

Assessing the Employability Skills of Arts Students – An Empirical Study in Erode, Tamil Nadu

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ABSTRACT

Employability skills refer to a set of core competencies that enable individuals to secure and retain employment, as well as perform effectively in the workplace. For arts students, these skills are particularly crucial as they prepare to enter a dynamic and competitive job market where technical knowledge alone may not suffice. Employability skills encompass a broad range of attributes including communication, teamwork, problem-solving, adaptability, time management, leadership, and digital literacy. These skills not only support academic success but also enhance graduates' readiness to transition smoothly into professional roles. Arts students often develop employability skills through academic projects, presentations, internships, cultural events, and extracurricular activities. Their exposure to diverse subjects and interdisciplinary learning fosters creativity, critical thinking, and the ability to understand complex human and societal issues, skills highly valued by employers. However, despite possessing many of these competencies, arts students sometimes face challenges in articulating and showcasing their employability strengths in ways that align with market demands. Hence, the researchers proposed a study to analyze the employability skills of arts students in arts and science colleges, Erode, Tamilnadu. A descriptive research design is adopted due to the nature of the study. Both primary and secondary data sources are utilized. The study population has consisted of arts students from arts and science colleges in Erode, Tamilnadu, with a sample size of 132 selected through a random sampling method. A structured questionnaire is administered to collect data on arts students' profile including demographic and academic details as well as their employability skills which assessed through 5-point Likert scale method. The collected data are managed using MS- Excel and analyzed using statistical methods such as percentage analysis, mean score, standard deviation, and ANOVA. Additionally, null hypotheses are framed to test for significant differences in mean employability skills across selected independent variables. This study observed from analysis that the arts students belong to male, postgraduate, II year, studying in commerce department and have job search skill exhibit higher levels of employability skills in arts and science colleges, Erode.

Keywords: Employability Skills, Career Readiness, Skill Development, Higher Education, Arts Students, Soft Skills, Communication Skills, Arts and Science College.

Introduction

Arts students possess a diverse range of employability skills that make them valuable assets in a variety of professional settings. One of the key strengths of arts students is their ability to think critically and creatively. Through their studies, they learn to analyze complex information, evaluate multiple perspectives, and generate innovative ideas. These skills are highly transferable and sought after in industries such as marketing, media, education, and public relations. Additionally, arts students often excel in communication both written and verbal. Their training typically involves presenting arguments, writing essays, and engaging in discussions, which sharpens their ability to express ideas clearly and persuasively. Collaboration is another vital skill arts students develop. Group projects, performances, and

workshops foster teamwork and interpersonal skills, enabling them to work effectively with others. Time management and self-discipline are also integral, as arts courses often require independent study, deadlines, and project planning. Furthermore, adaptability and resilience are nurtured as arts students navigate the uncertainties of creative processes and constructive feedback. These attributes help them to remain open-minded, flexible, and capable of adjusting to various professional environments. In today's rapidly evolving job market, employers value individuals who can approach problems with originality, engage diverse audiences, and adapt to change qualities that arts graduates consistently demonstrate. Technological competence is also becoming more common among arts students, as they increasingly use digital tools for research, presentations, and content creation. Whether in graphic design, journalism, cultural management, or social advocacy, arts students bring a well-rounded, human-centered approach to problem-solving and innovation. Therefore, contrary to some misconceptions, arts graduates are not only employable but also uniquely equipped with versatile and dynamic skills that align with the demands of modern workplaces. With the right guidance and opportunities, their potential for career success is substantial and far-reaching.

Review of Literature

According to Ahmed, R. J., & Gunasegaran, D. M. (2022) mentioned that most of the professional college students had average level of employability skills. Also, professional college female students had higher mean scores than the male students in the dimensions of fundamental skills and teamwork skills. Further, professional college engineering students had higher mean score than the medical, law, agriculture and teacher education students in the fundamental skills, teamwork skills and personal management skills dimensions of the employability skills. In view of Sahoo et al. (2022) revealed that 17% of university students possessed self-concept, 17% exhibited self-control, 17% demonstrated social skills, 17% had communication skills, 18% showed problem-solving abilities, and 13% had job searching skills. Further, science students possessed comparatively higher employability skills than arts students with respect to academic stream-wise differences in employability skills, and this difference was statistically significant at the 0.01 level. The authors Jagathesh and Ponraj (2024) assumed that 15.38% of the students demonstrated high awareness, 70.92% of the students showed average awareness and 13.69% of the students exhibited low level of employability skill awareness among undergraduate students. Also, majority of the students felt into the average category, which was statistically higher than those in the high and low groups which indicated that employability skill awareness among undergraduate students remained generally steady at an average level.

The study of Gowsalya et al. (2015) noticed that majority of the respondents were belonged to male, below 18 years and studying management. Moreover, the majority mean score of 3.36 for Global Awareness indicated that students considered it to be somewhat important for identifying employability skills. Meanwhile, Word Processing (mean = 3.57) and Internet Access and Use (mean = 4.45) were regarded as important by students in identifying employability skills. The researchers Dorji Wangdi et al. (2023) highlighted that many humanities students selected their courses without considering future employability prospects, resulting in limited awareness of the job market and a higher risk of unemployment. In addition, the analysis emphasized several contributing factors to unemployment among humanities graduates, including a lack of job opportunities, insufficient work experience, unclear career direction, and the limited relevance of their courses to real-world employment needs. The analysis of Gurung et al. (2023) displayed that graduates perceived employability as the ability to secure employment through the development of relevant employability skills. Further, they regarded academic qualifications as a significant advantage in navigating the highly competitive and saturated graduate labor market. Also, it was noted that employers sought graduates who possess not only discipline-specific knowledge but also essential soft skills.

Statement of the Problem

In today's competitive job market, possessing a degree alone is no longer sufficient for securing employment. Employers increasingly seek candidates who demonstrate a strong set of employability skills such as communication, teamwork, problem-solving, and adaptability. Arts students, despite having academic knowledge and creativity, often face challenges in meeting these skill expectations due to limited practical exposure and structured training. This gap between academic learning and industry requirements can hinder their career opportunities and professional growth. In regions like Erode, where arts and science colleges play a significant role in higher education, assessing and enhancing

employability skills among students is crucial. Therefore, this study aims to examine the level of employability skills among arts students in arts and science colleges, Erode.

Objectives of the Study

- To explore the profile including demographic and academic details of the Arts students in Erode.
- To analyze the employability skills of selected Arts students in Erode.

Hypothesis of the Study

- There is no significant difference in mean employability skills with respect to Degree of Studying of the arts students.
- There is no significant difference in mean employability skills with respect to department studying of the arts students.
- There is no significant difference in mean employability skills with respect to Additional skills of the arts students.

Research Methods

This study adopted a descriptive research design and quantitative methods. The researchers aimed to collect both primary and secondary data sources. A structured questionnaire was used to gather profile and employability skills of arts and science college students. The questionnaire employed a 5-point Likert scale to convert students' opinions on employability skills into numeric values for analytical purposes. A total of 132 arts students in arts and science colleges were selected using a random sampling method. The collected data were entered into MS Excel and analyzed using statistical tools such as percentage analysis, mean score, standard deviation and ANOVA, with the assistance of SPSS version 27.0.

Result and Discussion

• Profile of the selected Arts Students and Employability Skills

The details about the selected arts students' profile including demographic and academic information and their employability skills are given in the following table.

Table 1: Profile of the selected Arts Students and Employability Skills

| No. | Variables Name | Number of Respondents | % | Mean | SD |
|----------|----------------------------|-----------------------|--------------|------|------|
| 1 | Gender | | | | |
| | • Male | 74 | 56.1 | 3.76 | 0.49 |
| | • Female | 58 | 43.9 | 3.69 | 0.45 |
| | Total | 132 | 100.0 | | |
| 2 | Degree of Studying | | | | |
| | • UG | 87 | 65.9 | 3.70 | 0.52 |
| | • PG | 45 | 34.1 | 3.79 | 0.36 |
| | Total | 132 | 100.0 | | |
| 3 | Year of Studying | | | | |
| | • I Year | 35 | 26.5 | 3.59 | 0.42 |
| | • II Year | 68 | 51.5 | 3.95 | 0.52 |
| | • III Year | 29 | 22.0 | 3.79 | 0.29 |
| | Total | 132 | 100.0 | | |
| 4 | Department Studying | | | | |
| | • Tamil | 19 | 14.4 | 3.74 | 0.39 |
| | • English | 11 | 8.3 | 3.28 | 0.69 |
| | • Commerce | 43 | 32.6 | 3.88 | 0.37 |
| | • Management | 32 | 24.2 | 3.70 | 0.51 |
| | • Economics | 27 | 20.5 | 3.70 | 0.43 |
| | Total | 132 | 100.0 | | |
| 5 | Additional Skills | | | | |
| | • Interpersonal Skills | 26 | 19.7 | 3.80 | 0.45 |

| | | | | | |
|---|---------------------|------------|--------------|------|------|
| • | Social Skills | 54 | 40.9 | 3.61 | 0.49 |
| • | Computer Skill | 33 | 25.0 | 3.74 | 0.42 |
| • | Job Searching Skill | 19 | 14.4 | 3.97 | 0.44 |
| | Total | 132 | 100.0 | | |

- It is observed from the above table that 56.1% are male, while 43.9% are female among the selected arts students. The analysis mentioned that the higher participation of male respondents in the study compared to their female counterparts.
- From the analysis, a majority of 65.9% of the students are pursuing undergraduate (UG) degrees, whereas 34.1% are enrolled in postgraduate (PG) programs. This analysis noticed that undergraduate students form the dominant group in the sample.
- The analysis assumed that more than half of the students (51.5%) are in their second year of study, followed by 26.5% in their first year and 22.0% in their third year. This analysis divulged that second-year students are the most represented in the study.
- From the analysis, the Commerce department has the highest representation with 32.6% of students, followed by Management at 24.2%, Economics at 20.5%, Tamil at 14.4%, and English at 8.3%. It is obtained that students from Commerce and Management departments make up the majority of the students.
- It is revealed from the analysis that social skills are reported by the largest portion of students at 40.9%, followed by computer skills at 25.0%, interpersonal skills at 19.7%, and job searching skills at 14.4%. This analysis measured that a greater number of students identified social skills as their prominent additional skill.

Employability Skills of Arts Students

The college students can enhance their employability by focusing on additional skills whereas developing critical thinking and digital literacy also strengthens their career readiness. The following table discussed about the employability skills of arts students in Erode. For the study objective, the authors have framed eight statements related the employability skills of arts students.

Table 2: Employability Skills of Arts Students

| S. No | Factors | Mean Score | SD |
|-------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|------|
| 1 | I am confident in my ability to communicate effectively in both written and verbal forms | 3.96 | 0.84 |
| 2 | I possess strong problem-solving skills that can help me adapt to various workplace challenges | 3.85 | 1.09 |
| 3 | I can work efficiently both independently and as part of a team | 3.94 | 0.96 |
| 4 | I manage my time well and meet deadlines consistently | 3.88 | 0.92 |
| 5 | I can handle workplace pressure and stress without it affecting my performance | 3.71 | 0.95 |
| 6 | I actively seek feedback to improve my performance and skills | 3.53 | 1.12 |
| 7 | I am capable of making sound decisions when faced with complex situations | 3.21 | 1.15 |
| 8 | I regularly set career goals and take steps to achieve them | 3.70 | 1.21 |

It could be displayed from the analysis that the Cronbach Alpha value for the statements of employability skills of arts students is 0.923. This study indicates that the reliability of the employability skills is good and fit for analysis. From the mean score analysis, most of the arts students are confident in their ability to communicate effectively in both written and verbal forms with the mean score and standard deviation of 3.96 and 0.84 respectively and they can work efficiently both independently and as part of a team with the mean score and standard deviation of 3.94 and 0.96 respectively.

Testing of Hypothesis

- **Relationship between Profile and Employability skills of arts students**

This section has examined that the relationship between the profile including demographic and academic details and employability skills of arts students. In order to analyse the relationship between

selected independent variables of the arts students and their employability skills, hypotheses have been developed and examined by approaching ANOVA.

Degree of Studying and Employability Skills of Arts Students

H₀₁: There is no significant difference in mean employability skills with respect to Degree of Studying of the arts students.

Table 3: Degree of Studying and Employability Skills of Arts Students

| | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | 'p' value |
|----------------|----------------|-----|-------------|-------|---------------------|
| Between Groups | 0.267 | 1 | 0.267 | 1.196 | 0.276 ^{NS} |
| Within Groups | 28.989 | 130 | 0.223 | | |
| Total | 29.255 | 131 | | | |

Note: NS – Not Significant

From the above table, it is revealed that the 'p' value is greater than 0.05 ($p = 0.276$), hence the null hypothesis is accepted. So, there is no significant difference in mean employability skills with respect to the Degree of Studying of the arts students.

Department Studying and Employability Skills of arts Students

H₀: There is no significant difference in mean employability skills with respect to department studying of the arts students.

Table 4: Department Studying and Employability Skills of arts students

| | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | 'p' value |
|----------------|----------------|-----|-------------|-------|-----------|
| Between Groups | 3.134 | 4 | 0.783 | 3.809 | 0.006* |
| Within Groups | 26.121 | 127 | 0.206 | | |
| Total | 29.255 | 131 | | | |

Note : * – Significant at 1% level

It is pointed out from the analysis that the 'p' value is less than 0.01 ($p = 0.006$), hence the null hypothesis is rejected. Hence, there is a significant difference in mean employability skills with respect to the Department Studying of the arts students.

Additional Skills and Employability Skills of arts Students

H₀: There is no significant difference in mean employability skills with respect to additional skills of the arts students.

Table 5: Additional Skills and Employability Skills of arts students

| | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | 'p' value |
|----------------|----------------|-----|-------------|-------|-----------|
| Between Groups | 2.015 | 3 | 0.672 | 3.156 | 0.027** |
| Within Groups | 27.240 | 128 | 0.213 | | |
| Total | 29.255 | 131 | | | |

Note : ** – Significant at 5% level

From the analysis, it is mentioned that the 'p' value is less than 0.05 ($p = 0.027$), hence the null hypothesis is rejected. Therefore, there is a significant difference in mean employability skills with respect to the Additional Skills of the arts students.

Findings

- The analysis confirmed that among the gender category, male students have the highest percentage with 56.1%. It is mentioned that a high level of employability skills is obtained by Male arts students.
- In the degree of studying, undergraduate (UG) students represent the highest percentage with 65.9%. It is explored that a high level of employability skills is obtained by Postgraduate (PG) arts students.
- With regard to the year of studying, II year arts students have the highest percentage with 51.5%. It is justified that a high level of employability skills is obtained by II year arts students.
- Under the department studying, Commerce students constitute the highest percentage with 32.6%. It is measured that a high level of employability skills is obtained by Commerce department arts students.

- In the category of additional skills, social skills are reported by the highest percentage of students with 40.9%. It is assessed that a high level of employability skills is obtained by arts students possessing Job Searching Skills.
- From the mean score analysis, the arts students are confident in their ability to communicate effectively in both written and verbal forms and they can work efficiently both independently and as part of a team with the mean score of 3.96 and 3.94 respectively.
- The Anova test observed that there is no significant difference in mean employability skills with respect to the Degree of Studying of the arts students.
- From the 'F' test, it is noticed that there is a significant difference in mean employability skills with respect to the Department Studying of the arts students.
- It is proved from Anova test that there is a significant difference in mean employability skills with respect to the Additional Skills of the arts students.

Suggestions

- The analysis confirmed that a high level of employability skills is obtained by Male arts students. Hence, it is suggested that male arts students may benefit from peer learning programs to help bridge any skill gaps with their female counterparts and encourage a more inclusive skill development environment.
- It is explored that a high level of employability skills is obtained by Postgraduate (PG) arts students. So, postgraduate students should be encouraged to take up internships and real-time projects to further enhance their employability skills through practical exposure.
- It is justified that a high level of employability skills is obtained by II year arts students. II year arts students, having shown lower mean scores than others, can be provided with targeted training sessions to improve their professional readiness and soft skills.
- It is measured that a high level of employability skills is obtained by Commerce department arts students. Therefore, commerce department students can be given advanced employability workshops to further leverage their existing strengths and prepare them for industry-specific roles.
- It is assessed that a high level of employability skills is obtained by arts students possessing Job Searching Skills. Accordingly, this study suggested that Arts students with job searching skills should be motivated to mentor peers and participate in mock interviews or resume-building workshops to spread awareness among other students.

Conclusion

The researchers have made this attempt to examine the employability skills of arts students in Arts and Science colleges, Erode, Tamilnadu. This study confirmed that significant differences were observed with respect to department studying and additional skills of the selected arts students, highlighting the need for tailored skill development programs. Additionally, students possessing job searching skills demonstrate stronger readiness for employment. Hence, skill development programs should be integrated into the regular academic schedule to ensure all students receive consistent exposure to employability training regardless of their department or year. Further, career counseling and guidance services should be strengthened within colleges to help students identify their strengths, set career goals, and align their skills with industry expectations.

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