

Factors Influencing the Employability of Chinese Overseas Graduates in Thailand

Chengze Liao*, Chatcharawan Meesubthong

Faculty of Business Administration, Huachiew Chalermprakiet University

*Email: 935486380@qq.com

Abstract

The rapid expansion of China–Thailand educational cooperation and Thailand’s digital transformation under the Thailand 4.0 policy have created both opportunities and challenges for Chinese graduates from Thai universities. However, empirical evidence regarding their employability remains limited. This study aimed to (1) examine the overall level of employability among Chinese fresh graduates from Thai universities and (2) investigate the influence of demographic characteristics and digital transformation on employability. Quantitative research design was employed. Data were collected through a questionnaire survey from 382 Chinese undergraduate and master’s graduates who completed their studies at Thai universities during 2024–2025. Participants were selected using purposive sampling. The research instrument demonstrated satisfactory reliability (Cronbach’s $\alpha = 0.856$). Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation analysis, multiple regression analysis, and one-way ANOVA. The findings revealed that the overall employability level of respondents was moderately high ($M = 3.65$, $SD = 0.72$). Career development capacity showed the highest mean score, while work–life balance capacity had the lowest. Language competence emerged as a major strength, whereas practical professional skills remained a key weakness. Educational level was found to significantly predict language ability and career planning capacity, whereas gender, age, marital status, and internship experience showed no significant effects on most employability dimensions. In addition, graduates intending to work in Thailand demonstrated significantly higher employability than those planning to work in China or other regions. The findings provide practical implications for universities, employers, and policymakers in improving talent development programs, employability enhancement initiatives, and cross-border employment support mechanisms for Chinese graduates in Thailand.

Keywords: Employability, Chinese Overseas Graduates, Thailand, Digital Transformation, Higher Education

1. Introduction

The global restructuring of educational resources and deepening regional economic integration have driven the diversification of international study destinations. Southeast Asia, particularly Thailand, has emerged as an important hub for Chinese international students, with over 24,700 Chinese university students in Thailand in the 2025 academic year (Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research and Innovation of Thailand, 2025). This growth is fueled by cultural affinity, cost advantages, and expanding opportunities under the Belt and Road Initiative.

In the post-pandemic era, the global job market has undergone structural adjustments, intensifying cross-border talent competition. Employers increasingly demand "composite capabilities" and "cross-cultural adaptability" (OECD, 2023). Chinese graduates in Thailand face dual challenges: employment in Thailand is constrained by visa policies and workplace cultural differences, while returning to China involves certification recognition issues and competition with graduates from Western institutions. Simultaneously, the rapid growth of China-Thailand cross-border e-commerce and digital services creates new opportunities for bilingual, market-savvy international students.

Existing research on employability predominantly focuses on mainstream international student groups in Europe, America, and Australia, with limited attention to Southeast Asian contexts. Studies on Chinese students in Thailand primarily examine study-abroad motivation and cross-cultural adaptation, lacking systematic exploration of employability structure, influencing factors, and improvement pathways at the graduation stage. This study addresses this gap by empirically investigating the employability of Chinese fresh graduates from Thai universities and its determinants.

Research Objectives

This study aims to: (1) investigate the overall level and dimensional characteristics of employability among Chinese fresh graduates from Thai universities, encompassing career

development capacity, career adaptability, workplace adaptability, job competency, and work-life balance capacity; and (2) analyze key factors influencing employability, including demographic characteristics and digital transformation context.

2. Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

Employability refers to individuals' comprehensive ability to obtain, maintain, and adapt to employment while achieving career development (Fugate et al., 2004; Van der Heijde & Van der Heijden, 2006). For Chinese graduates in Thailand, employability encompasses not only professional skills and adaptability but also cross-cultural communication, career planning, and workplace integration capabilities, shaped by the Thai employment environment, digital economy development, and China-Thailand economic cooperation (Liao et al., 2023; Sika Kaew et al., 2022).

Building on classic employability theories and the specific employment context of Chinese graduates in Thailand, this study operationalizes employability across five dimensions: (1) **Career development capacity** — proactive learning, skill improvement, and career planning for sustainable growth (Rothwell & Arnold, 2007); (2) **Career adaptability** — ability to adapt to Thai workplace culture, processes, and environmental changes (Wang, 2023a; Güzel & Glazer, 2019); (3) **Workplace adaptability** — recognition and adaptation to work atmosphere, interpersonal patterns, and corporate culture (Chen, 2022; Serrano-Sánchez et al., 2021); (4) **Job competency** — professional knowledge and practical skills including digital competencies (Zhou, 2023a; Istrate & Velea, 2024); and (5) **Work-life balance capacity** — ability to coordinate career development with personal well-being (Clark, 2000; Liu, 2022).

Demographic characteristics—including gender, age, marital status, educational background, and internship experience—constitute foundational individual differences affecting employability (OECD, 2026; Li, 2022). Research suggests that educational level significantly influences employability through knowledge reserves and learning abilities, though advantages may diminish if majors mismatch market demands (Li, 2022). Internship experience in Thailand enhances local workplace adaptability, language proficiency, and social capital (Thai Ministry of Labour, 2022; Sisavath, 2021). Gender and age also shape career cognition, adaptability, and employment expectations among international students (Gabrielova & Buchko, 2021; UN Women, 2022).

Digital transformation, driven by Thailand's "Thailand 4.0" strategy and "Digital Thailand" plan, has become a core engine of economic growth, with the digital economy growing at 19% annually (Chapter 3 of the Road to Breaking Through Industry-University Integration, 2025). Digital transformation reshapes talent demand structures and enhances employability through four dimensions: digital resources, employee digital skills, executive support, and technological innovation (Westerman et al., 2014; Hess et al., 2016; Wang, 2023b). Research confirms that digital transformation positively predicts all five dimensions of employability, serving as a key external driver for capability improvement (Belaid, 2025; Hu & Wang, 2025).

Research Hypotheses

Based on the literature review, the following hypotheses are proposed:

1. H1: Demographic characteristics significantly influence the employability of Chinese fresh graduates from Thai universities.
2. H2: Digital transformation exerts a significant positive impact on the employability of Chinese fresh graduates from Thai universities.

3. Methodology

This study employs a quantitative research design using a questionnaire survey. The research follows a technical path of "descriptive statistics → correlation analysis → multiple regression analysis → difference analysis" to systematically examine employability and its influencing factors.

Sampling Procedure

The target population consisted of Chinese undergraduate and master's graduates who completed full-time study programs at Thai universities between 2024 and 2025. Purposive sampling was employed to recruit respondents who met the inclusion criteria. A total of 400 questionnaires were distributed, and 382 valid responses were retained for analysis, yielding a response rate of 95.5%. This study employed a mixed stratified-convenience sampling strategy targeting 2024–2026 Chinese full-time undergraduate and master's fresh graduates from four major Bangkok universities. Stratification by university type, academic level and major category reduced subgroup sampling bias,

while questionnaires were distributed through official international student offices, Chinese student associations and alumni networks to capture eligible respondents. A target of 300–400 valid samples was set: the sample size meets the minimum 10:1 variable-to-participant rule for multivariate regression and satisfies central limit theorem requirements against the population of 24,711 Chinese students in Thailand, ensuring statistical representativeness.

Instrument Validity and Reliability

The questionnaire items were adapted from established employability and digital transformation studies. Content validity was assessed by three experts in business administration and higher education. All items achieved acceptable content validity. The reliability analysis indicated strong internal consistency, with an overall Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.856. A self-developed 5-point Likert questionnaire was adopted, with measurement items adapted from established overseas career studies. Two academic experts conducted content validity reviews to refine culturally appropriate items, targeting a content validity index above 0.85. Post-collection tests included Cronbach's α for internal reliability (threshold ≥ 0.7), exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to assess construct validity; items with factor loadings below 0.6 were removed, with acceptable AVE (>0.5) and discriminant validity criteria enforced.

Data Analysis

Data was analyzed using SPSS software. Descriptive statistics were used to examine respondent characteristics and employability levels. Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to explore relationships among variables. Multiple regression analysis was employed to investigate the predictive effects of demographic characteristics on employability dimensions. One-way ANOVA was performed to examine differences in employability across intended employment regions. All valid data were cleaned and analyzed via SPSS 26.0 and AMOS 24.0. The analytical workflow included descriptive statistics, reliability and validity checks, Pearson correlation analysis to detect multicollinearity, independent t-tests and one-way ANOVA for inter-group differences, hierarchical multiple regression for direct hypothesis testing, and 5,000-bootstrap mediation analysis to identify indirect pathways. Subgroup regression by degree level was further implemented as a robustness check to stabilize empirical findings.

4. Results

Reliability Analysis

The overall Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the employability scale was 0.856 (30 items), indicating good internal consistency. All subscales demonstrated acceptable reliability, with alpha coefficients ranging from 0.78 to 0.85.

Table 1. Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Number of Items
0.856	30

Descriptive Statistics

Among the 382 respondents, 44.5% were male and 55.5% were female. Business Administration was the largest major group (27.7%), followed by Educational Management and Digital Economy. The majority were undergraduate students, with a substantial proportion having limited or no internship experience in Thailand.

Table 2. Demographic Statistics (Selected)

Variable	Category	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	44.5
	Female	55.5
Education	Bachelor	68.3
	Master	31.7
Intended Region	Thailand	39.8
	China	50.3
	Other	9.9

The overall employability level was medium-high ($M = 3.65$, $SD = 0.72$). Among the five dimensions, career development capacity ranked highest ($M = 3.72$, $SD = 0.83$), followed by career adaptability ($M = 3.66$, $SD = 0.79$), workplace adaptability ($M = 3.64$, $SD = 0.76$), job competency ($M = 3.60$, $SD = 0.68$), and work-life balance capacity ($M = 3.58$, $SD = 0.74$). Language competence emerged as the strongest sub-skill, while practical professional skills were identified as the primary area for improvement.

Table 3. Mean and Standard Deviation of Employability Dimensions

Dimension	Mean	SD
Career Development Capacity	3.72	0.83
Career Adaptability	3.66	0.79
Workplace Adaptability	3.64	0.76
Job Competency	3.60	0.68
Work-Life Balance Capacity	3.58	0.74

Correlation Analysis

Pearson correlation analysis revealed that educational background was significantly negatively correlated with language ability ($r = -0.129$, $p < 0.05$) and career planning ability ($r = -0.115$, $p < 0.05$). Internship duration in Thailand showed no significant correlation with any employability dimension. All five employability dimensions were significantly and positively correlated with each other ($p < 0.01$), indicating construct coherence.

Table 4. Correlations Between Demographic Variables and Employability Dimensions

Employability Dimension	Education (r)	Internship (r)
Career Development Capacity	-0.115*	-0.023
Career Adaptability	-0.087	-0.034
Workplace Adaptability	-0.065	-0.012
Job Competency	-0.034	-0.018
Work-Life Balance Capacity	-0.078	-0.045

Note. * $p < 0.05$.

Regression Analysis

Multiple linear regression was conducted with demographic variables (gender, age, marital status, educational level, internship duration) as predictors and each employability dimension as the dependent variable. Results indicated that demographic variables collectively explained only 1.0–3.4% of variance in employability dimensions, with educational level emerging as the sole significant predictor. Specifically, higher educational level significantly predicted lower language ability ($\beta = -0.152$, $p < 0.01$) and lower career planning ability ($\beta = -0.134$, $p < 0.05$). Gender, age, marital status, and internship duration showed no significant predictive effects on most employability dimensions.

Group Differences by Intended Employment Region

ANOVA revealed significant differences in overall employability across intended employment regions ($F = 4.567$, $p < 0.05$). Post-hoc comparisons showed that graduates intending to work in Thailand ($M = 3.74$, $SD = 0.78$) scored significantly higher on overall employability than those planning to work in China ($M = 3.63$, $SD = 0.85$) or other regions. Among specific dimensions, significant regional differences were observed in career adaptability and workplace adaptability, with Thailand-intending graduates demonstrating stronger performance.

Table 5. Employability by Intended Employment Region

Intended Region	N	Mean	SD
Thailand	152	3.74	0.78
China	192	3.63	0.85
Other	38	3.52	0.79

5. Discussion

Based on 382 valid questionnaires from Chinese fresh graduates at four Thai universities, this discussion interprets correlation and ANOVA results via human capital, career construction and cross-

cultural adaptation theories and contrasts findings with existing overseas student literature instead of simply reporting statistical values. Hypothesis 1 receives partial support: consistent with prior research, higher academic qualifications negatively predict self-assessed language and career planning ability ($p=0.012$, $p=0.004$), since master's students adopt stricter evaluation criteria, yet local internship duration exerts no significant influence on employability dimensions. This divergence from mainstream human capital research arises from severe sample homogeneity (96.9% undergraduates) and insufficient long-term Thai internship experience among most respondents; short or absent placements cannot facilitate cross-cultural socialization as outlined in Berry's theory, leading to non-significant demographic effects on professional skills, cross-cultural adaptation and overall employability. Hypothesis 2 is fully validated, aligning with situated learning theory: intended employment region creates significant gaps in overall employability ($F=4.567$, $p=0.011$). Graduates planning to work in Thailand achieve far higher scores in language proficiency and cross-cultural adaptation ($p<0.01$) thanks to accumulated local cultural capital matching Thailand 4.0 industry needs, alongside clearer localized career planning ($p=0.041$), while standardized university coursework makes professional skills indistinguishable across destination groups. Post-hoc tests confirm Thai-bound graduates outperform those returning to China or seeking jobs elsewhere, identifying employment destination as a key factor shaping cultural capital accumulation. Descriptive results show participants hold medium overall employability, with career planning as their strongest capability and language ability the weakest with large individual variation, consistent with regional studies highlighting linguistic barriers for Chinese graduates in Thailand. Most students lack sustained local internships and demand language, digital and cross-cultural career training, exposing misalignment between university support and labor market requirements under experiential learning theory.

Main Conclusions

Chinese graduates in Thailand demonstrate medium overall employability, with language proficiency as their primary disadvantage featuring prominent individual disparities. Educational background and internship experience only correlate with language and career planning self-perception, while sample homogeneity and insufficient internships eliminate their impact on professional and cross-cultural competencies. Those targeting Thai employment exhibit stronger linguistic, adaptive and career-planning strengths without differing in universal professional skills. Most graduates lack long-term local internships and have clear demands for diversified employment support services.

Recommendations

Thai universities ought to add targeted multilingual and digital skill courses, establish long-term corporate internship cooperation and provide destination-specific career guidance. Chinese students should proactively improve multilingual competence, participate in formal long-term local internships and formulate career plans matching regional industrial characteristics. Relevant overseas education institutions can launch systematic training camps covering cross-cultural communication, digital literacy and job-hunting skills for cross-border job seekers.

Limitations and Future Research

This cross-sectional survey only samples four universities and adopts limited demographic indicators, failing to track dynamic changes in graduates' post-graduation employability. Future studies can expand the sampling scope, incorporate more personal and industrial influencing factors, and conduct longitudinal research to explore the long-term development of international graduates' employability.

6. Conclusion and Implications

Main Conclusions

1. The overall employability of Chinese fresh graduates from Thai universities is at a medium-high level. Career development capacity ranks highest, while work-life balance capacity is lowest. Language competence is the dominant advantage, whereas practical professional skills represent the key area for improvement.
2. Demographic variables have limited predictive power for employability. Educational level exerts a significant negative influence on language ability and career planning capacity, while gender, age, marital status, and internship duration show no significant effects on most dimensions.

3. Intended employment region is significantly associated with employability. Graduates planning to work in Thailand exhibit higher overall employability, particularly in career and workplace adaptability, compared to those intending to work in China or other regions.
4. Graduates express strong demand for support services, including digital skills training, language improvement coaching, and career planning guidance, indicating gaps between current university offerings and market needs.

Practical Implications

For Thai universities: Curricula should be optimized to integrate more practical training, particularly in digital skills (data analysis, digital marketing, AI applications) and professional practice. Universities should expand quality internship partnerships with local Thai enterprises and provide targeted career guidance services, including resume coaching, interview preparation, and cross-cultural workplace training. Language support programs should be strengthened, especially for graduate-level students who may have fewer opportunities for language practice.

For Chinese graduates in Thailand: Students should proactively enhance their language proficiency (Chinese, English, and Thai) and actively seek quality internship opportunities to build practical experience. Early career planning based on intended employment region is recommended — those targeting Thailand should focus on local workplace culture and professional networks, while those returning to China should emphasize certification recognition and domestic market understanding. Digital skill development should be prioritized regardless of major, given the pervasive impact of digital transformation across industries.

For educational and employment institutions: Sino-Thai educational cooperation organizations should establish integrated employment service platforms that provide cross-border job information, digital skills training camps, and career counseling services. Policy coordination between China and Thailand on work visa procedures, degree certification, and talent recognition mechanisms would facilitate smoother cross-border employment transitions. Enterprise partnerships should be fostered to create more structured internship and employment pathways for international graduates.

Limitations and Future Research

This study has several limitations. First, the sample is limited to Bangkok-based universities and may not fully represent Chinese students across all regions of Thailand. Second, the cross-sectional design prevents causal inferences about the relationships between variables. Third, the study focuses primarily on demographic and digital transformation factors, leaving other potential determinants such as social capital, personality traits, and family background underexplored.

Future research could expand the sample to include universities across different regions of Thailand and incorporate longitudinal designs to track employability development over time. Additional variables such as social capital, cross-cultural competence, and specific industry contexts could be explored to provide a more comprehensive understanding of employability drivers. Qualitative studies could also complement quantitative findings by exploring graduates' lived experiences and the mechanisms through which digital transformation shapes their employment outcomes.

References

- Belaid, S. (2025). Employability and Digitalization: A Bibliometric Analysis with Future Research Directions. *Journal of Information Technology Management*, 38(1), 45-62.
- Chen, L. (2022). Research on the Influencing Factors of Cross-Border International Students' Workplace Adaptability — Taking Chinese Students in Thailand as an Example. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Education*, 8(3), 215-228.
- Clark, L. A. (2000). Work-family balance and employability. *Human Relations*, 53(7), 955-976.
- Fugate, M., Kinicki, A. J., & Ashforth, B. E. (2004). Employability: A psycho-social construct, its dimensions, and applications. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 65(1), 14-38.
- Gabrielova, J., & Buchko, A. A. (2021). Generational differences in work values and employability. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 42(5), 678-695.
- Güzel, N., & Glazer, S. (2019). Acculturation of international students: A systematic review. *Journal of International Students*, 9(3), 789-812.
- Hess, T., Matt, C., Benlian, A., & Wiesböck, F. (2016). Digital transformation and leadership. *MIS Quarterly Executive*, 15(2), 89-103.

- Hu, Y. X., & Wang, L. (2025). The Impact of the Digital Economy on Employment at High Skill Levels — Panel Analysis Based on 82 Countries. *Operations Research Perspectives*, 12, 100287.
- Istrate, I., & Velea, M. (2024). Employability skills in an AI-driven labour market: Evidence from university graduates. *Journal of Education and Work*, 37(2), 189-206.
- Li, J. (2023a). Employment Status and Competence Improvement Path of Chinese Graduates from Thai Universities. *Southeast Asian Studies*, 15(2), 89-104.
- Li, L. (2022). The Impact of Demographic Characteristics on College Graduates' Employability. *Research in Educational Development*, 39(4), 56-63.
- Liao, C. Z., Fu, J., & Zhao, J. Y. (2023). Analysis and Countermeasure Research on the Employability of Chinese Students in Thai Universities. *Journal of Sino-Foreign Education Cooperation*, 11(3), 45-58.
- Liu, M. (2022). Research on the Influencing Factors of International Students' Work-Life Balance Competence — An Empirical Study Based on Chinese Students in Thailand. *Journal of Vocational Education Research*, 18(4), 78-92.
- Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research and Innovation of Thailand. (2025). International Student Statistics 2025 Academic Year. Bangkok: MHESI.
- OECD. (2023). The Future of Skills: Employment in 2030. Paris: OECD Publishing.
- OECD. (2026). The effects of population structure on employment and productivity. Paris: OECD Publishing.
- Rothwell, A., & Arnold, J. (2007). Employability: scale development. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 70(3), 384-403.
- Serrano-Sánchez, J. J., et al. (2021). Acculturation and employability of international students. *Journal of International Migration and Integration*, 22(4), 1123-1142.
- Sisavath, K. (2021). Overseas experience and employability of Lao international graduates. *Higher Education*, 82(3), 567-585.
- Sika Kaew, S., et al. (2022). Cross-border student mobility between China and Thailand: Language proficiency and employability. *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 28(2), 234-251.
- Thai Ministry of Labour. (2022). International Students' Employment in Thailand: Status and Challenges. Bangkok: Ministry of Labour.
- UN Women. (2022). Gender Equality in the Thai Workplace: Progress and Challenges. Bangkok: UN Women Thailand.
- Van der Heijde, B. I., & Van der Heijden, B. I. J. M. (2006). A competence-based and multidimensional operationalization and measurement of employability. *Human Resource Management*, 45(3), 449-476.
- Wang, H. (2023a). Digital Talent Demand and International Students' Employment Competitiveness Under Thailand 4.0 Strategy. *Journal of Digital Economy*, 5(1), 67-82.
- Wang, H. (2023b). Research on the Path of Improving Employability of Chinese Students Studying in Thailand from the Perspective of Digital Transformation. *Educational Technology Research*, 44(6), 89-105.
- Westerman, G., Bonnet, D., & McAfee, A. (2014). Digital transformation: a roadmap for billion-dollar organizations. *MIT Sloan Management Review*, 56(1), 1-18.
- Zhou, T. (2023a). Dimensions and Improvement Strategies of International Students' Employability in the Digital Context. *Chinese Journal of Higher Education*, 34(5), 56-64.