



Role of Soft Skills in Enhancing Employability among College Students

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ABSTRACT

In today's highly competitive job environment, employers increasingly value graduates who possess both academic qualifications and a range of essential soft skills. Competencies such as effective communication, teamwork, leadership, problem-solving, adaptability, and emotional intelligence are widely regarded as important factors influencing employability. This review study explores the contribution of soft skills to the employability of college students by examining relevant literature, scholarly publications, and research findings. The analysis demonstrates that soft skills play a vital role in enhancing workplace preparedness, professional effectiveness, and career advancement opportunities. The reviewed studies further indicate that employers consider these competencies during recruitment and employee development processes. The study emphasizes the need for higher education institutions to promote soft skill development through curricular and co-curricular initiatives, thereby equipping students with the capabilities required to succeed in an evolving professional landscape.

Introduction

The contemporary labour market is undergoing significant transformation due to globalization, technological advancements, and evolving workplace demands. As a result, employers are no longer concerned solely with academic achievement and technical expertise but also place considerable importance on soft skills. Competencies such as effective communication, teamwork, problem-solving, adaptability,

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leadership, and emotional intelligence have become essential for navigating workplace challenges and achieving professional success. Consequently, soft skills are increasingly recognised as a key determinant of graduate employability.

In recent years, the nature of employment has changed considerably, with organisations seeking individuals who can perform effectively in diverse and dynamic work environments. While academic qualifications provide subject knowledge and technical competence, they do not necessarily equip graduates with the interpersonal and behavioural skills required in the workplace. Employers increasingly expect graduates to communicate clearly, collaborate with others, think critically, and respond effectively to changing professional situations.

The growing emphasis on soft skills has created new challenges for higher education institutions. Although colleges and universities play a crucial role in preparing students for employment, many graduates continue to face difficulties in securing suitable jobs despite possessing the required academic credentials. One of the major reasons identified in the literature is the gap between the skills acquired through formal education and those expected by employers. This mismatch has led to increasing concern regarding the employability of graduates in an increasingly competitive labour market.

Soft skills contribute significantly to workplace effectiveness and career advancement. Communication skills facilitate professional interaction, teamwork promotes collaboration, leadership enhances decision-making, and emotional intelligence supports positive workplace relationships. Similarly, adaptability and problem-solving abilities enable individuals to cope with uncertainty and organisational change. These competencies are therefore regarded as essential attributes for both obtaining employment and sustaining long-term professional growth.

Despite the growing recognition of the importance of soft skills, evidence relating to their role in enhancing graduate employability remains dispersed across different studies and disciplines. A comprehensive understanding of how these competencies influence employment outcomes is therefore necessary. In this context, the present review study examines the role of soft skills in enhancing employability among college students by reviewing existing literature and identifying the key competencies that contribute to career readiness and professional success.

Objectives of the study

1. To examine the concept and importance of soft skills in higher education.



2. To identify the major soft skills required for enhancing employability among college students.
3. To analyze the role of soft skills in improving employability and career readiness among college students.
4. To suggest strategies for promoting soft skill development in higher education institutions.

Methodology

This study is based entirely on secondary data and follows a review-based research design. Information relevant to the topic was obtained from various academic sources, including scholarly journals, books, conference papers, research reports, government publications, and online databases. The selected literature primarily examined the relationship between soft skills, employability, career readiness, and higher education.

The reviewed materials were examined to gain a deeper understanding of the importance of soft skills in enhancing employment opportunities among college students. Special emphasis was placed on studies discussing communication skills, teamwork, leadership, critical thinking, emotional intelligence, adaptability, and problem-solving abilities as essential employability attributes.

A descriptive and analytical method was employed to organize, interpret, and synthesize the information gathered from the existing literature. By reviewing and comparing the findings of previous studies, the research aims to present a comprehensive overview of the contribution of soft skills to employability and professional success. The conclusions of the study are derived from the analysis of the available literature and documented evidence.

Review of Related Literature

Mathur (2017) examined the role of soft skills in enhancing the employability of technical graduates: A study.. The study found that human interaction skills, particularly communication and presentation skills, are increasingly valued by employers alongside technical competencies. The author emphasized that educational institutions should integrate soft skill development into their learning outcomes to improve graduates' career prospects and workplace effectiveness.

Tiwari and Srivastava (2022) examined the study title , “Soft skills for employability of college students in India”. The study found that communication skills, emotional intelligence, leadership, and teamwork are highly valued by employers and significantly improve employment opportunities. The authors emphasized



the need for skill-based education and concluded that the development of soft skills alongside academic qualifications is essential for meeting the changing demands of the job market.

Sanmathi and Shekhar (2024), in their study titled “The Role of Soft Skills in Enhancing Employability of Commerce Graduates: Student Perspectives,” found that soft skills such as communication, teamwork, leadership, problem-solving, and adaptability play a significant role in enhancing the employability of commerce graduates. The study also revealed that lack of confidence and limited training opportunities hinder the development of these skills among students.

Suraiya et al. (2025) examined the role of soft skills in enhancing employability among university graduates. The study found that employers highly value communication, teamwork, adaptability, and critical thinking, while graduates often face challenges in developing these skills due to limited training opportunities and lack of confidence. The study concluded that soft skills are essential for improving employability and career success.

Tes and Khen (2025), in their review study on the role of soft skills in enhancing graduates’ employability, found that soft skills play a crucial role in improving employment prospects, career development, and workplace performance. Leadership, communication, teamwork, critical thinking, and problem-solving were identified as key employability skills. The review emphasized the need for higher education institutions to promote soft skill development through experiential learning, industry collaboration, mentorship, and work-based learning opportunities.

Prasad et al. (2025) conducted a study on the impact of soft skills on employability readiness among final-year students. The study found a strong positive relationship between soft skills and placement, internship, and interview readiness. The authors concluded that soft skills such as communication, teamwork, leadership, and problem-solving significantly enhance students' preparedness for professional opportunities and improve their transition from academic life to professional careers.

Concept of Soft Skills

Soft skills are a set of personal, social, and behavioural competencies that influence an individual's ability to interact effectively with others and perform successfully in academic,

professional, and social environments. These skills are not confined to a specific occupation; rather, they are transferable across different contexts and contribute to effective communication, teamwork, leadership, adaptability, and decision-making. Unlike hard skills, which are acquired through formal education and



technical training, soft skills are developed through experience, interaction, and continuous personal growth. They enable individuals to build positive relationships, manage challenges, and respond effectively to changing situations. In the contemporary workplace, soft skills have become increasingly important as employers seek individuals who can collaborate with diverse teams, communicate ideas clearly, solve problems creatively, and adapt to organizational changes. As a result, soft skills are widely regarded as essential attributes that complement technical knowledge and enhance employability, workplace performance, and career advancement.

Role of Soft Skills in Enhancing Employability

Soft skills have become an essential component of employability in the modern labour market. Employers increasingly seek graduates who possess not only academic knowledge and technical expertise but also the ability to communicate effectively, collaborate with others, and adapt to changing workplace environments (Andrews & Higson, 2008; Robles, 2012). These competencies enable individuals to perform efficiently in professional settings and contribute to organizational success.

Among the various soft skills, communication skills are considered one of the most important for employability. Effective communication helps individuals express ideas clearly, build professional relationships, and participate confidently in workplace interactions. Teamwork and interpersonal skills enable employees to collaborate with colleagues from diverse backgrounds and work towards common organizational goals.

Leadership and problem-solving skills are also highly valued by employers. These skills help individuals take initiative, make informed decisions, and address workplace challenges effectively. Similarly, critical thinking promotes logical analysis and sound judgement, which are essential for effective decision-making in professional settings.

Adaptability and emotional intelligence have gained increasing importance in today's dynamic work environment. Adaptability enables individuals to respond positively to organizational and technological changes, while emotional intelligence helps them understand and manage emotions, maintain positive relationships, and work effectively with others. Time management skills further contribute to workplace productivity by helping individuals prioritize tasks and meet deadlines efficiently.

Several studies have highlighted the significance of soft skills in enhancing employability. Andrews and Higson (2008), Robles (2012), and Succi and Canovi (2020) reported that employers highly value communication, teamwork, leadership, problem-solving, and adaptability when recruiting graduates. These



competencies not only improve workplace readiness but also support career advancement and long-term professional success.

Therefore, the development of soft skills is essential for enhancing employability among college students and graduates. Higher education institutions should encourage the development of these competencies through academic activities, practical experiences, internships, workshops, and industry interactions to better prepare students for the demands of the modern workplace.

Challenges and Strategies for Soft Skills Development

Despite the increasing recognition of soft skills as essential employability competencies, many students face challenges in developing these skills effectively. One of the major barriers is the examination-oriented nature of the education system, which often emphasizes academic performance over the development of communication, leadership, teamwork, and problem-solving abilities. Consequently, students may possess strong theoretical knowledge but lack the practical skills required in professional environments.

Limited practical exposure and insufficient opportunities for experiential learning also hinder the development of soft skills. Many students have inadequate access to internships, workshops, industry interactions, and other activities that help them acquire workplace-related competencies. In addition, lack of confidence, fear of public speaking, and inadequate training programmes further restrict the development of essential employability skills.

To address these challenges, higher education institutions should adopt effective strategies for soft skill development. Integrating soft skills into the curriculum can provide students with opportunities to enhance communication, critical thinking, teamwork, and leadership abilities. Colleges and universities should also organize workshops, seminars, group discussions,

presentations, and personality development programmes to strengthen students' professional competencies.

Furthermore, internships, field experiences, industry-academia collaboration, and mentorship programmes can provide valuable practical exposure and help students understand workplace expectations. Career guidance services and experiential learning opportunities can also enhance students' confidence, adaptability, and professional readiness. Through the combined efforts of educational institutions, employers, and students, soft skill development can be effectively promoted, thereby improving employability and career success.



Findings of the study

1. Soft skills have emerged as essential employability competencies in the contemporary labour market and are increasingly valued by employers alongside academic qualifications and technical expertise.
2. Communication skills, teamwork, leadership, problem-solving, critical thinking, adaptability, and emotional intelligence were identified as the most important soft skills required for enhancing employability among college students.
3. The reviewed studies indicate that soft skills significantly improve workplace readiness, internship preparedness, interview performance, and overall career prospects.
4. Employers increasingly consider interpersonal, communication, and behavioural competencies as important criteria during recruitment and employee selection processes.
5. Many students face challenges in developing soft skills due to limited practical exposure, inadequate training opportunities, lack of confidence, and the examination-oriented nature of the education system.
6. Higher education institutions play a crucial role in fostering soft skill development through curriculum integration, experiential learning, internships, workshops, mentorship programmes, and industry-academia collaboration.
7. The development of soft skills contributes not only to employment opportunities but also to long-term professional growth, workplace effectiveness, and career advancement.

Conclusion

The present review study highlights the significant role of soft skills in enhancing employability among college students. The review of existing literature indicates that competencies such as communication, teamwork, leadership, problem-solving, critical thinking, adaptability, emotional intelligence, and time management are essential for success in the contemporary workplace. These skills complement academic knowledge and technical expertise, enabling graduates to meet the evolving demands of employers and perform effectively in professional environments.

The study further reveals that employers increasingly value these competencies during recruitment and employee development processes, as they contribute to workplace readiness, professional competence, and long-term career advancement. However, the development of such skills among students is often constrained by factors including limited practical exposure, inadequate training opportunities, lack of



confidence, and an examination-oriented education system. To address these challenges, higher education institutions should actively integrate soft skill development into academic and co-curricular activities. Strategies such as experiential learning, internships, workshops, industry-academia collaboration, mentorship programmes, and career guidance initiatives can help students acquire the competencies required for career success and professional growth.

In conclusion, the development of soft skills is essential for preparing students to meet the demands of the modern labour market. Strengthening these competencies through educational and practical experiences can enhance career readiness, improve employment opportunities, and support long-term professional success in an increasingly competitive and dynamic world.

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