<td>Neither disagree or agree</td>
<td>Slightly agree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
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<tr>
<td>During my involvement in a student association I developed my empathy.</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>During my involvement in a student association I developed my initiative taking.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>During my involvement in a student association I developed my conflict solving.</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>During my involvement in a student association I developed my teamwork skills.</td>
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<tr>
<td>During my involvement in a student association I developed my leadership.</td>
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<td>1</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>During my involvement in a student association I developed my problem solving.</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
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<th>Matrix 4/5</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Slightly disagree</th>
<th>Neither disagree or agree</th>
<th>Slightly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No responsibility level in the student association was high.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>I got comfortable taking responsibility for tasks.</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I was a positive person in the student association.</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I made sure other people completed their tasks.</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I made sure other people had a good time in the association.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
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</tbody>
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<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Slightly disagree</th>
<th>Neither disagree or agree</th>
<th>Slightly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I achieve high grades in relation to my studies.</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I regard my academic work as important.</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The skills and abilities that I possess are what employers are looking for.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am generally confident of success in job interviews.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel I could get any job as long as my skills and experience are reasonably relevant.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My involvement in a student association was beneficial when applying for a job.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My part-time job was beneficial when applying for a job.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The recruiter emphasized my involvement in a student association.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel I could get a job relevant to my education and skills quickly after graduation.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Have you graduated?**
- Yes
- No

**Have you been involved in a student association?**
- Yes
- No

**Please select your gender.**
- Male
- Female
- Prefer not to answer
Appendix 9
Intervju 5 - Coding

Percentage coverage

- Learning: 7%
- Developed soft skill: 4%
- Leadership: 3%
- Time management: 3%
- Communication: 3%
- Diplomacy: 2%
- Find a job: 2%
- Creative: 2%
- Summary of Interview: 1%
- Hostile: 1%
- Soft skills: 1%
- Experience: 1%
- Networking: 1%
Appendix 10

Graphs showing the average score from the survey, displayed in categories in five as the survey.

- **Medel av Matrix 1/5** [I made contact with students I otherwise would not have met during my studies.]
- **Medel av Matrix 1/5** [I made contact with professionals I otherwise would not have met during my studies.]
- **Medel av Matrix 1/5** [I got more comfortable introducing myself to new people.]
- **Medel av Matrix 1/5** [It became easier to branch out to new people because I was in a student association.]
- **Medel av Matrix 1/5** [I learned to adapt myself to different people and social contexts.]
- **Medel av Matrix 1/5** [I created long-term contacts because I was part of a student association.]
Medel av Matrix 2/5 [I was not stressed about my studies and everyday life because I was involved in a student association.]

Medel av Matrix 2/5 [I felt like I had free time when I was in the student association.]

Medel av Matrix 2/5 [My grades were positively affected because of my involvement in the student association.]

Medel av Matrix 2/5 [I planned my time for both the student association and studying to ensure I would manage both.]

Medel av Matrix 2/5 [I prioritized my studies over my student association involvement.]

Medel av Matrix 3/5 [During my involvement in a student association I developed my creativity.]

Medel av Matrix 3/5 [During my involvement in a student association I developed my initiative taking.]

Medel av Matrix 3/5 [During my involvement in a student association I developed my conflict solving.]

Medel av Matrix 3/5 [During my involvement in a student association I developed my problem solving.]

Medel av Matrix 3/5 [During my involvement in a student association I developed my leadership.]

Medel av Matrix 3/5 [During my involvement in a student association I developed my teamworking ability.]
Medel av Matrix 4/5 [My responsibility level in the student association was high.]

Medel av Matrix 4/5 [I got comfortable taking responsibility for tasks.]

Medel av Matrix 4/5 [I was a proactive person in the student association.]

Medel av Matrix 4/5 [I made sure other people completed their tasks.]

Medel av Matrix 4/5 [I made sure other people had a good time in the association.]
Appendix 11

Model 2