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THE IMPACT OF ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE ON EMPLOYABILITY – A STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Employability denotes skills and attributes that make an individual desirable to potential employers. Owing to the dramatic increase in enrollment rate of higher education, a diploma is no longer a guarantee of employment and higher education institutes are expected to equip students with employability skills and attributes. However, the mandatory inclusion of employability skills and attributes in higher education has provoked considerable debate and controversy. Although the connection between employability and employment is well documented, it is not clear whether employability skills have potential impacts on academic performance of graduate students. This study is an attempt to further such research work and analyze whether good academic performance ensures employability. The research is an outcome of the data collected out of a series of pool campus drives conducted. The hypthesis was tested using ANOVA and T-test. The results show that very high academic performance does indeed lead to employability. In addition it was also seen that this set of students by and large also had the soft skills that companies look for while hiring candidates.

Introduction

Employability means a set of skills, knowledge, understanding, and personal attributes that make an individual more possible to choose and maintain occupations to be satisfied and successful. The low employability of pedagogy students becomes a concern in this study. Employability is a word that can be used in different contexts and with different meanings. In this course, we are discussing employability as it relates to higher education, so we will use the following definition. Employability is: "a set of achievements – skills, understandings and personal attributes – that makes graduates more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations, which benefits themselves, the workforce, the community and the

economy."

Employability skills in degree students.

Employability skills in degree students are personal qualities that make you "employable". They are sometimes called "soft skills" or "transferable skills" because they are separate from technical knowledge and work experience and can be applied to almost any job, in any industry.

For example, employers want to hire someone who is dependable, hard-working, and who gets along well with their colleagues these all fall under the bracket of employability skills.

Communication and teamwork

Being able to communicate clearly is an important skill for everyone. Our ability to work together depends on it, and your career might require you to communicate well with both colleagues and customers.

Students can improve their communication skills by working collaboratively on coursework and projects while at university, and even by forming study groups with other students on their degree.

Organisation and Management

Organizing their time and resources is important in most areas of life. Organisation is a soft skill that is essential in almost every job, and even during the time at university. Degree students may find themself working on multiple projects at once, meaning they will need to manage their time and priorities. Being organised can make their life much easier

Critical thinking

Critical thinking is the ability to carefully consider a problem, piece of information or argument, and form a judgment on it. It involves thinking both creatively and logically. Employers value critical thinking as a soft skill because they will often require their employees to come up with creative solutions to difficult problems. A university degree is one of the best ways of developing the ability to think critically.

Computer literacy

There are very few professions left that don't require any computer use, so it's easy to see why employers value computer literacy. The more comfortable they are with using computers, the better equipped they will be to succeed in a new job.

At university, they will have plenty of opportunities to use computers on coursework and for research. If they can gain experience using Outlook, Excel and other Microsoft Office programmes, they will much better prepared for the world of business.

Review of Literature

Studying at university can give an advantage in future career. For a start, graduates be able to apply to jobs which specify that you must be a graduate, and the subject studied or the grade achieved may be relevant to some employers. However, even if you have a first-class degree and a relevant subject for the career want, will most likely be competing against others who have the same or similar academic qualifications. Therefore, it's your employability, the unique mix of skills, abilities and personal

qualities that you have, that will make you stand out from the crowd.

Employability is not something that can be easily ignored. Thinking about your employability from an early stage is likely to increase the chance that you will be successful in your chosen career.
The National Knowledge Commission of the Government of India on Higher Education lays down certain guidelines for the betterment of the system; the need for excellence in the system, expansion of the higher education sector in the country, and providing access to higher education for larger numbers of students.
Yorke, M. (2004), Employability in higher education: what it is - what it is not, The Higher Education Academy/ESECT. Employability, therefore, is not just about getting a job, it is about a broader set of skills and attributes that will enable a graduate to be successful throughout their working life. Somalingam Shanthakumari (2013) explains that the concept of employability remains abstract and vague because different qualifications offer different employment opportunities; even in graduate qualifications, different domains play different perceptions on employability. Employability is having positive association with career advancement of graduates. Ketan Mulchandini (2011), hasemphasized that it is just not enough to make university education more widely available the quality and fields of education needs to be improved so that the gain knowledge can be applied in professional carreers. Hema Subramanian (2008) states that the more exposure a student has to the industry, the less commitment he or she demonstrates. Her study revealed that may graduate students, through exposure to the industry, become considerably less interested in selecting business as their career of first choice. This may have serious repercussions, both for the educators and industry.

Need for the Study

India generally produces 4,00,000 graduates annually, corporate are still finiding it difficult to get the candidates suitable for their requirements. According to the ministry of HRD, 85% of the Indian graduates are unemployable due to their lack of knowledge and skills which is a barrier to meet up to the industry's expectations. Hence, this study aims to understand whether good academic performance ensures higher employability.

Objectives of the Study

- To find the relationship between academic performance and employability of students undergoing university / collegiate.
- To identify and analyzethe gap in academic education and employability.
- To suggest ways to bridge the gap between University Education and Corporate expectations.

Research Methodology

This is an analytical study. The study has been planned taking into consideration the students who have participated in the pool campus recruitment drive at City College, Bangalore. The study comprises of feedback received from 16 companies who were invited for the pool campus drive. They can be segregated into the following sectors : IT/ ITES/ BFSI / Other services. There were 2283 participants for the 16 pool

campus recruitment drives belonging to commerce, Science and Management streams.

Academic Score

The Academic scores of the students were categorized into three groups : Less than 60%, 60-70%, and greater than 70%. The Academic score was taken as the aggregate score of their last degree.

Employability Score

The employability scores were categorized into Low, Medium and High. The employability score was taken as aggregate of General Aptitude Test, Communication Skill Test both verbal and written expression, Presentation Skill Test, and Subject Knowledge Test and HR Interview. This was based on the normal test that were administered to candidates for fresher hiring. The data was shared by the HR teams of the companies' who came for the campus recruitment.

Data Collection

Primary Data was collected using a two pronged approach, one set of data from the companies and the other from the participating students:

1. A structured Questionnaire was administered to the HRs of the companies who participated in the campus recruitment drive.
2. Companies' evaluation score sheet. Although 28 companies participated in the Pool Campus Recruitment Drive during the study period, only 16 were considered based on their willingness to share their evaluation score sheet.
3. The student data capture forms (registration forms) which included their course of study and academic scores from 10th onwards.
4. Feedback from the companies
5. Observation :There was a keen sense of observation followed during the study period to understand the various Interview approaches adopted by the companies

Secondary Data was collected from the various Journals, reports and websites such as HRD, UGC, Knowledge Commission, NSDC etc.

Descriptive Statistics, ANOVA, T-Test, Binary Logistic Regression analysis have been used to analyze the data, using MS-EXCEL and SPSS.

Scope of the Study

The study is limited to Bangalore city. The study is limited to students in the pre-final semester of (B.COM, BBM, BCA, B.SC and PG (MBA) programs since there is higher population of students opting for the said courses in comparison to any other course. The study has been carried out with respect to the companies in services sector. (including IT, ITES, Banking & Financial and other Services).

HYPOTHESIS

H_o: Academic Performance has no significant impact on employability of students undergoing university programs.

H_a: Academic Performance has significant impact on employability of students undergoing university programs

Data Analysis & Findings

Table 1: Student Participants Profile

Age Group	**No. of Student Participants**	**% of Student Participants**
a. 19 to 21 yrs	1990	87.17
b. 22 to 25 yrs	293	12.83
Total	2283	100.00
Qualification		
a. B.COm	1335	58.48
b. BBM, BBA	601	26.33
c. BSC, BCA	274	12.00
d. MBA	283	12.40
Gender		
a. Male	1250	54.75
b. Female	1033	45.25
Academic Score		0.00
a. Less than 60	424	18.57
b. 60 to 70	821	35.96
c. Greater than 70	1038	45.47
d. Consistently First Class(in 10^{th}, 12^{th} and graduation)	224	9.81
Selects/ Rejects		
Total Selects	526	23.04
Total Rejects	1757	76.96
Overall Selection Ratio		**23.10**
First Class and Distinction Participants		
a. Rejects	59	2.58
b. Selects	165	7.23
c. **Selection Ratio**		**73.60**
No. of Interviews Attended		
a. None	25	1.10
b. 1 to 3	1098	48.09
c. 4 to 7	792	34.69
d. 7&above	368	16.12

TEST OF HYPOTHESIS

One–way ANOVA Test was conducted to find out whether there was any significant difference in Employability score with respect to the Academic scores. The Academic scores were categorized into three groups as less than 60 %, 60–70% and 70% and above.

Table : ANOVA-single Factor

Summary						
Groups	**Count**	**Sum**	**Average**	**Variance**		
Less than 60	348	17036.67	48.95594	189.1405		
60 to 70	770	38920	50.54545	169.273		

70 and above	1163	62766.67	53.96962	145.6074		
ANOVA						
Source of Variation	**SS**	**DF**	**MS**	**F**	**P-value**	**F crit**
Between Groups	9360.073	2	4680.036	29.20868	2.98E-13	2.999675
Within Groups	364998.5	2278	160.2276			
Total	374358.6	2280				

***Interpretation*:** From the above table it can be seen that there is a significant variance in the.
Employability score between the academic score groups (Less than 60, 60–70, 70 and Above).

The p value obtained is 2.98E–13 which is less than 0.05 (5% significance). Hence, the Null Hypothesis is rejected.

Further, to find the difference between which groups the significant difference lies, T–Tests between groups have been conducted. The results have been summarized below:

Table : T-Transpose

Groups	Mean	Variance	Observations	DF	T Stat	P(T<=t) Two-tail	T Critical Two-tail
60 to 70	50.54545455	169.272964	770	1560	-5.8294	674771E-09	1.961485832
70 and above	53.9696188	145.607414	1163				
70 and above	53.9696188	145.607414	1163	517	6.1311	1.73399E-09	1.964563095
Less Than 60	48.9559387	189.140544	348				
Less Than 60	48.9559387	189.140544	348	637	-1.8193	0.069334431	1.963695081
60 to 70	50.54545455	169.272964	770				

Interpretation: There is a significant difference in employability between Groups:

1. (60–70) and (70 and above) where $p < 0.05$ and t-stat > T-Critical.
2. (70& above) and (less than 60) where $p < 0.05$ and t-stat > T-Critical.

In groups:
(Less than 60) and (60–70) there is no significant difference in the employability as $p > 0.05$.

This indicates that even students in the First class Range (60–70) have no significant advantage in employability in comparison to those below 60% in academic.
Hence we can define the new benchmark in academic score for employability as 70

% or distinction.

A binary logistic regression analysis was conducted to find the impact of academic score and the various skills generally tested for fresher's like Aptitude, Communication, Presentation, HR Interview on selection of students.
The results are summarized below:

Table : Case Processing Summary

Unweighted Cases		N	Percent
Selected Cases	Included in Analysis	2265	100.0
	Missing Cases	0	.0
	Total	2265	100.0

Table 5: Dependent Variable Encoding

Original Value	Internal Value
Rejected	0
Selected	1

Table 6: Omnibus Tests of Model Coefficients

		Chi-square	DF	Sig.
Step 1	Step	305.578	5	.000
	Block	305.578	5	.000
	Model	305.578	5	.000

Table : Model Summary

Step	-2 Log Likelihood	Cox & Snell R Square	Nagelkerke R Square
1	1546.609a	.480	.626
a. Estimation terminated at iteration number 6 because parameter estimates changed by less than.001.			

Therefore, the explained variation in the dependent variable, Selection/Rejection based on our model is 62.6% based on Nagelkerke R Square as shown in table 7, and the model correctly classified 87.7% of the cases as seen in table 8 below.

Table: Classification Table

	Observed		Predicted		
			Var00006		Per-centage Correct
			Rejected	Selected	
Step 1	Var00006	Rejected	1923	20	99.0
		Selected	259	63	19.6
	Overall percentage				87.7
A. The cut value is.500					

Table : Variables in the Equation

		B	SE	Wald	DF	Sig	Exp (B)
Step 1 a	Academic	.020	.007	8.308	1	.00	1.020

						4	
	Aptitude	.588	.039	224.828	1	.000	1.800
	Communication	-.152	.061	6.197	1	.013	.859
	Presentation	.070	.063	1.248	1	.264	1.072
	HR Interview	-.274	.056	23.617	1	.000	.760
	Constant	-6.449	.590	119.470	1	.000	.002
a. Variable (s) entered on step 1: Academic, Aptitude, Communication, Presentation, HR Interview.							

It can be seen that Academic Score, Aptitude, Communication, and HR Interview have found to have a significant impact on the final selection of candidates while presentation skills is found to be not so significant in the final selection.

Findings and Suggestions

Pooled Campus Drives is the best way for graduate students to seek employment. A majority of students attending the Pooled Campus Recruitment Drive are in the age group of 19 to 21 years. Participation is almost equal between Male and Female students with just about a 10% edge towards Males. Majority of the students have attended at least 1 to 3 Interviews. Employability score depends on the Academic scores. Higher the score in their academics students seems to be more employable. 74% of participants scoring above 60% in their last graduation have been selected by the companies. The study shows that there is significant bearing of academic scores on employability. Further the study indicates that academic performance should be really high(distinction) to make an impact on employability.

Colleges and Universities can focus more on developing the student's broader skills in order to prepare them for the world of work (communication, problem-solving, money management, attitudes, etc.).

- Career advice can be improved though more connections with employers and a focus on vocational choices as well as academic pathways.
- More partnership-working between education and industry, including more work experience for young people before they make career choices.
- More training in the workplace, including Apprenticeships, which allow employers to mould new recruits to suit their requirements, and offer the opportunity to earn money whilst learning.
- Encourage the students to take up short–term Internships to understand the workplace scenario and the expectations from the industry. This will also be a attesting ground to make right career choices.
- Students need to be advised right from their school level to maintain consistency in their academic records scoring at least 70% and above.
- Students need to be given support in the colleges for enhancement of the Job–related skills. For instance, for Technical roles students' needs to develop hands on skills in latest technology areas like Cloud computing, Big Data Analytics, Mobile Computing etc. which may not be a part of their academic curriculum. In

the Non–technical cadre they may develop skills in Financial Statement Analysis, Social Media Recruitment, Digital Marketing etc. In the Managerial cadre students could be advised to acquire skills in analysing macro and micro components of business, presentation and communication skills etc.

- Students can be apprised of the Job opportunities in the campuses of the various streams of the study. This can be component of counselling at the time of admission so that students can make an informed choice.

Importance of Employability in Degree students

Producing **employable** graduates forms part of the process of educating. Generic **employability skills** are **important** because the labour market is intensely competitive, and employers are looking for people who are flexible, take the initiative and have the ability to undertake a variety of tasks in different environments.

Employers are demanding skills from graduates which are outside the subject area of study in Higher Education. Indeed, some employers have placed less importance on graduates' actual degree discipline in favor of the more generic skills which they have acquired.

Employers generally see a graduate's achievements related to the subject discipline as necessary but not sufficient for them to be recruited. Achievements outside the boundaries of the discipline extracurricular activities such as work experience, volunteering, and involvement in clubs and societies are seen as having equal importance in this context as the knowledge and experience acquired through academic study.

In today's competitive job market, it's important to stand out. Employability skills can help to do that. While having a good degree in a relevant subject is certainly important, it's something that many graduates will be able to offer.

Therefore, lots of employers will make final hiring decisions based on what other skills candidates can bring to the job. Being able to demonstrate good employability skills could be what makes a hiring manager choose you!

Gain employability skills on a degree

These soft skills are all vital to finding a job and having a successful career, but they can develop them long before then. In fact, most university degrees will require to use soft skills, with critical thinking, time management and team work all being common features of most degrees. Clearly then, the best way to prepare for future career is with a university degree.

CONCLUSION

The relationship between higher education and employability in turn, the economy is longstanding. Employers generally see a graduate's achievements related to the subject discipline as necessary but not sufficient for them to be recruited. In some employment contexts the actual subject discipline may be relatively unimportant. Achievements outside the boundaries of the discipline (such as the possession of so-called 'soft skills') are generally considered to be important in the recruitment of graduates. Employability is not merely an attribute of the new graduate. It needs to be continuously refreshed throughout a person's working life.

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