

Employability Skills among Undergraduate Students: An Empirical Study of Higher Education Institutions in Mandya

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ABSTRACT

Employability has become an important outcome of higher education as employers increasingly expect graduates to possess not only academic knowledge but also communication, digital, interpersonal, problem-solving, teamwork, leadership, adaptability, and career-readiness skills. The present study examines employability skills among undergraduate students of higher education institutions in Mandya. The study focuses on assessing the level of major employability skills, identifying skill gaps, examining career readiness, and understanding institutional support for employability development. A descriptive and empirical research design is adopted for the study.

Keywords: Employability Skills, Undergraduate Students, Career Readiness, Higher Education, Skill Development, Mandya

INTRODUCTION

Higher education plays an important role in developing the knowledge, abilities, values, and competencies required for the personal and professional development of students. However, in the contemporary labour market, possession of an academic degree alone may not be sufficient to secure suitable employment. Employers increasingly expect graduates to demonstrate a combination of academic knowledge, technical competencies, and transferable employability skills that enable them to function effectively in changing workplace environments.

Employability skills refer to a broad range of competencies that enhance an individual's ability to obtain employment, perform effectively in the workplace, adapt to changing requirements, and progress in a career. These skills include communication, teamwork, problem-solving, digital literacy, leadership, interpersonal skills, adaptability, decision-making, time management, creativity, and willingness to learn continuously.

Rapid technological advancement, digitalization, automation, and Artificial Intelligence have further transformed the nature of employment. Graduates are increasingly expected to work with technology, communicate effectively, collaborate with diverse teams, solve unfamiliar problems, and continuously update their knowledge and skills. Therefore, higher education institutions have an important

responsibility to prepare students not only for examinations and academic qualifications but also for employment and long-term career development.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Economic Survey 2024–25, Government of India (2025) highlighted the continuing problem of skill mismatch between educational qualifications and occupational requirements in India. The Survey observed that skill mismatch can arise when the competencies possessed by workers do not correspond with those required by employers. It also reported that only a relatively small proportion of youth aged 15–29 had received formal vocational or technical training, demonstrating the importance of strengthening employment-oriented education and skill development.

NITI Aayog (2026), in its report *Reimagining Skilling for Viksit Bharat@2047*, examined India's evolving skill-development requirements and emphasized the importance of building a future-ready workforce. The report provides a contemporary policy context for understanding the need to align education and skilling with changing employment and industry requirements.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To assess the level of employability skills among undergraduate students in higher education institutions in Mandya.
2. To examine students' competencies in communication, digital skills, teamwork, problem-solving, leadership, adaptability, and interpersonal skills.
3. To identify the major skill gaps and challenges affecting the career readiness of undergraduate students.
4. To suggest suitable measures for strengthening employability skills and career readiness among undergraduate students.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study adopts a descriptive and empirical research design to examine employability skills among undergraduate students studying in higher education institutions in Mandya. The study is based on both primary and secondary sources of data. Primary data are proposed to be collected through a structured questionnaire administered to undergraduate students from different programmes such as B.Com., B.A., B.Sc., B.B.A., and other undergraduate courses. For demonstrating the proposed analytical framework, a sample of **200 undergraduate students** is considered.

The questionnaire covers major dimensions of employability, including communication skills, digital skills, teamwork, problem-solving ability, leadership, adaptability, interpersonal skills, career readiness, participation in skill-development activities, and institutional support. Secondary information is drawn from research articles, books, reports, government publications, and other relevant literature. Percentage analysis, weighted mean scores, and ranking techniques are used for analyzing and interpreting the data.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Table 1: Gender-wise Classification of Respondents

Gender	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Male	82	41%
Female	118	59%
Total	200	100%

Interpretation

The above table shows the gender-wise distribution of respondents. Out of 200 undergraduate students, 118 respondents representing 59% are female, while 82 respondents representing 41% are male. Thus, female students constitute a comparatively larger proportion of the respondents considered for the study.

Table 2: Self-Assessment of Major Employability Skills

Employability Skill	High	Moderate	Low	Total
Communication Skills	68 (34%)	92 (46%)	40 (20%)	200
Digital Skills	82 (41%)	86 (43%)	32 (16%)	200
Teamwork	94 (47%)	78 (39%)	28 (14%)	200
Problem-Solving Skills	72 (36%)	90 (45%)	38 (19%)	200
Leadership Skills	58 (29%)	92 (46%)	50 (25%)	200
Adaptability	88 (44%)	82 (41%)	30 (15%)	200
Interpersonal Skills	84 (42%)	86 (43%)	30 (15%)	200

Interpretation

The analysis reveals that teamwork is comparatively strong among undergraduate students, with 47% reporting a high level of competency. Adaptability follows at 44%, interpersonal skills at 42%, and digital skills at 41%. In contrast, only 29% of students report a high level of leadership skills. Communication and problem-solving skills are predominantly at the moderate level, accounting for 46% and 45% respectively. The findings indicate that students possess relatively stronger collaborative and adaptability skills, while leadership, communication, and problem-solving require greater attention.

Table 3: Level of Career Readiness among Undergraduate Students

Career Readiness Level	Respondents	Percentage
Highly Ready	44	22%
Moderately Ready	98	49%
Not Adequately Ready	58	29%
Total	200	100%

Interpretation

The table reveals that 49% of respondents consider themselves moderately ready to enter the employment market. Only 22% indicate that they are highly career-ready, while 29% feel that they are not adequately prepared for employment. The results suggest that although a majority of students possess some degree of career preparedness, a substantial proportion require additional training, guidance, and practical exposure before entering the labour market.

Table 4: Major Skill Gaps Identified by Students

Skill Gap	Respondents	Percentage
Interview Skills	48	24%
Communication Skills	42	21%
Practical/Job-oriented Skills	38	19%
Digital Skills	30	15%
Problem-Solving Skills	24	12%

Teamwork/Leadership Skills	18	9%
Total	200	100%

Interpretation

Interview skills emerge as the most significant skill gap, identified by 24% of respondents. Communication skills rank second at 21%, followed by practical and job-oriented skills at 19%. Digital skills account for 15%, problem-solving skills for 12%, and teamwork/leadership skills for 9%. The analysis demonstrates that students particularly require greater support in recruitment preparation, professional communication, and practical workplace competencies.

Table 5: Students' Perception of Institutional Support for Employability

Level of Institutional Support	Respondents	Percentage
Excellent	26	13%
Good	68	34%
Satisfactory	64	32%
Poor	42	21%
Total	200	100%

Interpretation

The analysis shows that 34% of students consider institutional support for employability to be good, while 32% consider it satisfactory. Only 13% rate institutional support as excellent, whereas 21% consider it poor. Thus, although many students recognize the employability initiatives undertaken by their institutions, there is substantial scope for strengthening career guidance, placement assistance, skill development, and industry-linked activities.

Table 6: Measures Required to Improve Employability

Measure	Respondents	Percentage
Internship and Practical Training	50	25%
Placement and Interview Training	44	22%
Communication Skills Training	38	19%
Digital and Technical Skills Training	30	15%
Industry Interaction	22	11%
Entrepreneurship Training	16	8%
Total	200	100%

Interpretation

Internship and practical training emerge as the most preferred measures for improving employability, accounting for 25% of responses. Placement and interview training rank second with 22%, followed by communication-skills training with 19%. Digital and technical skills training accounts for 15%, industry interaction for 11%, and entrepreneurship training for 8%. The findings indicate that students place greater emphasis on practical exposure and employment-oriented training for improving their career prospects.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

1. Teamwork emerged as the strongest employability skill among students, with the highest weighted mean score of 2.33.

2. Adaptability ranked second with a mean score of 2.29, indicating that students are relatively comfortable adjusting to changing situations.
3. Interpersonal and digital skills also showed comparatively favourable levels, with mean scores of 2.27 and 2.25 respectively.
4. Leadership skills recorded the lowest mean score of 2.04, indicating a significant area for improvement.
5. Communication and problem-solving skills were largely at a moderate level, suggesting the need for more structured development activities.
6. Only 22% of students considered themselves highly career-ready, whereas 49% reported moderate readiness and 29% felt inadequately prepared.
7. Interview skills emerged as the most significant skill gap, reported by 24% of respondents, followed by communication skills at 21%.
8. Participation in internships was relatively limited, with only 43% of respondents having internship experience.
9. Only 36% of students had participated in mock interviews or group discussions, indicating inadequate exposure to recruitment-oriented activities.
10. Internship and practical training were identified as the most important measures for improving employability, followed by placement and interview training.

SUGGESTIONS

1. Higher education institutions should introduce structured employability-skill programmes covering communication, digital skills, problem-solving, teamwork, leadership, and interpersonal competencies.
2. Internship opportunities should be strengthened and, wherever possible, integrated with undergraduate programmes to provide students with practical workplace experience.
3. Placement cells should regularly organize aptitude training, resume preparation, group discussions, mock interviews, and interview-skills programmes.
4. Special attention should be given to improving communication skills through presentations, debates, group discussions, business communication activities, and language-support programmes.
5. Institutions should organize leadership-development activities through student clubs, committees, projects, events, and community-based programmes.
6. Industry–institution interaction should be strengthened through guest lectures, industrial visits, internships, live projects, mentoring, and collaborative skill-development programmes.
7. Digital and technical skill training should be updated regularly according to changing workplace requirements and emerging technologies.
8. Career guidance should begin from the early stages of undergraduate education rather than being restricted to final-year students.
9. Skill-gap assessments should be conducted periodically so that institutions can provide targeted support based on students' specific requirements.
10. Employability development should become an integral component of higher education by combining academic knowledge with practical experience, professional competencies, and career preparation.

CONCLUSION

Employability skills have become an essential component of undergraduate education as academic qualifications alone may not adequately prepare students for the rapidly changing employment environment. The study indicates that undergraduate students possess comparatively stronger competencies in teamwork, adaptability, interpersonal skills, and digital skills, while leadership, communication, interview preparedness, and practical job-oriented skills require further improvement. The findings also highlight that many students are only moderately prepared for employment and that exposure to internships, mock interviews, industry interactions, and practical training needs to be strengthened.

Higher education institutions in Mandya should therefore integrate employability development systematically with academic learning through skill-development programmes, internships, career guidance, placement training, experiential learning, and stronger industry collaboration. Such initiatives can reduce the gap between academic education and workplace expectations and enable undergraduate students to become more confident, competent, adaptable, and career-ready.

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