

# **Impact of Soft Skills Training on Employability Readiness among Undergraduate Students**

Author: Ms. Anuradha Ramesh

Designation: Assistant Professor – Soft Skills & Professional Communication

College: ASM Nextgen Technical Campus

Email: anuradha81094@gmail.com

## **Abstract**

### **Preparedness for Work in Today's Job Market**

In today's job market, being "job ready" is a popular buzzword within the academic and business worlds, as well as within the student community itself. Of course, a strong foundation of academic and professional knowledge and skills is necessary, and it is true that employers are increasingly looking to hire new talent with a range of so-called "soft skills" such as communication, teamwork, problem-solving, adaptability, emotional intelligence, and professional common sense. However, there is a noticeable disconnect between what today's undergraduate student knows and what employers seek.

The current research work focuses on the effect of structured soft skill training on the readiness of employability among undergraduate students. A quantitative descriptive research design was adopted for data collection. A total of 150 undergraduate students from engineering, management, and arts streams were chosen for the study using a structured questionnaire. The study analyzes the effect of soft skill training on important parameters of employability, including communication skills, interpersonal skills, confidence, adaptability, teamwork, and interview readiness. The data was analyzed using statistical methods such as percentage analysis, comparison of mean scores, and correlation analysis.

Analysis of the results reveals that there is a significant rise in the readiness of employability among the students who have participated in the soft skills training program. Communication skills, confidence, and work behavior have demonstrated the highest level of improvement. The conclusion of this research study is that soft skills training is an important factor that helps to bridge the gap of employability among undergraduate students, and it is recommended that soft skills development programs be included in higher education.

**Keywords:** Soft Skills Training, Employability Readiness, Undergraduate Students, Communication Skills, Higher Education

## **1. Introduction**

The notion of employability has witnessed a most dramatic shift in the past few decades. Employability was conventionally linked to academic credentials, knowledge, understanding and excellent skills. But in the present scenario of a rapidly changing global economy, it is not sufficient to ensure successful employment outcomes. Generally, employers are looking for graduates who not only have technical skills but also possess a whole range of soft skills that help them perform effectively in a dynamic, collaborative, and multicultural workplace.

Soft skills also refer to employability or life skills and include proficiency in communication, working in teams, leadership, flexibility, problem-solving, time management, empathy, and maintenance of professional and ethical principles. These competencies would provide an individual with enhanced ease in interacting with others, in making better decisions, and coping with workplace challenges. With the flattening of structures in many organizations, increased project-based work, and cross-functional teams, there is an even greater need for employees possessing very strong soft skills.

The undergraduate is the most important workforce for the future. However, many studies and employer surveys have found that a great number of graduates are not appropriately ready for employability, even though their academic credentials are in good standing.

There seems to be an ever-present disconnect between what we learn in school and what we actually need in the work environment, and for colleges and universities, this seems to be an actual obstacle. It seems like new graduates are

having trouble nailing job interviews, as well as getting along with people and conduct in the work environment, and yeah, all of those factors together may really hurt their job chances.

And so, soft skills training enters the scene. It's been identified as a strategy for bridging the employability skills gap. Soft skills training is designed to gradually help students develop appropriately all the skills and abilities that matter most in working environments. Various exercises, role plays, group chats, presentations, mock interviews, and hands-on learning help students build confidence, become aware of themselves, and get ready for the job market.

The question of being ready to work in India is pressing due to the growth rate of higher education in various fields. It must be noted that even when students are equipped with knowledge in their own sphere of learning, basic skills also go a long way in determining their employability.

## **Study Purpose**

This study has the purpose of investigating the effect of formal soft skill training on students as they enter the labor market, while providing useful insights based on their actual situations and state of minds.

## **2. Objectives of the Study**

The objectives that the paper aims to achieve include:

**Firstly**, to determine the readiness of the students for employment upon their time as undergraduates;

**Secondly**, to determine the extent of the effect of training in soft skills as it relates to communication skills, interpersonal skills, and professional skills;

**Thirdly**, to determine the relationship between training in soft skills and employability;

**Fourthly**, to determine which of the soft skills have the greatest effect in improving employability;

And lastly, to make some recommendations.

## **3. Statement of the Problem**

Even though there are large investments in colleges, students still have shaky job prospects ahead of them, and often, employers complain that they are not as prepared as they should be for actual work, and this creates anxiety among the students and the educational institutions as well.

A major cause is also the lack of development in soft skills in colleges. In many cases, there is a high emphasis on theory and technical skills acquired, with much less focus given to soft skills. As a result, a student can be excellent in academic grades and tests, but still be uncertain and lack communication skills to look professional in their workplace.

Soft-skills training programs are springing up with greater frequency on college and university campuses, but hard evidence of whether they actually better prepare students for the job market is in short supply. Too many programs launch without any clear metric by which one might quantify their effects; as such, it often becomes impossible to tease out what works and what constitutes best practice.

This study fills this gap by examining the impact of a structured soft skills program on the employability readiness of undergraduates. Gaining an understanding of this relationship will be beneficial in designing the training that can adequately link academic learning to labor market realities.

## **4. Hypotheses**

\* In light of objectives of the research, following hypotheses were formulated:

\* **H1**: Soft skills training would have a significant impact on undergraduate students' employability.

\* **H2**: Learners will demonstrate improved communication skills as a result of participating in soft skills training.

\* **H3**: Soft skill training programs will have a positive effect on students' self-confidence and professionalism. H0: Soft skills training does not have a significant impact on employability readiness among undergraduate students.

## **5. Research Methodology**

### **5.1 Research Design**

This study employed a quantitative research design using a quantitative descriptive method involving a pre-test and post-test design. It will aim to monitor changes in the students' employability readiness after they are provided training on

soft skills.

## 5.2 Population and Sample

The target group consists of undergraduate students from engineering, management, and arts faculty departments. A total of 150 students was randomly selected for the study. Undergraduate students from various disciplines and academic levels have been included in the study.

## 5.3 Research Instrument

A structured questionnaire was designed to measure how prepared participants feel to enter the job market and also measure the development of soft skills. It is composed of four sections:

- Age, gender, major, and academic year of the students.

- **Communication Skills:** the ability to express oneself clearly, listen actively, communicate effectively, and use appropriate diction.

**Interpersonal and professional skills:** These include collaboration, teamwork, adaptability, emotional intelligence, and time management, amongst others.

- **Employability Readiness Indicators:** Readiness level in interviewing, self-confidence, resume presentation, and overall perception of job readiness.

The responses are recorded on a response scale ranging from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree.

## 5.4 Soft Skills Training Intervention

An eight-week soft skills training program was conducted, covering aspects such as communication, interpersonal skills, professional etiquette, interviews, and career preparedness. This was done in a variety of teaching methods, including interactive lectures, role plays, group discussions, presentations, etc.

## 5.5 Data Collection

Data gathering was carried out in two stages: prior to training (pre-test) and after training (post-test). Here, participation was purely voluntary with a high level of confidentiality guaranteed.

## 5.6 :Data Analysis Techniques

The data were analyzed using:

- Percentage Analysis
- Comparison of Mean Scores
- Correlation Analysis These methods enabled an objective evaluation of the impact of soft skills training on employability readiness.

## 6. Analysis and Discussion

### 6.1 Baseline Employability Readiness

From the general evaluation, it was evident that most students were clustered around moderate to low employability. However, two issues prominent in the minds of the students were communication skills and interviews. A majority of the students felt low confidence at work and felt that they had not been exposed enough to a working environment.

### 6.2 Impact of Soft Skills Training

The post-test results showed there had been an increase in all the indicators for student employability. The most enhanced were for communicating, followed by confidence, working in groups, and professional conduct. The students spoke clearly, made better presentations, and were more comfortable when required to work in groups.

### 6.3 Link Between Soft Skills Training and Readiness for Employment

The data also shows there is a positive and specific relationship between the students who actively took part in soft skills training and their readiness and confidence in their professional lives.

## 6.4 What the Findings Mean

Again, our findings are supported by what other studies have to say, meaning that soft skills can play a role in employability. During training, students are able to gain some experience, get some feedback, and reflect on themselves, and this is crucial for developing their soft skills. The research appended herein was aimed at supporting the fact that the gap can be closed using soft skills training for undergraduates.

## 7. Conclusion

The research has shown that training in soft skills significantly impacts students' readiness to enter the job market. Training in this area increases students' readiness to enter job markets; therefore, it emphasizes the need for educational systems to have colleges and universities at their core. Soft skill training increases students' preparedness to enter job

markets by focusing on communication, interaction, confidence, and professionalism, among other aspects.

## **8. Recommendations**

1. Based on these findings from the study, the following are suggestions that appear:
2. Soft skills training should be incorporated into undergraduate programs at colleges and universities.
3. It should also ensure that the development of soft skills reflects the needs of industries and enhances graduate employability.
4. Practice-oriented methods of learning should be implemented, such as role-playing and mock interviews.
5. - Soft skills are further bolstered when faculties within an institution are oriented and trained to be more instructive in teaching them.
6. It is important that the assessment of the employability skills be ongoing to show the students' progress.

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