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The important accounting graduates skills for the Libyan job market: perceptions of academics and professionals

Las habilidades importantes de los graduados en contabilidad para el mercado laboral libio: percepciones de académicos y profesionales.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is twofold. First, it aims to explore the important accounting graduate skills namely accounting technical skills, computer accounting skills, and general skills for the Libyan job market. Second, it aimed to investigate whether the opinions of academics and professionals are different regarding accounting technical skills, computer accounting skills, and general skills. The study used 100 questionnaires received from academics and professionals and used descriptive statistics, one sample t-test and independent samples t-test to test the hypothesis of the study. The findings showed that the selected accounting graduates' skills particularly accounting technical skills, computer accounting skills, and general skills are important for the Libyan job market. Also, the results revealed no differences between the perceptions of academics and professionals regarding the important accounting graduate skills in the Libya job market.

Keywords. Libyan Job market needs, technical skills, computer accounting skills and general skills, accounting graduates.

RESUMEN

El propósito de este estudio es doble. En primer lugar, tiene como objetivo explorar las habilidades importantes de los graduados en contabilidad, específicamente las habilidades técnicas en contabilidad, habilidades en informática contable y habilidades generales, para el mercado laboral libio. En segundo lugar, se pretende investigar si las opiniones de los académicos y los profesionales difieren con respecto a las habilidades técnicas en contabilidad, habilidades en informática contable y habilidades generales. El estudio utilizó 100 cuestionarios recibidos de académicos y profesionales, y se emplearon estadísticas descriptivas, la prueba t de

una muestra y la prueba t de muestras independientes para probar las hipótesis del estudio. Los hallazgos mostraron que las habilidades seleccionadas de los graduados en contabilidad, en particular las habilidades técnicas en contabilidad, habilidades en informática contable y habilidades generales, son importantes para el mercado laboral libio. Además, los resultados revelaron que no existen diferencias entre las percepciones de los académicos y los profesionales con respecto a las habilidades importantes de los graduados en contabilidad para el mercado laboral libio.

Palabras clave. *necesidades del mercado laboral libio, habilidades técnicas, habilidades en informática contable, habilidades generales, graduados en contabilidad.*

INTRODUCTION

The compatibility between accounting graduates' skills and job market requirements has been an interesting and controversial topic among researchers, academics, professionals and regulatory bodies. All these stakeholders are interested to ensure that the output of accounting education fulfill the needs of job market (Alazawi, 2018; Maali and Al-Attar, 2020). Conventionally, employers were generally satisfied with technical skills and most studies confirm that accounting graduates possess technical skills (Kavanagh and Drennan, 2008; Sardar, 2017).

However, after the influences of the information technology revolution, the recent financial scandals and globalization of the world economy, the way business is conducted have changed, which demands more than technical skills for accounting graduates Jackson et al. (2023). More skills are needed such as information technology silks and general are becoming very important parameters in hiring decisions by employers Ajeela and Gneyu (2016). Addressing such issues in the accounting education literature, are very significant to help accounting graduates to possess skills, which increase the chances of employment and avoid the status of being unemployed and help universities focus on the important skills that the job market demand.

The practice of accounting requires a skill set that is different from that required in other disciplines, because the practice of accounting is based on accounting rules, regulations and standards which change overtime Ebaid (2013). Therefore, accounting education plays a very important role in order to ensure that students are cultivated with the skills which fulfills the needs of the job market requirements as well as accounting regulations. Consequently, any accounting education reform should be done in line with the requirements of International Accounting Education Standards and the international Professional and regulatory bodies requirements such as the CBAETC 2019 issued by the World Bank and other frameworks which highlights the importance of the technical and generic skills of accounting graduates Altarawneh (2015).

In addition to that, many scholars have called for the importance of including generic skills such as information technology skills and general skills, into accounting programs so that accounting graduates can compete in this changing world Zuregigat (2017). However, an extensive review of the local and the international literature on the topic has indicated that the majority of the results shows that employers are more satisfied with technical skills than generic skills (Alrawawneh, 2016; Sithole, 2015). Only, few studies have showed that accounting graduates possess the desired skills (Low et al, 2013; Ngoo et al, 2015; Tan and Fawzi, 2016). However, most former studies were executed in advanced countries, while little attention is given to less-developed countries.

This study extends previous literature by investigating the important accounting graduates' skills for academics and professionals for the Libyan job. This is important to the accounting education literature to elaborate the important accounting graduate skills in the Libyan job market. The findings of this study could also indirectly reflect the importance of teaching quality attributes

Ebaid (2023), online classes Awal (2023), and active learning methodologies Llorente et al. (2023) because these scholars confirmed these aspects of higher education increase students' development of skills such as information technology skills, communications skills, problem solving skills, entrepreneur skills and other skills. In addition to that, including academics and professionals as the main respondents to the study could signal whether there are different priorities between academics and professionals regarding accounting graduate skills or they prefer the same set of skills. Also, the management of Libyan universities could use the result of the study to develop suitable accounting curriculum for the Libyan job market. Therefore, the objective of this study is twofold. First, to investigate the important accounting, technical skills, computer accounting skills and general skills from the perspectives of academics and professionals. Second, to investigate whether academics and professionals' preference of skills are different or not.

Overview of Accounting Profession Libya

Accounting profession plays a very important role in economic development as well as it is the main driver which shapes the accounting education of a country Enthoven (1981). The situation of accounting profession in Libya is not well developed and therefore accounting profession does not contribute in the design of the accounting education requirements Nasser and Simon (2004).

The history of accounting profession in Libya is not that long. Before, independence Libyans did not practice any accounting activities and the accounting activities were managed by foreign bodies and the major contributors to set the accounting system in Libya were Italy, US and UK Bait-Elmal et al. (1973). During the 1950s first attempts were made by the US and UK and UN advisers to establish the accounting system in Libya Buzied (1998). Therefore, the accounting practices in Libya are based on the US and UK accounting models Kilani (1988). After, the discovery of the oil in Libya and the economic growth in Libya during the 1960s, the importance of the accounting profession as the main source of financial information, has increased.

As a results, many national and international accounting firms worked in the Libyan market . In 1975 the Libyan Association of Accountants and Auditors (LAAA) was announced, which is responsible for regulating and control practitioners and setting standards and conditions for public accountants. Nasser and Simon (2004). The LAAA is still the accounting professional body in Libya to date and is responsible to issue license as Libyan Public Accountant. However, it seems that there is no coordination between the LAAA and Libyan universities to design accounting programs which are based on the views of professionals and educators and the accounting profession still not well developed. According to Abu Galiya et al. (2017) the main reason for the weakness of accounting education in Libya could be attributed to the lack of national accounting standards, effective professional associations, capital markets, and the low level of general education in Libya.

Overview of Accounting Education in Libya

Accounting education have started as a pre-university level since 1953, by opening the first school of public administration, which also played a major role in training the workforce of the public sector in accounting Belkheir et al. (2019). However, university level accounting education have started in the Faculty of Economics and Political Science, University of Benghazi and established the core stone of higher accounting education and it was the only faculty which provide accounting education at the university level in all Libya from 1957 to 1988 Nasser and Simon (2004). Thereafter, accounting education has prevailed out through Libyan cities by establishing many universities and higher education institutes which offers bachelor's degrees and master's degrees.

However, past studies showed that the accounting education output are not satisfactory in terms of fulfilling the needs of the accounting profession and market needs in Libya. In general,

although there are many undergraduate and graduate programs, accounting schools still relay on old methods and philosophies of accounting education such as memorization and traditional exams and negligence of generic skills such as general skills, IT skills, and accounting ethics skills, while focusing only on accounting technical skills Belkheir et al. (2019).

Accounting research is quite restricted too, due to the lack of proper database of financial data of Libyan companies, making large scale quantitative studies are very limited, most practical studies, which have been done rely on interviews and questionnaires to obtain data which could lead to bias and subjective generalizations or theoretical papers are sometimes written as well. According to a study by Liberish and Almogla (2013) to develop accounting education recommended that universities should focus on reporting skills in a timely manner, critical and logical thinking skills to solve accounting issues, decision making skills, team work skills, analysis and interpretation skills are very important. Also, Nasser and Simon (2004) stated the desired skills and competences in the Libyan social and economic system are (1) communication skills, (2) information development and distribution skills, (3) decision-making skills, (4) knowledge of accounting, auditing, and tax, (5) knowledge of business and environment, (6) professionalism, and (7) leadership development. Therefore, it is clear that the importance of non-technical accounting graduates' skills, is recognized in the Libyan accounting literature.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This section reviews the related literature on accounting education locally and internationally. Although many recent studies have concluded that the current accounting education system in Libya does not fulfill the job market requirements (Al-Saga, 2014; Belkheir et al, 2019; Ejela, 2016; Eshmila and Trili, 2013), while other studies (Abas and Khalil, 2022; Alamari et al, 2021; Alarbi and Abufares, 2006; Musbah, 2021) argued that Libyan universities fulfill the Libyan market needs by providing the desired skills. Therefore, due to this contradiction in the Libyan accounting literature, more recent research is needed in order to provide more recent evidence, which justified the execution of the current study.

For instance, Alarbi and Abufares (2006) investigated whether Libyan accountants possess non-technical skills required by international accounting bodies such IFAC namely, knowledge skills, information technology skills, self-management skills, teamwork skills, and decision-making skills. A questionnaire was distributed to petroleum companies that operate in Tripoli and used descriptive statistics to analyze the data. The results showed that Libyan accountants possess the skills on an intermediate rank.

Belkheir et al. (2019) conducted a study which aimed to explore the current situation of accounting education in the Libyan Higher Education Institutes by exploring the level of availability of the scientific, practical, and technological requirements in accounting education. The data was collected by questionnaires distributed to faculty members in accounting departments of Higher Education Institutes across all Libya and the analytical descriptive approach was used to analyze the data. The findings suggested that the current accounting education provided in the Libyan Higher Education Institutes does not meet the scientific, practical, and technological requirements in accounting education.

Also, Al-Saga (2014) attempted to propose a model to develop a program for accounting education in the Libyan universities. Questionnaires were distributed to accounting students and accounting lecturers at Al-Asmarya University and Mergeb University and the data were analyzed by the analytical descriptive approach. The analysis revealed that any accounting education development program should have four main pillars which are admission condition, content of accounting curriculum, teaching methods and techniques, and practical training of accounting students.

In addition, Abu Galiya et al. (2017) investigated the educational, professional, cultural, and economical obstacles which contributes to the obstruction of the accounting education development in Libya in order to fulfill job market needs, economic development needs, and social needs. Based on a questionnaire distributed to faculty members in accounting departments of Libyan universities and utilizing the analytical descriptive approach. The findings showed that the main obstacles to ensure good output of accounting education are inability to use information technology, absence of good scientific libraries, absence of continuous cooperation between accounting academics and accounting professionals, and the absence of accounting standards, accounting associations, and capital markets.

Lebersh and Al-mogla (2013) evaluated the current status of accounting education in Libya and the possibility of developing accounting curriculum which fits with students' aspiration in Libyan universities. The findings showed that most accounting graduates have selected accounting major because they thought, it would ensure job in the future, personal interests, and impression that accounting is a unique major. Also, there is evidence that some graduates have acquired some accounting skills and competences at varying levels such as preparing financial reports on a timely basis, analysis and interpretation accounting information and making conclusions, critical thinking, and working in a team. Further, the results suggested that some elements act as determinants for students ability to acquire the main accounting skills such as the focus on statistical and mathematical subjects can effect on the comprehension of the accounting subject, the focus on the quantity rather than the quality in accounting main courses, the timeframe of some subjects are not suitable, absence of teaching information technology in accounting, repetitions of some accounting topics in courses, absence of teaching accounting terminology by English language, accounting curriculum is not prepared in coordination between accounting professionals and accounting educators.

Almagori (2008) analyzed and described the current status of the elements of accounting education programs in Libya and whether these programs fits with job market needs. The study concluded that there is a gap between accounting education in Libya and job-market needs. Also, the results revealed that the academic elements and professional elements of accounting education programs could bridge the gap between accounting education and professional needs.

Also, Al-Nyhawi et al. (2018) conducted a study to investigate the effect educational process factors on educational attainment in Intermediate Accounting I Subject at Misrata University. The examined factors were the curriculum, exams, library services, accounting faculty members, and teaching methods. The study found that the most important factor was accounting faculty members which effects the educational attainment in Intermediate Accounting I at Misrata University.

Ashkal (2018) conducted a study which illustrated the role of the use of technology such as eLearning, cognitive mapping, concept map in accounting education and suggested several barriers. The findings showed a general agreement among respondents about the importance of the role of eLearning and concept map in accounting education. In addition, Zikri (2013) explored the challenges and the problems facing Total Quality (TQ) in accounting education in Libya. Their findings suggested that, from the point view of the accounting students, TQ in accounting educations dependents on several factors such as the services and facilities provided at Tripoli University at Aljufrah branch, Lectures, administration offices, library, and others.

Nasser and Simon (2004) reports the development of accounting education and curricula since Libya's independence in the 1950s and examines its current problems. The authors concluded that the major issues currently faced by Libyan accounting educators are a shortage of qualified accounting academics; inappropriateness of imported syllabuses to the peculiarities of the economy; the unfit marriage of academic teaching and professional training in the accounting curricula; and inadequate accounting research. They also stressed that the social and economic

characteristics must considered in the case of Libya when it comes to importing accounting education systems from the West.

Musbah (2021) investigated the knowledge and skills which should be taught to accounting students by Libyan universities, a questionnaire was distributed to accounting faculty members who are practicing accounting profession in Libya. The results showed that the skills which should be taught by Libyan universities are technical accounting skills, general skills, and information technology skills.

Alamari et al. (2021) explored the important knowledge and skills which are taught in the Libyan universities from the perspectives of accounting graduates and accounting faculty members using a questionnaire. The descriptive statistics results showed that the most important skills which are taught at Libyan universities are financial accounting, internal auditing, writing accounting reports, teamwork, ethics, and decision making.

Abas and Ali (2022) explored the general skills needed for accounting graduates to get hired in the Libyan job market. The findings showed that the important accounting graduate skills are intellectual skills, communication skills, personal skills, and organizational skills are important for accounting graduates in order secure a job in the Libyan job market. Also, the results showed that there are no differences in the means of accounting graduates and employers in the private sector regarding their opinions on the needed skills for accounting graduates.

In addition to that, many recent studies have been done in the MENA region related to the objectives of the study. For instance, Hassan (2018) explores the level of harmonization between accounting education and the needs of the job market, based on a questionnaire and accounting graduates in working in Gaza were the main respondents. The findings indicated that accounting education Gaza strict universities are able to meet market needs.

Zuregigat (2017) explored the needed skills of accounting graduates by employers and rank their importance. Based on sample of internal auditors and accounting heads in Saudi companies. The findings revealed that most skills were important ordered as critical thinking and reasoning, problem and decision analysis, oral presentation and communication, team working, business ethics, time management, negotiation, written communication, computer, planning and leadership.

Altrawawneh (2016) investigated the compatibility is needed between accounting education providers, graduates' skills, and market job needs. A survey were distributed to major Jordanian public and private companies. The findings revealed that accounting graduate lack generic skills and are better in terms of technical skills. Also, a significant gap was found between the skills the employers consider important and skills that the graduates possess and show in practice.

Alazawi et al. (2018) analyzed and described the phenomena of the incompatibility between the output of accounting education and the needs of the job market and international accounting education standards in Iraq universities. Based on inductive approach which examined documents and related magazines. The authors concluded that there are several issues regarding admission conditions of accounting students, issues regarding universities do not enhance skills which are related to innovative thinking, creative thinking, practical aspects of accounting. The findings confirmed that there is a gap between accounting education and job market needs.

Klibi and Oussii (2013) examined the perceptions and expectations of two major stakeholders: students and employers of the importance of skills and attributes for securing entry-level employment in accounting in Tunisia. The finding’s indicated employers are seeking graduates who possess a diverse range of non-technical skills. While students believe that technical skills are more important for accounting profession.

Maali and Al-Attar (2020) examined the views of professionals and academics and analyzing whether the current accounting curricula of Jordanian universities fit the Jordanian market demand, in addition to determining the skills and competences that Jordanian businesses require

from accounting graduates. The study found the presence of a significant gap between the courses covered in the accounting curricula of Jordanian universities and the skills acquired by the students versus the market's requirements and needs.

Ajeela and Gneyh (2016) explored the contribution of electronic accounting education in students skills developments in Algerian universities. The findings revealed that electronic accounting education contributes to the increase of interaction of students, easiness of obtaining information regarding the subject, and increase creativity in solving accounting problems.

Srdar (2017) explored to what extent does university accounting education in Saudi Arabia produce graduates who meet the requirements of the current work environment in Saudi Arabia. The findings show that a gap between learning and practice exists in university accounting education in Saudi Arabia. Employers believe that accounting graduates lack the required technical competencies for the workplace.

Also, the issue of accounting graduate skills and job market needs have received attention at the international level as well. For example, Sithole (2015) investigated the accounting knowledge and skills desired by employees and their level of satisfaction with skills demonstrated by accounting graduates in Swaziland NGO organizations. The results showed the most important skills are computing technique, written communication, reporting skills, measurement skills, professionalism, and functional competencies. While the shown skills are reporting skills, measurement skills, research skills, functional competencies, finance and professionalism. Also, most important technological skills are knowledge of accounting, spreadsheet and accounting software. However, the findings also revealed that there is gap between the desired and the actual skills of accounting graduates.

In addition, Ngoo et al. (2015) in his study attempted bridge the gap between the perceived soft and technical skills between employers and graduates in Malaysia. Questionnaires distributed to accounting graduates and employers and the desired skills. The findings revealed that no gap on technical skills between accounting graduates and employers, but some gaps were found on the soft skills of accounting graduates.

Kavanagh and Drennan (2008) examined the perceptions of graduating students and employers about the skills and attributes they consider important to their career and the emphasis placed on development of these skills during their degree program in Australia. The findings indicated an agreement between graduate students and employers regarding the important of technical skills for accounting graduates. However, that the most important generic skills from the graduating student's point of view are continuous improvement while employers consider analytical problem-solving skills, business awareness, and real-life experience skills as the most important skills accounting graduates.

Ali et al. (2015) investigated the perceptions of employers and accounting educators of important of knowledge taught in higher education and soft skills embedded in accounting students in Malaysia. The findings suggested that employers and educators agreed upon some knowledge and skills of accounting graduates, however, employers place higher importance to taxation rather than auditing and service, compared to educators, also, employers argued that accounting graduates should learn at a faster pace in accounting careers, while educators believe that there is too much reliance on memorization by accounting students. Also, the findings revealed that the Main important skills found in the study are written communication, continuous learning, and decision-making skills as indicated by employers and accounting educators.

Mhlono (2020) investigated whether employers do call for pervasive skills when recruiting accounting graduates and, if so, which of these skills are most sought after. Based on content analysis of online advertised accounting vacancies. The findings indicate that, indeed, employers generally specified pervasive skills, and that oral and written communication and critical thinking were the most sought-after of these skills for accounting-related employment in South Africa.

Ogundana (2015) examined the role of ICT integration in accounting education on the value adding capacity of accounting students in Nigeria. The results revealed that integration of ICT (accounting software packages and IT knowledge and skills) into accounting education (curriculum) would help accounting graduates fulfill their responsibility of adding value to organizations.

Atanasovski et al. (2018) contrasted the perceptions of students and employers in Macedonia, in respect of skills and knowledge that must be possessed by graduates to increase their employability and evaluated the quality of a recognized undergraduate accounting program in order to determine if it allows for relevant skills and knowledge to be obtained. The results indicated agreement between students and employers about of generic skills, where students gave more weight to personal skills of time management, good presentation and characteristics of self-confidence, motivation, and self-promotion. Employers valued more oral communication, knowledge of foreign languages, ethical attitude and credibility and commitment to life-long learning.

Low et al. (2013) examined the role of accounting education in the provision of soft skills to accounting graduates, and how this may be affected by the recent changes in academic requirements initiated by NZICA . The findings of the interviews and questionnaires showed that the majority of participants in this study were of the opinion that tertiary accounting education plays an important role in soft skills development for accounting graduates.

Low et al. (2016) examined what accounting employers are seeking in their 'ideal' accounting graduate and sought to provide clarification on the 'expectation gap' between what accounting employers require in their graduates, and the skills these graduates are exhibiting. Based on semi-structured interviews the researchers found that, for technical skills, employers require at least a sound understanding of the fundamental technical accounting skills. However, beyond this, little more is expected technically of graduates as the requisite technical skills are learned 'on the job'. Findings also suggest that the touted 'expectation gap' is not as pervasive as prior literature has suggested. Over half of employers also believed universities are preparing students adequately for the workplace.

Tan and Fawzi (2016) examines employability skills of accountants as indicated in job advertisements in Australia and New Zealand. The authors found the most required skills by employers in job advertisements are skills the ability to collaborate with colleagues, present, discuss and defend views, and having a positive attitude. Overall, a team player with a positive attitude and good communication skills.

Tanaka and Sithole (2015) investigated the gap IT skills desired by employers of accounting graduates and the IT skills the accounting graduates' possess. Data was obtained from employers on 10 IT skills and knowledge areas applicable to accounting graduates. Results of the survey research suggest that students are better trained in word-processing and knowledge of communications software skills, yet employers expect entry level accounting graduates to possess accounting packages knowledge and spreadsheet competencies.

Parvaiz (2014) investigated the expectation-performance gap in the development of generic skills for the purpose of employability offered by the accounting institutes of Pakistan. The findings indicated that there are 19 skills where the accounting educators have dissimilar expectation from employers in terms of skill base education, such skills include decision making, economics, ability to analyses and reason logically, teamwork and others.

Shamsuddin et al. (2015) employers' level of satisfaction towards Universiti Tenaga Nasional (UNITEN) accounting graduates. It also provides a revelation on the relationship between employability skills of UNITEN accounting graduates and employers' level of satisfaction towards graduates. The key findings of the study reveal that employers are satisfied with UNITEN accounting graduates technical and generic skills. The finding of the study also showed that there

are positive correlations between three categories of employability skills with the employers' level of satisfaction towards UNITEN accounting graduates.

Rebele and Pierre (2019) investigated whether soft skills can effectively be taught or developed at the undergraduate level and whether accounting faculty members play an important role in delivering the soft skills. The authors suggested that that as emphasis on soft skills development increases there has to be a decreased emphasis on technical issues given the class time constraints. It should be noted that we do not take the position that developing soft skills is not important or desirable. Instead, we focus on how accounting faculty members, given their expertise**,** can best use the limited time they have to educate our students and to prepare them for careers as accounting professionals.

Wells et al. (2009) identified the capabilities which are considered by employers in public practice to be the most important for successful practice in accountancy during the first years after graduation in New Zealand. The findings based on an analysis of questionnaires, suggested that personal, intellectual and interpersonal aspects of professional capabilities needed to be ensured successfully in the workplace. The importance of interpersonal and communication skill development in accounting courses was also highlighted in a recent Australian study by de Lange et al. (2006), which concluded that there was a need in the course to give more emphasis to developing those skills.

Berry and Routon (2020) examined whether the professionals calling for increased soft skills development actually believe they developed these soft skills along with technical skills during completion of their own accounting education. Based on a sample of students in the U.S, the researchers found that the majority of accounting majors reported increased skills in 14 of 15 categories analyzed findings were positive in that accounting students reported significant gains in most skill categories.

Aryanti and Adhariani (2020) describe the perceptions of accounting students and expectations of employers towards the skills and knowledge needed by accounting graduates in Indonesia. The results showed that students' perceived honesty, continuous learning, and work ethics are important skills, while employers stress the importance of work ethics, teamwork, and time management. Knowledge needed by accounting graduates in the perception of students includes financial accounting, financial reporting, and financial statement analysis, whereas employers perceived the importance of financial statement analysis, knowledge of Microsoft Office program, and financial accounting.

Heang et al. (2019) examine how Malaysian accounting fresh graduates perceive the performance of their university in preparing them for the job market, as well as the early employment problems encountered by them. The findings showed that accounting graduates face issues on Early Employment Problems difficulty in adapting to their workplace difficulty in handling stress, lack of technical knowledge on accounting standards and taxation and inadequate practical or internship experience and exposure inadequate support given by the seniors or superiors communication skills were inadequate and many other skills were inadequate as well.

Naidoo (2012) investigated the contribution of accounting graduates' education to the development of employment capabilities including an evaluation of the capabilities important for early professional success. The findings showed that graduates do not perceive that employability skills are well developed within the accounting curriculum. Although employers and academics ranked some capabilities as highly important, they believed that graduates did not demonstrate high levels of skills, for example team skills and oral communication. The study demonstrates that an expectation-performance gap exists despite efforts to reduce this gap.

Cristina et al. (2017) analyzed the perception that employers and students enrolled in the faculties for accounting from the Western part of our country have regarding the importance of the professional and transversal competencies when they get hired. The findings showed a general

agreement between the perceptions of students and employers regarding the main categories of professional and transversal competencies presented in the questionnaires, but there is different in prioritization of these competences.

Grant and Murphy (2009) conducted a survey to capture students' perceptions of their computer proficiency and a computer skills assessment to measure their actual performance in the U.S. The findings of this study indicate some differences in the students' perception of their word processing skills and actual performance, no difference in perception and performance for their presentation skills, and a significant difference in perception and performance for their spreadsheet skills.

Hypothesis of the Study

The review of the related literature suggests two main hypothesis of this study as follows:

Ha: accounting graduates skills are not important for the Libyan job market

From the first main hypothesis the following sub-hypothesis are proposed as follows:

Ha1: accounting technical skills are not important for the Libyan job market.

Ha2: computer accounting skills are not important for the Libyan job market.

Ha3: general skills are not important for the Libyan job market.

Hb: there are no important statistical differences between the opinions of academics and professionals regarding accounting graduate skills.

From the second main hypothesis the following sub-hypothesis are proposed as follows:

Hb1: there are no important statistical differences between the opinions of academics and professionals regarding accounting technical skills.

Hb2: there are no important statistical differences between the opinions of academics and professionals regarding computer accounting skills.

Hb3: there are no important statistical differences between the opinions of academics and professionals regarding general skills.

METHODOLOGY

These sections explain the methodology of the study. The study adopts the descriptive analytical approach to investigate the important accounting graduates in the Libyan job market and to investigate whether the opinions of academics and professionals prefer different skills. Therefore, quantitative research methods were used particularly descriptive statistics and inferential statistics for hypothesis testing.

Population and Sample of the Study

The population of the study comprised of the public sector institutions that operate in Benghazi city. The public institutions include public universities The sample size of the study was 150 institutions in which each institution received a questionnaire except for academics who all respondents were collected from one university. The other public institutions include ministries, public organizations, and public companies. From the 150 questionnaires distributed, only 112 were received and only 100 questionnaires could be used for analysis.

Data Collection Method

The study used primary data in the form of questionnaire to collect the data related to the variables of the study. The questionnaire was design based on previous studies and the then a pre-testing study was conducted among 4 academics and 3 professionals to ensure that the technical accounting skills, the computerized accounting skills, and general skills are suitable for

the Libyan environment. The final version of the questionnaire consists of two parts. The first part was dedicated for the demographic information of the respondents such as job title, adjective, years of experience and other information. The second part of the questionnaire was dedicated to the variables which represents the accounting graduates' accounting technical skills, computerized accounting skills, and general skills. The technical accounting skills dimension was consisted of 25 item, the computerized accounting skills dimension was consistent of 9 items, and the general skills dimension was consisted of 11 items. All these items were designed based on 7 likert-scale in the questionnaire which varied from not important at all to very important. Then, a pilot study was conducted to check the questionnaire reliability and internal validity of the questionnaire. Table (1) summarizes the results of the reliability test for the three dimensions and the questionnaire as a whole.

Table (1) Results of the Reliability Test

Dimension	Number of items	Cronbach's Alpha
Technical accounting skills	25	.964
Computer accounting skills	9	.919
General skills	11	.944

Table (1) summarizes the results of the reliability test, which indicates the values of Cronbach's Alpha for all dimensions are more than 0.70 which confirm that the dimensions of the survey are reliable and can be used to conduct the study. In addition, in order to test the internal validity for the items and each dimension Pearson Correlation test was conducted. Table (2) summarizes the results of the Pearson Correlation for all dimensions.

Table (2) Pearson Correlation for Internal Validity

Dimension	No of items	Pearson Correlation	P-Value
Technical accounting skills	25	.931	.000
Computer accounting skills	9	.722	.000
General skills	11	.766	.000

Table (2) indicates the correlation between the each dimension with whole dimensions used in the questionnaire. From the results, it can be seen that all dimensions are highly correlated with whole question at 1% significant level. However, before that Pearson Correlation was tested for each dimension alone with its items and the results showed that all items are highly correlated with the dimension they represent at significance level 1%. Therefore, it could be concluded that the items are valid in representing the three dimensions.

RESULTS

In order to analyze that data of the study several statistical tests were used. First, descriptive statistics was used to analyze the demographic information as well as to analyze the descriptive statistics for the main variables in order to describe the important accounting graduate skills to the respondents of the study. Second, normality test was conducted to ensure that the data follow a normal distribution in order to test the hypothesis of the study. One sample test was used in order to provide statistical evidence that the selected accounting graduate skills are statistically important and independent sample T-test was used to measure whether there are important

statistical differences between the opinions of academics and professionals regarding the significance of accounting graduates skills.

Descriptive Statistics Results

This section discusses the descriptive statistics for the demographic information and for the accounting graduate skills which are technical accounting skills, computer accounting skills, and general skills.

Descriptive Statistics of the Demographic Information of Respondents

Table (3) indicates the demographic information of the respondents to the study. The instrument included five criteria namely job title, adjective, academic qualification, specialization, years of experience and professional qualifications.

Table (3) demographic information of respondents

Criteria	Item	Frequency	Percentage %
Job Title	Chairman of board	3	**3**
	CEO	3	**3**
	Head of managerial function	14	14
	Branch Manager	1	1
	Head of Department	15	15
	Unit manager	1	1
	Faculty member	37	37
	Internal auditor	3	3
	External auditor	5	5
	Financial manger	2	2
	Accountant	16	16
Total		100	%100
Adjective	Academic	37	37
	Professional	63	63
Total		100	%100
Academic Qualification	Intermediate diploma	2	2
	Higher diploma	3	3
	Bachelor degree	31	31
	Master degree	35	35
	PhD	28	28
	Others	1	1
Total		100	%100
Specialization	Accounting	83	83
	Management	4	4
	Financial	5	5
	Others	8	8
Total		100	%100
Years of Experience	From 1 to 5 years	8	8
	From 5 to 10 years	12	12
	From 10 to 15 years	31	31
	More than 15 years	49	49
Total		100	%100
Professional Qualification	CPA	56	56
	CMA	15	15
	Others	2	2
	None	27	27
Total		100	%100

Table (3) shows the demographic information for the respondents to the study which reached 100 respondents. First, from the job title, it can be observed that 3 of the respondents hold the

position of chairman of board of directors of public companies, 3 are CEOs of public companies, 14 of the respondents hold the position of head of managerial function, among the respondents only 1 branch manager, 15 respondents hold the position of head of department, the sample consistent of 1 unit manager, out of the 100 respondents 37 of them were faculty members, 2 respondents were internal auditors, while 5 were external auditors, 2 of the respondents were financial managers, 16 of the respondents were accountants. Therefore, 37 of the respondents are academics, while 63 of the respondents were professionals. In terms of academic qualifications, it could be noted that, 2 of the respondents hold intermediate diploma degree, 3 hold higher diploma degree, while 31 of the respondents hold bachelor degree, 35 of the respondents hold master degree, 28 of the respondents hold PhD, and 1 hold other degree. Regarding their specialization, 83 of the respondents were specialized in accounting, 4 of them specialized in management, 5 were specialized in financial and 1 of the responded has another specialization which was not listed. The years of experience of the respondents showed that, 8 of the respondents have experience from 1 to 5 years, 12 of them have experience from 5 to 10 years, while 31 of them have experience from 10 to 15 years, and the remaining which was 49 respondents have experience for more than 15 years. Finally, regarding the professional qualifications, 56 of the respondents were CPAs, 15 were CMAs, while 2 hold other professional qualifications, and 27 do not hold any professional experience.

Descriptive statistics of the important technical accounting skills

Table (4) indicates the descriptive statistics of the important accounting graduates technical accounting skills which include different technical accounting skills which are related to financial accounting, management accounting, auditing and governmental accounting and the respondents were asked to rank these skills on 7 likert-scale which totaled 25 items. The items are ranked according to the mean to show the importance of the skills in order and they are ranked by considering mean below than 4 not high, 4 to 5 not high, 5 to 5.5 high, and mean more than 5.5 classified as very high level of importance.

Table (4) Respondents' responses on the important technical accounting skills

No	Item	Mean	Std. Deviation	Rank of Item	Level of importance
1	applying accounting theory	5.38	1.66	14	High
2	applying accounting principles and assumptions	6.19	1.33	4	Very high
3	able to prepare financial reports and disclose the relevant accounting information	6.28	1.23	2	Very High
4	able to practice bookkeeping effectively	6.38	1.15	1	Very High
5	able to evaluate and interpret financial information	5.87	1.36	6	Very High
6	able to evaluate and interpret the financial performance of organizations	5.59	1.56	11	Very High
7	able to compute the taxable income according to Libyan tax Laws	5.78	1.34	7	Very High
8	compute the social security installments	5.75	1.43	8	Very High
9	able to apply internal control systems concepts	5.90	1.19	5	Very High
10	able to use statistical techniques to determine the audit sample size	5.01	1.68	23	High
11	able to apply the international auditing standards	5.10	1.53	22	High
12	able to practice internal and external audit	4.97	1.53	24	Moderately High

13	able to design and operate manual accounting systems	5.45	1.38	13	High
14	able to analyze and design accounting information system	5.61	1.28	10	Very High
15	able to apply international accounting standards in the public sector	5.24	1.48	19	High
16	able to prepare the state budget	5.28	1.41	18	High
17	able to conduct a feasibility study	4.91	1.53	25	Moderately high
18	able to apply the accounting aspects of corporate governance	5.16	1.50	21	High
19	able to discover accounting errors in the accounting cycle	6.22	1.13	3	Very High
20	able to prepare financial reports according to IFRS	5.47	1.40	12	High
21	able to prepare different estimated budgets	5.70	1.38	9	Very High
22	able to assess organizational performance using financial and nonfinancial indicators	5.31	1.46	15	High
23	able to determine the role of management accounting in the planning, monitoring and decision making	5.28	1.52	17	High
24	able to practice cost accounting	5.18	1.47	20	High
25	able to apply different managerial accounting techniques and methods	5.30	1.48	16	High

Table (4) shows that the items number 1 has a mean of 5.38 and standard deviation of 1.66 and classified as highly important skill with rank of 14 among the 25 technical accounting skills. The item number 2 which is applying accounting principles and assumptions has a mean of 6.19 and a standard deviation of 6.19 and classified as very highly important skills and was the fourth most important skill. The item number 3 which is preparing financial reports and disclosing accounting information has a mean of 6.38 and a standard deviation of 1.23 and was ranked as the second most important skill in the list. Regarding the fourth item which is related to the skill of bookkeeping has the highest mean among all items, which is 6.38 and a standard deviation of 1.15 and thus ranked as the most important technical accounting skill. The item 5 which is related to the ability to evaluate and interpret financial information has a mean of 5.87 and a standard deviation of 1.36 was classified as very highly important skill and is the sixth most important skill. Also, item number 6 which is relation to the evaluation of interpretation of organizational financial performance is ranked as the 11th most important skill with a mean of 5.59 and a standard deviation of 1.56 and considered as very highly important skill. The item number 7 which asked about the ability to compute the taxable income according to Libyan laws has a mean 5.78 and a standard deviation 1.34 and ranked as the 7th most important skill and considered as very highly important skill. The item 8 which asks about the ability to compute social security installments considered the 8th most important technical accounting skill with a mean of 5.75 and a standard deviation 1.43 and considered as very high important skill. The items number 9 which asked about the ability to apply the concepts of internal control concepts has a mean of 5.90 and a standard deviation of 1.19 and ranked as the 5th most important skill and considered very highly important skill. The 10th item which asked ability the ability to determine audit sample size statistically has a mean of 5.01 and a standard deviation of 1.68 and ranked as the 23rd most important skill and considered as highly important. The 11th item which is ability to apply the International Auditing Standards has a mean of 5.10 and a standard deviation of 1.53 is ranked as the 22nd most important skills and considered as highly important skill. The 12th item which asked about the ability practice internal and external audit has a mean 4.97 and a standard deviation of 1.53 and ranked as the 24th most important skill and considered moderately important skill. The 13th item which asked about the ability to design and operate manual accounting

system has mean of 5.45 and a standard deviation of 1.38 and ranked as 13th most important skill and considered highly important. The 14th item which asked about the ability to analyze and design accounting information system has a mean of 5.61 and a standard deviation of 1.28 and ranked as the 10th most important skill and considered very highly important skill. The 15th item which asked about the ability to apply the international accounting standards in the public sector has a mean of 5.24 and a standard deviation of 1.48 and ranked as the 19th most important skill and considered as highly important skill. The 16th item which asked about the ability to prepare the state budget has a mean of 5.28 and a standard deviation of 1.41 and ranked as the 18th most important skill and considered as highly important skill. The 17th item which asked about the ability to conduct a feasibility study has a mean of 4.91 and a standard deviation of 1.53 and ranked as the last important skill and considered moderately important skill. The 18th which asked about the ability to practice the accounting aspects of corporate governance has a mean of 5.16 and a standard deviation of 1.50 and ranked as the 21st most important skill and considered highly important skill. The 19th item which asked about the ability to discover accounting errors has a mean of 6.22 and a standard deviation of 1.13 and ranked as the 3rd most important skill and considered very highly important skill. The item number 20 which asked about the ability to practice IFRS has a mean of 5.47 and a standard deviation of 1.40 and ranked as the 12 most important skill and considered highly important skill. The 21st item which asked about the ability to prepare different estimated budgets has a mean of 5.70 and a standard deviation of 1.38 and ranked as the 9th most important skill and considered very highly important skill. The 22nd item which asked about the ability to assess performance using financial and nonfinancial measures has a mean of 5.31 and a standard deviation of 1.46 and ranked as the 15th most important skill and classified as highly important skill. The item 23 asked about the ability to determine the role of management accounting in management functions has a mean of 5.28 and a standard deviation of 1.52 and ranked as the 17th most important skill and considered highly important skill. The 24th item which asked about the practices of cost accounting has a mean 5.18 and a standard deviation of 1.47 and ranked as the 20th most important skill and considered as a highly important skill. Finally, the 25th item which asked the ability to apply different management accounting methods and techniques has a mean of 5.30 and a standard deviation of 1.48 and ranked as the 16th most important skill and considered as highly important skill.

Descriptive statistics of the importance of computer accounting skills

Table (5) indicates the descriptive statistics of the important accounting graduates computer accounting skills which include different computer accounting skills which are related to the use of accounting software, computerized systems and other items, and the respondents were asked to rank these skills on 7 likert-scale which totaled 9 items. The items are ranked according to the mean to show the importance of the skills in order and they are ranked by considering mean below than 4 not high, 4 to 5 not high, 5 to 5.5 high, and mean more than 5.5 classified as very high level of importance.

Table 5. Respondents' responses on the important computer accounting skills

No	Item	Mean	Std. Deviation	Rank of Item	Level of importance
1	design and operate an integrated computerized accounting information system	5.53	1.53	4	Very high
2	able to prepare accounting information using accounting software	5.72	1.40	3	Very High
3	able to design accounting information system using electronic tables	5.76	1.47	2	Very High

4	aware of programing basics	5.35	1.47	7	High
5	able to use different programing languages	4.80	1.63	9	Moderately High
6	able to use excel in the accounting processes, tables, and reports	6.16	1.24	1	Very High
7	able to use database management software	5.43	1.43	5	High
8	able to use computerized internal control systems	5.32	1.29	8	High
9	use specialized computerized accounting information systems	5.41	1.49	6	High

Table (5) indicates that the 1st item which designing and operating an integrated computerized accounting information system has a mean of 5.53 and a standard deviation of 1.53 and ranked the fourth most important computer skill and considered as very important skill. The 2nd item which asked about the ability to prepare accounting information using accounting software has a mean of 5.72 and a standard deviation of 1.40 and ranked the 3rd most important skill and considered as very highly important skill. The 3rd item asked about the ability to design accounting information system using electronic tables has a mean of 5.76 and a standard deviation of 1.47 and ranked the 2nd most important computer skill and classified as very highly important skill. The 4th item asked about the importance of the awareness of programing basics has a mean of 5.35 and a standard deviation of 1.47 and ranked the 7th most important skill and considered as highly important. The 5th item asked about the ability to use different programing languages has a mean of 4.80 and a standard deviation of 1.63 and ranked the 9th most important skill and considered moderately important skill. The 6th item asked about the ability to use excel in the accounting process, tables, and reports has a mean 6.16 and a standard deviation of 1.24 and ranked the most important computer skill and classified as very highly important skill. The 7th item asked about the ability to use database management software has a mean of 5.43 and a standard deviation 1.43 and ranked the 5th most important skill and classified as highly important skill. The 8th item which asked about the ability to use computerized internal control systems has a mean of 5.32 and a standard deviation of 1.29 and ranked the 8th most important skill and considered as highly important skill. The 9th item asked about the ability to use specialized computerized accounting information system has a mean of 5.41 and a standard deviation of 1.49 and ranked the sixth most important skill and classified as highly important skill.

Descriptive statistics of the importance of general skills

Table (6) indicates the descriptive statistics of the important accounting graduates general skills which include different general skills, and the respondents were asked to rank these skills on 7 likert-scale which totaled 9 items. The items are ranked according to the mean to show the importance of the skills in order and they are ranked by considering mean below than 4 not high, 4 to 5 not high, 5 to 5.5 high, and mean more than 5.5 classified as very high level of importance.

Table (6) Respondents' responses on the important general skills

No	Item	Mean	Std. Deviation	Rank of Item	Level of importance
1	able to present ideas clearly and confidently	5.71	1.31	7	Very High
2	mastery of foreign languages	5.19	1.50	10	High
3	able to write professional reports	6	1.22	1	Very High
4	able to practice self-learning	5.88	1.25	4	Very High
5	possess goods skills of documentation	5.82	1.28	5	Very High
6	able to work in a team	5.99	1.23	2	Very High
7	able to lead a team	5.51	1.35	9	Very High
8	having problem solving skills	5.70	1.34	8	Very High
9	able to make conclusions based on	5.70	1.34	8	Very High

	objective evidences				
10	able to practice continues improvements in the business environment	5.96	1.12	3	Very High
11	able to practice time management	5.81	1.26	6	Very High

Table (6) indicated the important of different general skills. The 1st item asked about the ability to present ideas clearly and confidently has a mean 5.71 and a standard deviation of 1.31 and ranked the 7th most important general skill and considered as very highly important skill. The 2nd item which asked about the importance of the mastery of foreign language has a mean of 5.19 and a standard deviation 1.50 and ranked the 10th most important skill and classified as very highly important skill. The 3rd item asked about the ability to write professional reports has a mean of 6 and standard deviation of 1.22 and ranked as the most important general skill and therefore considered as very highly important skill. The 4th item asked about the skill of self-learning which has a mean of 5.88 and a standard deviation of 1.25 and ranked the 4th most important skill and considered as very highly important skill. The 5th item which asked about documentation skills has a mean of 5.82 and a standard deviation of 1.28 and ranked the 5th most important skill and considered very highly important skill. The 6th item which asked about the ability to work in a team has a mean of 5.99 and a standard deviation of 1.23 and ranked as the 2nd most important skill and considered very highly important skill. The 7th item which asked about the ability to lead a team has a mean of 5.51 and a standard deviation of 1.35 and ranked as the 9th most important skill and considered as very highly important skill. The 8th item asked about the skill of problem solving and has a mean of 5.70 and a standard deviation of 1.34 and ranked as the 8th most important skill and classified as very highly important skill. The 9th item asked about the ability to make conclusions based on objective evidence which has a mean of 5.70 and a standard deviation of 1.34 and ranked as the 8th most important skill and considered as very highly important skill. The 10th item asked about the ability of continues improvement which has a mean of 5.96 and a standard deviation of 1.12 and ranked as the 3rd most important skill and classified as very highly important skill. Finally, the 11th item asked about the skill of time management which has a mean of 5.81 and a standard deviation of 1.26 and ranked the 6th most important general skill and considered as very highly important skill.

Inferential Statistics Results

This section discusses the related analysis for testing the study's hypothesis, in particular one sample t-test was used to determine whether the technical accounting skills, computer accounting skills and general accounting skills are statistically significant or not. While, independent samples t-test was used to explore whether there are significance statistical differences between the answers of academics and professionals. In order to conduct the analysis a composite variable for each dimension was computed by adding the sum of all items under each dimension. However, before that normality test was used in order to ensure that the data of the study follow the normal distribution and therefore the selected tests for hypothesis can be used.

Normality Test Results

The normality test were conducted on the composite variables of technical skills, computer skills and general to be used in the analysis. The sum of items of each variable and normality test was conducted and the results of the primary normality test revealed that the variables does not normal distribution. Then, the research transformed the variables in order to have the variables follow the normal distribution. Two steps were taken, first fractional rank was computed for all variables and then, normal, inverse DF function was computed for all variables. Table (7) shows the results of the normality test.

Table (7) Normality Test

Variables	Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a]		
	Statistics	df	Sig
Technical accounting skills	.036	100	.200
Computer accounting skills	.046	100	.200
General Skills	.052	100	.200

Table (7) show the results of the normality for all variables. The significance level of the variable technical accounting skills is .200. the significance level of computer accounting skills is .200, and the significance level of the variable general skills is .200. All significance levels of all variables are above 0.05 level and therefore it can be concluded that the data follow normal distribution and pragmatic tests can be used.

One Sample T-Test Results

In order to test the first main hypothesis which stats that accounting graduates skills are not important in the Libyan market, one sample t-test were used to test each selected skills namely technical accounting skills, computer accounting skills, and general skills which represented the three sub-hypotheses under the main hypothesis. Table (8) show the results of one sample t-test to provide significant statistical evidence that the accounting technical skills, computer accounting skills, and general skills are important in the Libyan job market.

Table (8) One Sample T-Test Results

Variable	N	Test value	Mean	Std Deviation	t	df	Sig
ATS	100	.45	.51	.28	2.17	99	.032
CAS	100	.45	.51	.28	2.14	99	.034
GS	100	.45	.51	.28	2.15	99	.034

Table (8) shows the results of the one sample t-test to test for the three sub-hypotheses for the first main hypothesis. The first row is related to the first sub-hypothesis of the first main hypothesis which stated that accounting technical skills are not important in the Libyan job market. From the table it can be seen that the analysis accounting technical skills variable denoted as ATS was performed for 100 respondents and the test value was .45, the mean is .51, the standard deviation is .28, the t value was 2.178, the degree of freedom is equal to 99, and the p-value is .032, which is less than .05. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected, and the alternative hypothesis was accepted. As a result, the results suggests that the accounting technical skills considered in this study are statistically important for the Libyan job market at .05 level.

In addition, the second row is related to the second sub-hypothesis of the first main hypothesis which stated that computer accounting skills are not important in the Libyan job market. From the table it can be seen that the analysis of computer accounting skills variable denoted as CAS was performed for 100 respondents and the test value was .45, the mean is .51, the standard deviation is .28, the t value was 2.145 the degree of freedom is equal to 99, and the p-value is .034, which is less than .05. Thus, the null hypothesis was rejected, and the alternative hypothesis was accepted. So, the results suggests that the computer accounting skills considered in this study are statistically important for the Libyan job market at .05 level.

Finally, the third row is related to the third sub-hypothesis of the first main hypothesis which stated that general skills are not important in the Libyan job market. From the table it can be seen that the analysis of general skills variable denoted as GS was performed for 100 respondents and the test value was .45, the mean is .51, the standard deviation is .28, the t value

was 2.152 the degree of freedom is equal to 99, and the p-value is .034, which is less than .05. Thus, the null hypothesis was rejected, and the alternative hypothesis was accepted. So, the results suggests that the general skills considered in this study are statistically important for the Libyan job market at .05 level.

Independent Samples T-Tests Results

In order to test the second main hypothesis which stats that there are no significant statistical difference between the means of respondents answers between academics and professionals regarding accounting graduate skills, independent samples t-test were used to test the difference between academics and professionals for each selected skills namely technical accounting skills, computer accounting skills, and general skills which represented the three sub-hypotheses under the second main hypothesis. Table (9) show the results of independent samples t-test to provide significant statistical evidence whether the important accounting graduate skills differ between academics and professionals.

Table (9) The Results of the Independent Samples T-Test

AGS	Adjective	No	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance Sig	t	df	Sig
ATS	Academic	37	.53	.30	.754	.668	98	.505
	Professional	63	.49	.28				
CAS	Academic	37	.50	.26	.464	-.108-	98	.914
	Professional	63	.51	.29				
GS	Academic	37	.49	.28	.929	-.517-	98	.606
	Professional	63	.52	.28				

Table (9) shows the results of the independent samples t-test to test for the three sub-hypotheses for the second main hypothesis. The first row is related to the first sub-hypothesis of the second main hypothesis which stated that that there are no significant statistical difference between the means of respondents answers between academics and professionals regarding accounting technical skills. From the table it can be seen that the results of independents samples t-test between academics and professionals regarding accounting technical skills variable denoted as ATS indicated that the number of academics are 37 and the number of professionals are 63, the mean of academics is .53 and the mean of professionals is .49, the standard deviation of academics is .30 and the standard deviation of professionals .28. The results of the Leven's test of equality of variance has shown a p-value equal to .754 which is less than .05, so the condition of variance between academics and professionals, was met and no important statistical differences were found. Regarding, the independent samples t-test between academics and professionals related to ATS, the results showed that the t value is .668, the degree of freedom is 98, and the p-value is .505, which is more than .05 level. Therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted and it is concluded that there are no significant statistical difference between the means of respondents answers between academics and professionals regarding accounting technical skills.

The second row is related to the second sub-hypothesis of the second main hypothesis which stated that that there are no significant statistical difference between the means of respondents answers between academics and professionals regarding computer accounting skills. From the table it can be seen that the results of independents samples t-test between academics and professionals regarding computer accounting skills variable denoted as CAS indicated that the number of academics are 37 and the number of professionals are 63, the mean of academics is .50 and the mean of professionals is .51, the standard deviation of academics is .26 and the standard deviation of professionals .29. The results of the Leven's test of equality of variance has

shown a p-value equal to .464 which is less than .05, so the condition of variance between academics and professionals, was met and no important statistical differences were found. Regarding, the independent samples t-test between academics and professionals related to CAS, the results showed that the t value is .-.108-, the degree of freedom is 98, and the p-value is .914, which is more than .05 level. Therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted and it is concluded that there are no significant statistical difference between the means of respondents answers between academics and professionals regarding computer accounting skills.

Finally, The third row is related to the third sub-hypothesis of the second main hypothesis which stated that that there are no significant statistical difference between the means of respondents answers between academics and professionals regarding general skills. From the table it can be seen that the results of independents samples t-test between academics and professionals regarding general skills variable denoted as GS indicated that the number of academics are 37 and the number of professionals are 63, the mean of academics is .49 and the mean of professionals is .52, the standard deviation of academics is .28 and the standard deviation of professionals .28. The results of the Leven's test of equality of variance has shown a p-value equal to .929 which is less than .05, so the condition of variance between academics and professionals, was met and no important statistical differences were found. Regarding, the independent samples t-test between academics and professionals related to GS, the results showed that the t value is .-.517-, the degree of freedom is 98, and the p-value is .606, which is more than .05 level. Therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted and it is concluded that there are no significant statistical difference between the means of respondents answers between academics and professionals regarding general skills.

DISCUSSION

In general the results suggests that all the examined skills in the three categories are important for the Libyan job market from the perspective of academics and professionals. However, it is clear from the results that accounting technical skills are the most important required skills and they have received highest ranks and statistically significant. This findings is consistent with previous studies (Alamari et al, 2021; Musbah, 2021). The findings also imply that accounting education quality is significant for academics and professionals because Ebaid (2023) confirmed that accounting education quality attributes such as class preparation and design, the class delivery, and the instructor's traits and personal characteristics would enhance accounting students' skills. The findings also revealed that there are no significant statistical differences between the opinions of academics and professionals regarding the importance of accounting technical skills for the Libyan job market and therefore both stakeholders have the same preferences of accounting technical skills. This finding is similar to Abas and Ali (2022) in which they find no statistical differences between the opinions of accounting graduates and employers on accounting technical skills .

Regarding the second category of skills which is computer accounting skills, the results provided evidence about the importance of computer accounting skills to the Libyan job market from the perspective of academics and professionals. This finding is consistent with (Alamari, 2021; Alarbi and Abufares, 2006; Musbah, 2021). The findings stresses the importance of accounting education quality attributes Ebaid (2023), and the importance of information technology skills for accounting students, which is in line with the calls of Aawal (2023) to improve students' information technology skills to conduct online accounting classes and the author found that online classes improve students' communication skills and promote their and promote their critical skills as well. The results also showed that there are no statistical significant differences between the perceptions of academics and professionals on the importance of computer accounting skills presented in this study. This finding is similar to Abas and Ali (2022) in which

they find no statistical differences between the opinions of accounting graduates and employers regarding computer accounting skills.

Finally, the results of the academics and professionals perceptions on general skills set of accounting graduates showed high ranks and in the same time are statistically important for the Libyan job market. This finding is consistent with (Abas and Ali, 2022; Alamari, 2021; Alarbi and Abufares, 2006; Musbah, 2021). The findings stress the important of accounting education quality attributes (Ebaid, 2023) and the importance of active leaning methodologies, entrepreneur, and internationalization because Llorente et al. (2023) these higher education techniques enhances general skills such as communication skills, problem solving skills, and critical thinking skills. The findings also revealed that there are no significant statistical differences between the opinions of academics and professionals regarding the importance of general skills for the Libyan job market and therefore both stakeholders have the same preferences of general skills. This finding is similar to Abas and Ali (2022) in which they find no statistical differences between the opinions of accounting graduates and employers on accounting graduates' general skills .

CONCLUSION

Although many studies have investigated accounting graduates' skills, to date there are no agreed set of accounting graduates' skills or how accounting graduates' skills should be measured. As a result, there are plenty of research which explored the skills of accounting graduates in different countries from different perspectives such as employers, students, faculty members, and professionals. However, the majority of these studies were conducted in advanced countries, and less consideration has been given to less-developed countries.

The main aims of this study were twofold. First, is to explore the important accounting technical skills, computer accounting skills, and general skills of accounting graduates to the Libyan job market from the perspectives of academics and professionals. The results regarding this objective revealed that these skills are important for the Libyan job market. However, the analysis indicated that more weight is still given to the accounting technical skills than the weights of computer skills and general skills. The second objective aimed at exploring whether there are important statistical differences between the views of academics and professionals with respect to accounting technical skills, computer accounting skills, general skills of the accounting graduates in Libya. The results showed that the views of academics and professionals are not different regarding the selected accounting graduate skills. This could mean that there is no gap between academics and professionals in the Libyan context and both recognize the importance accounting technical skills, computer accounting skills, and general skills.

The study contributes to the literature by identifying the most important accounting technical skills, computer accounting skills, and general skills of accounting university graduates for the Libyan job market from the point view of Libyan academics and professionals. The findings provided clear statement on these skills. This might be helpful for accounting faculties to focus on delivering these skills to accounting students in class, which would be aligned with the needs of academics and professionals regarding accounting graduates' skills which suits the Libyan job market. The findings also might be important for academic managers, such as deans and heads of departments and schools, in designing accounting programs and courses which include these skills and other aspects of higher education, such as accounting education quality attributes, online classes, and active learning methodologies.

However, there are several limitations associated with this study. First, is the small sample size as this study used only 100 questionnaire from Benghazi city for analysis. Future studies can examine larger sample size from different cities in Libya, which would generate more generalizable results. Second, the study on the important accounting graduate skills for the

Libyan job market, and not the actual skills possessed by accounting graduates. Therefore, future research can examine the actual skills possessed by accounting graduates in Libya and compare the results with the results of the current study and identify gaps between the important accounting graduate skills and the actual ones. Another limitation is that, the study did not take into consideration the important accounting graduate skills related to corporate social responsibility and sustainability as this issue is becoming very important in the corporate world and accounting research Robles-Elorza et al. (2023). So, future studies can investigate corporate social responsibility skills for accounting graduates. Also, the study did not consider the influence of gender issues as this line of future research is becoming very important in business and economics literature Diez-Martin et al. (2023). Consequently, future research can explore the influence of the gender of the academics and professionals on their perceptions on the important accounting graduate skills. Finally, this study did not consider the perspective of accounting students on the important accounting graduate skills. Future studies can include accounting students perceptions and compare them with the perceptions of academics and professionals.

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CRediT AUTHOR STATEMENT

All authors have contributed equally to all parts of the work.