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## “A STUDY TO ANALYZE THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SOFT SKILLS TRAINING AND EMPLOYABILITY COMPETENCY IN HIGHER EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS (HEI)”

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### ABSTRACT

*Management students are reluctant to take up behavioral courses, especially the ones relating to soft skills. There is cynicism in registering for such courses in higher educational institutions (HEI). This has resulted in lack of awareness about soft skills potential. However, institutions are educating students to take up such courses to build their careers. Learning throughout life time enhances employability and this applies to the students, universities, corporate business houses who can collate their respective efforts towards the factor of employability. In India, we are witnessing a thorough skill gap worsened by non-availability of quality education. This is at a time when India's service driven economy is moving at a pace unprecedented over the past many years. The main purpose of this study was to analyze the relationship between Soft skills training and Employability Competency and understand Students perception about soft skills training provided in B – schools(HEI). Karl Pearson's Correlation test was applied to find out the relationship between Soft skills training and Employability Competency.*

**Key words:** HEI, Behavioral Courses, Skill Gap, Soft Skills Training, Employability Competency, Karl Pearson's Correlation test

## INTRODUCTION

The primary role of soft skills training is to enhance and improve performance levels of a student based on present and expected future needs of industry- particularly the corporate world. This is done to ensure there is more scope in improving employability by increasing productivity per employee, cost savings, quality control and improvisation of overall work force. It is through the process of training and development that organizations yield better results. Gradually, the focus of academic and industry research has moved into the zone of understanding the training needs of employees. Moreover, employers are also insisting on presence of soft skills in future employable candidates and improving the soft skills of present employees. Hence, if students are able to understand the importance of soft skills, it will help them to become employable. Management students are reluctant to take up behavioral courses, especially the ones relating to soft skills. There is cynicism in registering for such courses. This has resulted in lack of awareness about soft skills potential. However, higher educational institutions (HEI) are educating students to take up such courses to build their careers.

A study was undertaken to understand B-school students' perspective about soft skills training provided by educational institutions and employability among the student community. The MBA students under Bangalore University, Vishveshvariah Technological University and Autonomous universities were the population for this study. Stratified Random Sampling method was used for selecting the sample for the study. A sample of 3 Universities i.e. Bangalore University, Vishveshvariah Technological University and Autonomous universities with 1193 B-School Students with reference to Bangalore was taken as a representative for conducting the study. Karl Pearson's Correlation test was applied to find out the relationship between Soft skills training and Employability Competency.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Literature to be reviewed encompasses all the material available in this field of study. For this study various sources such as books, articles, journals, research papers, e-resources, newspapers and magazines were reviewed.

- ***Sally S. Fadhil, Ramlee Ismail & Alhamzah Alnoor (2021)*** investigated the impact of soft skills on graduates' employability in the technology industry in Malaysia. Delphi analysis was performed to identify the critical soft skills required by the technology industry sector. The preliminary study identified ten critical soft skills in order to develop a conceptual model of their impact on employability and regression analysis was performed to validate the conceptual model. The findings

demonstrated the impact of critical soft skills on employability in Malaysia's technology industry sector.

- **Debarshi Ghosh (2017)** in his paper highlighted the importance of soft skills in the current environment and also on the bottlenecks faced during soft skills training. He observed that soft skills aid in improving an individual's capacity to perform effectively in a global corporate environment and ensuring the successful application of knowledge in practise. Soft skills play a critical role in increasing job seekers' employability thus indicating a relation between the two.
- **Orlando Pereira (2013)** compared graduates' opinion on university acquired soft skills and those which are actually applied in organizational context and indicated that university will have to play a more significant role instead of settling to producing and spreading specific and instrumental skills. It is imperative to integrate soft skills with the academic curriculum, for; they are a strategic component in qualifying individuals and companies.
- **Ilana Lavy & Aharon Yadin (2013)** conducted a study which revealed that, compared to task and technical skills, human interactions are the most required. It requires excellent communication, presentation skills and teamwork. The I.T. professional should possess good interpersonal and team based qualifications. Even the modern agile development methodologies stress the importance of human interaction. The bottom line is that academic institutions should embrace this change and modify the learning outcomes to include developing and enhancing the soft skills addressed in this study to enhance employability.
- **Chang Peng Kee et al. (2012)** analyzed the correlation between the students' soft skills and future employability in Malaysia. It was observed that it was more effective to increase soft skills through co-curricular activities rather than formal education. Apart from the dynamic and relevant curriculum and pedagogy introduced to the students, several soft skills need to be imparted differently for better results. This may include team discussion and participation in community activities and services and sports to foster the development of leadership, teamwork and other personal and interpersonal qualities. Soft skills can be the key measurement for a graduate's marketability in the job market indicating positive correlation between both the variables.

## OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To analyze the relationship between Soft skills training and Employability Competency in HEI.
- To understand Students perception about soft skills training provided in HEI.

## ANALYSIS

### Correlation between the Study Variables

Table 1

#### Correlation between the Independent Variables (Soft Skills Training) and Impact on Employability Competency

Independent Variables (Soft Skills Training)	Impact on Employability Competency
Importance of personal and methodological skills for employability	.314**
Importance of social skills for employability	.237**
Personal and methodological skills provided in the college	.269**
Social skills provided in the college	.264**
Trainer Evaluation	.585**
Soft skills content and facilities	.532**
Institutional planning of soft skills	.427**

**\*\*.** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Karl Pearson's Correlation was applied to find out the relationship between importance of personal, methodological skills for employability, importance of social skills for employability, personal and methodological skills provided in college, social skills provided in college, trainer evaluation, soft skills content, facilities, institutional planning of soft skills and impact on employability competency.

To identify the relationships, the following null hypotheses are formulated:

**Ho1:** “There is no significant relationship between importance of personal, methodological skills for employability and impact on employability competency”.

From the table, we can interpret that there exists a positive correlation between importance of personal, methodological skills for employability and impact on employability competency ( $r = 0.314$ ). Thus, we reject the null hypothesis and accept alternative hypothesis. Therefore, it can be inferred that there exists a positive correlation between importance of personal, methodological skills for employability and impact on employability competency.

**Ho2:** “There is no significant relationship between importance of social skills for employability and impact on employability competency”.

From the table, we can interpret that there exists a positive correlation between importance of social skills for employability and impact on employability competency ( $r = 0.237$ ). Thus, we reject the null hypothesis and accept alternative hypothesis. Therefore, it can be inferred that there exists a positive correlation between importance of social skills for employability and impact on employability competency.

**Ho3:** “There is no significant relationship between personal, methodological skills provided in college and impact on employability competency”.

From the table, we can interpret that there exists a positive correlation between personal, methodological skills provided in college and impact on employability competency ( $r = 0.269$ ). Thus, we reject the null hypothesis and accept alternative hypothesis. Therefore, it can be inferred that there exists a positive correlation between personal, methodological skills provided in college and impact on employability competency.

**Ho4:** “There is no significant relationship between social skills provided in college and impact on employability competency”.

From the table, we can interpret that there exists a positive correlation between social skills provided in college and impact on employability competency ( $r = 0.264$ ). Thus, we reject the null hypothesis and accept alternative hypothesis. Therefore, it can be inferred that there exists a positive correlation between social skills provided in college and impact on employability competency.

**Ho5:** “There is no significant relationship between trainer evaluation and impact on employability competency”.

From the table, we can interpret that there exists a positive correlation between trainer evaluation and impact on employability competency ( $r = 0.585$ ). Thus, we reject the null hypothesis and accept alternative hypothesis. Therefore, it can be inferred that there exists a positive correlation between trainer evaluation and impact on employability competency.

**Ho6:** “There is no significant relationship between soft skills content, facilities and impact on employability competency”.

From the table, we can interpret that there exists a positive correlation between soft skills content, facilities and impact on employability competency ( $r = 0.532$ ). Thus, we reject the null hypothesis and accept alternative hypothesis. Therefore, it can be inferred that there exists a positive correlation between soft skills content, facilities and impact on employability competency.

**Ho7:** “There is no significant relationship between institutional planning of soft skills and impact on employability competency”.

From the table, we can interpret that there exists a positive correlation between institutional planning of soft skills and impact on employability competency ( $r = 0.427$ ). Thus, we reject the null hypothesis and accept alternative hypothesis. Therefore, it can be inferred that there exists a positive correlation between institutional planning of soft skills and impact on employability competency.

## DISCUSSION

The analysis of correlation between the study variables (importance of personal and methodological skills for employability, importance of social skills for employability, personal and methodological skills provided in college, social skills provided in college, impact on employability competency, trainer evaluation, soft skills content, facilities and institutional planning of soft skills) revealed that positive correlation exists between the study variables from the perspective of students. While looking at the results from an in-depth perspective, the independent variables considered in the study namely social skills provided in college, institutional planning of soft skills, soft skills content, facilities and trainer evaluation were found to have significant positive relationship with the dependent variable employability competency. Hence correlation measures help to understand the interdependence among the variables with respect to magnitude and direction.



## CONCLUSION

Many studies of the past have thrown the spotlight on the effectiveness of management education where they meet employer expectations. Quality management education must result in application of learning at institutions to real life challenges and problems. It must be noted that students are prepared to work in industries and their future converges with industry's success. When institutions fail to showcase relevance to these students, they are not just deceiving students but are also not solving the problems of industry. There is a need to teach soft skills in B -schools apart from imparting management education to students. The development of soft skills becomes relevant to improvise on the employability of graduates and help them fight intense competition to secure jobs. The soft skills a student gains during his formal education will equip him \ her to excel in professional and personal life. The employability guidelines practiced currently takes into account only imparting of hard skills and fail to provide much on soft skills. The system will need to make students learn and unlearn. Employability can be effective only when there is a positive correlation between the various segments like student community, employers and academicians and it is not vested with only one segment. Based on the study results, it was found that a positive correlation exists between soft skills training and employability competency.

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