

SKILL ACQUISITION ON PERCEIVED EMPLOYABILITY AND SELF EFFICACY AMONG GRADUATE STUDENTS

Abstract

Skill acquisition is defined as the art of learning to do something in order to earn a living and or to survive. Acquisition of skill is a type of learning in which repetition results in enduring changes in individual's capability to perform a specific task. The study is aimed to identify the influence of skills acquisition on employability of graduate students in selected educational institutions. A descriptive research study with the use of questionnaires has been adopted to collect data from the selected respondents. A self-designed scale was used as the research instrument. Non-probability sampling method with the sample size of 209 samples was administered. Data analysis was done for the two hypotheses developed by using Multiple regression analysis and independent sample t-test. The results of analysis showed that there is significant influence of skills acquisition on the perceived employability among the graduate students of the selected institutions. The analysis also revealed that there is no significant influence of gender on perceived employability. The study concluded that skills acquisition has significant influence on perceived employability among the graduates of the selected institutions taken for the study.

Keywords: Skills Acquisition, Employability, Self-Efficacy, Behaviours, Performance, Perception.

Author

Dr. S. Pratibha

Professor

Department of Business Management
David Memorial Institute of Management.

pratibha15077@gmail.com

I. INTRODUCTION

Learning is the process of representing any cognitive event in the memory. It is a process of developing knowledge representations of how to respond in certain situations. It is a series of actions or steps retrieving the memory more easily and reliably to achieve a particular end wherein the skilled behaviours become more routinized and even automatic under some conditions. Skills acquisition is the ability that needs to be trained on a particular task or function to become expert in it. Gaining new skills is a repeated challenge met by the graduate's students who have to acquire them in a broad range and also at a faster pace while they are entering the universities. Often, students need to acquire a set of transferable skills, such as oral and written communications, problem solving, group working and information technology along with a thorough knowledge on theoretical concepts, orientation towards research and be equipped with design intervention programs. The Perception of students on their skill acquisition has great impact on their future training needs and strategic decisions towards current study programs. This perception allows them to make choices related to their strongest skills and also decide about which skills they need improvement.

Knowledge is a crucial ingredient for a meaningful living and teaching styles greatly influence the learning acquisitions of the students. Students value and expose themselves to collaborative teaching methods where they could learn leadership skills by working with diverse peers. But when the time to seek employment arises literally there is no book that gets you to the work environment. Then students develop a broad consensus of the value of enhancing their employability profile. These skills are the professional, core, generic, key and non-technical skills that are inherent to enhance the work readiness of the students. Typical employability skills comprise of team working, communication, self-management, analysis and critical thinking which do not appear to be well developed by the graduates in today's knowledge-based economies.

Due to significant changes in the labour market and economic conditions, it is observed that there is significant gap in the development of employability skills among the students (Evers, Rush, and Berdrow, 1998) Range of skills widely demanded by employers are typically least in supply. (Atkins, 1999, McLaughlin 1992). There is a great amount of dissatisfaction to the employers with respect to the recent graduates and of their entry-level jobs. It is identified that the lack of employability skills development has caused due to several graduates left their education not having sufficient awareness or foundation skills to acquire a better job in the varying labour market (Ever et al., 1998, De la Harpe et al., 2000). Wittekind, Raeder, and Grote (2010) have conducted a study on employability to develop and test an integrated model of the factors affecting perceived employability with employees at different employment grades. In the present study they found that job related skills are important for perceived employability, whereas being aware of opportunities and self-presentation were found to be less relevant.

- 1. Statement of the Problem:** There is a great dearth of general vocabulary and the vital knowledge and development of various skills among different disciplines is still visible at most of the Institutions of Higher Education which demands this study to explore the gap and provide valuable suggestions for the benefit and improvement of the society.

The research objectives were:

- To evaluate the perceptions of undergraduates concerning the skills and knowledge that help them to be employable.
- To assess the degree of competence that graduate students possess before moving on to workplace.
- To measure whether academic programmes have sufficiently included the required employability skills into the curriculum.

2. Research Hypotheses

H1: There is no significant relationship between undergraduates' skills acquisition, knowledge and their perceived employability

H 2: There is no significant impact of self -efficacy on employability.

3. Scope of the Study:

The study contributes to understand the nature, determinants, and implications of skills acquisition and perceived employment opportunity and self-efficacy of selected graduated students of selected educational institutions of Hyderabad City.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

1. **Skill Acquisition:** Skill acquisition is a form of continued learning about the series of events, through a pairing of stimuli and responses. It is the situation when a person begins to develop knowledge on how to respond to certain situations. Skill acquisition is the ability to train people on a particular task and allow them to become expert in accomplishing the tasks. People need to be capable of exploiting, marketing and selling their assets (Hillage & Pollard, 1998).
2. **Perceived Employability:** Perceptions on employability is to find the possibilities of identifying new, equal and better employment opportunities, and how people perceive them in getting employment in a flexible and uncertain labour market. Employability refers to chances of getting employment and serves as a factor of control in a flexible work environment.

A successful graduate will have acquired employability skills which are may be divided into three categories: person traits (e.g. self-awareness and self-confidence); core skills (e.g. critical analysis and creativity); process skills (e.g. using computers and handling complexity). Many higher education institutions have recently placed a strong emphasis on the necessity for these skills to be applied to the labour market in order to be employable (Yorke and Knight 2006).

Lent (2008) in his study connected employability abilities and characteristics that would help people maintain successful employment over time. The theories of learning tend to place a strong emphasis on engaging in social and culturally relevant activities that are context-based and expanding knowledge via these activities. Employability skills are the traits, attitudes, and competencies required for people to manage their careers and secure successful future work prospects worldwide (Robinson, 2005).

Wittekind, A., Raeder, S., & Grote, G. (2010) according to their study found in their study that age had a significant effect on how employable people felt themselves to be, with older employees believing it would be more difficult for them to hunt for other job. This study's major finding was that "perceived employability is mostly dependent on characteristics that can scarcely be modified by organisations or people" in regard to this.

- 3. Perceived Employment and Self Efficacy:** Perceived employability and self-efficacy are related concepts. According to Bandura (1997), self-efficacy refers to an individual's assessments of their own talents. Career self-efficacy, for example, is described as "people's expectations regarding their capacity to undertake different career search activities, including personal exploration, career explorations, and job search activities" from the perspective of careers counselling (V. Scott Solberg, Glenn E. Good, Dennis Nord, 1994: 64).

In other words, self-efficacy can be assessed only in a specific domain that allows for the measurement of certain abilities and behaviour. Self-efficacy may be viewed from the perspective of employability as a person's anticipation about their capacity to get job. Finding work, however, may be influenced by an individual's perceptions of his or her capacity to locate suitable positions, build useful networks, etc., but it also depends on the individual's actual skills, as well as other elements like prior education or experience, or external labour market factors.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

- 1. Introduction:** The research method that was adopted for the study consists of the research design, population for the study, sample and sampling procedure, research instrument, procedure for the data collection and data analysis.
- 2. Research Design:** This study used a descriptive survey design as its research method. As the study intended to evaluate undergraduate skill acquisition and perceived employability, this was deemed relevant. Perceived employability is the dependent variable in the study, whereas skill acquisition is the independent variable.
- 3. Study Population:** The study population are undergraduate students in select institutions of Hyderabad region. Sample was drawn from institutions across Hyderabad with student enrolment of approximately 2,000.
- 4. Sample and Sampling Procedure:** The sample size consists of 209 respondents are selected through purposive non-probability sampling method.
- 5. Research Instrument:** The Research instrument used for data collection was Questionnaire technique. The questionnaire is divided into three parts namely: part I, II, and III. The first part comprises of items that relate to socio-demographic characteristics of respondents such as age, gender, marital status, and religion.

The items in the second part focused on skills acquisition; specifically, items in this part measure the level of skills acquisition. Items in the third part focused on perceived employability. Items in the second and third parts of the instrument involves

likert-scale close-ended five points continuum. This was utilised to obtain information from the respondents in the sample.

6. **Data Analysis:** Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyse the data collected. Descriptive statistics of mean, standard deviation and percentage counts was used to analyse the socio-demographic data while inferential statistics of Multiple-linear regression analysis were used to test the hypotheses.

IV. DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS

Table 1: Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Socio-Demographics Characteristics of Participants

Variable	Level	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	114	55
	Female	95	45
	Total	209	100.0
Age	15-24yrs	165	78.9
	25-34yrs	44	21.1
	Total	209	100.0
Religion	Hindu	135	64.5
	Christianity	25	11.9
	Islam	49	23.6
	Total	209	100.0
Marital Status	Married	87	41.6
	Unmarried	122	58.4
	Total	209	100.0

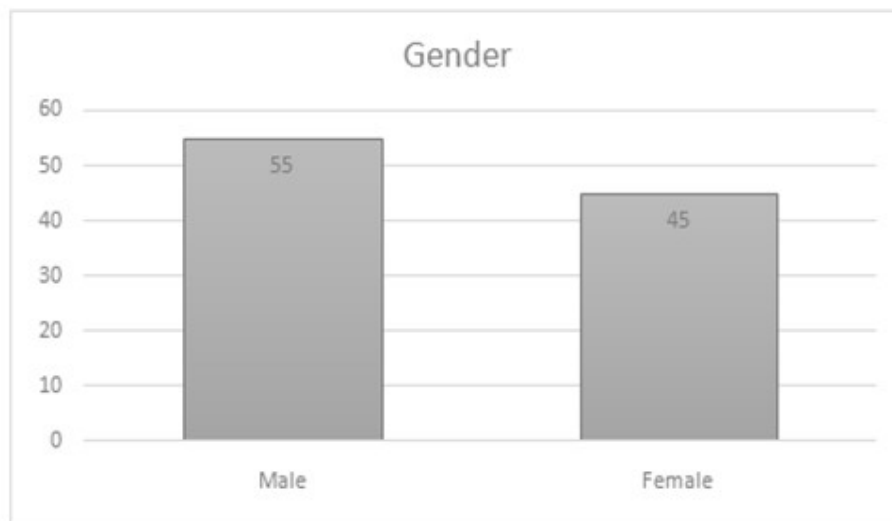


Figure 1: Gender of the Respondents

Inference: Out of the total respondents (209) 55 are Males and 45 are Females

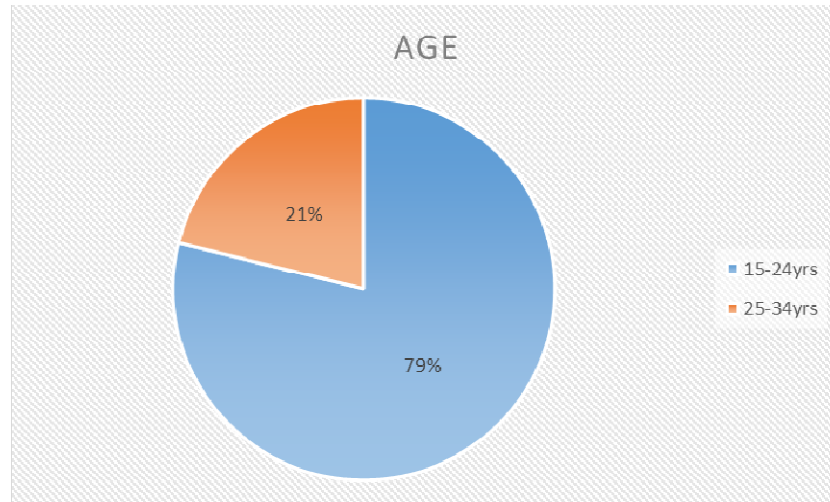


Figure 2: Age of the Respondents

Inference: Out of the total respondents (209) 79% i.e 165 respondents are in the age group of 15-24 yrs and 21% i.e., 44 respondents are in the age group of 25-34 yrs.

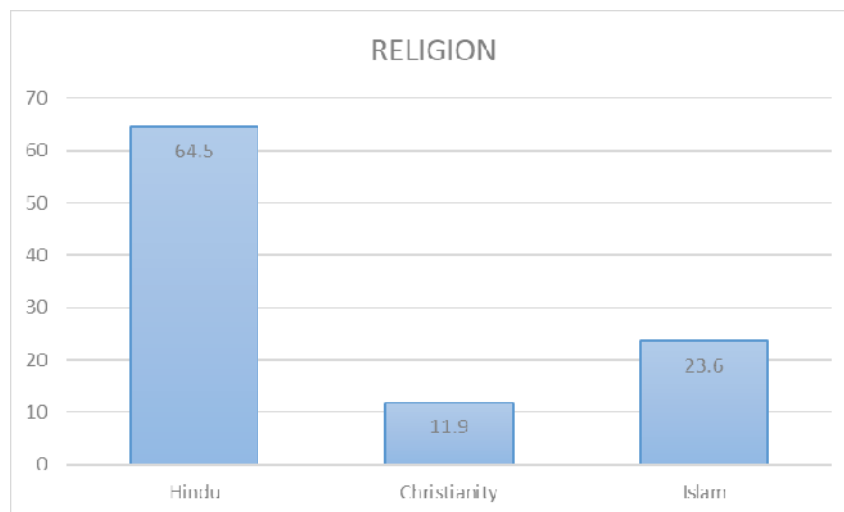


Figure 3: Religion of the Respondents

Inference: Out of the total respondents (209), 64.5% i.e., 135 respondents belong to Hindu religion, 11.9% i.e., 25 respondents belong to Christianity and 23.6% i.e., 49 respondents belong to Islam religion.

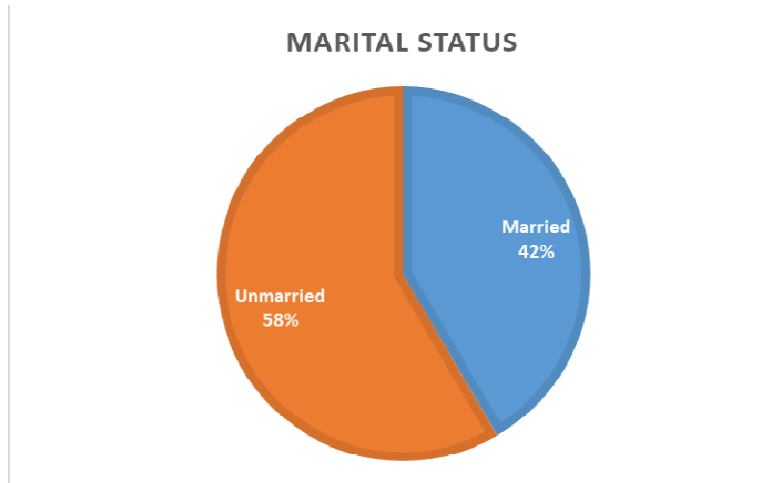


Figure 4: Marital Status of the Respondents

Inference: Out of the total respondents (209), 87 (42%) of the respondents are married and 122 (58%) of the respondents are unmarried.

V. HYPOTHESES TESTING

- Hypothesis H 1:** There is no significant relationship between undergraduates' skills acquisition, knowledge and their perceived employability.

Table 2: Multiple Regression Analysis of Employability Skills by Skill Acquisition

Variables	β	Std.error	t-val	P-val	R ²	Adj. R ²	F-val
(Constant)	14.067	2.370	5.07	.000			
Proficiency Skills	.186	.234	.729	.437	.175	.139	5.260**
ICT Skills	.635	.238	2.542	.015			
Teamwork Skills	.107	.116	.898	.287			
Problem Solving	-.065	.106	-.521	.569			
Personal management	.239	.182	1.564	.102			
Communication Skills	.134	.132	1.065	.274			
(F(6,145)=5.380, p<.05, R²=.175)							

The multiple regression analysis result reveals that there is significant influence of skills acquisition on employability skills ($F(6,145)=5.380, p<.05, R^2=.175$). This shows that undergraduate who are well equipped with skills tends to possess skills required to be employed. It was also observed that 17.5% change in the outcome variable employability skills is explained by the independent variable. The null hypothesis states that there is no significant relationship between undergraduates' skills acquisition, knowledge and their perceived employability skills among undergraduates is therefore rejected and the alternate hypothesis is accepted.

2. Hypothesis H 2: There is no significant impact of self -efficacy on employability.

Table 3: Multiple Regression Analysis of Self-Efficacy on Employability

Variables	β	Std.error	t-val	P-val	R ²	Adj. R ²	F-val
(Constant)	13.053	2.470	5.04	.000			
Academic Performance	.186	.234	.628	.435	.196	.146	5.230**
Future Job Security Perception	.735	.328	2.472	.017			
Career enhancing Strategies	.112	.126	.839	.221			
Academic Commitment	-.054	.107	-.632	.534			
Ambition	.246	.178	1.643	.120			
Self-perceived Employability	.143	.123	1.054	.265			
(F(6,145)=5.380,p<.05 R²=.196)							

The multiple regression analysis result reveals that there is significant impact of self-efficacy on employability (**F(6,145)=5.380,p<.05, R²=.196**). This shows that undergraduate who incline to have high self - efficacy tends to possess high employability skills. It was observed that 19.6% change employability is explained by self-efficacy that is self-confidence which is the independent variable. The null hypothesis states that there is no significant impact of self -efficacy on employability which is therefore rejected and the alternate hypothesis is accepted.

VI. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The study’s primary objective is to investigate the perceptions of undergraduate students relating to their skills and knowledge which help them to be employable. From the socio demographic profile of the respondents, it is found that out of 209 respondents 114 are males and 95 are females, among them 165 respondents are in the age group of 15 - 24 years and remaining 44 are in the age group of 25 -34 years. Out of 209 respondents, 135 belong to Hindu religion, 25 belong to Christianity and 49 are Islamic. 87 respondents are married and 122 are unmarried out of 209 respondents.

The first hypothesis reveals that relationship between skills acquisition, knowledge and their perceived employability among undergraduate students is not significant.

The second hypothesis explains that there is no significant impact of self -efficacy on employability. The findings are substantiated by the work of Yorke and Knight (2006) who has highlighted in his study that employability skills are the potential a graduate acquires to succeed in the labor market. Lowe and Schellenberg (2001) also validated thorough his findings by referring to the fact that acquiring broad employable skills promotes human

growth through enhanced societal and professional engagement through increased level of outcomes and earnings.

VII. CONCLUSION

The study assessed the perceptions of students concerning the skill, knowledge and characteristics which help them to be employable. It has elaborated the concepts of skills acquisition and its association with perceived employability and its theoretical and practical implications to survive in the workplace. The practicality of the finding of the study is to equip the students with enhanced knowledge, skills and capabilities to enable them to survive in the workplace due to the importance of employability in the workplace.

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