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MBA Students' Self-Assessment Of Employability Skill Development For Career Preparation

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ABSTRACT

This study examines MBA students' self-perceived competence in employability skills essential for managerial positions in business organizations. A structured employability-skills assessment instrument was administered to a convenience sample of MBA students in Coimbatore. The analysis of mean scores and standard deviations reveals that students perceive themselves as moderately to highly competent in several skill areas, particularly group problem solving, identifying essential problem components, and decision-making under time constraints. However, lower competence was perceived in areas such as understanding political and ethical implications of decisions, revising plans with new information, and making effective business presentations. The findings suggest that both program-related and non-program experiences contribute to employability skill development. The study highlights the need for strengthening curriculum components that focus on advanced decision-making, communication, and real-time problem-solving skills. Future research should explore alignment between students' self-perceptions and their actual skill proficiency....

1. INTRODUCTION:

Employability skills refer to the transferable competencies required not only to secure a job but also to advance within an organization and contribute to its long-term goals. The Business Council of Australia and Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry define employability skills as the capabilities individuals must possess to achieve their potential and support enterprise development. These skills—often termed *generic* or *core* skills—are essential for entry-level managerial roles, especially in a dynamic and technology-driven business environment.

The landmark study conducted in 2001 by ACCI and BCA identified eight major employability skill clusters: **communication, teamwork, problem solving, initiative and enterprise, planning and organizing, self-management, learning, and technology**.

These competencies have become critical expectations for MBA graduates entering diverse industries. Although management education aims to cultivate these skills through academic curricula, projects, internships, and experiential learning, students often acquire additional competencies through non-academic experiences. Understanding how students perceive the development of these skills is essential for designing effective MBA programs.

2. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The primary objective of the study is:

To determine whether MBA students perceive their employability skills as being developed through program-related experiences or non-program experiences.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study adopted a **descriptive research design** to examine MBA students' self-perceived development of employability skills relevant to managerial career preparation. The focus was on understanding the learning environments—program-based and non-program-based—through which these skills were developed.

Sample Selection and Size

The study employed **convenience sampling** due to time and accessibility constraints. Data were collected from **60 MBA students** enrolled in a business school in Coimbatore. Respondents were selected based on their availability at the time of data collection, ensuring voluntary participation.

Research Instrument

Data were collected using a **structured employability skills self-assessment questionnaire**, adapted from an established employability skills framework. Although the original instrument consisted of a larger number of items covering eight employability skill domains, the present study utilized **35 relevant items** that were applicable to the study context and respondent experience.

Skill Grouping for Analysis

For analytical clarity, the 35 items were grouped into **four major employability skill dimensions**, based on conceptual similarity and the nature of the skills assessed:

Problem Solving and Decision-Making Skills – items related to identifying, prioritizing, analyzing, and resolving problems and making informed decisions.

Planning and Organizing Skills – items measuring task management, planning, delegation, prioritization, and monitoring progress.

Communication Skills – items assessing verbal, written, interpersonal, and presentation skills required in business environments.

Initiative, Risk-Taking, and Interpersonal Skills – items reflecting entrepreneurial initiative, risk evaluation, adaptability, and collaborative work behavior.

This grouping was adopted to align the analysis with the available data and ensure meaningful interpretation of results.

Measurement Scale

Respondents indicated the extent to which each skill was developed through **program-based** or **non-program-based** environments using a five-point scale:

5 – Almost exclusively from the MBA program

4 – Mostly from the MBA program

3 – Equally from the MBA program and non-program sources

2 – Mostly from non-program sources

1 – Almost exclusively from non-program sources

Data Analysis Techniques

Data were analyzed using **descriptive statistical tools**, specifically **mean scores and standard deviations**, to assess students' perceived level of competence and the environment contributing to skill development. The analysis was presented through **three consolidated tables**, each corresponding to a major skill grouping. Interpretations were drawn by comparing mean values to identify relative strengths, moderate competence, and areas requiring improvement.

Limitations of the Study

The use of convenience sampling and reliance on self-reported perceptions may limit the generalizability of findings. Additionally, the study focused only on selected employability skill dimensions based on available questionnaire items and did not include self-management, learning, or technology skills.

4. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The objective of the study was to describe what environment (those associated with higher educational experience or those not associated with higher educational experience) students perceived they developed competence in employability skills needed for careers in business. Respondents were asked to indicate from what environment they developed each of the 67 employability skills.

ITEM	INTERVAL	NO OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE	MEAN	S.D
Identify problems	Exclusively from non program	10	50.0	3.60	.681
Prioritizing problems	Equally from program and non-program	11	55.0	3.30	.681
Solving problems	Mostly from program	10	50.0	2.70	.865
Contributing to group problem solving.	Almost from program	11	55.0	3.70	.733
Identifying essential components of the problem.	Almost from program	14	70.0	3.70	.470

Making decisions in a short time period.	Equally from program and non-program	9	45.0	3.35	.671
Assessing long-term effects of decisions	Equally from program and non-program	10	50.0	3.45	.686
Making decisions on the basis of thorough analysis of the situation	Mostly from program	7	35.0	3.30	1.031
Identifying political implications of the decision to be made.	Equally from program and non-program	6	30.0	2.95	1.234
Knowing ethical implications of decisions	Mostly from program	7	35.0	3.05	1.050

Interpretation:

The self-assessment results indicate that MBA students perceive a generally moderate to high development of employability skills, with the strongest abilities reported in contributing to group problem solving and identifying essential components of problems (Mean = 3.70), skills attributed largely to program-based learning. Students also show strong confidence in identifying problems (Mean = 3.60), though this skill is reported to be developed mainly through non-program experiences. Moderate development is noted in prioritizing problems, making quick decisions, assessing long-term effects, and making analytically based decisions, all with means around 3.30–3.45, suggesting balanced influence from both program and external experiences. Lower confidence appears in solving problems (Mean = 2.70) and understanding political (Mean = 2.95) and ethical implications (Mean = 3.05), indicating these areas may require stronger curricular emphasis. Overall, students feel reasonably well-prepared, particularly in analytical and team-oriented aspects, while advanced decision-making and independent problem-solving skills present

opportunities for further development

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ITEM	INTERVAL	NO OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE	MEAN	S.D
Recognizing the effects of decisions made	Exclusively from non program	7	35.0	2.80	.894
Establishing the critical events to be completed.	Almost exclusively non program	6	40.0	2.55	1.572
Sorting out the relevant data to solve the problem	Equally from program and non-program	10	50.0	3.15	.988

Assigning/delegating responsibility	Equally from program and non-program	7	35.0	2.70	1.174
Monitoring progress against the plan	Exclusively from non program	7	35.0	2.55	1.026
Integrating strategic considerations in the plans made.	Equally from program and non-program	12	10.0	3.00	1.026
Revising plans to include new information	Exclusively from non program	9	45.0	2.45	.826
Setting priorities	Equally from program and non-program	7	35.0	2.90	.1.210
Managing/overseeing several tasks at once	Almost exclusively non program	5	25.0	2.90	1.518
Meeting deadlines	Equally from program and non-program	7	35.0	2.55	1.317

Interpretation:

The results show that MBA students perceive only moderate development of their planning, organizing, and task-management skills, with most mean scores ranging from 2.45 to 3.15, suggesting room for improvement. Skills such as sorting relevant data to solve problems (Mean = 3.15) and integrating strategic considerations in plans (Mean = 3.00) received relatively higher ratings and are attributed equally to program and non-program experiences, indicating balanced learning influence. However, several critical operational skills—including revising plans based on new information (Mean = 2.45), establishing critical events, monitoring progress, and meeting deadlines (each around Mean = 2.55)—are rated lower and are mostly attributed to non-program experiences, highlighting a gap in formal curricular support. Task-management abilities such as setting priorities and overseeing multiple tasks show moderate ratings (Means = 2.90), again predominantly shaped by external experiences. Overall, these findings suggest that while the MBA program somewhat supports analytical and strategic planning skills, students feel less adequately prepared in practical, real-time planning and organizational competencies essential for workplace performance.

ITEM	INTERVAL	NO OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE	MEAN	S.D
Taking reasonable job-related risks	Equally from program and non-program	9	45.0	3.05	.945
Identifying potential negative outcomes when considering risks venture	Equally from program and non-program	11	55.0	3.20	.768
Monitoring progress toward objectives in risky ventures	Equally from program and non-program	9	45.0	2.85	1.089
Recognizing alternative routes in meeting objectives	Exclusively from non program	7	35.0	2.85	1.348

Conveying information one-to-one	Equally from program and non-program	9	45.0	2.65	1.040
Making effective business presentations	Exclusively from non program	8	40.0	2.20	.951
Communicating ideas verbally to groups	Equally from program and non-program	9	45.0	2.75	.1.070
Making impromptu presentations	Equally from program and non-program	11	55.0	2.70	.733
Writing reports	Equally from program and non-program	7	35.0	2.85	.1,137
Writing external business communication.	Equally from program and non-program	5	25.0	3.05	1.317
Writing internal business communication	Equally from program and non-program	5	25.0	3.15	1.309
Using proper grammar, spelling, & punctuation	Equally from program and non-program	6	30.0	2.60	1.353
Listening attentively	Equally from program and non-program	10	50.0	3.10	..912
Responding to others' comments during a conversation.	Equally from program and non-program	9	45.0	3.30	.801
Working well with fellow employees	Equally from program and non-program	12	60.0	2.95	.945

The respondents indicated that they developed their level of competence in majority of the employability skills in "equally from program and non-program" environments as average mean lies in the range 3.00 to 4.00.

5. MAJOR FINDINGS

4.1 Problem-Solving and Decision-Making Skills

Students reported relatively high competence in:

contributing to group problem solving (Mean = 3.70)

identifying essential problem components (Mean = 3.70)

identifying problems (Mean = 3.60)

These skills were perceived to be shaped largely by the MBA program.

However, comparatively lower competence was reported for:

understanding political implications of decisions (Mean = 2.95)

solving problems independently (Mean = 2.70)

recognizing ethical implications of decisions (Mean = 3.05)

This suggests the need for enhanced exposure to real-world problem contexts.

4.2 Planning, Organizing, and Task Management Skills

Moderate competence was reported for:

sorting relevant data (Mean = 3.15)

integrating strategic considerations in plans (Mean = 3.00)

However, lower competence was associated with:

revising plans based on new information (Mean = 2.45)

monitoring progress (Mean = 2.55)

meeting deadlines (Mean = 2.55)

These skills were largely attributed to non-program experiences, indicating a potential gap in curriculum-based experiential learning.

4.3 Communication and Interpersonal Skills

Students displayed moderate confidence in:

listening attentively (Mean = 3.10)

responding during conversations (Mean = 3.30)

Low confidence was noted in:

making effective business presentations (Mean = 2.20)

conveying information one-to-one (Mean = 2.65)

writing reports using correct grammar, structure, and punctuation (Mean = 2.60)

These are essential corporate communication skills that require more focused training.

4.4 Initiative, Risk-Taking, and Innovation

Students reported moderate competence in:

evaluating risks (Mean = 3.20)

taking reasonable job-related risks (Mean = 3.05)

However, identifying alternative solution routes and monitoring risky ventures scored lower, suggesting limited exposure to innovation-driven tasks.

6. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The study's analysis reveals how MBA students perceive the development of their employability skills across program and non-program environments. The findings highlight strengths in analytical and teamwork skills, while also identifying notable gaps in communication, planning, and advanced decision-making competencies essential for managerial careers.

Students showed strong competence in identifying problems and essential components, mainly developed through structured program-based academic activities and collaborative learning experiences.

2Group problem-solving skills were highly rated, indicating the MBA curriculum effectively supports teamwork, analytical discussions, and collective decision-making processes essential for managerial roles.

Students reported lower competence in independent problem-solving and understanding political and ethical implications, suggesting limited exposure to complex, real-world decision contexts.

Planning and organizing skills, including revising plans and monitoring progress, were weak and primarily developed outside program environments, indicating curricular gaps requiring attention.

Communication skills, especially business presentations, grammar, and report writing, showed low confidence levels, demonstrating the need for enhanced structured communication training within the MBA program.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Enhancement of Experiential Learning Components

MBA programs should integrate more experiential learning opportunities such as internships, industry simulations, live case studies, and field projects. These activities allow students to apply theoretical knowledge to real business situations, leading to improved problem-solving, decision-making, and workplace readiness.

2. Strengthening Communication and Presentation Training

Business schools should design structured training modules that focus on oral communication, business writing, public speaking, and professional presentations. Continuous practice with feedback from faculty and industry experts can significantly enhance students' confidence and competence in corporate communication.

3. Curriculum Revision to Include Ethical and Strategic Decision-Making

Programs should incorporate more content related to ethical reasoning, political awareness, and strategic decision-making through dedicated subjects, workshops, or simulations. This will help students develop deeper understanding of real-world complexities that influence managerial decisions.

4. Implementation of Periodic Skill-Based Assessments

Institutions should conduct regular assessments that measure both perceived and actual employability skills. Using tools such as psychometric tests, performance-based evaluations, and industry-standard competency frameworks can help identify gaps and guide targeted improvement strategies for individual students.

5. Increased Focus on Planning, Organizing, and Time-Management Skills

MBA programs must adopt structured training approaches that strengthen students' ability to prioritize tasks, manage deadlines, and adapt plans based on new information. Activities like project management workshops and multi-task simulations can significantly enhance practical organizational competencies crucial for workplace success.

8. CONCLUSIONS

MBA students demonstrate confidence in essential employability skills, particularly those related to teamwork, analytical thinking, and basic decision-making. However, significant gaps exist in communication, advanced decision-making, real-time planning, and adaptability. Strengthening experiential components such as case labs, industry simulations, internships, and communication workshops is crucial.

Future research should assess whether students' self-perceived competence aligns with actual performance using skill-based assessments or personality frameworks (e.g., MBTI, Thomas Profiling). Aligning perceived and actual competence will help design targeted interventions for producing industry-ready graduates..

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