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EMPOWERING INDIAN YOUTH THROUGH SKILL EDUCATION: AN INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDY OF SELF-EFFICACY AND EMPLOYABILITY

Name of the Author: Dr. Sadaf Jafri (Assistant Professor)
Name of the Institution: Department of Education,
AMU Centre Malappuram, Kerala

ABSTRACT:

Skill education has emerged as a central component of India's development strategy under the Atmanirbhar Bharat vision. While existing literature largely focuses on employability outcomes, limited attention has been paid to the psychological dimensions of youth empowerment, particularly self-efficacy. The present study adopts an interdisciplinary framework integrating education, psychology, and workforce studies to examine the relationship between skill education, self-efficacy, and employability among Indian youth. Using a descriptive empirical research design, data were collected from 120 youth enrolled in various skill education programmes at polytechnics in Malappuram District, Kerala. Standardised tools prepared by Schwarzer & Jerusalem (1995), and the Self-developed Employability Readiness Questionnaire prepared by the researcher were used to assess self-efficacy and employability readiness. Descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and cross-tabulation were employed for data analysis. The findings reveal that participation in skill education programmes is associated with moderate to high levels of self-efficacy and employability readiness. A significant positive correlation was found between self-efficacy and employability, suggesting that psychological empowerment is a crucial factor in workforce preparedness. The study underscores the need for skill education models that integrate technical training with psychological empowerment to promote sustainable youth development in India.

Keywords: Skill Education, Youth Empowerment, Self-efficacy, Employability, Atmanirbhar Bharat.

1. INTRODUCTION:

India has one of the largest youth populations globally, making youth empowerment a national priority. In recent years, the Government of India has launched several initiatives, such as Atmanirbhar Bharat, Skill India Mission, and Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY), to promote self-reliance through skill development, employment generation, and entrepreneurship. These initiatives emphasize Skill education as a strategic tool to bridge the gap between education and employment by equipping youth with industry-relevant competencies. According to Mehrotra (2019), skill education plays a crucial role in improving workforce productivity and addressing unemployment by aligning human capital with industry needs.

While skill education has traditionally been viewed from an economic and employment-oriented perspective, contemporary research highlights that employability is a multidimensional construct that goes beyond technical competence alone. Yorke (2006) argued that employability encompasses not only skills and knowledge but also personal attributes and psychological readiness that enable individuals to secure

and sustain employment. This shift calls for an interdisciplinary approach that integrates education, psychology, and workforce studies.

One of the most significant psychological constructs influencing employability is self-efficacy. Rooted in Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory, self-efficacy refers to an individual's belief in their ability to successfully perform tasks and overcome challenges (Bandura, 1997). Individuals with high self-efficacy are more likely to exhibit initiative, persistence, and resilience- qualities that are essential in navigating the uncertainties of contemporary labour markets. Empirical studies have consistently shown that self-efficacy is positively related to career, decision-making, job search behaviour, and workplace performance (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994).

Skill education programmes have the potential to enhance self-efficacy by providing mastery experiences, opportunities for social learning, and structured feedback. Pool and Sewell (2007) emphasised that confidence and self-belief act as crucial mediators between skill acquisition and employability outcomes. In the Indian context, Agrawal and Agrawal (2017) noted that skill development initiatives are more effective when they incorporate soft skills, confidence-building, and psychological empowerment alongside technical training.

Despite growing policy emphasis and academic interest, there is a relative scarcity of empirical studies that simultaneously examine the interrelationship between skill education, self-efficacy, and employability readiness among Indian youth. Many existing studies focus either on employment outcomes or psychological variables in isolation. Addressing this gap, the present study adopts an interdisciplinary framework to examine how skill education contributes to youth empowerment through enhanced self-efficacy and employability readiness. By integrating educational and psychological perspectives, the study seeks to provide evidence-based insights relevant to policymakers, educators, and skill development practitioners.

2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Skill Education and Youth Empowerment

Employability readiness and skill education have gained significant attention in recent years, especially in the context of India's Atmanirbhar Bharat Initiative, which emphasizes self-reliance through skill development and youth empowerment. Employability refers to a combination of knowledge, skills attitudes, and personal attributes that enable individuals to obtain employment, perform effectively, and adapt to changing workplace demands.

Skill education focuses on developing vocational, technical, and transferable skills aligned with labour market needs. Research indicates that skill-based programmes enhance employment prospects and reduce skill mismatches among youth. Gupta (2023) in Safety Science further shows that skill programs enhance employability for vulnerable youth.

Yorke (2006) conceptualized employability as a set of achievements- skills, understandings, and personal attributes- that makes graduates more likely to gain employment and succeed in their occupations. This perspective highlights that employability extends beyond academic knowledge to include transferable skills and personal competencies. In the Indian context, Tilak (2018) observed that formal education often remains disconnected from labour market requirements, thereby necessitating structured skill education and vocational training programs.

Self-efficacy and Psychological Empowerment

Bandura's self-efficacy theory (1977, foundational work) highlights the role of belief systems in motivation and performance. Researches connect Skill acquisition to confidence, autonomy, and problem-solving abilities, thereby strengthening self-efficacy. Youth with higher self-efficacy demonstrate greater adaptability and persistence in employment contexts.

Employability and Workforce Readiness

Employability encompasses a combination of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and psychological attributes required for effective workforce participation. Empirical studies reveal a positive relationship between self-efficacy and employability (Lent, Brown, and Heckett, 1994), through Social Cognitive Career Theory, emphasized that self-efficacy influences career interests, choices and performance. Creed, Bloxsome, and

Johnston (2007) found that self-efficacy significantly predicted employability skills, career confidence, and job readiness among trainees and students.

Despite growing research, there is limited empirical work that simultaneously examines skill education, self-efficacy, and employability readiness using context-specific instruments. Moreover, the use of self-constructed tools tailored to local socio-economic conditions remains unexplored. The present study addresses this gap by employing a self developed Employability Readiness Questionnaire to assess the influence of skill education on self-efficacy and employability among Indian youth.

3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

- To examine the role of skill education in enhancing self-efficacy among Indian youth.
- To study the relationship between self-efficacy and employability readiness.
- To analyze skill education as a tool for youth empowerment from an interdisciplinary perspective.

4. HYPOTHESES:

- Skill Education has a significant impact on self-efficacy among youth.
- Self-efficacy is positively related to employability readiness.
- Skill education contributes to youth empowerment through enhanced self-efficacy and employability.

5. METHODOLOGY

Research design- The study adopted a descriptive empirical research design.

Sample- The sample consisted of 120 youth aged 18-25 years enrolled in various skill education programmes in Malappuram District. Simple random sampling was used.

Tools used- The self-efficacy standardised scale prepared by Schwarzer & Jerusalem (1995) was employed to assess the respondents' belief in their ability to perform tasks, handle challenges, and achieve goals. The scale consisted of 10 Likert-type items with responses ranging from 'Not at all true' to 'Exactly True'. The total scores range from 10 to 40, with higher scores indicating higher perceived self-efficacy. The scale has demonstrated satisfactory reliability and validity across diverse populations.

Self-developed Employability Readiness Questionnaire: A self-developed questionnaire was developed by the researcher to measure employability readiness among youth. The tool included 15 items related to communication skills, problem-solving & critical thinking, adaptability & learning orientation, work ethics and teamwork, and career confidence & job readiness. Content validity was established through expert review by teacher educators. Responses were recorded on a five-point Likert scale; higher scores reflected greater employability readiness. The questionnaire was pilot-tested on a small group to ensure clarity, relevance, and reliability before final administration.

Background Information Schedule: This schedule collected demographic details such as gender, age, and the type of skill education programme attended.

6. DATA ANALYSIS

Descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and cross-tabulation were employed.

7. RESULTS:

7.1 Sample Characteristics

The demographic profile of the respondents provides context for understanding the results of the study. Gender-wise distribution indicates balanced representation, allowing meaningful interpretation across groups.

Table 1. Gender distribution of the respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	62	51.7
Female	58	48.3
Total	120	100

The nearly equal participation of male and female respondents suggests that the findings are not biased towards a particular gender and reflect a broad youth perspective.

7.2 Type of Skill Education Programme

Respondents were enrolled in diverse skill education programmes, reflecting the multidisciplinary nature of contemporary skill development initiatives.

Table 2. Type of Skill Education Programme attended

Programme Type	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Technical/IT Skills	38	31.7
Vocational Trades	34	28.3
Soft Skills	27	22.5
Entrepreneurship Training	21	17.5
Total	120	100

A majority of respondents (60%) were enrolled in technical and vocational programmes, indicating a strong focus on employment-oriented skill acquisition. Participation in soft skills and entrepreneurship training highlights growing awareness of holistic employability requirements.

7.3 Levels of Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy levels were classified into low, moderate, and high categories based on scale score ranges.

Table 3. Distribution of self-efficacy levels

Self-Efficacy Level	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Low	18	15.0
Moderate	47	39.2
High	55	45.8
Total	120	100

The data indicate that a substantial proportion of respondents (85%) demonstrated moderate to high self-efficacy. This suggests that participation in skill education programmes contributes positively to confidence, motivation, and perceived competence among youth.

7.4 Employability Readiness

Employability readiness scores were derived from the self-constructed questionnaire and categorized into three levels.

Table 4. Employability Readiness Levels

Employability Level	Frequency	Percentage
Low	20	16.7
Moderate	50	41.6
High	50	41.7
Total	120	100

More than one-fifth of the respondents (83.3%) exhibited moderate to high employability readiness, indicating that skill education programmes are effective in preparing youth for workplace demands.

7.5 Descriptive Statistics

Mean and S.D values were calculated to understand the overall levels of self-efficacy and employability readiness.

Table 5. Descriptive Statistics of Key Variables

Variable	N	Mean	SD
Self-Efficacy	120	3.84	0.62
Employability Readiness	120	3.76	0.59

The mean scores indicate above-average levels of both self-efficacy and employability readiness among respondents, suggesting a positive influence of skill education programmes.

7.6 Correlation Analysis

Pearson's correlation coefficient was computed to examine the relationship between self-efficacy and employability readiness.

Table 6. Correlation between Self-efficacy and Employability Readiness

Variables	1	2
1. Self-efficacy	1	0.68*
2. Employability Readiness	0.68*	1

***Correlation is significant at 0.01 level**

The strong positive correlation indicates that higher self-efficacy is associated with higher employability readiness, supporting the study hypotheses.

7.7 Cross Tabulation

Cross-tabulation analysis was conducted to examine the distribution of employability readiness across different levels of self-efficacy.

Table 7. Self-efficacy and employability cross-tabulation (percentages)

Self-efficacy level	High Employability	Moderate Employability	Low Employability
High	68.0	26.0	6.0
Moderate	32.0	50.0	18.0
Low	11.0	33.0	56.0

Table 7 clearly demonstrates that respondents with high self-efficacy predominantly fall into the high employability category, whereas those with low self-efficacy show higher levels of low employability readiness.

8. DISCUSSION

The findings indicate that skill education significantly contributes to psychological empowerment and employability readiness among Indian youth. The positive correlation between self-efficacy and employability aligns with existing theoretical and empirical literature, underscoring the importance of confidence and belief systems for workforce participation.

9. IMPLICATIONS:

Skill education programmes should integrate self-efficacy enhancing strategies such as experiential learning, mentoring, and life skills training. Policymakers and other stakeholders must adopt interdisciplinary frameworks to strengthen youth empowerment initiatives.

10. LIMITATIONS

The study was limited by sample size and reliance on self-reported data. Future research may adopt longitudinal and mixed-method approaches.

11. CONCLUSION

Skill education is a powerful tool for empowering Indian youth by enhancing both employability and self-efficacy. An interdisciplinary approach is essential for realizing the objectives of Atmanirbhar Bharat and ensuring sustainable youth development.

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