

**Soft Skill and future Employability – A Study with Special
Reference to D. K District of Karnataka**

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ABSTRACT

According to a research conducted by Harvard University, the Carnegie Foundation and Stanford Research Centre, 85 per cent of job success comes from having well-developed people skills or soft skills and only 15 per cent of job success comes from technical skills or knowledge (hard skills). It has been highlighted that soft skills play a crucial role in increasing the chances of the candidates to get an employment. Technically, it helps the candidates improve their employability skills.

The present paper intends to determine student awareness and perception towards the prominence of soft skills among the under graduate students from the employment point of view. A total of 150 under graduate students from 10 Government & Private (including aided) educational institutions each randomly selected from D K District of Karnataka. It will be analysed by using percentage technique. Required data are collected from the structured questionnaire.

Key words: People skills, Technical skills, Employment, Employability skills and Student awareness and perception.

Introduction

According to a research conducted by Harvard University, the Carnegie Foundation and Stanford Research Centre 85 per cent of job success comes from having well-developed people skills or soft skills and only 15 per cent of job success comes from technical skills and knowledge (hard skills). It has been highlighted that soft skills play a crucial role in increasing the chances of the candidates to get an employment. Technically, it helps the candidates improve their employability skills.

Soft skills

Soft skills have been defined in different contexts and include different perspectives, as per various authors at various times. Soft skills are nontechnical and not reliant on abstract reasoning, involving interpersonal and intrapersonal abilities to facilitate mastered performance in particular contexts. Parente, John Stephan, and Randy Brown (2012) defined soft skills as people management skills. The soft skills are all included “teaming skills” in its preview in addition to communication and social skills, work ethic, critical thinking and problem solving.

AnjuShukla&Gopika Kumar (2017), a range of terminology have been given to soft skills by various authors, such as - social skills, interpersonal skills, human skills, key skills, soft factors, people skills, personal skills, critical skills. According to Stevens (2005), the technology industry in Silicon Valley believes successful careers are based on “the ability to communicate effectively both orally and in writing”

Soft Skills and Employability

According to Keller S, Parker C M & Chan C (2011), the employability skills are classified in to attributes and skills, in which attributes means to non-skill related behaviours and attitudes, while skills refer to the ability to carry out a technical task.

According GoswamiRitu (2013), skills for employability are Communication skills, managerial skills, critical thinking and problem-solving skill, skills to work in a team, Time Management, Stress Management and Anger Management skills, Leadership Skills, Decision Making, Motivation, Perception Building, Goal setting skills.

As per Hart Research Associates Survey, the important skills demanded by employers are: Innovation (95per cent), capacity to think critically, communicate clearly and solve complex problems (93 per cent). More than 90 per cent of the employers opine that, it is important that those they hire demonstrate ethical judgment and integrity, intercultural skills, and the capacity for continued new learning. More than 75 per cent of employers reveal they desire more emphasis on 5 key areas containing: Critical Thinking, Complex Problem Solving, Written and Oral Communication, and Applied Knowledge in real-world settings.

Pereira Orlando P (2013), article presents skills which play a prominent role in employment market: They are Oral communication skill, Written communication skill, Initiative to solve problems, Decision making ability and self-trust, Analysis and concision skills, Team work related skills, Inter-personal skills, Ability to (re)act in a stressful environment, Ability to create and share new ideas, Critical and cooperative spirit, Willingness to share experiences and Initiative and creativity.

Importance of Soft skills

Klaus P (2010), states that, time and again the importance of soft skills has been highlighted by various authors and organisations. The survey believed that soft skills are more desirable than hard skills when determining a candidate's employability. When such Soft Skills are perceived as the most Important, the survey specifies that, 80% of the respondents identified communication (oral, written, body language, listening skills and etiquette) as very important, 72% identified teamwork as very important and 44% identified time management as very important. With regards to the top three hard skills identified by the survey population, 78% identified technical problem solving as very important, 65% identified technical knowledge as very important and 54% identified analytical capability as very important. The survey concluded, after the in-depth interviews, and confirmed that communication was clearly the most important skill.

Statement of the Problem

Majority of the under graduate students are lacking in soft skills. They are very excellent and potential to become good employees with hard skills, but they fail to get a job. It is because they do not know how to market themselves to their potential employer. Many countries including India are having an issue of employability and it has been identified that lack of soft skill is among the factors for this scenario. It is also being the biggest challenge for institutions of higher education (university) to develop employable skills, enhance knowledge

and make local graduates more attractive to employers. The students should know the significant soft skills that the employers are looking for in their employees. This would help the employees know what they should furnish themselves before approaching for a job in the corporate world. The present paper intends to determine student awareness and perception towards the prominence of soft skills among under graduate students from the employment point of view. With due consideration, an attempt is made with “**Soft Skill and Future Employment – With Special Reference to D K District of Karnataka**” practised in the study area.

Objectives

The study was conducted with the following two objectives:

1. To evaluate the awareness & perception of under graduate students towards the prominence of soft skills.
2. To recognise the Students’ perception on the importance of soft skills for job employment.

Research Methodology

Research Design

The study is of exploratory nature and is meant to assess the awareness & perception of under graduate students towards the prominence of soft skills from the employment point of view in the Dakshina Kannada District, Karnataka.

Source of Data

To achieve the objectives, this study has used both primary and secondary data. The secondary data and information have been collected from various sources like, journals, magazines and publications etc. Primary data has been collected through structured questionnaire from the under graduate students in the Dakshina Kannada District, Karnataka. The study is carried in the month of October & November 2019.

Sample Design & Size

A total of 150 under graduate students from 10 Government & Private (including aided) educational institutions each randomly selected from D K District of Karnataka. Required data are collected from the structured questionnaire. The research was made by the survey in accordance to the convenience of the students and request was made to them to fill up the questionnaire with correct and unbiased information. So the sample type is convenient sampling.

Tools for data analysis

Data Analysis is done through basic statistical methods. The relevant data are presented in appropriate tables and percentages in this paper.

Limitations of the study

This study is based on the data furnished by the under graduate students and on the observations. An element of personal bias may affect the data to some extent. Further, the results of this study may be applicable only to areas similar to that of the study area. With due awareness of these limitations, an attempt is made “A Study on Students’ Soft Skill Perception of Future Employment – With Special Reference to D K District of Karnataka”.

Selection of sample respondents:

Table 1

Distribution of respondents on Type of college & Gender wise

Type of college Gender	Government		Aided & Private		Total	
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
Boys	25	16.67	25	16.67	50	33.34
Girls	50	33.33	50	33.33	100	66.66
Total	75	50	75	50	150	100

Source: Field survey

Table 2

Distribution of respondents on Type of college & Stream wise

Sectors Stream	Government		Aided & Private		Total	
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
B.Com + B B A	40	26.67	40	26.67	80	53.34
B.Sc + B C A	25	16.67	25	16.67	50	33.34
B A	10	06.66	10	06.66	20	13.32
Total	75	50	75	50	150	100

Source: Field survey

Table 3
Distribution of respondents on Type of college & year of study wise

Sectors Year of study	Government		Aided & Private		Total	
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
I st year	20	13.33	20	13.33	40	26.67
II nd year	25	16.67	25	16.67	50	33.33
Final year	30	20.00	30	20.00	60	40.00
Total	75	50	75	50	150	100

Source: Field survey

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Understanding of soft skill

In this section, the basic idea is to investigate whether or not respondents have clear understanding of soft skills. Respondents were asked about what skills are considered as soft skills from their point of view. A list of 12 soft skills was identified and developed from the literature review. Respondents need to choose any skills that they considered as soft skills. Accordingly, the study reveals the following in table 4:

Table 4
Distributions of respondents on clear understanding of soft skills

No.	Types of soft skills	Frequency in total
1	Communication	137 (91.33%)
2	Leadership	132 (88.00%)
3	Problem solving	131 (87.33%)
4	Critical thinking	125 (83.33%)
5	Teamwork capability	119 (79.33%)
6	Creativity	83 (55.33%)
7	Common Knowledge	62 (41.33%)
8	Time management	60 (40.00%)
9	Negotiating skills	58 (38.50%)
10	Responsibility	53 (35.50%)
11	Conflict Management	47 (31.50%)
12	Business Management	46 (30.50%)

Source: Field survey

The above table reveals that, out of 150 respondents, 91.33 per cent considered communication as a soft skill, followed by leadership, Problem solving, Critical thinking, teamwork capability and creativity with 88.00 per cent, 87.33 per cent, 83.33 per cent, 79.33 per cent and 55.33 per cent respectively. Skills such as Common Knowledge, Time management, Negotiating skills, Responsibility, Conflict management and Business management are among the skills that more than 50% respondents did not consider them as a soft skill attribute. This maybe because they are not exposed to those soft skills as the subjects offered in their study program or curriculum.

Students' perception on the importance of Soft skills

After investigating the respondents' clear understanding of soft skills, a 5-point Likert- type scale was created to evaluate the respondents' perception on the importance of soft skills in the study area. The questionnaire used to rate their opinion on importance of soft skills which they consider in their capacity, with the range of Strongly Agree (5), Agree (4), Neutral (3), Disagree (2), and Strongly disagree (1) was used. Accordingly, the study exhibits the following perceptions in the study area in Table 5:

Table 5

Students' perception on the importance of soft skills

No	Factors of importance of soft skills	Perception					Total
		1	2	3	4	5	
1	Value added point of view	29	36	06	49	30	150
2	Better job point of view	11	17	08	53	61	150
3	Career developments point of view	24	26	05	47	48	150
4	Difficult to acquire point of view	38	51	07	31	23	150
5	Really required point of view	23	24	19	21	63	150
6	Less important than hard skill point of view	22	29	33	47	19	150
7	Attached to pay structure point of view	07	16	02	28	97	150
Overall		154	199	80	276	341	1,050
Mean score		15	19	08	26	32	100

Source: Field survey

The study analysed the students' perception towards the importance of soft skills, majority of respondents agree that soft skill is a value added component (52.67 per cent) for them. 76 per cent of the respondents believe that they will get better job when they have good soft skills. 73 per cent of the respondents state that, soft skill will create their career development. Around 56 per cent stated that soft skills are mandatory to employer. Out of 150 students 54 students perceive that, soft skill is difficult to acquire than hard skill. About 44 per cent respondents agree that soft skill is less important than hard skill. Majority 83 per cent of the respondents perceive that candidates having excellent soft skill will fetch better pay structure in the corporate or employment market.

The above analysis in total reveals that, majority 58 per cent of the respondents know very well about the importance or relevance of soft skills in respect of Value addition, better job prospects, career developments opportunities and toughness to acquire, must to employer and attract better pay in their future work life.

Table 6

Students' perception on the importance of soft skills for job employment

After examining the respondents' perception on the importance of soft skills for job employment in the study area, a 5-point Likert-type scale was created. The questionnaire was used to rate their opinion on importance of soft skills for job employment which they consider in their capacity, with the range of Strongly Agree (5), Agree (4), Neutral (3), Disagree (2), and Strongly disagree (1) was used. Accordingly, the study exhibits the following perceptions in Table 6:

No	Types of soft skills	Perception					Total
		1	2	3	4	5	
1	Communication	06	07	01	84	52	150
2	Leadership	06	17	06	52	69	150
3	Problem solving	21	28	07	45	49	150
4	Critical thinking	20	31	12	61	26	150
5	Teamwork capability	11	16	08	61	54	150
6	Creativity	19	32	16	41	42	150
7	Common Knowledge	17	19	03	73	38	150
8	Time management	14	26	04	60	46	150

9	Negotiating skills	20	28	23	42	37	150
10	Responsibility	04	09	09	63	65	150
11	Conflict Management	25	33	16	47	29	150
12	Business Management	21	19	11	55	44	150
Overall		184	265	116	684	551	1,800
Mean score		10	15	06	38	31	100

Source: Field survey

The study shows that 91 per cent of the respondents' perceived Communication as very important soft skill for job employment. Candidates with good communication skills might have more opportunity to be employed comparing to those who do not have. Second highest ranking of soft skills that perceived as very important for job employment is capacity of taking responsibility. About 85 per cent of the respondents' believe that one must have responsibility skill to be able to work in this present employment. Besides Communication and responsibility, most of the respondents (81 per cent) perceived that leadership is one of the most soft skills that required by employer. The study reveals that, Teamwork capability plays an important role in the employment and perceived to the extent of 77 per cent. Common Knowledge (74 per cent), Time management (71 per cent), Business Management (66 per cent) and Problem solving (63 per cent) are the next level of perceived skills by the respondents as prominent from employment point of view. The least important of soft skills for job employment based on respondents' opinion are Conflict Management (51 per cent), Negotiating skills (53 per cent), Creativity (55 per cent) and Critical thinking (58 per cent) skills. This opinion may be influenced by students' lack of exposure to industry and understanding towards the job scope.

Table 7

Students' perception on the existence of soft skills in them for job employment

After examining the respondents' perception on the importance of soft skills for job employment, a 5-point Likert- type scale was created to evaluate the respondents' perception on the existence of soft skills in them for job employment in the study area. The questionnaire used to rate their opinion on the existence of soft skills in them which they consider in their capacity, with the range of Very high (5), High (4), neutral (3), Low (2), and Very low (1) was used. Accordingly, the study exhibits the following perceptions in Table 7:

No	Types of soft skills	Perception					Total
		1	2	3	4	5	
1	Communication	11	18	12	68	41	150
2	Leadership	23	25	09	41	52	150
3	Problem solving	39	37	06	32	36	150
4	Critical thinking	37	45	10	26	32	150
5	Teamwork capability	23	31	06	49	41	150
6	Creativity	28	33	12	42	35	150
7	Common Knowledge	33	44	06	41	26	150
8	Time management	20	26	10	51	43	150
9	Negotiating skills	37	49	12	29	23	150
10	Responsibility	35	53	09	32	21	150
11	Conflict Management	41	51	15	20	23	150
12	Business Management	29	22	13	49	37	150
Overall		356	434	120	480	410	1,800
Mean score		20	24	07	26	23	100

Source: Field survey

The study shows that, 73 per cent of the respondents stated that they already have Communication skills, Time management skill by 63 per cent, Leadership skill to the extent of 62 per cent, Teamwork capability skill by 60 per cent, 57 per cent Business Management skill and Creative skill to the extent of 51 per cent. All the above skills perceived by the students' respondents probably from their active involvement in class room and curricular activities either inside or outside their campus. On the contrary, the study reveals that, the perception of the students towards own skill acquisition in terms of Conflict Management skill by 61 per cent, Responsibility skill to the extent of 59 per cent, Negotiating skills to 57 per cent, Critical thinking skill is 55 per cent and Common Knowledge and Problem solving skill 51 per cent each is low and very low. It clearly indicates that, students' have very limited industry exposure. These soft skills are normally not being taught in their curriculum of under graduation subjects. Therefore, the students were not able to presume or imagine and acquire those skills throughout their study time.

Findings & Recommendations

The study identified that students are aware, understand and perceive soft skills is important for their education and employment, yet, the present scenario and system of teaching and learning restricts them to become proficient at soft skills. Accordingly, the following are some recommendations to overcome this problem:

- (i) Implementing problem-based learning in all technical subjects, so that it helps to develop their critical and common thinking because it makes strong connections between concepts when they learn facts and skills.
- (ii) Introducing the student-centered learning in every subject with real life situation, so that it helps to develop their participation skills, thereby it also boosts performance at work, develops problem-solving skills & facilitates personalized learning too.
- (iii) Students' perception discovered that, they need to improve negotiation skill. The higher education should revise the syllabus and taking into consideration of industrial & entrepreneurial concepts in such a way that student is to be more exposed to modern market.

Conclusion

Even after the introduction of some of the courses/ subjects in under graduation in the study area which exposed the students to a certain extent to these soft skills in different structure, still the respondents feel that there is lot to learn and acquire about soft skills to enable them to perform well in their future careers. It is true that even the Ministry of Higher Education is trying its level best to fit in various types of soft skills in formal curriculum in most of the higher education system. Since soft skills are value added for students when seeking job, students can be made more marketable by educating and training in these areas of skills. Moreover, it has been found out that these respondents are aware of the significance of soft skills and how vital it is in an employment.

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