



Employability Skills among Students of Government Aided and Self Financing Courses

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Abstract

The present study sought to assess the levels of employability skills of students of Government Aided and Self Financing Courses. The study included a sample of 120 MBA students currently pursuing their final year program, 60 each undergoing government aided course and self-financing course respectively. An Employability Skills Checklist was administered through which it was observed that the students of regular and self-financing courses differed significantly ($P < 0.05$) in their employability skills. The study also showed statistically significant relationships among the dimensions of employability skills. The paper provides details on the levels of employability skills of the respondents besides discussing the significant relationships and differences with regard to employability skills of the subjects.

Key Words: Employability Skills, College Students, Government Aided (regular) Courses, Self-financing Courses, Gender

Introduction

India will be one of the youngest countries on the globe by 2030 with about 140 million youth in the college-going age group, wherein one out of four graduates in the entire world will be from a higher educational institutions of India (FICCI Higher Education Summit 2013). India has pioneered in the educational domain and has in the recent years drastically increased the rates of enrolment in higher education besides improving the quality of educational outcomes.

The Government of India has invested considerably for the youth development initiatives including higher education, skilling the youth, improving healthcare systems and service deliveries, providing employment and promoting entrepreneurship through various flagship schemes. The Union Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports in India is the custodian of youth development in the nation among other important ministries providing such services to the entire nation. Recognising the contemporary needs and requirement of the youth of the country, the Government of India has swotted the existing National Youth Policy (NYP) and is poised to bring the revised National Youth Policy which includes key priority areas such as education, employment and entrepreneurship to harness the potential of youth in the country and to enhance the GDP of the country.

During this new normal of the post COVID-19 pandemic, India is resurging with optimal forte in all spheres of development, is expected to emerge as a superpower with its tremendous human capital which is known for diligence and industriousness. It is predicted that India will gradually develop economically and this trajectory will place India as the world's third largest economy by 2030, surpassing the UK in 2025, Germany in 2027 and Japan in 2030 (CEBR, 2020). For this to become reality, the youth need to be engaged productively in economic pursuits. There seems to be equilibrium on the demand and supply for

employment. However, it is the employability skills that determine the match between the right candidate and right job which forms the foremost concern of the employers.

Rationale

With the system of education being continually being revamped to raise the standards and quality of teaching-learning processes, the Government of India has introduced the New Education Policy, 2020 towards achieving this goal. While undertaking these efforts, it is highly imperative to take into consideration the resultant of education, particularly, higher education which paves the way for a seeking a gainful employment or to pursue a sustainable career. In order to enter into the world of work, employability skills are of paramount importance for the youth. Having this educational refurbishment on one side, access and affordability to higher education is still a major concern among youth with economic situation being the main determinant. Further, studying in a self-financing institution is yet another attraction for today's youth due to the emerging branding of such institutions including variety of facilities provided to those candidates enrolled in those programs. The youngsters also consider it a pride to pursue education in top brand self-financing institutions. With this milieu, it was felt to undertake a study that would reveal the levels of employability skills possessed by the students of regular and self-financing courses which is the ultimate purpose of higher education. Therefore, this study was conducted to assess the levels of employability among the students pursuing post-graduation degrees in regular and self-financing courses and to explore if there were any significant differences in their degree of employability skills.

Statement of the Problem

The present study seeks to assess the levels of employability skills of the students pursuing regular and self-financing courses in Chennai and probes to explore whether employability skills of these two categories of youth differ significantly?

Objective of the Study

The present study was undertaken with the following objectives:

- To assess the levels of employability skills of students undergoing studies in regular and self-financing courses
- To study the differences in employability skills among the students pursuing regular and self-financing courses
- To study the relationship among the dimensions of employability skills

Research Design

The present study adopted an exploratory research design.

Hypotheses:

H₀ 1: There will be no significant difference among the students of regular and self-financing courses with regard to their employability skills

H₀ 2: There will be no significant gender differences in employability skills among the students of regular and self-financing courses

H₀ 3: There will be no significant relationship among the dimensions of employability skills

Operational Definitions

Employability Skills

Employability refer to the level of readiness of an individual to take up a work which also includes possession of the requisite skills, knowledge, attitudes and an understanding about work environments in an organization that makes them to be productive and enables achieving the organizational goals.

Sample

The subjects included for the purpose of conducting the present study comprised of students pursuing final year Master's Degree Programme in Business Administration in regular (government aided) and self-financing courses in Chennai.

Size and Source of Sample

The total number of respondents included for the study constituted 120 students who were presently pursuing final year MBA programmes in six different colleges Chennai City (three institutions which are government aided (regular) and three institutions which are self-financing respectively). The sample therefore consisted of 60 respondents correspondingly each from those who were pursuing government aided (regular) courses and self-financing courses. Among the 20 respondents from each of the six higher educational institutions, equal gender representation was provided i.e., ten male and female students were included from each institution.

Sampling Technique Adopted

For selection of respondents to conduct this study, stratified random sampling method was adopted.

Tool for Data Collection

For collection of data, an Employability Skills Checklist was developed by the investigators.

Employability Skills Checklist Development

The Employability Skills Checklist was developed based on the framework suggested by various national and international organisations such as the Forbes, World Economic Forum, Wheebox etc. The dimensions suggested by these organisations were reviewed and the factors that were appropriate to the Indian context were delineated. The Checklist initially prepared was circulated among academicians and practitioners and a few youth to assess the appropriateness of content, comprehension of items and face validity. Thereafter, the draft Checklist was finalised with 56 items. This was once again circulated among 10 Industry Experts and Academicians based on the Delpi Method (Rescher, 1998). Based on this try-out, the items of the Checklist were further modified and were finalized.

Description of Employability Skills Checklist

The Employability Skills Checklist administered for data collection had a total of 54 items with six items under each of the nine dimensions viz., Communication, Creative Thinking, Job Seeking Skills, Leadership, Planning, Problem Solving, Self-Management, Team Work and Time Management.

Scoring

Each test item was provided a provision to record the response of the respondent by checking one option viz., always, often, sometimes, rarely and never. The total score for dimension ranged between 0 to 24 with 0 as a minimum score and 4 as the maximum score for an item. For negatively phrased item, reverse scoring was done. For each dimension, a score up to 6 was considered as low in that skill, 7 to 12 as moderate, 13 to 17 as high and 18 to 24 was regarded as very high in a particular employability skill. All the dimension scores were added to obtain a comprehensive Employability Skills score. Scores up to 54 were placed in the low employability skills category, scores between 55 to 108 were regarded as moderate level, scores in the range of 109 to 162 were attributed to high employability skills and the scores between 163 to 216 were recognized as very high employability skills.

Interpretation

Higher the score indicated in a dimension indicated higher skill in each of the nine domains of employability skills. For the Employability Skills Score, all the dimension scores were added together to get a global score.

Data Collection

For the purpose of the collecting the data, the researchers obtained the list of students from each of the management faculty of six institutions in Chennai (three government-aided and three self-financing institutions) and stratified the students based on gender and adopted simple random method for selection of twenty students in one institution (with 10 male and female students respectively). The subjects selected were contacted through e-mail who consented to participate in the study voluntarily. The Employability Checklist was converted into a Google Form and was circulated to the participants for submitting their responses. Due confidentiality was maintained during the entire process.

Data analysis

The data thus emerged through the above process was scored and classified for statistical treatment.

Descriptive statistical methods were employed to describe the levels of employability skills of the respondents besides inferential statistical techniques such as t-test to study the statistical difference between regular and self-financing students including their gender were computed. Pearson's Product Moment Correlation was calculated to study the significant relationships among the dimensions of Employability Skills.

Results

The following sections present the results of the present study.

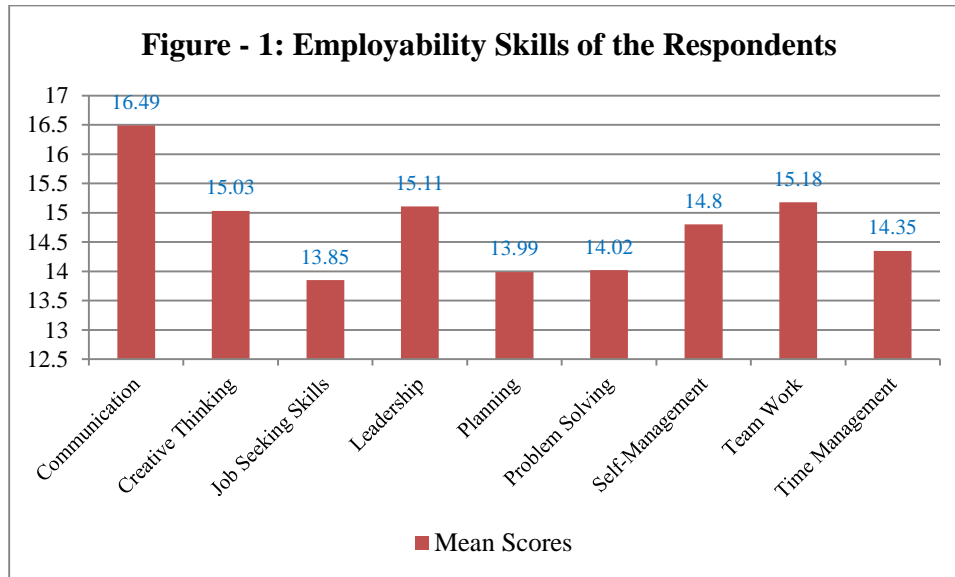
1. Employability Skills of the Respondents

Based on the data collected, it was observed that the mean Employability Skills Score of all the respondents was

Table – 1 Employability skills of the Respondent (Total and Dimension-wise)

Dimension	No. of Respondents	Mean Scores	Level
Communication	120	16.49	High
Creative Thinking	120	15.03	High
Job Seeking Skills	120	13.85	High
Leadership	120	15.11	High
Planning	120	13.99	High
Problem Solving	120	14.02	High
Self-Management	120	14.8	High
Team Work	120	15.18	High
Time Management	120	14.35	High
Employability Skills	120	132.85	High

From Table – 1, it is observed that the overall employability skills of the respondents, on an average possessed high level of employability skills. With regard to the dimensions of employability skills, the respondents scored high in all the domains with Communication on the top followed by Teamwork, Leadership, Creative Thinking, Time Management, Self-Management, Problem Solving, Planning, and Job Seeking Skills as showed in Figure – 1.



Bindu & Unninarayanan (2018) in their research, studied that the employability skills of the MBA students in the State of Kerala were at “average” level and called for commensurate efforts by management institutions to equip students with employability skills. They further suggested that the Universities and academic institutions need to align the curriculum with the employability skills keeping in view the changing scenario and requirements of the industrial sectors. Yadav, Kiran; Babra, Sonal; Yadav, and Rohit (2022) in their study opined that most business management students were aware of the value of soft skills in terms of employment and growth. The further reiterated the greater need for continuous efforts for building the capacities of the students through training programmes for improving their soft skills. Gowsalya (2016) in her study highlighted the need to concluded that educators may integrate employability skills into courses by blending experiential learning taking into account what the employers look for. Gandhi, M. (2013) had conducted a study on Employability Skills in Management Students - An Industry Perspective and found out that management students don't possess the required employability skills from the point of view of industries and hence management institutions should take necessary steps to improve their pedagogy.

2. Employability Skills of the Respondents with respect to Gender

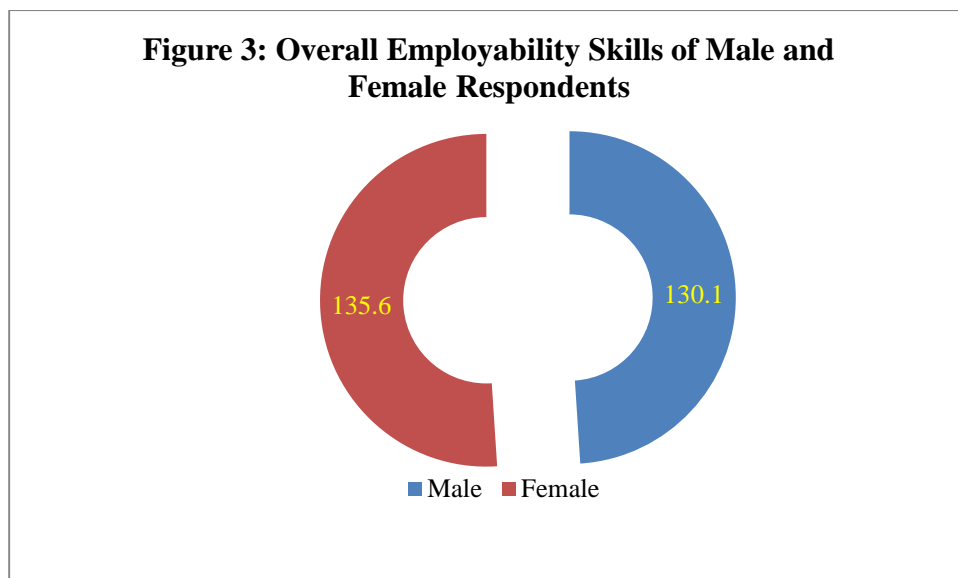
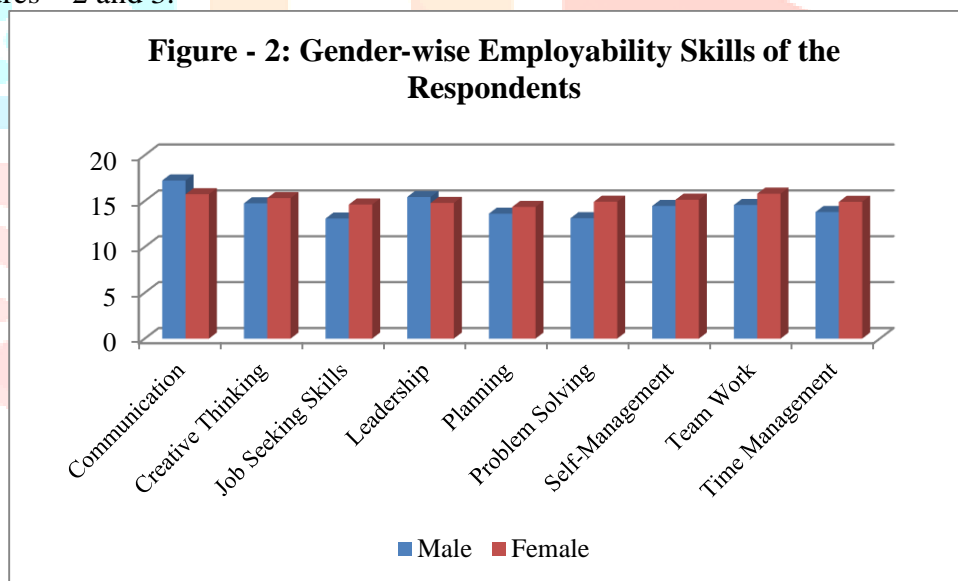
Table – 2 presented below shows the average scores of the respondents on the overall employability skills based on the gender.

Table – 2 Gender-wise Employability skills of the Respondents

Dimension	Gender	No. of Respondents	Mean Scores	Level of Employability Skills
Communication	Male	60	17.24	High
	Female	60	15.74	
	Total	120	16.49	
Creative Thinking	Male	60	14.75	High
	Female	60	15.32	
	Total	120	15.03	
Job Seeking Skills	Male	60	13.09	High
	Female	60	14.62	
	Total	120	13.85	
Leadership	Male	60	15.44	High
	Female	60	14.79	
	Total	120	15.11	
Planning	Male	60	13.62	High

	Female	60	14.36	
	Total	120	13.99	
Problem Solving	Male	60	13.13	High
	Female	60	14.92	
	Total	120	14.02	
Self-Management	Male	60	14.46	High
	Female	60	15.14	
	Total	120	14.8	
Team Work	Male	60	14.57	High
	Female	60	15.8	
	Total	120	15.18	
Time Management	Male	60	13.8	High
	Female	60	14.91	
	Total	120	14.35	
Employability Skills	Male	60	130.1	High
	Female	60	135.6	
	Total	120	132.85	

From Table – 2, it is noticed that among the male and female respondents, the female student youth were found to have scored higher than their male counterparts in the overall employability skills with higher average scores on Creative Thinking, Job-seeking Skills, Planning, Problem Solving, Self-Management, and Teamwork than the male respondents. While the male respondents possessed higher levels of Communication, Leadership, Time Management skills in comparison with the female respondents which is depicted in Figures – 2 and 3.



3. Significance of Differences in Employability Skills between the Students Pursuing Government Aided (regular) Courses and Self-financing Courses

With the responses obtained from 120 respondents (60 each from Government Aided and Self-Financing Courses) the average scores of the respondents on the overall employability skills with regard to their nature of courses being pursued i.e., government aided and self-financing courses are presented in Table – 3 along with the statistical differences among these two groups.

Table – 3 Difference in Employability Skills between Students of Government Aided and Self-financing Courses

Groups	N	Mean	SD	SEM	t
Students of Government Aided (Regular) Courses	60	137.31	14.19	1.8319	3.2729**
Students of Self Financing Courses	60	128.39	15.63	2.0178	

** Significant at 0.01 level

From the Table-3 above, it is noticed that the students from Government Aided (Regular) Courses scored higher on the overall employability skills than the students pursuing education through self-financing courses. Further, it was studied that there was a statistically significant difference among these two groups with respect to the overall employability skills which was found to be significant at 0.01 level.

The present study also probed the statistical differences among the students of government aided courses and students of self-financing courses with respect to the dimensions of employability skills which are shown in Table – 4.

Table – 4 Differences among Students of Government Aided and Self-financing Courses on various Dimensions of Employability Skills

Dimensions of Employability Skills	Groups	N	Mean	SD	SEM	t
Communication	Students of Government Aided Courses	60	17.16	4.45	0.5745	1.5822
	Students of Self-financing Courses	60	15.82	4.82	0.6223	
Creative Thinking	Students of Government Aided Courses	60	15.76	3.61	0.466	2.2092*
	Students of Self-financing Courses	60	14.31	3.58	0.4622	
Job Seeking Skills	Students of Government Aided Courses	60	14.1	3.17	0.4092	0.7753
	Students of Self-financing Courses	60	13.61	3.73	0.4815	
Leadership	Students of Government Aided Courses	60	15.52	4.21	0.5435	1.0316
	Students of Self-financing Courses	60	14.71	4.39	0.5667	
Planning	Students of Government Aided Courses	60	14.21	4.63	0.5977	0.529

	Students of Self-financing Courses	60	13.77	4.48	0.5784	
Problem Solving	Students of Government Aided Courses	60	14.67	4.02	0.519	1.5979
	Students of Self-financing Courses	60	13.38	4.79	0.6184	
Self-Management	Students of Government Aided Courses	60	15.42	4.82	0.6223	1.4778
	Students of Self-financing Courses	60	14.18	4.36	0.5629	
Team Work	Students of Government Aided Courses	60	15.64	4.29	0.5538	1.3215
	Students of Self-financing Courses	60	14.73	3.17	0.4092	
Time Management	Students of Government Aided Courses	60	14.83	4.75	0.6132	1.2197
	Students of Self-financing Courses	60	13.88	3.72	0.4802	

* Significant at 0.05 level

From Table – 4 above, it is inferred that the students of government aided courses scored higher in all the dimensions of employability skills than the students of self-financing courses. However, only in the dimension of creative thinking, both these groups differed statistically which was significant at 0.05 level.

The results of their study conducted by Bindu & Unninarayanan (2018) showed no difference in the employability skills among three different categories of institutions on the basis of years of their existence/establishment. Their research revealed that there was no significant difference in the overall employability skills between male and female students. Contrarily, the present study found significant differences in employability skills among the students pursuing education in Government Aided and Self-Financing Courses. Therefore the hypothesis (H_0 1) stating that “there will be no significant difference among the students of regular and self-financing courses with regard to their employability skills” is rejected.

4. Significance of Differences in Employability Skills of the Respondents based on Gender

Though the female respondents scored higher on an average in the employability skills, the statistically significant differences were computed to ascertain if they significantly differed or not. The gender differences among the respondents in their employability skills is given below in Table – 5.

Table – 5 Gender Differences in Employability Skills of the Respondents

Groups	N	Mean	SD	SEM	t
Male Students	60	130.1	17.63	2.276	1.7262
Female Students	60	135.6	17.27	2.2295	

From the table above, it was found that the male and female respondents did not statistically differ in the overall employability skills.

The gender differences among the respondents in various dimensions of employability skills were probed to find out the significant difference, if any. Table – 6 provides the details of gender differences across the dimensions of employability skills of the respondents.

Table – 6 Differences in various Dimensions of Employability Skills of the Respondents based on Gender

Dimensions of Employability Skills	Groups	N	Mean	SD	SEM	t
Communication	Male	60	17.24	3.47	0.448	2.2482*
	Female	60	15.74	3.83	0.4945	
Creative Thinking	Male	60	14.75	4.29	0.5538	0.7767
	Female	60	15.32	3.73	0.4815	
Job Seeking Skills	Male	60	13.09	3.76	0.4854	2.391*
	Female	60	14.62	3.23	0.417	
Leadership	Male	60	15.44	3.68	0.4751	0.8672
	Female	60	14.79	4.49	0.5797	
Planning	Male	60	13.62	3.58	0.4622	1.0873
	Female	60	14.36	3.87	0.4996	
Problem Solving	Male	60	13.13	4.66	0.6016	2.2291*
	Female	60	14.92	4.12	0.5319	
Self-Management	Male	60	14.46	3.26	0.4209	1.1763
	Female	60	15.14	3.07	0.3963	
Team Work	Male	60	14.57	3.45	0.4454	2.0334*
	Female	60	15.8	3.17	0.4092	
Time Management	Male	60	13.8	3.61	0.466	1.7124
	Female	60	14.91	3.49	0.4506	

* Significant at 0.05 level

Selvam (2016) in his study on the employability skills of rural MBA students found that MBA graduates were more employable and that the rural students possessed high levels of employability skills. His study also found that the levels of employability skills among rural youth did not vary much with the national situation. Further, his study identified that the respondents of the research did not differ significantly on employability skills with regard to gender and first generation learners. Kazilan, Hamzah and Bakar (2009) and Kong (2011) studying the differences between males and females, found through their study that females had higher levels of employability skills than the males. Chithra (2013) explored the gender differences in relation to employability skills and identified that the male and female respondents of their study did not significantly differ in their employability skills which she attributed the reasons to cultural sensitization and socialization factors. Bindu & Unninarayanan (2018) The results of their study showed no difference in the employability skills among the three categories of institutions on the basis of years of their existence/establishment. Their research revealed that there was no significant difference in the overall employability skills between male and female students.

From Table – 6 above, it is observed that the male and female respondents differed statistically in the dimensions viz., Communication, Job Seeking Skills, Problem Solving and Team Work and the differences were found to be significant at 0.05 level. Therefore, the hypothesis (H₀ 2) stating that “there will be no significant gender differences in employability skills among the students of regular and self-financing courses” is rejected.

5. Correlational Analysis among the Dimensions of Employability Skills

In order to probe the relationships between the dimensions of employability skills of the respondents, correlational analysis among the sub-dimensions of employability skills were computed and the co-efficient of correlation and the levels of significance are indicated in Table - 7.

Table – 7 Correlation among the dimensions of Employability Skills

Dimensions of Employability skills	Correlation Coefficients across Dimensions of Employability Skills								
	C	CT	JSS	L	P	PS	SM	TW	TM
C	---	0.239*	0.199*	0.196*	0.332**	0.103	0.117	0.297**	0.228*
CT		---	0.271**	0.265**	0.342**	0.277**	0.213*	0.137	0.246*
JSS			---	0.298**	0.296**	0.246*	0.168	0.174	0.254**
L				---	0.368**	0.338**	0.285**	0.371**	0.201*
P					---	0.109	0.247*	0.119	0.304**
PS						---	0.121	0.258**	0.384**
SM							---	0.314**	0.365**
TW								---	0.375**
TM									---

* Significant at 0.05 level

** Significant at 0.01 level

From Table - 7 presented above, it is evident that there were that there were significant relationships among most of the sub-dimensions of Employability Skills.

Communication was found have very close relationship with various dimensions of employability skills. Through the study it was established that Communication was significantly associated with Creative Thinking, Job Search Skills, Leadership and Time Management at 0.05 level; while Planning and Team Work were significantly related to communication at 0.01 level.

Critical Thinking was found to be significantly correlated with Job Search Skills, Leadership, Planning and Problem Solving at 0.05 level and Self-Management and Time Management were observed to have high levels of association and statistically significant at 0.01 level.

Job Search Skills were positively associated with Leadership, Planning and Time Management at 0.05 level whereas, Problem Solving was found to be highly related to Job Search Skills, significantly at 0.01 level.

Leadership was studied to be correlated with Time Management at 0.05 level, wherein Planning, Problem Solving, Self-Management and Team Work were closely interrelated to Leadership at 0.01 level.

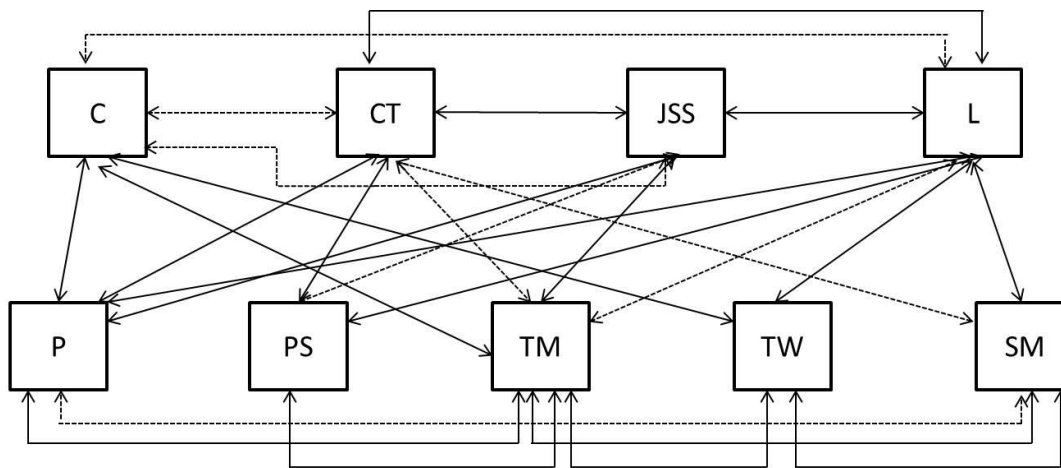
Planning was found to be significantly correlated with Self-Management at 0.05 level while Time Management was significantly related with Planning at 0.01 level.

Problem Solving was studied to be significantly related to Team Work and Time Management at 0.01 level.

Self-Management was assessed to be positively correlated with Team Work and Team Management at 0.01 level.

Team Work and Team Management were found to be significantly related with each other at 0.01 level.

Figure – 4: Diagrammatic Representation of Significant Relationships among the Dimensions of Employability Skills



C – Communication L – Leadership TM – Time Management ←-----→ P < 0.05
 CT – Creative Thinking P – Planning TW – Team Work
 JSS – Job Seeking Skills PS – Problem Solving SM – Self Management ←-----→ P < 0.01

While all the correlations were positively associated with each other, it was noticed that the relationships between Communication, Problem Solving and Self-Management; Creative Thinking with Team Work; Job Search Skills with Self-Management, Planning with Problem Solving and Team Work; Problem Solving with Self-Management were not found to be statistically significant. The hypothesis (H₀ 3) stating that “there will be no significant relationship among the dimensions of employability skills” is rejected.

Conclusions

Based on the results the following conclusions were drawn:

- The respondents were found to possess high level of employability skills and their levels on all the dimensions of employability skills were found to be high.
- The overall mean scores of employability skills showed that the female respondents scored higher than the male respondents
- The female respondents were found to have scored higher than their male counterparts in the overall employability skills
- In the dimensions of employability skills, female respondents scored higher on Creative Thinking, Job-seeking Skills, Planning, Problem Solving, Self-Management, and Teamwork
- The male respondents possessed higher levels of Communication, Leadership, and Time Management skills
- Respondents from Government Aided (Regular) Courses scored higher on the overall employability skills and possessed high levels of skills in all the dimensions of employability skills than the students pursuing education through self-financing courses.
- Statistically significant differences between the respondents from government aided courses and self-financing courses in their overall employability skills were observed
- In the dimensions of employability skills, the respondents from government aided courses and self-financing courses differed statistically only in creative thinking.
- The male and female respondents did not show statistically significant differences in their overall employability skills
- The male and female respondents differed statistically in the dimensions of employability skills viz., Communication, Job Seeking Skills, Problem Solving and Team Work

- Statistically significant relationships were found between:
 - Communication and Creative Thinking, Job Search Skills, Leadership and Time Management, Planning, Team Work
 - Critical Thinking and Job Search Skills, Leadership, Planning and Problem Solving, Self-Management, Time Management
 - Job Search Skills and Leadership, Planning and Time Management, Problem Solving
 - Leadership and Time Management, Planning, Problem Solving, Self-Management and Team Work
 - Planning and Self-Management, Time Management, Planning
 - Problem Solving and Team Work, Time Management
 - Self-Management and Team Work, Team Management
 - Team Work and Team Management

Implications of the Study

- The present study provides preliminary inputs for the educators and policy makers for building employability skills among the student youth for enabling effective job placements.
- The study proves to be useful for the employers for selection of young people into various positions requiring the skills covered under the study.
- The study provides an understanding that the students passing out of government aided courses have greater employability skills and are at par with the students passing out from private institutions.

Limitations of the Study

1. In the present study, the number of respondents included were only 120
2. Only management graduates were included in the study.
3. No comparisons were made with regard to the different variables of the students of government aided and self-financing courses
4. The study was confined to the generic employability skills and not the domain specific skills

Suggestions for Future Research

1. Large scale research covering students of various streams may be covered
2. Interventional studies to study the effect of employability skills training may be conducted
3. Studies to strengthen the employability skills in alignment with the curriculum may be conducted with implications for academia vis-à-vis training of the student youth.
4. Methodically tested training modules on employability skills may be developed for student youth pursuing various streams of studies and be imparted to them by their Placement Officers
5. Master training programmes for the Placement Officers/Counsellors/Faculty handling Student Welfare initiatives be imparted at State/District levels so that they can train their students to enhance the employability skills and to make them employment ready.

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