

A STUDY ON THE ASSESSMENT OF SOFT SKILLS DEVELOPMENT AMONGST GRADUATES IN JAMNAGAR AND FINDING THE KEY FACETS TO BE INCLUDED IN THEIR GRADUATION PROGRAMME

Authors:

Dr. Snehal Kotak

Principal

Mrs. Sneha Sumaria

Assisstant Professor

Abstract

The education as well as the market scenario is changing very fast. A decade ago, those individuals who had a brilliant academic record with added work experience were well sought after by most of the corporate institutions. But today hard skills and experience are not sufficient enough for the ingress and escalation in the corporate world. Employers prefer to hire and promote those persons who are resourceful, ethical, and self directed with good communication/ soft skills. Dearth of soft skills in the candidates has resulted in low hiring by corporate. In spite of such great significance of soft skills, many management colleges are reluctant to incorporate soft skills training in the curriculum of management courses. This paper is based on an empirical study conducted between students regularly exposed to soft skills sessions and those who are deprived of the same .

The findings of this study revealed that Critical thinking, problem solving, and communication skills are well developed soft skills by Commerce graduates as perceived by the respondents. Further, results reveal that there was no significant association between age and medium of instruction on level of soft skills development. It is striking to note the significant association between Gender and level of soft skills development. The study suggests that the university should enrich the soft skills and entry level hard skills component in the curriculum.

Key words: soft skills, hard skills, soft skills training, Graduation students

Introduction

‘We cannot always build the future for our youth, but we can build our youth for the future’

-Franklin D Roosevelt

The soft skills in addition to multiple skill sets in youth, is of a primary essence for the economic growth & development of a country. Today’s employers’ eye that the skill quality of graduates is not par with industry standards. Dearth of soft skills in the candidates has resulted in low hiring by corporate. The fresher skills do not tailor the industry standards. To smoothly carryout complex business activities, organizations require wider range of skills like – technical, cognitive, interpersonal, social, hard & soft skills etc.

Hard skills are a set of technical expertise to perform a job, and soft skills are the essential interpersonal skills necessary to fulfil the duties. Hard skills are those skills that are learned at school through training. They can be measured in terms of quantity. And these skills can be taught at regular intervals. However, soft skills are eccentric and emotion-based, which measures itself in quality.

The term soft skill is used as a canopy term that covers key proficiencies such as life skills, social skills, communication & interpersonal skills, problem solving, time management, leadership skills, aptitude, and attitude. It also encompasses personality traits such as friendly approach, team worker, influencer, professionalism, etc. Soft skills include. Students exposed to 'soft-skills' sessions have an edge about employability & overall personality development.

Soft skills + Education = Employability is the equation that our system must work out with to improve the way of 'learning' and 'performing'. 'Soft-skills' are vital for the fresher's seeking entry-level jobs in the global markets. The corporate and academia must work in collaboration to derive a proper mix of these skills in the graduation programme. This will benefit the economy by bestowing better managers, better competitors & rulers of global market. This will help them to improve their complete personality and compatibility therefore enabling them to secure a respectable position in the corporate world.

Literature review

However, researchers such as Robles (2012) have reported that "even though management students have full command over subject and theoretical aspects, they lack in performing effectively with full efficiency due to lack of soft skills". "Soft skills like communication, interpersonal and critical thinking – plays a vital role in higher level management and leadership positions in the workplace" (Bedwell et. al, 2013).

Ciappei, 2015 explains that most of the personal traits of an individual persuade his competencies. Soft skills like justice, bravery, courage, and tolerance are indefinitely carried from the moral aspect of life. All these significant traits eventually nurture the competencies. Moreover, the research study distinguishes soft skills as entrepreneurship skills and technological skills. Entrepreneurship skills also termed leadership skills, encircle the skills like taking risks, inspire and motivate co-workers, creativity, innovativeness, and management skills. Likewise, the technological skills permit one to accomplish the specific tasks within the timeframe.

According to McGrath, S (2012) – "literacy, numeracy & life skills are basic skill required for proper student growth". Management students seeking employment after their degree must ensure that their skills match with the employers' requirement and develop those that are still missing. Quality of Skill Development is a base for student growth. Quality depends on strength & weakness of institutes. Students might be educated but are unemployed because industries do not consider them as productive resources. (Okada, A. 2012)

Heavey and Morey (2003)³ "ENHANCING EMPLOYABILITY, RECOGNIZING DIVERSITY, LONDON: UNIVERSITY UK AND HIGHER EDUCATION CAREERS SERVICES UNIT". Highly the skill graduates need to manage their own careers and those that will enable them to continue learning throughout the work lives.

THE STUDY

This paper aims to find out the significant improvement that soft skills training can bring forth in the life of a management student. The nature of impact of soft skills training on management students was measured by comparing their soft skills levels before and after the intervention.

Objectives of the Study:

The basic objectives of this paper are

- To highlight the importance of soft skills for management students
- To assess the level of soft skills development amongst graduate students
- To study the associations between
 - Age and soft skills development
 - Gender and soft skills development
 - Medium of instruction and soft skills development
- To compare the levels of various soft skills amongst the graduates and find the most and the least developed soft skill.
- To suggest suitable measures & strategy for providing the soft skills to graduation students.

Research Design

Research Design	Exploratory
Sampling design	Non-probability sampling
Sample size	296
Area of research	Jamnagar
Data for analysis	Primary data
Data collection	Questionnaire
Methodology	Chi-square test

Hypothesis 1

Null Hypothesis: There is no significant association between Age and Soft skills development

Alternate Hypothesis: There is significant association between Age and Soft skills development

Interpretation

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	49.687	36	.064
Likelihood Ratio	52.182	36	.040
Linear-by-Linear Association	1.242	1	.265
N of Valid Cases	294		

From the above table we come to know that value of p is 0.064 i.e., $p > 0.05$, there is no significant association between the Age and Soft skills development. Thus, null hypothesis is accepted.

Hypothesis 2

Null Hypothesis: There is no significant association between Gender and Soft skills development

Alternate Hypothesis: There is significant association between Gender and Soft skills development

Interpretation

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	18.565	9	.029
Likelihood Ratio	20.789	9	.014
Linear-by-Linear Association	.589	1	.443
N of Valid Cases	295		

a. 8 cells (40.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .89.

From the above table we come to know that the value of p is 0.029 i.e., $p < 0.05$, there is significant association between the Gender and Soft skills development. Thus, null hypothesis is rejected

Hypothesis 3

Null Hypothesis: There is no significant association between Medium of Instruction of schooling and soft skills development

Alternate Hypothesis: There is significant association between Medium of Instruction of schooling and soft skills development

Interpretation

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	10.489	9	.312
Likelihood Ratio	10.501	9	.311
Linear-by-Linear Association	.128	1	.720
N of Valid Cases	294		

a. 8 cells (40.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .31.

From the above table we come to know that the value of p is 0.312 i.e., $p > 0.05$, there is significant association between the Medium of Instruction and Soft skills development. Thus, null hypothesis is accepted.

The research on various soft skills parameter and its level of development is put up in the following table which indicates the top three parameters which are well developed are Communication, Creative thinking and Interpersonal relationship skills whereas the institutes and universities should work on focusing more on Computer skills, Critical thinking and Communication skills.

Skill	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
Communication Skills	73	182	35	6
Critical thinking	59	167	65	5
Decision making	110	136	46	4
Interpersonal Relationship Skills	88	155	47	6
Creative Thinking	107	136	48	5
Problem Solving Skills	101	142	45	8
Computer Skills	58	139	79	20
Time Management Skills	97	136	56	7
Coping with Stress and Emotions	90	117	76	13
Self-Awareness	131	127	32	6

Findings of the study

- The study seems to be a fair representation of population as it evenly is filled by male as well as female
- The study has around 69% of respondents from English Medium of Instruction.
- The self-awareness skill is the most excellently perceived soft skill parameter by majority of respondents.
- The computer skills need a special focus as the rating for the same seems to be lowest amongst all the other skills mentioned.

Suggestions

The research results show that soft skills of the students can be refined by devising framed and standardized soft skills training sessions to them. This will help them gain a competitive edge and foster not only the employability but also over all personality development.

Those students' who are regularly exposed to soft skills sessions will have an edge over other students not only with respect to employability but also with respect to overall personality development. This is predicted to be reflected whenever they will be facing interviewpersonality development. Though technical skills are needed at the entry level for any fresher it is his soft skills and conceptual skills that is going to help the candidate in scaling the heights in career.

Limitations of the study

- As the major source of data is primary, biasness on the part of respondents can be a major limitation to this research.
- The scope of the research is limited to Jamnagar city only.
- The inexperience on the part of researcher in the research field might affect the results

Conclusion

Soft skills are quintessential adornment along with the hard skills in the current scenario. The present-day graduates should have the ability to cope with stress and emotions, effectively communicate their ideas and expressions, ability to connect and coordinate, and should have strong interpersonal skills to work collaboratively.

Thus, this paper throws light on pressing priority i.e., graduation colleges need to take up quick measures to reduce this lacuna that is existing in the students by introducing soft skills training programme as a part of their curriculum.

References

Aparna, N. & Raakhee, A. S. (2011). Life Skill Education for Adolescents: Its Relevance and Importance. *GESJ: Education Science and Psychology*, 2 (19), 3-7

Christy Mekala, V. (2012). A Study to Assess the Life Skill among Adolescents at Selected College in Coimbatore.

Dhingra, R. & Chauhan, K. S. (2017). Assessment of Life Skills of Adolescents in Relation to Selected Variables. *International Journal of Scientific and Research Publications*, 7 (8), 201-212

Lavy, Ilana, and Aharon Yadin. (2013) Soft skills an important key for employability in the shift to a service-driven economy era. *International Journal of e-Education, e-Business, e-Management, and e-Learning*, 3(5)

Engelberg, S. (November, 2015). A developmental Perspective on Soft Skills. Speech at "Soft Skills and their role in employability – New perspectives in teaching, assessment, and certification," Bertinoro, FC, Italy.

Elderidge Brad (2006). The growing need for soft skills. [http:// www.ourfactsyourfuture.org/admin/uploadedPublications](http://www.ourfactsyourfuture.org/admin/uploadedPublications)