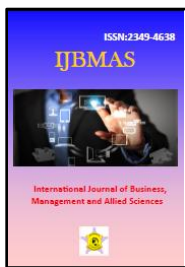

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**EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS AMONG MANAGEMENT STUDENTS BASED ON
INTERNSHIPS ATTENDED DURING MBA- A STUDY AND IT'S
IMPLICATIONS TO HIGHER EDUCATION**

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ABSTRACT

This paper attempts to identify the self perceived level of employability skills among students who attended internships and those who have not attended internship in their MBA program and also understands how the students perceive the employability skills. Fifteen variables that make up employability skills based on past research were examined in this study. Data were collected through survey method using a questionnaire to analyse the students' perceptions. The sample respondents are from University affiliated colleges in Hyderabad. The research instrument was given to two academicians and one corporate professional for validation. The findings revealed that the questionnaire design is reliable with Chronbach's alpha $\alpha = 0.829$. based on Mann whitney U test results, it was revealed that the level of employability skills differed between the interns and non interns of MBA program and students who did internship during MBA perceived themselves as better compared to non interns.

Keywords: Employability skill levels, interns, non interns, MBA program

INTRODUCTION

It has been observed since ages in India, among the students pursuing MBA or any other higher education that they are much accustomed to think only on getting good grades in examinations and not realizing the importance of employability skills which helps them to get ahead in global competition. This can be nurtured mostly through attending internship programs during their MBA. Rapid changes taking place in the economy create a pressure upon employers to identify and recruit graduates that possess critical employability skills relevant to corporate demands. Employability skills are those basic skills necessary for getting, keeping, and doing well on the job. It is a group of important skills instilled in each individual in order to produce productive workforce. As such, a survey of the importance of attending internships during their MBA program to improve their employability skills is of utmost importance in generating insights to policy makers in higher education in developing their course curriculum.

Literature Review

Employability skills: conceptual perspective:

Employability or work-readiness means the ability of a graduate to ensure economic competitiveness. The term employability skills appeared in literature only comparatively recently. Previous studies have reported that students received added value from experience-based learning activities such as internships, field experience, and Internships have been said to improve or develop characteristics looked-for by employers, known as "Employability Skills"

According to Yorke, (2008) employability is a set of achievement skills, understanding and personal attributes that makes graduates more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupation, which benefits themselves, the workforce, the community and the economy.

Sharifah *et al.* (2011) found out that the different perception of graduates' employability skills lies on the priorities of requirement of the companies. They stated that the MNC companies emphasise on graduates with employability skills in planning, thinking skills and followed by other skills. Meanwhile, the GLC and SME companies priorities require a well performing graduates in their field of expertise, ethics and values followed by other skills.

Mohamad Sattar Bin Rasul, (2010) suggested teachers in educational institutions need to improve the understanding, implementation and measurement methods of employability skills. Employability skills are also important in helping people adapting with changes and improve career opportunities in the workplace. His findings showed that employability skills such as basic skills, thinking skills, resource skills, information skills, interpersonal skills, systems and technology and individual quality is at high level. While basic skills, creative thinking, decision making, problem solving, risk management, interpret and disseminate information, leadership, negotiates, monitor and improve performance and handling equipment at a moderate level.

Researchers (Cox & King, 2006; O'Neil, 1997) have indicated that entering the professional workplace without the expected employability skills often leads to limited promotional opportunities, job hopping, underemployment, and unemployment

Rubvita Chadha et al (2014) focussed on the industry's requirements for employability of management student in present scenario and suggested to enhance students' confidence level, organize frequent personality development workshops and encourage institute-industry interaction.

Rajanibala J. Shah et al (2014) in his study entitled "A study on factors affecting employability skills of management students" highlighted the present scenario of market expectations for management students and the factors of employability for them. The findings revealed that major factors are analytical skills and self-understanding, general management and work culture, leadership and problem solving ability and communication.

Internships: Conceptual perspective:

Internships allow students to gain valuable experiential learning. Essentially, an internship will allow the students to apply the skills and lessons learnt in a classroom in the real world of business. An MBA internship is a brief, learning-oriented work experience with a company that is completed between the first and second year of the MBA programme. Summer internships are compulsory for most business schools today.

Laycock, Hermon, and Laetz (1992) found many factors associated with successful internship experiences – talented students, employers who mentored students, jobs that enhanced learning, and faculty that helped students integrate classroom learning into their job experiences.

According to Beard (2007). "Well-organized and carefully supervised programs enhance the student's ability to integrate academic knowledge with practical applications, improve job / career opportunities after graduation, create relevance for past and future classroom learning, develop work place social and human relations skills, and provide the opportunity for students to apply communication and problem-solving skills."

Narayanan et al (2010), argue that when students join a company directly after leaving university, they experience “cultural differences, (which) may pose additional challenges and acquisitions for learning for the carrier” Internships assist students to fit into the culture of the company and to socialise with colleagues.

Therefore, it can be concluded that employability skills can be nurtured among students when they are in the academics and should correspond to the industry requirements globally.

The present study has identified 15 most important Employability skills in discussion with various recruiters. They are: team work skills, verbal communication skills, leadership skills, creativity, understanding job procedures, analysing and investigation skills, self confidence, flexibility, initiative and drive, accountability, written communication, commercial awareness, time management, planning and organizing, decision making.

1.Team work skills: Teamwork is one of the fundamental skills employers look for and it is on the recruiters' top priority list. They may be interested in looking for individuals who can bring different strengths to teams - some graduates may be particularly good at monitoring or evaluating progress, others may urge the team on when it starts to flag and others may be great at contributing bright new ideas. But in the vast majority of graduate roles, being able to work well with colleagues is crucial.

2. Verbal communication skills: Every job requires workers to use verbal communication skills. That's why verbal skills are highly ranked on the candidate evaluation checklists used by many job interviewers. The stronger the communication skills, the better are the chances of getting hired regardless of the job for which applying.

3. Leadership skills : Leadership skills are often sought after by many employers; they not only show that one has good interpersonal skills, they also show that they have the ability to co-ordinate, motivate and shape a team.

4 Creativity: Enables to explore available alternatives and consequences of actions. According to a new report from the World Economic Forum, it is clear that creativity at work is going to be one of the most important and in-demand skills in the next 5 years.

5. Understanding job procedures: Every company or organization has a particular way of doing business. Effective organizations generally establish set rules and procedures to promote consistency, quality and good customer service. Though administrative staff members rely heavily on these established procedures, other employees also benefit from understanding how things work. General office procedures consist of basic operational tasks, including answering phones, sorting mail, responding to customers and ordering supplies.

6. Analysis and investigation skills: Employers look for employees with the ability to investigate a problem and find a solution in a timely, efficient manner. To solve problems, employees need strong analytical skills. Hiring managers desire a person who uses clear, logical steps and excellent judgment to understand an issue from all angles before executing an action. Solutions can be reached by clear-cut, methodical approaches or more creative and lateral angles, depending on the objective. Both of these ways of solving a problem take analytical skills.

7. Self confidence: One must always be confident at workplace to gain visibility and show how one tackles situation or problems with positivity and dignity. To be successful it is vital that one has confidence and self-assurance at every level of the career. The leaders of an organization are a good instance to know how confidence is revealed in the phase of obstacles. However there is a very minute line between being confident and ego centric or reckless, so one must keep in mind never to cross the line.

8 Flexibility: "Flexibility is about an employee and an employer making changes to when, where and how a person will work to better meet individual and business needs. Flexibility enables both individual and business needs to be met through making changes to the time (when), location (where) and manner (how) in which an employee works.

9 Initiative and drive: Initiative is "the power, ability, or instinct to begin or to follow through energetically with a plan or task; enterprise and determination". Many employers look for initiative as a "must have" trait for every position they are attempting to staff. In addition, it is critical to demonstrate initiative to be promoted in an organization.

10 Accountability and responsibility: Responsibility and accountability are both attributes that can help employees in any career. Most managers appreciate when their employees possess these soft skills.

Some of an employee's more basic and important responsibilities involve meeting job expectations and fulfilling daily work duties. As a related workplace responsibility, employers must find ways to communicate what each worker's job entails.

11 written communication: At work, written communication can include anything from emails to contracts. It is a central part of the workplace across many industries and is the professional pathway to keeping in touch, solidifying business agreements, and collaborating. one can demonstrate proficiency in written communication by composing clear, concise, and error-free messages. Employers value this skill just as much as oral communication and are increasingly seeking candidates with superior written communication skills.

12 Planning and organizing: Staying organized in the workplace can save a company time and money. Organizational skills are essential for multitasking and keeping a business running smoothly and successfully. Employers aim to recruit applicants who can work to achieve results consistently, even when unforeseen delays or problems arise.

Workers with strong organization skills are able to structure their schedule, boost productivity, and prioritize tasks that must be completed immediately versus those that can be postponed, delegated to another person, or eliminated altogether

13 Commercial awareness: For most employers, a commercially aware employee is "One who has some thought or consideration for the business environment in which they work. Effective and commercially aware employee has an understanding of the customer and their desires or wants. Having an appreciation of how their actions impact upon business profits is a component part of a commercially aware employee

14 Time management: Effective time management requires employees to analyze their workload, assign priorities, and maintain focus on productive endeavors. Employees who are excellent time managers can eliminate distractions and enlist support from colleagues to help accomplish their goals.

15 Decision making: Every job involves some level of individual decision making. Certain career paths, like marketing, management, and retail are among those that often require a large amount of decision making. Employers appreciate employees who are good decision makers because it allows them the freedom to focus on coaching and other aspects of their jobs.

Objective of the study

The main objective of this study is to examine whether there is any significant difference between the self perceived development of the identified employability skills in this study among students those who have undergone internship programs and those who have not undergone internships during their MBA program.

Testing of Hypothesis: H₀: There is no significant difference in the perceived employability skills of students who have undergone internships and those who have not undergone internships.

H_a: There is a significant difference in the perceived employability skills between students who have undergone internships and those who have not undergone internships.

Research Methodology: A survey has been conducted on two different samples, namely students who attended internships during their MBA and students who have not undergone any internship during their MBA. 300 questionnaires have been distributed to students who have completed their course work in the year 2017 from university from affiliated colleges in Hyderabad .The sampling

frame used is based on Whether they have done internship or not. Questionnaire designed for Management Graduates comprise of two sections. Section A that captures the demographic information of the respondents, and section B requires them to rate their level of competency for each of the personal qualities and skills namely, 1) team work skills 2) verbal communication skills 3) leadership skills 4) creativity 5) Understanding job procedures 6) Analysis and investigation skills 7) self confidence 8) flexibility 9) initiative and drive 10) Accountability and responsibility 11) written communication 12) planning and organizing 13) Commercial awareness 14) time management 15) Decision making ,which are measured on a five-point Likert Scale measured from 1, being "Very Poor" to 5, "Excellent".

The instrument was given to two academicians and one corporate professional for validation. The statistical software, SPSS, is used to perform Chronbach's alpha as the reliability measure for this study. The value of the Cronbach's α coefficient for this instrument in this study's sample is 0.829. This indicates that the 15 item scale is quite reliable. The Mann Whiney U test was carried out to find out if the students held any significant differences in their perceptions of how they rate their employability skills.

Table 1: showing the reliability statistics of cronbach alpha
Reliability Statistics

| Cronbach's Alpha | Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items | N of Items |
|------------------|--|------------|
| .829 | .832 | 15 |

Source:primary data

Table 2: Descriptive statistics for Perceived differences in the level of employability skills possessed by students based on internship attended during MBA program

Group Statistics

| | Internship status | Mean | Std. Deviation | Mean Rank | Mann whitney U | Z | ρ - value |
|------------------------------------|-------------------|------|----------------|-----------|----------------|--------|----------------|
| Team work skills | Interns | 3.40 | 1.294 | 145.15 | 4596.000 | -5.344 | .000 |
| | Non Interns | 2.52 | 1.064 | 96.50 | | | |
| Verbal communication skills | Interns | 3.23 | 1.440 | 128.72 | 7045.000 | -.873 | .382 |
| | Non Interns | 3.09 | 1.386 | 120.75 | | | |
| Leadership skills | Interns | 3.13 | 1.151 | 131.23 | 6671.000 | -1.558 | .000 |
| | Non Interns | 3.79 | 1.231 | 117.05 | | | |
| Creativity | Interns | 2.81 | 1.517 | 121.21 | 6885.500 | -1.167 | .007 |
| | Non Interns | 3.03 | 1.330 | 131.83 | | | |
| Understanding job procedures | Interns | 3.36 | 1.321 | 141.93 | 5076.000 | -4.463 | .000 |
| | Non Interns | 2.61 | 1.166 | 101.26 | | | |
| Analysing and investigation skills | Interns | 2.78 | 1.483 | 122.10 | 7018.500 | -.923 | .012 |
| | Non Interns | 2.94 | 1.340 | 130.51 | | | |
| Self Confidence | Interns | 3.38 | 1.378 | 137.43 | 5747.000 | -3.241 | .001 |
| | Non Interns | 2.84 | 1.147 | 107.90 | | | |
| Flexibility | Interns | 2.95 | 1.497 | 125.91 | 7463.000 | -.112 | .911 |
| | Non Interns | 2.93 | 1.358 | 124.89 | | | |
| Initiative and drive | Interns | 3.07 | 1.351 | 135.60 | 6019.500 | -2.746 | .006 |

| | | | | | | | |
|-------------------------|-------------|------|-------|--------|----------|--------|------|
| | Non Interns | 2.59 | 1.142 | 110.60 | | | |
| Accountability | Interns | 2.99 | 1.132 | 137.52 | 5733.000 | -3.273 | .001 |
| | Non Interns | 2.38 | 1.287 | 107.76 | | | |
| Written communication | Interns | 3.08 | 1.333 | 135.64 | 6014.000 | -2.758 | .006 |
| | Non Interns | 2.60 | 1.141 | 110.54 | | | |
| Planning and organizing | Interns | 3.00 | 1.551 | 134.93 | 6119.500 | -2.561 | .010 |
| | Non Interns | 2.47 | 1.196 | 111.59 | | | |
| commercial awareness | Interns | 3.09 | 1.345 | 135.93 | 5971.000 | -2.835 | .005 |
| | Non Interns | 2.59 | 1.142 | 110.12 | | | |
| Time Management | Interns | 3.40 | 1.385 | 136.09 | 5946.003 | -.287 | .004 |
| | Non Interns | 2.90 | 1.308 | 109.88 | | | |
| Decision making | Interns | 3.37 | 1.543 | 120.73 | 6814.500 | -1.295 | .011 |
| | Non Interns | 3.21 | 1.306 | 132.53 | | | |

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

On the basis of the cron bach alpha test results, the reliability of the items is proved to be good and hence proceeded with the Mann whitney U test to measure the significant differences perceived by interns and non interns with respect to 15 employability skills of themselves. As shown in Table 2 the two-tailed significance value for all skills are greater than significant level 0.05 ($p > 0.05$) except for verbal communication skills and flexibility which could be attributed to their medium of study since childhood as well as the demographic influences. Overall, it is found that there was a notable difference in the perceived development of employability skills due to the internship attended during their MBA program, hence, the Null hypothesis is rejected. Therefore it can be concluded that the employability skills of those who attended internship were significantly higher than the non intern students and definitely doing internships have an impact on the development of employability skills of students.

Conclusions and policy implications

An analysis of the perceived level of employability skills among students based on the internship program attended will generate insights to higher educational policy makers as well as Institutes in developing their courses of study as they are the most direct evaluators to the students' performance. Higher learning institutions should design their courses of studies to be more practical. Internships provide advantages to graduates in the job market and the institutions of higher education can transform their curricular offerings to include structured experiential learning. They have to break from the present mode function and create a wide range of co curricular, extracurricular and extra mural opportunities for the students during the period of their stay in the campus. This paper, therefore, seeks to expand the dimension of study on the importance of employability skills from the perspective of management graduates, as well as the employers.

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