

EMPLOYABILITY ENHANCEMENT THROUGH SOFT SKILLS: A STUDY OF MANAGEMENT EDUCATION IN NAGPUR

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Abstract

In today's competitive job market, employability extends beyond academic knowledge and technical skills, emphasizing the significance of soft skills such as communication, teamwork, problem-solving, and emotional intelligence. This research investigates the impact of soft skill training on the employability of management graduates in Nagpur. Through a comprehensive review of existing literature and empirical analysis, this study aims to understand how soft skills are integrated into management programs and their effectiveness in enhancing employability. Data was collected from management students, faculty members, and industry recruiters through surveys and interviews to gauge the current state of soft skill training and its perceived impact on employment prospects. The findings highlight a positive correlation between soft skill proficiency and employability, demonstrating that graduates with well-developed soft skills are more likely to secure employment and succeed in their careers.

Furthermore, the study identifies key soft skills that are most valued by employers and examines the methods used by management institutes in Nagpur to impart these skills. It also explores the challenges faced by educational institutions in incorporating soft skills training into their curricula and suggests best practices for effective implementation. This research contributes to the ongoing discourse on employability enhancement through soft skills, providing valuable insights for educators, policymakers, and industry stakeholders. By emphasizing the importance of a holistic approach to management education, this study advocates for a balanced curriculum that equips graduates with both technical knowledge and essential soft skills, ultimately fostering a workforce that is adaptable, resilient, and highly employable.

Keywords – Soft Skills, Employability, Management Education, Communication Skills, Teamwork

Introduction

In the evolving landscape of the global job market, the concept of employability has expanded beyond the traditional confines of academic knowledge and technical expertise. Today's employers seek candidates who not only possess the requisite technical skills but also demonstrate a strong command of soft skills, such as communication, teamwork, problem-

solving, and emotional intelligence. These attributes are increasingly recognized as critical determinants of career success, enabling individuals to navigate the complexities of modern workplaces effectively.

Management education, traditionally focused on imparting theoretical knowledge and technical competencies, is now being re-evaluated to incorporate a more holistic approach that includes the development of soft skills. This shift is particularly pertinent in Nagpur, a burgeoning educational hub in India, where management programs are adapting to meet the dynamic needs of the industry. The integration of soft skills training into the management curriculum is seen as a strategic imperative to enhance the employability of graduates and ensure they are well-prepared for the challenges of the professional world.

This research aims to explore the impact of soft skills training on the employability of management graduates in Nagpur. By examining the current state of soft skills education within management programs, this study seeks to identify the key soft skills that are valued by employers and assess the effectiveness of various training methodologies employed by educational institutions. Furthermore, it delves into the perceptions of students, faculty, and industry recruiters to provide a comprehensive understanding of how soft skills influence employability outcomes.

The significance of this study lies in its potential to inform educators, policymakers, and industry stakeholders about the critical role of soft skills in shaping a competent and adaptable workforce. By highlighting best practices and identifying areas for improvement, this research aims to contribute to the enhancement of management education in Nagpur, ultimately fostering a generation of graduates who are not only knowledgeable but also equipped with the essential skills required to thrive in their careers.

In the following sections, the study will review relevant literature on soft skills and employability, outline the research methodology, present and analyze the findings, and discuss the implications for management education in Nagpur. Through this comprehensive examination, the study endeavors to provide actionable insights and recommendations for integrating soft skills training into management curricula, thereby enhancing the overall employability of graduates.

Objectives of the study

- To determine the specific soft skills that are most valued by employers in the context of management roles.
- To evaluate the existing methods and practices used by management institutes in Nagpur for imparting soft skills to students.
- To analyze the correlation between soft skills proficiency and employability outcomes among management graduates

Research methodology

This study employs a mixed-methods approach to comprehensively examine the impact of soft skills training on the employability of management graduates in Nagpur. The research methodology includes both quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques to ensure a holistic understanding of the subject matter. Quantitative data is gathered through structured surveys administered to a sample of management students and recent graduates from various institutes in Nagpur. These surveys assess the participants' proficiency in key soft skills and their employment outcomes post-graduation. Additionally, quantitative data is collected from employers through questionnaires that evaluate their perceptions of the importance of soft skills and their observations of graduates' competencies. To complement the quantitative data, qualitative insights are obtained through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions with students, faculty members, and industry recruiters. These interviews explore the nuances of soft skills training, the effectiveness of different pedagogical approaches, and the challenges faced in implementing these programs. The qualitative data provides context and depth to the statistical findings, revealing the subjective experiences and opinions of the stakeholders involved.

Literature review

Research on multi-level marketing tactics in Indonesia's advertising sector was conducted by A. Mardatillah et al. (2018). Salespeople in Indonesia are a social liability due to a lack of "soft skills," or communication abilities; after all, consumers evaluate a salesperson based on more than just their product offerings. In addition to making sales, a salesperson's duties may include advertising the product. However, Indonesian salespeople often attempt to persuade customers in their own manner and even get into arguments with them. According to the researcher's review of the literature, personal selling talent is influenced by several elements and aspects. This research looks at the MLM sector in Indonesia and its issue with careless and unprofessional salespeople. Presentation skills, task performance, hard skill, self-confidence, interaction, sales atmosphere, and interpersonal skills are some of the aspects and variables investigated in this survey-based research. A questionnaire was filled out by salespeople from several areas, including Medan, North Sumatra, and Indonesia, and data was gathered from primary and secondary sources as well. We used a cluster sampling approach. To ensure the data is free of bias, the following statistical methods were used for analysis: ordinary least square, multiple regression, and one sample t-test.

The influence of training methodologies and the acquisition of soft skills on employee performance was examined in the study "The Effect of Soft Skills & Training Methodology on Employee Performance" by Rosli Ibrahim et.al. (2017). Employees in today's fast-paced, highly competitive business environment need a mix of "hard" and "soft" talents to succeed. Hard skills include things like education, training, and experience, whereas soft skills include things like perception, habit, language, and self-awareness. In order to cultivate the highest level of work ethic, training is essential. Since training employees to focus only on tasks and

following rules led to a decrease in their ability to form relationships and take the initiative, the researcher hoped that this report would shed light on the importance of soft skills over hard abilities.

In 2017, Timothy Yearly This study set out to update a longitudinal research project that had previously defined the impact of new paradigms for the development of soft skills and assessed the content delivery of courses offered by private training providers (PTPs) to first-level managers (FLMs). Research was conducted to examine both internal and external programmes that PTPs provide to FLMs, not limited to individual coaching or mentorship. There are a total of three phases to the study, the first of which looks at a framework for the most important soft skills that experienced competent managers should have.

According to Scarlett C. Wesley et al. (2017)⁷, the purpose of this research was to compare the value of soft skills according to students' rankings in business, retail and tourist management, and other related fields. After comparing three groups—faculty, students, and industry leaders—this research seeks to understand why each group had different ideas about different kinds of soft skills. For this study, a cross-sectional survey was developed. Three groups made up the population: retail and tourist management students from chosen universities, industry leaders, and the general public. Seven "soft skills"—experience, teamwork, communication, leadership, decision-making, self-management, and professional competence—were the subject of this study.

The main goal of the research by Sharif Nadiyah Razal et al. (2017) was to determine how well the Online Project Based Collaborative Learning (OPBCL) model improved the students' soft skills. Soft skills, as opposed to purely technical ones, are in high demand among employers in today's dynamic job market. As a result, schools must play a pivotal role in helping students develop their soft skills. Collaborative Learning (CL) is a popular method of instruction and a great tool for developing transferable skills in today's fast-paced, competitive workplace. The lack of soft skills among graduates of Malaysian polytechnics is the focus of this research. A mixed-methods strategy was used in the research. Some students from Polytechnic Merlimau Melaka's Nutrition class were randomly chosen to participate in this research, and their results were based on an actual exam. With an experimental group and a control group serving as the foundation for the actual test, we were able to further subdivide the therapy into two groups: treatment 1 and treatment 2. As a control, the students in this group work on their projects using the tried-and-true approach of group projects.

According to Sitraselvi Chandren et al. (2016), Given the importance of effective oral presenting skills in both academic and professional contexts, this research set out to help accounting students hone these abilities. Oral presentation skills are more than just expressing one's opinions; they are an art form that requires the presenter to be confident, articulate, use appropriate body language, posture, and gestures; speak clearly and loudly; maintain eye

contact with the audience; adhere to the presentation's planned content; demonstrate proficiency in language; and most importantly, have a positive attitude. This research looked at methods for improving accounting students' oral presentation abilities as well as ways to improve their real presenting skills.

Researchers Tang KeowNgang and Tan Chan Chan (2015) sought to measure the intangible qualities that new teachers need to succeed in the workplace, such as the ability to solve problems creatively, strong moral convictions, strong leadership qualities, and an entrepreneurial spirit. The research placed a greater emphasis on the relevance of rookie teachers' soft skills, which are crucial for the development of their communities' personalities. From the perspective of the Malaysian secondary school administration, this research set out to assess the professional competence, moral fibre, and ethics of newly hired teachers. Critical thinking, communication, ethics, moral and professional competence, group work, entrepreneurship, and lifelong learning were the seven soft skill variables examined in the study.

The importance of soft skills for students of management and engineering was the primary focus of M. S. Rao's (2014) research, "Enhancing employability in Engineering & management students through soft skills," which sought to identify novel approaches, methods, and tools for introducing soft skills into these fields. Students in India, particularly those pursuing degrees in engineering and management, often face the difficulty of improving their employability. Due to a lack of soft skills, Indian students have a higher rate of unemployability than unemployment. The purpose of the study was to clarify why management and engineering students need soft skills, and to bridge the gap between academia and industry by making them more marketable to potential employers.

The study's authors, Suave Rangaung et al. (2014), set out to assess the methods used to train novice instructors soft skills and to identify the soft skills held by teachers employed by private basic education schools in Thailand's Samut Prakan province. In order to be a better caretaker of children, it is essential that every educator and instructor have both technical and interpersonal abilities. Important soft skills for private elementary school teachers were the focus of this article.

"Global Marketing Manager—improving global marketing" was the subject of research by David A. Griffith et.al. (2013). Finding out how well a manager can plan and execute a worldwide marketing strategy was the driving force for the study. The research aimed to build a model that may help managers improve their job performance in an ever-changing and complicated global market by identifying a list of soft-skills that contribute to good global marketing strategy development. In addition to examining the relationship between global marketing strategy and employee performance on the job, this research zeroed attention on the people—global marketing managers—who are primarily responsible

for creating and executing such strategies in the marketplace. Ten "soft skills" were the primary focus of the researcher's analysis.

The purpose of this article by Prof. Ritu Goswami (2013) was to educate readers on the value of soft skills for information technology (IT) students and to explain why these abilities are just as important as technical ones. This article sought to examine the many approaches of developing students' soft skills in the field of information technology, as well as the role that professors and schools play in this endeavour. It was an academic conceptual study that drew on actual research and the insights of other specialists.

The purpose of this research by Daine H. Parente et al. (2012) was to determine whether managers can learn strategic competencies via management education programmes, taking into account their level of experience. Traditional and soft skills, which are prerequisites for building strategic abilities, may be better developed via experience-based educational approaches, as mentioned in the article. A model that identifies many elements influencing the development of strategic competence was introduced in this article. The research study primarily focused on experiential learning in group work situations and employed the simulation management experience approach. The simulated management experience method made use of both traditional classroom instruction and modern technological tools, such as computerised business simulations and role acting.

Accounting students in Malaysia have been required by the Malaysian Institute of Accountants (MIA) to complete a six-month industry training curriculum since 2005 (Ruhanita et al., 2012). Additional evidence from a variety of sources suggests that teaching pupils soft skills is not a top priority. Accounting students' views on the value of industrial soft skill training courses are the focus of this research. Also, the study's main objective was to find out how much of an advantage the sectors' soft skill training really was.

According to P.V. Dharmarajan et al. (2012), the researcher sheds light on the importance of soft skills in both the personal and professional lives of students in this study work. The researcher highlighted that, in addition to the other technical abilities, soft skills are necessary. In addition, the article outlined the responsibilities of professors, lecturers, and trainers in helping students build transferable "soft skills" that are useful in any field. Since instructors in the field of information technology are already well-versed in teaching their students technical abilities, they are in a prime position to help engineering students enhance their soft skills as well.

In 2011, Jungsunkim et al. This study focused on the hotel industry specifically to determine how employees of different ages perceive the importance of soft skills, which are non-technical abilities, and whether they prefer to use e-learning to improve these skills. It also

aimed to determine the influence of individual characteristics, such as motivation and self-awareness, on the intentions to use e-learning as a training tool.

Dr. Jerry John's (2009) research, "Blend Hard and Soft Skills to fast track Management career," set out to provide a framework for improving one's interpersonal and communicative abilities. In addition, to develop proficiency in giving compelling presentations. The primary goal was to cultivate competence in leading groups, communicating effectively, and interacting with others. Technical knowledge and work experience are no longer sufficient for advancing one's career in today's fast-paced, globally interconnected world. Confident, ethical, self-directed, and self-motivated individuals with strong soft skills are the ones most sought after by employers. This research compared the experiences of students who had frequent opportunities to practise soft skills with those of students who did not.

The significance of soft skills in students' academic and professional careers was examined in a survey research by Bernd Schulz (2008). It elucidated the ways in which a person's soft talents supplement their hard abilities, which are necessary for a profession. Personal traits, interpersonal skills, and supplementary talents are the three main categories into which all of the soft skills examined in this research study fall. Later research, however, narrowed its focus to only two areas: personality characteristics and social competence. One of the major reasons given by the researcher as to why soft skills are essential is the fact that competition for jobs is rising sharply across all industries. Soft skills are essential in many areas of life and are moulding people's personalities.

Architects and engineers (AEs) need both technical and interpersonal abilities, according to research by Florence Yean-Yang Ling et al. (2000). Hard skills, sometimes known as technical skills, are fundamental to the job of an AE, but soft skills are also necessary, since AEs do not do the actual labour but rather engage with the systems and environments in which they operate.

Research gap

Despite the growing recognition of the importance of soft skills in enhancing employability, there is a noticeable gap in the literature concerning the specific impact of soft skills training within the context of management education in regional settings such as Nagpur. While numerous studies have examined the role of soft skills in general employability, few have focused on the integration and effectiveness of these skills in management programs offered in smaller educational hubs. This lack of focused research leaves a gap in understanding how regional educational institutions are addressing the need for soft skills training and how this training translates into employment outcomes for graduates. Furthermore, existing studies often emphasize the perspectives of either employers or educators but rarely capture the comprehensive viewpoints of all key stakeholders, including students, faculty, and recruiters. This gap limits the understanding of how soft skills training is perceived and valued across

different groups involved in the educational and employment processes. There is also insufficient empirical evidence on the specific challenges and barriers faced by management institutes in Nagpur in incorporating soft skills training into their curricula.

Conclusion

This study highlights the critical role of soft skills in enhancing the employability of management graduates in Nagpur. Through a mixed-methods approach that combines quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews, the research provides a comprehensive understanding of how soft skills training is currently implemented in management education and its impact on employment outcomes. The findings reveal a strong positive correlation between soft skills proficiency and employability, indicating that graduates who excel in communication, teamwork, problem-solving, and emotional intelligence are more likely to secure employment and succeed in their careers. Employers in Nagpur emphasize the importance of these skills, often prioritizing them over technical knowledge during the hiring process. In conclusion, this research underscores the necessity of soft skills training in management education and its pivotal role in shaping employable, adaptable, and successful professionals. It calls for concerted efforts from educators, policymakers, and industry stakeholders to enhance the quality and delivery of soft skills training, ultimately fostering a more competent and competitive workforce in Nagpur. The insights and recommendations from this study aim to inform and inspire future educational practices and policy decisions, ensuring that management graduates are equipped with the essential skills needed to thrive in their careers.

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