



ISSN: 2249-894X
IMPACT FACTOR : 5.7631 (UIF)
UGC APPROVED JOURNAL NO. 48514
VOLUME - 8 | ISSUE - 8 | MAY - 2019

A STUDY ON STUDENTS' PERCEPTION TOWARDS THE IMPROVEMENT OF SOFT SKILLS IN PROFESSIONAL COURSES IN MORADABAD REGION IN UTTAR PRADESH

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ABSTRACT:

The government of India is spending tremendous investments on education; still it is receiving minimal returns because there is a gap between the soft skills possessed by the professional students and the soft skills that are required by the industries and organizations. University education is being criticized as being too theoretical while employers are searching for employees who reflect competency in soft skills. Many job opportunities remain vacant in spite of the high

unemployment rate of the university professional students. Therefore higher institutions are considering the development of soft skills based education in response to reform traditional education systems which appear to be out dated with the realities and challenges of modern social and economic life. Some higher institutions have introduced a training program to improve the soft skills of professional students in order to meet the future needs and growth in their workplace. This paper attempts to analyze the perception of the students on the development of their soft skills through the training of soft skills to cope with their professional life. On the basis of Survey Method, a study has been conducted on 312 students of professional courses in Moradabad region in Uttar Pradesh. Primary data was collected through a self made questionnaire 'Perception scale for soft skills development in professional students'. Since the data for analysis is primary in nature and sample size is varied for various sample units, therefore as per the response rate Chi-square test has been applied. The significance level 0.05 has been selected for this test due to the nature of data. After analyzing the data it has been observed that the impact of the training on the improvement of the soft skills of the students was positive. This training fills the gap between the skills that must be possessed by the students of professional courses and the skills required by the employers for a successful professional growth of an individual and the company as a whole. The present study is confined to the different professional courses of private and government colleges in Moradabad region in Uttar Pradesh.

KEYWORDS: soft skills, hard skills, professional courses.

INTRODUCTION:

The role of higher education is increasing year by year and will continue to increase over decades. It is considered as a source of knowledge and innovative thinking, providers

of skilled personnel and a driver of personal and performance growth. Universities providing higher education contribute a lot to the economic growth and development of their countries. Today we see that most of the educational institutions are providing the hard skills to their students but the soft skills are

still lagging behind. Hard skills refer to the specific abilities that can be measured and gained through education or specific training include competencies to use a certain machine, software or other tools to complete any task or responsibility. Soft skills are more often seen as personality traits of a person

which include personality development, dressing sense, office etiquettes, effective use of body language, effective communication skills, stress management techniques, understanding of professional ethics, group discussion techniques and presentation skills.

We see students getting selected in written exams with marvelous scores but when it comes to the face to face interviews they get rejected without any mercy. Even if selected they face several issues related to promotions or are fired later due to lack soft skills in their personality. In our course structure, we train students to handle machines, issues or number but we never teach them to deal with people who are the most important component of any organization. Hard skill is the minimum necessary requirement needed in a workplace. Thus in professional courses educationist must develop the hard skills in students along with the soft skills which will be beneficial for the success of the students as well as for the success of any organization. Today employers look for both the skills while hiring the employees in their companies. They try to hire people with the balance of both skills. The universities and colleges are in deliberate need to conduct researches to keep themselves in pace with the current changing trends in education that is impacting the present and the future. So the teachers must try to provide their students with all the trainings that supports and builds them to survive in this competitive and live fast ever changing world.

NEED OF STUDY

Different institutions have different courses in which the professional courses are very important and number of professional courses specially B. Ed, M. Ed, MBA and MCA are increasing day by day. Merely classifying the students into different categories based on performance in the examinations is only to make superficial and not absolutely fair classification. It is good to judge all round personality and characteristics of the students before giving them any grades. Now a days it is being observed that every year both the universities whether it is a Government or Private are providing professional degrees to their students but after getting the professional degree they are still unemployed. Seeing the gap between the soft skills possessed by the professional students and the skills required by the employers many professional courses are paying more stress on the training of developing soft skills in the personality of the students. If the students improve themselves they will get more chances and opportunities to get them employed. Universities are trying to nurture their students in different ways to groom them well to make them employable. But some questions arise in the mind of researcher. They are-

- Does the training of soft skills help the professional students to improve them?
- Do the urban and rural get equal improvement from the training of soft skills?
- Do the girls and boys get equal improvement from the training of soft skills?
- Do the students of both Government and Private Universities get the improvement from the training of soft skills?
- Do the students of different streams get the improvement from the training of soft skills?
- Do the students of Hindi and English medium get equal improvement from the training of soft skills?
- Do the students from different boards get equal improvement from the training of soft skills?

The researcher selected a topic 'A study on students' perception towards the improvement of soft skills in professional courses in Moradabad region in Uttar Pradesh' I order to find the answers of above questions.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The researcher has reviewed the related literature extensively through books, magazines, journals, internet, educational surveys, published and unpublished thesis and dissertation.

The related literature reviewed has been summarized and presented here under the following categories-

INDIAN RESEARCHES**FOREIGN RESEARCHES**

Categories have been divided such because both Indian and educational context is different from that of the Foreign countries.

INDIAN RESEARCHES

Engineers of Amity, (2015) published an article 'Amity, National Skill Development Council offer Engineering Training in Telecom' in The Hindustan Times on 21st May 2015. They emphasized that in order to bridge the gap between the skill set of graduating students and industry expectations, Amity Institute of Telecom Engineering and Management (AITEM), Amity University Uttar Pradesh aligned with National Occupational Standards (NOSs) and offered two skill oriented modules related to the job roles of "Infrastructure Engineer" and "Field Maintenance Engineer", as specified by telecom Sector Skill Council (TSSC). The first batch of B.Tech. students of Electronic and Telecom Engineering have undergone the skill training along with their regular academic programme. Lt Gen (Dr.) S. P. Kocher, CEO, TSSC along with Lt. Gen P. D. Bhargava – Group Dy. Vice Chancellor, Amity and Advisor, Amity Institute of Telecom Engineering and Management (AITEM) awarded the certification to the students. Lt. Gen P. D. Bhargava congratulated the students on the successful completion of the module and welcomes them to the TSSC Alimni group. He averred that Private industry is the biggest and most preferred employee in India, which faces acute talent dearth at entry level. "What is required in industry, is most often, not taught in the classrooms, therefore, the students have to undergo the herculean task of unlearning what they have learnt in college and re-learning the basics of industry when they join it" remarked Lt. Gen (Dr.) S. P. Kocher.

Kulkarni, S. & Kulkarni, D. G. (2019) conducted a study on the topic 'Gap analysis of soft skills in the curriculum of higher education (A case study of Management Institutes in Karnataka)'. They emphasized that in present scenario things are changing quickly in workplace and at times many strategies are being formed to cope with this changing environment to achieve success. Employers are complaining that the students lack pre-requisite soft skills to enter in a workplace. The rational of this study is to find the significant soft skills which are required to be employable. The author aimed to identify the expectations of the industry and employers regarding soft skills developed among graduates. The study examines that students must have 16 soft skills to satisfy the employment needs of employers. They are (i) communication skills, (ii) interpersonal skills, (iii) adaptability, (iv) leadership, (v) research skills, (vi) team work & collaboration skills, (vii) behavioral skills, (viii) positive attitude, (ix) empathy, (x) accountability, (xi) passion, (xii) critical observation, (xiii) conflict resolution, (xiv) assertiveness, (xv) strong work ethic and (xvi) emotional intelligence. Explanatory Sequential Mixed Methods Design was used by the author. The findings of the study shows that the training of soft skills provides confidence, productivity and future potential in graduates but an effective training of soft skills and finding out the expert trainers are the great challenges to impart this training to the graduates.

FOREIGN RESEARCHES

Washor, S. K. (2015) conducted a research on the topic 'Bridging the soft skill gap from education to employment through internships'. In his dissertation he stressed upon both hard (academics and technical) and the soft skills (personality traits and habits, communication, teamwork, initiative and analytical thinking) which must be possessed by the professional students for their workplace readiness. Pre-post retrospective surveys were administered to students and one to corresponding supervisors to measure change in soft-skill development during a 13 week semester as a direct result from participating in an internship. 278 students (88%) and 287 supervisors (91%) consented to participate in the study and completed all of the items on the survey regarding soft-skill development. Macro level statistical testing using (MANOVA) was conducted to explore the relationship between the independent variable, time (13 week semester) and the dependent variables, soft-skills. Micro level paired samples t-tests were conducted on each scale and each item for students and

supervisors. Results of the analysis of all soft-skill development items suggest that there are patterns among student and supervisor pre and post responses. Students and supervisors reported gains across all soft-skill development scales at the conclusion of the internship. Findings suggest that participating in an internship contributes to student soft-skill development.

Susan. A, (2017) explored in her research on the topic 'Soft skills needed for the 21st Century workforce' that today there is a great competition among the organizations. Hard skills are not enough to be sustained in a workplace. Soft skills are also required to get the success in these organizations. The author has studied many case studies on emotional intelligence before conducting this research to identify the successful strategies of the training of soft skills in the logistics industry. Three logistics organization leaders in the country of Burlington, Middlesex and Somerset, New Jersey participated in this study. Primary data was collected through semi structured interview and the secondary data was reviewed from the documents of the companies. After analyzing the data four points were identified by the author (i) the use of organized technique to determine emotional behaviour at work, (ii) the importance of effective communication skills (iii) the training need of individuals (iv) the use of an amalgamation of group and individual training. The findings of the study can contribute to bring social change by providing an effective training to the students who are unemployed and living in poverty in 21st Century.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

"To analyze the improvement of the professional students through the training of soft skills".

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design: Survey research design has been adopted to conduct a research on 'A study on students' perception towards the improvement of soft skills in professional courses in Moradabad region in Uttar Pradesh'.

Primary Data – Collected from the students of the Professional Courses through a self made questionnaire.

Secondary Data- Collected from available literature through books, magazines, journals, articles, reports, periodicals, newspapers, websites etc.

Data Collection Tool: A self made tool 'Perception scale for soft skills development in professional courses' has been used to collect the data. The data is in the form of frequencies for five point scale so it is quantitative in nature and at nominal scale.

Sampling Technique: Stratified Random Sampling technique is used to collect data for the present study.

Statistical Techniques Employed: Since the data for analysis is primary in nature and sample size is varied for various sample units, therefore as per the response rate chi square test is applied. The significance level 0.05 has been selected for this test due to the nature of data and result.

Sample Constitution: The sample for the study constituted 312 professional students of private and government colleges of Moradabad Region.

In order to achieve the objectives of the study, the following hypotheses have been tested through Chi - Square test.

Hypothesis 1: Perception of the students of professional courses towards the development of soft skills is significantly independent with respect to course.

Table 1: Test of Independence for Hypothesis1

χ^2	d.f.	Significance	Position
26.73	8	0.05	H ₀ Rejected

Table 1 shows that the calculated value of χ^2 26.73 is greater than the tabulated value of χ^2 15.507 for 8 d. f. at 0.05 level of significance. Thus there is a significant difference among B.Ed, MBA and

MCA student in reference to the perception of professional students of private colleges about the training of developing soft skills. Thus the hypothesis is rejected. Among all the courses the development of soft skills has been observed more in case of the students of M. Ed compared to the students of MCA and less development has been observed in case of students of MBA.

Hypothesis 2: Perception of the students of professional courses towards the development of soft skills is significantly independent with respect to age.

Table 2 : Test of Independence for Hypothesis 2

χ^2	d.f.	Significance	Position
13.49	4	0.05	H ₀ Rejected

Table 2 shows that the calculated value of χ^2 13.49 is greater than the tabulated value of χ^2 9.488 for 4 d. f. at 0.05 level of significance. Thus there is a significant difference among B. Ed, MBA and MCA students in reference to the perception of professional students of private colleges about the training of developing soft skills to improve their personality, dressing sense and office etiquettes. So the hypothesis is rejected. Between the two age groups of students the development has been observed more in case of the age group (19-22) in comparison to the age group (above 22). Thus the students in the age group of (19-22) felt that their soft skills have improved through the training of soft skills provided in their professional courses.

Hypothesis 3: Perception of the students of professional courses towards the development of soft skills is significantly independent of gender.

Table 2: Test of Independence for Hypothesis 3

χ^2	d.f.	Significance	Position
10.14	4	0.05	H ₀ Rejected

Table 3 shows that the calculated value of χ^2 10.14 is greater than the tabulated value of χ^2 9.488 for 4 d. f. at 0.05 level of significance. Thus there is a significant difference among B. Ed, MBA and MCA student in reference to the perception of professional students of private colleges about the training of developing soft skills. So the hypothesis is rejected. Thus it can be concluded that more improvement has been observed in case of female students as compared to male.

Hypothesis 4: Perception of the students of professional courses towards the development of their soft skills is significantly independent of area.

Table 4: Test of Independence for Hypothesis 4

χ^2	d.f.	Significance	Position
8.62	4	0.05	H ₀ Cannot be Rejected

Table 4 shows that the calculated value of χ^2 8.62 is less than the tabulated value of χ^2 9.488 for 4 d. f. at 0.05 level of significance. Thus there is no significant difference among B. Ed, MBA and MCA student in reference to the perception of professional students of private colleges about the training of developing their personality. So the hypothesis cannot be rejected. Thus it has been observed that the development of the urban students is less than the students from rural background with respect to the

improvement of their soft skills through the training provided in their professional courses. So there is a great need of a regular training to develop the soft skills of the students in professional courses.

Hypothesis 5: Perception of the students of professional courses towards the development of their soft skills is significantly independent of board.

Table 5: Test of Independence for Hypothesis 5

χ^2	d.f.	Significance	Position
6.23	4	0.05	H ₀ Cannot Rejected

Table 5 shows that the calculated value of χ^2 6.23 is less than the tabulated value of χ^2 9.44 for 4 d. f. at 0.05 level of significance. Thus there is no significant difference among B. Ed, MBA and MCA students in reference to the perception of professional students of private colleges for developing their soft skills. So the hypothesis cannot be rejected. Among all the boards the students of CBSE have been found to be most dissatisfied with the training and felt that they have not developed their soft skills. Thus there is a great need of an effective training for the development of soft skills of these students.

Hypothesis 6: Perception of the students of professional courses towards the development of soft skills is significantly independent with respect to stream.

Table 6 : Test of Independence for Hypothesis 6

χ^2	d.f.	Significance	Position
4.61	4	0.05	H ₀ Cannot be Rejected

Table 6 shows that the calculated value of χ^2 4.61 is less than the tabulated value of χ^2 15.507 for 8 d. f. at 0.05 level of significance. Thus there is no significant difference among the students of B. Ed, MBA and MCA in reference to the perception of professional students of private colleges on the training of developing their soft skills. So the hypothesis cannot be rejected. Thus it can be concluded that less improvement has been observed in case of the students of Science stream than the students of Commerce and the least development has been observed in case of the students of Arts with respect to the improvement of their soft skills. So there is a great need of the training of soft skills to improve the students.

Hypothesis 7: Perception of the students of professional courses towards the development of soft skills is significantly independent with respect to medium.

Table 7: Test of Independence for Hypothesis 7

χ^2	d.f.	Significance	Position
9.90	4	0.05	H ₀ Rejected

Table 7 shows that the calculated value of χ^2 9.90 is greater than the tabulated value of χ^2 9.44 at 4 d. f. for 0.05 level of significance. Thus there is a significant difference among B. Ed, MBA and MCA student in reference to the perception of professional students of private colleges on the training of developing their soft skills. So the hypothesis is rejected.

Thus it can be concluded that the students of English medium strongly agree to the fact that they have been successful to develop themselves through the training of soft skills provided in their professional courses yet the students of Hindi medium were less agree on the same.

OBJECTIVE WISE CONCLUSION

Objective: To analyze the improvement of the professional students through the training of soft skills.

The findings of the above objective have been given below according to the background variables:

1. Among all the professional courses the students of M. Ed course are found to be more developed through the training of soft skills in their professional courses.
2. The students in the age group (19-22) are found to be more improved through the training of soft skills in their professional courses than the students in the age group (above 22).
3. The development through the training of soft skills is found more in female students than the male students.
4. Between two groups the development through the training of soft skills is found more in rural students as compared to the students of urban.
5. Among all the boards the students of CBSE found themselves more developed through the training of soft skills as compared to the students of ICSE and UP boards.
6. All the students felt that they have developed through the training of soft skills in their professional courses. The more development has been observed in the students of Commerce stream than Science and Arts.
7. The students of Hindi medium are seen to be less developed than the students of English medium.

HYPOTHESIS WISE CONCLUSION

Table 8: The result of hypothesis regarding the perception of students of professional courses towards the development of their soft skills

Hypothesis	Result
1. Perception of the students of professional courses towards the development of their soft skills is significantly independent of course.	Rejected
2. Perception of the students of professional courses towards the development of their soft skills is significantly independent of age.	Rejected
3. Perception of the students of professional courses towards the development of their soft skills is significantly independent of gender.	Rejected
4. Perception of the students of professional courses towards the development of their soft skills is significantly independent of area.	Cannot be Rejected
5. Perception of the students of professional courses towards the development of their soft skills is significantly independent of board.	Cannot be Rejected
6. Perception of the students of professional courses towards the development of their soft skills is significantly independent of stream.	Cannot be Rejected
7. Perception of the students of professional courses towards the development of their soft skills is significantly independent of medium.	Rejected

CONCLUSION

Table 8 shows that hypotheses 1, 2, 4 & 7 have been rejected, which shows that there is a significance difference among the perception of the students towards the development of soft skills in their professional courses with respect to their background variables - course, age, gender and medium. This indicates that there has been a positive effect of the training in developing their soft skills. Students pursuing different professional courses, in different age groups, gender and medium felt that they have been successful to develop themselves as per the need of employability in present scenario and they have been able to survive for a long time in their professional life.

Hypothesis 4, 5 & 6 cannot be rejected, which shows that there is no significance difference among the perception of the students towards the development of soft skills in their professional courses with respect to their background variables- area, board and stream. This shows that there is a

great need of an effective training of soft skills for the improvement of these students in their professional courses.

Trainers need to analyze their needs and the reasons of their failures. An effective training can motivate them improving their soft skills which are equally essential to possess with their hard skills to make them employable in a reputed company. Today there is a great need to introduce quality workshops, short term courses, and lectures from industrial experts and career counseling of the students in professional courses to fill the gap between academia and industry. They must be provided with many opportunities to improve their personality, public speaking, communication skills, body language, spoken English, presentation skills, leadership skills, to discuss in a group confidently and to improve many other skills to get a good placement, to sustain in a job for a long time, to get promotions and to act as a successful professional in their future workplace.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

In the light of the results, subsequent conclusions and experience gained in the course of this study, following suggestions may be made for further research in this area:

- Researcher has conducted the study in Moradabad region of Uttar Pradesh state; further researches can be conducted in other regions of different states.
- Researcher has conducted the study on four professional courses; further research can be done on more professional courses.
- Researcher has conducted the study to know the benefits of soft skills. Further study can be done to know the reasons of un-employability of the immigrants as lack of soft skills keeping immigrants underemployed.
- Researcher has conducted the study on the development of soft skills through the curriculum activities in professional courses. Further study can be done on the development of soft skills through technology.

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