



An Empirical Analysis of Perception Differential Between Employers and Job Aspirants on the Importance of Employability Skills

KEYWORDS

Employability Skills, Perception Differential, Graduate unemployment, Radar Chart, Independent Samples T Test

Kanhaiya Lal

PhD Scholar

Khushboo Singh

Senior Vice President, INLEAD, Gurgaon

Deepak Sharma

Dean, INLEAD, Gurgaon

Kaustav Paul

Senior Research Associate, INLEAD, Gurgaon

ABSTRACT

The issue of low employability in our country India is on a rise which may be attributed to perception differential between the employers and the job aspirants on the importance of employability skills. Hence, this paper attempted to analyze that whether the perceptions of the job aspirants on the importance of employability skills were in sync with the industry perspective or there existed a perception differential between the employers and the job aspirants on the importance of the employability skills. The responses of 183 management students in Delhi-NCR who would start looking for jobs soon were analyzed along with the responses of 72 recruiters from various organizations belonging to diversified industries. The results indicated significant differences in perception and hence it is advised that the academic institutions must frame their curriculum with the industry expectations so as to address the employability problem in the country

INTRODUCTION

Globalization associated with liberalization and privatization has been a major influence for social, economic, political and cultural development around the world. New job opportunities have led to more emphasis on skilled workforce. However, in our country, India, the lack of desired skills and required level of skills is a significant factor leading to low employability which can be defined as key skills, core skills, life skills, essential skills, key competencies, necessary skills, transferable skills those are instrumental to be employed in the industry along with making a progress in the career. Even, unfortunately in majority of the cases, the business schools are unable to offer to meet the expectation of the students as well as corporate recruiters when emphasis is provided more on business and revenue generation instead of focusing on academic requirement as the bull's eye. According to Rubin and Dierdoff (2009), the curriculum of business management course often fails to provide managerial skills which an MBA graduate is expected to apply in real life problem solving cases.

The senior manager of a company often prefers to pursue executive MBA in order to get increment promotion or switch over to a new organization which can be termed as a big leap in their professional careers (Dhar, 2012). Similarly, different organizations prefer to send their employees to pursue the professional course where the entire expense is borne by the company and employees do their MBAs within a sabbatical leave and this scenario is often arising due to the lack of skilled management graduates. Thus, in this landscape, it is very important to analyze the perceptual difference between the employers and the job aspirants regarding the importance of various employability skills which will enable the job aspirants to know whether they are focusing on the right areas and will also facilitate the academic institutions to frame their curriculum more industry specific so as to generate employment among their students.

NEED FOR THE STUDY:

Numerous research publications are prevalent in the field of employment opportunity of students pursuing professional courses like MBA (Wolff, 1996; Smith, 2000; Mason, 2009; Lundstorm, 2011). Several researchers have done plenty of works on Entrepreneurship (Tucker, 1988; MCELwee, 2006; Tominc, 2007; Politics, 2009). However, there has hardly been a research analyzing the employability issue from industry's perspective and all the levels in the organization. Though Lim and Wye (2009) conducted a study on the employability skills from the perspective of the industry, to analyze the perceptual difference between the employers and the undergraduates, however it was in the landscape of Malaysian employment industry. Hence this study attempted to bridge the gap analyzing the perceptual difference between the employers and the job aspirants in the landscape of job market of India.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

- To analyze the perception of the employers regarding the importance of various employability skills.
- To analyze the perception of the job aspirants regarding the importance of various employability skills.
- To analyze the perceptual gap between the employers and the job aspirants regarding the importance of the various employability skills.
- To empirically test the perceptual difference between the employers and the job aspirants regarding the importance of the various employability skills.

RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS:

- H_0 : There was no perception differential between the employers and the job aspirants pertaining to the importance of various employability skills
- H_A : There was significant perception differential between the employers and the job aspirants pertaining to the importance of various employability skills

METHODOLOGY:

This study endeavored to analyze the perception of the

employers and job aspirants regarding the importance of various employability skills. It also aimed to empirically test the perceptual difference between the employers and the job aspirants pertaining to the importance of various employability skills. Thus it was an empirical study in nature.

SAMPLING AND DATA COLLECTION:

The samples for this study were collected implementing convenient sampling technique. The sample comprised of both employers and the job aspirants. The questionnaires were mailed to the recruiters after initial discussion with the regarding the importance of the study and then their views were sought. The samples for the job aspirants were collected from different management colleges in the Delhi-NCR region. The samples for job aspirants comprised of those management students who were pursuing full time management program and were either in first or final year of the management program. The permission to collect samples was allowed on the ground of anonymity.

DESIGN OF QUESTIONNAIRE:

The questionnaire comprised of various employability skills and the employers and the job aspirants were to rate the importance of each employability skill. The questionnaire used a 5 point Likert Scale where "1- Not At All Important", "2 – Not That Important", "4 – Important" and "5 – Very Important". However, point no three (3) was different for the employers and the job aspirants. For the employers, it was "3- May be Important", while for the job aspirants, it was "3 – Not Aware of Its Importance".

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION:

Table 1 presents us with the codes for the dimensions of employability skills. The employers and the job aspirants were asked to rate the importance of each dimension of employability skills and gap analysis was being conducted to analyze the perceptual difference between the employers and the job aspirants pertaining to the importance of the employability skills.

Table 1: Dimensions of the Employability Skills

Code	Variables
ESKILLS1	Listening and understanding
ESKILLS2	Speaking clearly and directly
ESKILLS3	Negotiating skills
ESKILLS4	Reading and deciphering
ESKILLS5	Using numeracy effectively
ESKILLS6	Empathizing
ESKILLS7	Persuading effectively
ESKILLS8	Networking skills
ESKILLS9	Probing skills - asking the right question to the client
ESKILLS10	Being assertive
ESKILLS11	Sharing information
ESKILLS12	Speaking correct English in a neuter accent
ESKILLS13	Time management skills
ESKILLS14	Planning and strategizing skills
ESKILLS15	Translating ideas into action
ESKILLS16	Resource optimization skills

ESKILLS17	Coordinating and organizing people and activities in an orderly manner
ESKILLS18	Establishing clear project goals and deliverables
ESKILLS19	Collecting, analyzing and organizing information
ESKILLS20	Understanding basic business systems and their relationships
ESKILLS21	Predicting- weighing up risk, evaluating alternatives and applying evaluation criteria
ESKILLS22	Decision making skills
ESKILLS23	Solving team conflicts
ESKILLS24	Applying teamwork in a range of situations e.g. Planning and problem solving
ESKILLS25	Pragmatic problem solving skills
ESKILLS26	Skills to solve problems in a team
ESKILLS27	Skills to solve problems independently
ESKILLS28	Skills to apply problem solving strategies across a range of areas
ESKILLS29	Skills to use mathematics including budgeting and financial management to solve problems
ESKILLS30	Skills to work with different demographic groups
ESKILLS31	Skills to leverage technology to facilitate collaboration
ESKILLS32	Skills to define a role as a part of a team
ESKILLS33	Applying teamwork in a range of situations e.g. Planning and problem solving
ESKILLS34	Working as an individual and as a member of a team
ESKILLS35	Skills to leverage technology to facilitate collaboration
ESKILLS36	A range of IT skills to complete various projects and tasks
ESKILLS37	Leadership skills

While Table 1 presented us with the codes those were used to identify each employability skills, Table 2 will give us the descriptive statistics for the perception scores of the employers regarding the importance of the employability skills.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics for Perception Scores of the Employers

Variables	Mean Perception Scores for the Employers	Standard Deviation for the Perception Scores-Employers
ESKILLS1	4.42	.496
ESKILLS2	4.42	.496
ESKILLS3	4.44	.500
ESKILLS4	4.42	.496
ESKILLS5	4.42	.496
ESKILLS6	4.39	.491
ESKILLS7	4.49	.503
ESKILLS8	4.51	.503
ESKILLS9	4.42	.496
ESKILLS10	4.54	.502
ESKILLS11	4.46	.502
ESKILLS12	4.63	.488
ESKILLS13	4.46	.502

ESKILLS14	4.51	.503
ESKILLS15	4.49	.503
ESKILLS16	4.47	.503
ESKILLS17	4.50	.504
ESKILLS18	4.53	.503
ESKILLS19	4.46	.502
ESKILLS20	4.68	.470
ESKILLS21	4.42	.496
ESKILLS22	4.49	.503
ESKILLS23	4.43	.499
ESKILLS24	4.51	.503
ESKILLS25	4.49	.503
ESKILLS26	4.63	.488
ESKILLS27	4.49	.503
ESKILLS28	4.60	.494
ESKILLS29	4.54	.502
ESKILLS30	4.56	.500
ESKILLS31	4.51	.503
ESKILLS32	4.57	.499
ESKILLS33	4.53	.503
ESKILLS34	4.54	.502
ESKILLS35	4.40	.494
ESKILLS36	4.44	.500
ESKILLS37	4.50	.504

Table 2 gives us the descriptive statistics for the perception scores for the employers and recruiters regarding the importance of employability skills. The results indicate that for most of the dimensions pertaining to employability skills, the mean perception scores for the job aspirants were between four (4) which meant "Important" and five (5) "Very Important". The results indicated that the all the dimensions for employability skills seemed to hold great importance to the employers i.e. these were the employability skills that the employers and recruiters were seeking from the job aspirants. Low standard deviation for all the responses established consistencies and lack of variance among the responses i.e. the employers seemed to share the same views regarding the importance of the mentioned employability skills.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics for Perception Scores of the Job Aspirants

Variables	Mean Perception Scores for the Job Aspirants	Standard Deviation for the Perception Scores- Job Aspirants
ESKILLS1	3.98	.790
ESKILLS2	4.02	.807
ESKILLS3	3.89	.836
ESKILLS4	4.05	.816

ESKILLS5	3.97	.810
ESKILLS6	3.94	.829
ESKILLS7	4.02	.804
ESKILLS8	3.96	.833
ESKILLS9	4.06	.842
ESKILLS10	3.97	.833
ESKILLS11	4.05	.819
ESKILLS12	4.07	.787
ESKILLS13	3.98	.827
ESKILLS14	4.00	.821
ESKILLS15	3.95	.836
ESKILLS16	4.00	.841
ESKILLS17	3.99	.824
ESKILLS18	3.90	.857
ESKILLS19	3.97	.837
ESKILLS20	4.02	.844
ESKILLS21	4.10	.760
ESKILLS22	3.94	.767
ESKILLS23	3.92	.790
ESKILLS24	4.06	.818
ESKILLS25	4.07	.801
ESKILLS26	3.95	.816
ESKILLS27	3.99	.824
ESKILLS28	3.91	.832
ESKILLS29	4.03	.817
ESKILLS30	3.95	.816
ESKILLS31	4.00	.834
ESKILLS32	3.92	.804
ESKILLS33	3.99	.834
ESKILLS34	3.91	.816
ESKILLS35	4.11	.820
ESKILLS36	4.08	.807
ESKILLS37	3.90	.848

Table 3 gives us the descriptive statistics for the perception scores for the job aspirants regarding the importance of employability skills. The results indicate that for most of the dimensions pertaining to employability skills, the mean perception scores for the job aspirants were between three (3) which meant "Not Aware of its Importance" and four (4) "Important". However, only for a few of the dimensions, the mean rating was above four (4). The results indicated that for most of the dimensions, the students were "Not Aware of its Importance", while some of them considered the dimensions to be "Important" employability skills. Low standard deviation for the dimensions of the employability skills indicated lack of variance among the responses of the job aspirants.

Chart 1: Gap Analysis between Perception Scores of the Employers and the Job Aspirants



Chart 1 gives us the results for the Gap analysis between the perceptual scores between the employers and the job aspirants regarding the importance of the employability skills through a radar chart. The chart indicates that there was a gap between the perceptions of the recruiters and the job aspirants regarding the importance of the employability skills. The results call for an Independent Samples T Test in order to empirically test the significance of the difference of the mean perception scores between the recruiters and the job aspirants regarding the importance of each employability skill.

Table 4: Empirical Test for Perception Differential between Employers and the Job Aspirants: Independent Samples T Test Results

Dimensions	Mean Difference (Employer - Job Seeker)	Sig Value
ESKILLS1	0.433	0.000
ESKILLS2	0.395	0.000
ESKILLS3	0.558	0.000
ESKILLS4	0.368	0.000
ESKILLS5	0.444	0.000
ESKILLS6	0.448	0.000
ESKILLS7	0.470	0.000
ESKILLS8	0.557	0.000
ESKILLS9	0.357	0.000
ESKILLS10	0.574	0.000
ESKILLS11	0.404	0.000
ESKILLS12	0.555	0.000
ESKILLS13	0.480	0.000
ESKILLS14	0.514	0.000
ESKILLS15	0.535	0.000
ESKILLS16	0.472	0.000
ESKILLS17	0.505	0.000
ESKILLS18	0.630	0.000
ESKILLS19	0.485	0.000
ESKILLS20	0.664	0.000
ESKILLS21	0.319	0.001
ESKILLS22	0.546	0.000

ESKILLS23	0.506	0.000
ESKILLS24	0.449	0.000
ESKILLS25	0.416	0.000
ESKILLS26	0.674	0.000
ESKILLS27	0.492	0.000
ESKILLS28	0.689	0.000
ESKILLS29	0.515	0.000
ESKILLS30	0.604	0.000
ESKILLS31	0.514	0.000
ESKILLS32	0.645	0.000
ESKILLS33	0.539	0.000
ESKILLS34	0.628	0.000
ESKILLS35	0.295	0.000
ESKILLS36	0.363	0.000
ESKILLS37	0.597	0.000

Table 4 gives us the results for the Independent Samples T Test that was being conducted in order to empirically test the difference between the perceptions between the employers and job aspirants. The T test results indicated significant results for each variable suggesting that the perception scores for the employers and recruiters were higher than the job aspirants. Thus, the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternate hypothesis was accepted. The results suggested that for the employers each of the employability skills held more importance than the job aspirants perceived they were.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

The empirical findings of the study find its support from a similar kind of study conducted by Lim and Wye (2009) in the landscape of Malaysian job market also found substantial perceptual difference between employers and the undergraduate students pertaining to the importance of various personal qualities and job skills that together comprise employability skills. This study also found that the most of the management students and those who would become a graduate soon were not aware of the importance of key employability skills. Considering the findings of the study, it is recommended that more such studies should be conducted to dig further into the subject so as to gain key insights regarding employability skills from the industry perspective. Also, more interactions between the academia and the industry should take place where the students along with the management personnel of the academic institutions can become aware of the industry expectations. This will facilitate the academic institutions to frame their curriculum in such a way that they would address the employability issue currently going through the country and thus, will lead the nation to greater prosperity.

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