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RESEARCH ARTICLE

EMPLOYABILITY SKILL AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN RELATION TO ACADEMIC STREAM

Suruchi Sahoo, Madhusmita Panda, Suchitra Patel and Partha Sarathi Mallik

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Abstract

The study was intended to investigate employability skills among University Graduate students and one of the specific purpose was to find out difference in employability skills between Science and Arts students. Descriptive survey method was employed for this study. Primary data were collected from 50 science and 50 arts of G.M University by standardised 'Employability Assessment inventory' of Larry Dershem, 2016 which has six employability skill domains, measured by 24 items. The obtained data were analysed and interpreted by using percentage and t-test. The results of the study revealed that 17% university students have self-concept, 17% have self control, 17% have social, 17% have communication, 18% have problem solving and 13% have job searching skill. With reference Academic stream wise employability skill difference, it is found that science students have comparative more skill than arts students and the difference is significant at .01 level. The result of the present study will help full for policy makers and practitioners of higher education to develop employment skills among students by redesigning curricular content, methodology and practical component.

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Introduction:-

The Context

Employability can be explained as an ability of or attribute of a person to get employment at the initial stage and maintain it for a long duration. In addition, this ability and attribute help them to switch jobs or to get different employment opportunities. The term employability skills though primarily focus on knowledge of a person i.e., what they know, it also covers several skills and attitudes, including the way to approach things (Pool and Sewell, 2007). All these skills are crucial factors for assessing one's employability. There are certain skills which are very important and possession of these skills help for easy employment. The employability skills are: communication, professionalism, personal development, teamwork, flexibility, ideas and innovations, leadership etc. (Buheji & Buheji, 2020). Higher education plays a critical role in equipping youths with employability skills. Universities and Higher Education Institutions are generally regarded as the producers of human capital. In the present globalisation scenario, the role of higher education in initiating youth employability cannot be discarded. In this context, Weligamage (2009) noted that "the current changing business environment emphasizes the importance of education for employability, focusing on the development of not only these skills but also practical expertise." The content of employability is borrowed from the western thinkers. In Indian context, the India Skill Report 2021 indicates a degradation of youth's employability since 2018. Employability is regarded as the ability to improve the skills and applicability that are necessary in the context of employment sector. Entrepreneurship need to be nurtured by higher

education institutions along with collaboration to develop job providers and enhance skills of job seekers (Bhatt and Smita, 2021). The wider context of Indian higher education is surely relevant to the consideration of employment outcomes. In a country like India, education and the socio-economic-political trends and the trends of liberalisation, privatisation and globalisation have continuously interacted with both positive and negatively. An overall increase in liberalisation leads to the deregulation of education system which means that the government has less power to assure quality. Moreover, privatisation of education increasingly being transferred to the private from public sector is resulting in an increase in the number of for-profit educational institutions.

It has been documented in the UNESCO report about critical prerequisites of employability: “Transferable skills that are less tangible but crucial for employability and other life outcomes, such as self-esteem, motivation and aspiration, are in part shaped outside the school environment. Yet good quality education can play a role in promoting such skills in ways that could be particularly beneficial to students who lack a supportive home environment” (UNESCO, 2012). This quote from UNESCO is highlighting the importance of employability as multi-dimensional in curricular and extra-curricular components with respect to discipline-specific as well as cross-disciplinary and also within and beyond educational systems and its various structures.

Focussing upon India, specific policies have significant implications on employability skills. Since 2009, the Government of India has sought to develop the employability skills of graduates through different skill-development programmes (Tara & Kumar, 2016). A person must possess basic knowledge of working on technologies and also aware of all the upgraded to be developed in the workplaces which helps a person to be skilled enough in his personal life and become completely independent (Kenayathulla, Ahmad, & Idris, 2019).

It is concern of researcher and academicians, how to develop these skills among students in general and higher education students in particular. From the curricular context, academicians are very much serious not only to include appropriate curricular content but also to develop these skills among students in the due course of curriculum transaction. Proper curricular designing requires research results about existing status of employability skills among students.

Literature Review:-

Weligamage (2009) conducted a study on graduate students' employability skills as evidence from literature review to identify the employer skills and needs in Sri Lankan University community and in different countries and various definitions related to employability skills requirements and their recommendations. The study was based on a literature survey of educational reports, empirical and theoretical research papers and summarised. The review findings revealed that the skills in consonance with definitions, employer expectation and requirements differ according to different countries. The study recommended that universities should identify the necessary sets of skills that are best to serve and align with the future labour market.

Jakson (2013) investigated the contribution of work integrated learning to undergraduate employability skill outcomes upon 131 students adopting a survey method. Study background and demographic characteristics such as age, sex, degree type, years of study, hours of placement, organisation type and size of organisation produced variations in skill outcomes. With respect to degree type the health and science graduates showed more employability skills against business, education and engineering graduates.

Al-Alawneh (2014) focused on measuring students' Employability Skills as they are perceived at Yarmouk University students and examined the differences in the perceptions on employability skills among students on assigned variables (gender, high school discipline, level of study, type of college, and major willingness. A total number of 317 students from 15 colleges at Yarmouk University were participated and data collected through questionnaire and ANOVA was employed for analysis. The students from sciences colleges whole learned life skills course scored higher than students from humanities colleges on three domains: Empathy, Communication, Coping with Stress.

Collet et. al. (2015) aimed at debating on the employability skills and perspectives from a knowledge-intensive industry through an exploratory factor analysis to examine the perceptions of the skills gap. The findings of the study resolved ten broad constructs that represent cognitive, interpersonal and intra personal skills domains applied in industry along with the perceptions of graduate skills specifically for organisational success. The results suggest

that the discourse of and the design of curriculum needs to shift from a knowledge intensive towards diversity of workplace contexts.

Ekpoh(2015) investigated on assessing student's employability skills in Universities in South Nigeria to assess university students' perspective on employability skills for work placement. The study was a survey research design and sample comprised of 400 students. The data were collected by using Employability Skills Questionnaire and analysed through simple percentage and t test. The results indicated that the present university curriculum was inadequate in enhancing students' employability skills. The results also showed that the level of acquisition of employability skills of students were low in terms of possession of team work skills, problem solving skills, analytical and critical thinking skills and initiative skills. Moreover, the study recommended that students should be placed on industrial attachment through practicum or internship to enhance their work related skills.

Tisdell (2016)enquired the employability skills through the t-shaped student in science, mathematics and medical science on 500 1st year students through a case study design. The results showed science students have more positive perceptions in their employability skills with respect to collaboration, active learning engagement and professional development than the other counterparts.

Gowsalaya and Kumar(2017) studied Perceptions on employability skills necessary to enhance Arts and Science students in Namakkal district and concentrated on the issue of employability skills needed by arts and science students from an industry perception which has been drawn from a survey of 500 students. ANOVA and Correlation tests were used to analyze the study and results showed no significant difference between arts and science graduates in relation to their level of employability.

Rintari (2017) studied on University Graduate's employability skills preparedness in Kenyan economic sectors to investigate the link between graduate quality and preparedness of employability skills. A sample of 420 graduate employees and 46 supervisors/managers were taken for data collection. A questionnaire was used to collect data related to employability skills. The study used descriptive and exploratory design to conduct qualitative analysis and for quantitative data Pearson's correlation analysis was used. The study revealed that a positive link between present job and competence, job confidence, job involvement and employability skills.

Shivoro et al.(2017) critically analysed the universal literature on graduate employability with an objective of a synoptic review on conceptualising the theoretical backgrounds as well as models and approaches for enhancing employability attributes. The analysed reviews established that the discourse of employability attributes is a major theme to the higher education across the world. This notion of employability has been evolved from the conceptualised developmental instruments that are guiding agent to integrate graduate employability to the higher education curricula. The research also recommended strengthening collaboration between universities, higher education institutions and industrial field to enhance the graduate employability.

Kumar (2020) analysed the employability skills gap among the Arts and Science students in selected areas of Tamilnadu. 500 respondents were taken and data were analysed through ANOVA and Co-relation. The findings revealed a significant difference between arts and science graduates where arts were found perceiving more employability skills.

Bhatt and Smita (2021) evaluated the employability of graduates in Indian higher education aiming at exploring the causes of poor employability among graduate students. The study was a review research conducted based on the existing literature and data collected from secondary sources. The study concluded with the recommendations such as teachers' career growth, better salaries and autonomy, nurturing entrepreneurship, strong political will to channelize youth talent etc. to enhance employability of graduates in India.

Sekhri(2021)compared the current scenario of employability skills private and government higher education institutions in Panjab to find out the gap between the capability of graduates and the needs of the market. The sample of the study comprised of 174 teaching faculty and 1058 students. The results indicated that the lower employability of undergraduates might be due to the lack of linkage between industrial sector and internship.

Aier and Joseph (2022)attempted to review the New National Education Policy-2020 with regard to employability skills and the skill based learning programs to analyse the problems which are inhibiting factorsto the present

education system. The study highlighted the issues such as teaching learning method, division of streams, challenges in vocational education and evaluation system. It also focused on the holistic skill development education to revitalise the system and make future opportunities for employability.

A number of researchers have studied the employability skills of students. It is an important aspect to produce efficient group of human capital for the labour market. From the student life they should be acquainted with the work skills and the prerequisites of a future employee so that it enables them to perform in a better way. With respect to association between student's academic stream and employability skills, both significant difference (Jackson, 2013; Al-Alawneh, 2014; and Tisdell, 2016; and Kumar, 2020) and insignificant difference have been reported (Weligamage, 2009; Ekpoh, 2015; Gowsalaya and Kumar, 2017; Rintari, 2017; and Sekhri, 2021).

Justification Of The Study

Today's education system not only imparts knowledge but makes an output oriented and productive student mass. To build the nation as a progressive and economically self sufficient, the human capital plays a very crucial role. So it is very high time to be awakened and make our education output based by equipping the learners with employability skills. The university students are the future employers and contributors to the human capital society and the industrial sector. So in this context, it is important to know the employability skills of university students in order to channelize them in a productive way. So the researcher intended to know the employability skills among the graduate students for the purpose of exploring their skills perceived in different disciplines.

Problem Statement

As per the above felt need, the following research questions arouse in the researchers mind.

Q.1. How much present University graduation students have employability skills?

Q.2. Do, the employability skills varies among students due to their academic stream?

In order to find out the answers to above questions, the present study was conducted titled as “**EMPLOYABILITY SKILL AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN RELATION TO ACADEMIC STREAM**”.

Objectives:-

1. To find out employability skills among university graduate students.
2. To find out differences in employability skills between Science and Arts graduate students.

Hypothesis Of The Study

H₁-There exist a significant difference in the employability skills of Science and Arts graduate students (Jackson, 2013; Al-Alawneh, 2014; and Tisdell, 2016; and Kumar, 2020).

Delimitation Of The Study

The present study is delimited to the arts and science graduate students of Gangadhar Meher University only. Methodology wise,, it was delimited to survey method and data were collected only from students.

Method And Materials:-

Method:-

Since the objective of the study was to find out present status of employability skills among University graduate students, descriptive survey method was employed.

Population and sample

All the University graduate students of Odisha constitute the population for the present study. A sample of 100 graduate students were selected by stratified random sampling from Gangadhar Meher University, Sambalpur which comprised of 50 science and 50 arts students.

Instrumentation

For the present study, the Employability Assessment Tool developed and standardised by Larry Dershem, 2016 was used which has 24 representing 6 employability skills, i.e. positive self concept, self control, social skills, communication skills, problem solving skills and job search skills. The reliability of the tool was Cronbach $\alpha = 0.90$.

The range of the scores for each sub scale is 4 (lowest) to 20 (highest) and the range scores for the Employability Scale are 24(lowest) to 120 (highest).

Data Collection Procedure

With prior consent from the concerned authority of G.M.University, the investigator administered the 'Employability Assessment Tool' on the selected sample by giving clear instructions about how to provide their response. After receiving filled up inventory, the researcher conveyed a deep gratitude to the respondents.

Statistical Techniques Used

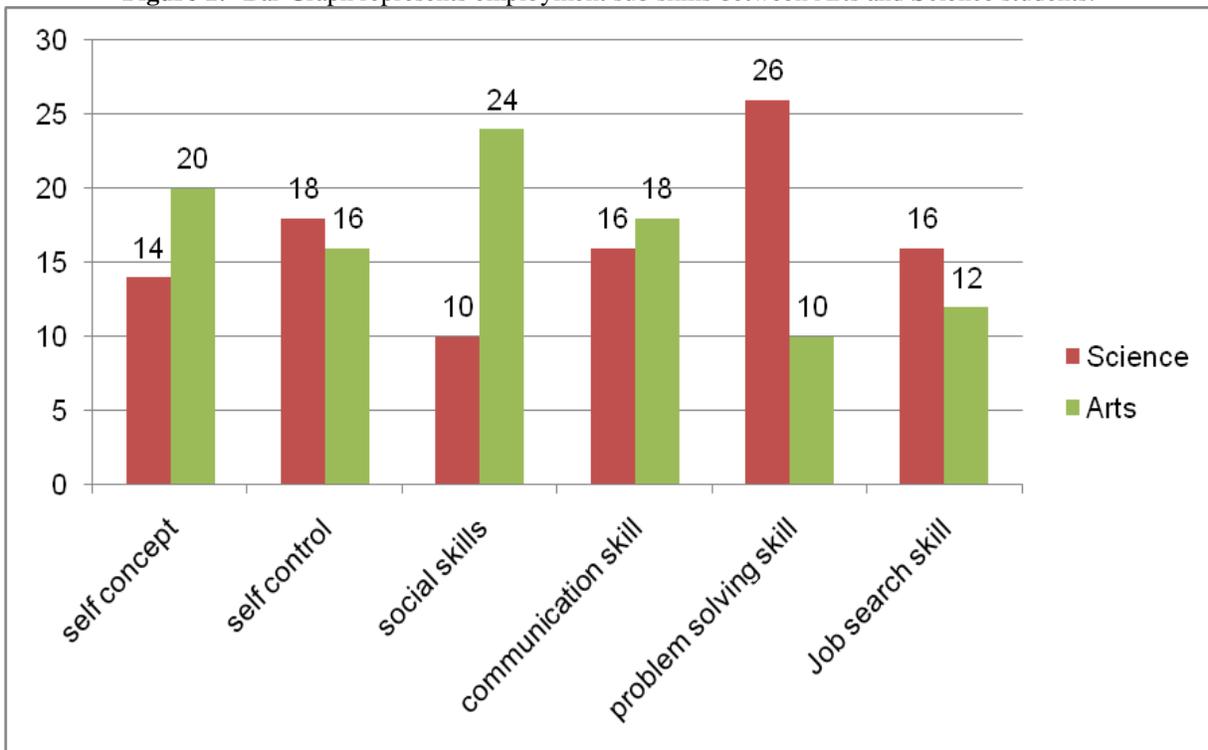
Keeping in view, the objective and design of the study, data were analysed by simple percentage and t test.

Result And Discussion:-

Table 1:- Employability Skills perceived by University Graduate Students.

Employability skills→ stream↓	Self Concept(%)	Self control(%)	Social Skills(%)	Communication skills (%)	Problem solving skill (%)	Job search skill (%)
Arts (50)	20%	16%	24%	18%	10%	12%
Science (50)	14%	18%	10%	16%	26%	16%
Total (100)	17%	17%	17%	17%	18%	13%

Figure 1:- Bar Graph represents employment sub skills between Arts and Science students.



The above table-1 and figure-1 indicated the employability skills of arts and science graduates of G.M.University students in the sub skills at a higher level i.e. self concept, self control, social skills, communication skills, problem solving skills and job search skills. It is found that 17% university students have self concept, self control, social and communication skills; 18% students have problem solving skill and 13% students have job searching skill. With respect to stream wise distribution of sub-skills, it is found that 20% arts and 14% science graduates have self concept sub skill; 16% Arts and 18% science graduates have self control skill; 24% Arts and 10% science graduate students have social skills; 18% Arts and 16% science students have communication skill; 10% Arts and 26% science students have problem solving skill; 12% Arts and 16% science students have job searching skill.

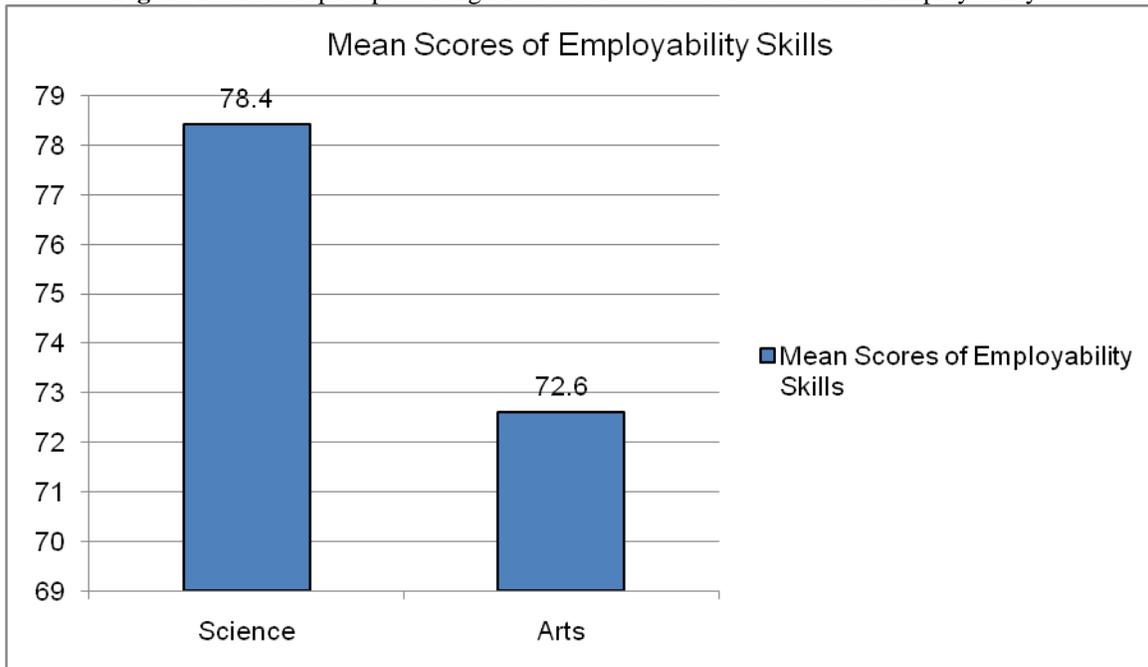
Broadly, distribution of these employment sub-skills between Arts and science students revealed that in terms of social competencies like communication, inter-personal relationship, Arts graduates have better skill than Science graduate but terms of cognitive ability like problem solving and job searching skill, science students are ahead of arts student.

Table 2:- Significance difference between Employability skills of Arts and Science graduates.

Variable	category	N	Mean	SD	SED	df	't' value
Employability skills	Science	50	78.4	9.6	2.09	98	2.77 (significant at 0.01 level)
	Arts	50	72.6	11.2			

The above table-2 indicates the mean values of employability skills of Science and Arts graduate students of GM University students 9.6 and 11.2 respectively. The calculated 't' value (2.78) is more than the critical value at 98 degrees of freedom at the 0.05 level of significance (1.98) and 0.01 level of significance (2.63). Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. It means there is a significant difference exist in the employability skills between Science and Arts graduate students. The science graduate students have better employability skills in comparison to arts graduates.

Figure 2:- Bar Graph representing Mean of Arts and science students in Employability.



The above figure-2 reveals the mean score of science graduate students is higher than arts graduate students. It shows a significance difference between the science and arts graduate students' employability skills.

Discussion:-

The results of the present study shows that less than 19% university graduates have pre-requisite skills for employment. It indicates for majority of students have no skills for employment. This situation directly denotes about lack of employability of the present curriculum of higher education. Similarly with respect to academic stream wise difference in employability skills in total and different sub-skills in particular, it revealed that science students are a little ahead of arts students. But Arts students have social and interpersonal skills more than science students but science students have cognitive sub-skills like problem solving and job searching skills. The findings of the present study about more employability skills among science students in comparison to arts graduates is corroborated with the earlier literature findings of Jackson (2013), Al-Alawneh(2014), and Tisdell (2016). Moreover the results are contradictory to the findings of Kumar (2020) who has reported for more employability

skills among arts graduates than their counterparts and no significant differences in employability skills between arts and science graduates (Weligamage, 2009, Ekpoh, 2015, Gowsalaya and Kumar, 2017, Rintari, 2017, and Sekhri, 2021). Moreover, the documented existing literature stated that there should be institutional efforts to collaborate Universities, HEIs with industrial sectors (Shivoro et al., 2017) and students should be placed on industrial attachment through practicum or internship to enhance their work related skills (Ekpoh, 2015).

From the findings of the present study, it can be concluded that science students possess more employability skills as it is more practical oriented curricular components and induce logical and problem solving skills to prepare for field work or job whereas, arts graduates are more skilled in communication and social skills.

Major Findings

After the analysis and interpretation of data documented in the tables and figures in the early chapter, the researcher draws the following findings.

1. The Science graduate students showed more employability skill than arts graduate students.
2. The arts graduate students have better self concept in comparison to science graduates.
3. The science graduate students have better self control in comparison to arts graduates.
4. The arts graduate students have better social skills in comparison to science graduates.
5. The arts graduate students have better communication skills in comparison to science graduates.
6. The science graduate students have better problem solving skill in comparison to arts graduates.
7. The science graduate students have better job search skills in comparison to arts graduates.
8. The results showed a significant mean difference in the employability skills between science and arts graduate students.

Suggestions And Implications:-

1. Employability skills should be an integral part of the study programmes for university students to accommodate with future employment needs.
2. Universities should conduct employment skill surveys to identify the appropriate needs of students to enhance their employability skills.
3. Practicum and internship on industrial sector and placement needs should be initiated in Universities.
4. Regular review and update of university curriculum in accordance to industrial needs and in the light of changing time.
5. Regular workshops and recurring sessions should be initiated as an important input in enhancing students' employability skills.
6. Association and cooperation with labour market expectations and integrate the university education.

Conclusion:-

The present study sought to find out the employability skills among the science and arts graduate students of G.M. University. The science graduate students showed more employability skills than their counterpart. The science graduates have more employability skills in cognitive aspects like self control, problem solving and in job search skills whereas, the arts graduates are better in social skills and communication skills. Consequently, the research suggest that the University should equip the science graduates with better social and communication skills and the arts graduates should be provided opportunity to strengthen their cognitive skills like problem solving, self control and inquiry skills. These targets could be possible through designing curriculum integrating the industrial sector and enhancing the employability skills within students. Due to the limited opportunity to be employable in the global market the skills and aptitudes of university students should be integrated in such a manner that provides wider scope to employability.

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Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict is reported.

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Appendices:**Employability Assessment Tool**

Sl.no.	Statements	SA	A	UD	DA	SDA
1	I feel valued and appreciated by others.					
2	I feel good about my future.					
3	I anticipate my own needs ahead of time.					
4	I can adapt to changes by learning new skills.					
5	I am able to complete assignments in time.					
6	I feel proud when i produce high quality work.					
7	I go to work even when I feel like staying at home.					

8	I follow work place on school dress codes.					
9	I can understand and work with people with different backgrounds.					
10	I accept people who are different than me.					
11	I value the input and contributions of others.					
12	I take responsibility for what I do.					
13	I know how to express myself in proper ways.					
14	I know how to articulate my own ideas clearly.					
15	I read so I can comprehend and use new information.					
16	I listen actively to understand and learn.					
17	I collect, analyse and organise information to find the best solution to a problem.					
18	I seek many sources of information to solve a problem in school or at work.					
19	I learn from my past successes and mistakes to make future decisions.					
20	I can adapt to changing circumstances.					
21	I have the knowledge and skills needed to interview for jobs.					
22	I know how to prepare a resume.					
23	I know how to complete a job application.					
24	I have the skills and experience valued by employers.					