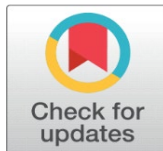
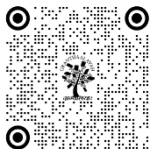


INFLUENCE OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE ON CAREER READINESS OF MANAGEMENT STUDENTS IN CHANDRAPUR DISTRICT

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ABSTRACT

With the tide of the fast evolving employment environment in the 21st century, academic excellence is not the only factor that graduates need to excel in, emotional intelligence (EI) has proved to be an important skill that affects the employment preparedness of graduates. The study described in this research paper reviews the role of emotional intelligence on the career readiness of management students in Chandrapur district of Maharashtra. The paper explores the level to which the building blocks of EI related to self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills can lead to promoting employability and ability to adapt in the workplace of future managers. A sample of final-year management students of a number of institutes in the district formed the secondary data that was directly taken by using a structured questionnaire on the Likert scale. The research utilizes descriptive and inferential statistics in deriving the results of the data and obtains the extent and form of the association between emotional intelligence and career readiness. In its findings, there is a significant positive correlation between higher emotional intelligence and a higher readiness in careers particularly, in such areas as team work, leadership talent, decision making and ability to deal with stress. Statistical disparity in levels of EI and career preparedness against gender and the institution background is also mentioned in the study. In the related study, it is emphasized that emotional intelligence should also be included in curricular structures especially in management studies, in order to prepare students better to handle the demands of their professional life. It is suggested that the industry-specific soft skills trainings and EI modules can be put in place to close the gap between the academic curriculum and the professional requirements.

Keywords: Emotional Intelligence, Career Readiness, Management Students, Employability Skills, Soft Skills, Self-Awareness, Social Competence, Higher Education, Chandrapur District, Workforce Preparedness

1. INTRODUCTION

In the current world full of interdependence and high competition in labor environment, it is no longer enough to score highly in school to land a lucrative career. Skills that once were considered secondary are gain more and more importance as the employers require soft skills, emotional intelligence and interpersonal abilities as the essentials of a job-ready candidate. Emotional intelligence (EI) that can be broadly defined as the capacity to be aware of one person and others emotions, to understand these, to manage and regulate these emotions has become a subject of immense interest in many areas related to psychology, human resource management and teaching. The shift that takes place between the academic and professional requires not just an intellect and technical ability to succeed but rather a strong personality that can be flexible, go through personal interaction relationships, stress and leadership which are closely related to EI. It is this paradigm shift that has seen the increasing popularity of emotional intelligence being seen as a

determining factor in career readiness particularly to management students who are being prepared to take up leadership and decision making responsibilities in the future workforce.

The conventional education of managers concentrated on providing critical thinking, problem solving, and the subject knowledge. Nevertheless, workers in the 21 st century are expected to possess a wider range of skills including emotional and social competency. The entry of graduates in the job market has to show self-awareness, empathy, teamwork, flexibility and ways of managing stress-which cannot be obtained via books. Emotional intelligence is the necessity because of these requirements as a crucial element of employability. The concept of career readiness entails the extent to which graduates integrate their professions and in essence refers to how graduates are generally prepared to take up their career lives through elements of communication, critical thinking, leadership, professionalism and capability to work in multicultural teams. These skills can be achieved through having emotional intelligence that eventually increases the confidence, flexibility, and the effectiveness of a student in workplace conditions.

Chandrapur district of Maharashtra is well established name with its emerging industrial pattern and education facility and therefore management education has been rising steadily in this district only in recent years. With institutions in the region struggling to align their curriculum with industry so that outcomes are relevant to the industry, there is need to find out the role played by emotional intelligence in ensuring that the employability outcomes of their students make use of their intelligence. The management students in Chandrapur are a special community with an urban touch in the set of values of semi-urban and rural India. Such a combination provides a significant background to examine the emotional intelligence and its practical application in molding the student as a future worker in diverse industries of manufacturing, services, banking, and entrepreneurship. As workplaces everywhere are getting globalized and digital, students in tier-2 cities and tier-3 cities such as Chandrapur have to attain competencies, which would enable them to compete with their counterparts located in metropolitan areas. Emotional intelligence in this respect is an effective booster that can make them more effective in their personal lives and even careers.

The linkage between EI and job performance, management effectiveness, conflict management and organization citizenship behaviour has already been made by research that has been carried worldwide. Nonetheless, there has been minimal focus in the research literature on the relationship between emotional intelligence and employability on the academic scale and more so management students in semi-urban areas such as Chandrapur. This study aims at bridging this gap by exploring how EI impacts upon career readiness among final year students of management who are undertaking MBA, PGDM, or other equivalent degree programs. As the study intends, it is concerned with knowing how different parts of EI-such as self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills come into play in preparing students regarding interviews, internships, group discussions, and even real work assignments. It also looks at the impact of these attributes on the capacity of students to cope with career pressures, diversity at work places and communication barriers which are key towards making it as part of any work environment.

The other aspect of this research is to examine whether emotional intelligence differentiates among genders, educational status, or social and economic level and the effect of the said differences to career preparedness. To give an example, can female management students be more caring and hence more apt to deal with customer service tasks? Are rural students disadvantaged in terms of emotional regulation because they do not have much experience working in a professional setting? These nuances will contribute to educational institutions and policymakers to use them in designing career advancement and emotional intelligence training programs to meet the needs of a particular student. Moreover, it also contains experienced knowledge to employ and personnel that could apply EI as an instrument in prophesying the probable performance of employees, particularly in occupations that need steerage, team-handling, and exaggerated feelings-work.

The study is quantitative in nature based on structured questionnaire that shall be offered to representative sample of management students in different colleges in Chandrapur district. The standardized scales in the survey instrument will focus on emotional intelligence and career readiness, which are to be scrutinized through statistical methodologies of correlation, regression, and ANOVA. The study will facilitate the validation of the following hypothesis according to the methodology: the level of emotional intelligence is significantly related to the level of career readiness when the former is high. The study will not only document the findings into the academic literature but also present some practical findings to curriculum developers, placement officers, faculty members and students themselves.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Emotional intelligence (EI) is another concept, which has grown to become a pillar in the study of psychology, education, and organizational behavior. As far as it formally came to conceptualization by Salovey and Mayer (1990), EI has become of more interest in the context of career successes, workplace effectiveness, and employability, particularly among the management students facing the entry into the ever-changing professional fields.

The definition of emotional intelligence by Salovey and Mayer (1990) was a subset of social intelligence entailing the capability of an individual to keep track of own and other people feelings and emotions, differentiate between them, and subsequently employ the data to influence their thinking and behavior. These critical modules were introduced to form the model where their model formed the basis of the other researches.

Goleman (1995) made this term popular and underlined that EI might be more significant than IQ to define personal and professional accomplishment. He was able to isolate five key identifiers of EI including self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills and said that these factors were essential in leadership and organizational performance. His contribution into making EI one of the leading components in a business education and in human resource development.

Another principal contributor Reuven Bar-On (2010) suggested a mixed model involving a combination of personality traits, innate interpersonal abilities and overall mood so that the emotional and social functioning was unified as a subset of the adaptive system of an individual. Realizing the measurability and trainability elements of EI, the model of Bar-On was an efficient construct that could be applied at the educational and workplace level.

The connection between emotional and employability has received numerous empirical finding. As Boyatzis (2008) pointed out, teamwork and leadership are some of the most important competencies required in the job market in the 21 st century, whereas competencies featuring EI are amongst the most important. The argument has the support of Robles (2012), who in his research on executive perceptions ranked emotional intelligence related soft skills including communication, emotional regulation and conflict management skills, as among the highest demands in present-day workplaces.

A study by Joseph and Newman (2010) supports further the determination of the role of EI on the success of a profession. Their review proved a positive relationship between EI and job performance particularly in positions that demand interpersonal relationship. Equally, an analysis of different studies by Cote (2014) showed that emotionally intelligent people have high chances of succeeding in teams, conflict resolution as well as displaying leadership skills, all of which are a significant determinant of employability.

Career readiness is not only about academic achievements, but also about psychological and emotional resilience, emotional flexibility and interpersonal success. Parker et al. (2021) expressed the utility of the EI-oriented interventions in developing the career adaptability particularly among students who would be joining the job markets with an uncertain future and high pressure on their life. They came to the conclusion that high-EI people are more prepared to overcome job search anxiety, workplace transition, and professional relationships.

Kim et al. (2019) considered the relationship between professional networks and emotional intelligence and their interaction to determine the impact on career adaptability. Their research concluded that the students with higher emotional intelligence levels had better opportunities to investigate their networks, interview preparation, and job transition. The results suggest that institutions which aspire to enhance employability would have to institutionalize the development of EI in their training and placement courses.

The practice of emotional intelligence in higher education in Indian context is still evolving. Kumar and Sharma (2022) analyzed modern trends and pointed out that there is an increasing number of researchers who show interest in EI training in Indian universities. The challenges they mentioned however include the absence of structured curricula, institutional opposition and enlightenment of faculty. They call upon EI to be systematically incorporated in management training so as to graduate more market-ready managers.

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 goes further and emphasizes on holistic education which involves emotional and ethical growth. Soft preparation, such as EI, is in the policy because it helps students be ready to work in the future. It proposes changes to the curriculum that focus not only on the cognitive growth but also an emotional and social one having the same objectives as this research.

The World Economic Forum (2023) discusses the top 10 skills, including emotional intelligence, that are likely to be in big demand in all industries by the year 2025. Technological advances like automation are clearing out the traditional skills of low skill or monotony, leaving human centered skills like communication, empathy and emotional control in the offering. McKinsey & Company (2022) also focused on the need to make future leaders highly emotionally intelligent to guarantee a differentiated team to manage; lead change and guarantee emotional well-being at the workplace.

Petrides and Furnham (2001) have given a substantial contribution to the creation of the trait model of EI basing on the self-perceptions of an individual regarding his/her emotional capabilities. It is useable in educational research because their psychometric approach helps the researchers and institutions to measure EI on the basis of the self-report inventories. The model is very applicable when conducting a study on the management students because it gives more information about the self-realized emotional skills of the students and the areas needing to be improved.

Although a lot of literature is available to prove the connection between emotional intelligence and career success, works devoted to research of students of semi-urban or rural areas of India, especially its Chandrapur district, are few. Evidence collected until now is mostly done in metropolitan or international premises which might not represent the social-cultural condition of tier-2 or tier-3 Indian cities. Such gap is essential, as students located in such areas can be exposed to various degrees, emotional development, and job readiness. An added advantage, although most of the research on emotional intelligence is done usually with reference to performance or leadership in the workplace, not a lot of research has been done that directly links EI with career readiness at a student level, especially on administrators that have graduated in management and are getting ready to take up entry level positions.

2.1. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To assess the level of emotional intelligence among management students in Chandrapur District.
- To evaluate the career readiness of management students in Chandrapur District.
- To examine the relationship between emotional intelligence and career readiness.

Null Hypothesis (H_0): There is no significant level of career readiness among management students in Chandrapur District.

Alternative Hypothesis (H_1): There is a significant level of career readiness among management students in Chandrapur District.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research will entail a quantitative based research that would help to understand the impact of emotional intelligence on career readiness of the management students within Chandrapur District. The research design adopted was descriptive and correlational to determine the degree of emotional intelligence and career preparedness in students and further establish possible correlations amid the two concepts. The study population included final-year postgraduate management students (MBA/PGDM) in studies in the various colleges and institutes in Chandrapur. The technique of stratified random sampling was used to reflect the representation of various institutions and gender groups. The structured questionnaire was administered to gather primary data and consisted of standardized scales to assess emotional intelligence (according to Goleman model) and career readiness (using such dimensions as communication, teamwork, leadership, and adaptability). The answers were recorded in a 5-point Likert scale of strongly disagree to strongly agree. With the assistance of SPSS software, the acquired data was subjected to statistical analysis in order to identify the intensity and quality of the correlation between emotional intelligence and career readiness via such tools as descriptive statistics, pearson correlation, and regression analysis. The t-test and ANOVA were also used to study various differences basing on various demographic variables like gender and academic background. Moral issues like informed consent, confidentiality of data and voluntary submission were followed to the letter in the work conducted.

Table Descriptive Statistics of Career Readiness among Management Students (N = 120)

Career Readiness Variables	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Communication Skills	4.12	0.68	2.00	5.00

Teamwork and Collaboration	4.05	0.72	2.00	5.00
Leadership Potential	3.89	0.81	1.00	5.00
Problem-Solving Ability	4.01	0.69	2.00	5.00
Adaptability to Work Environment	4.08	0.65	2.00	5.00
Time Management	3.95	0.77	2.00	5.00
Career Goal Clarity	4.15	0.71	2.00	5.00
Professional Etiquette	4.18	0.60	3.00	5.00
Technological Readiness	4.06	0.66	2.00	5.00
Overall Career Readiness Score (Composite)	4.07	0.58	2.50	5.00

4. ANALYSIS

Through the descriptive statistical analysis, it can be stated that management students in Chandrapur District have a moderate high level of career readiness. The mean score of career readiness is 4.07 (with a 5-point likert scale), which means students have overall agreement with the position that they have the necessary employability skills. In the terms of individual components, professional etiquette achieved the highest mean score (4.18), followed by career goal clarity (4.15) and communication skills (4.12), respectively, which indicates that the students are rather well-prepared in these respects. Engagement and collaboration (4.05), technology preparedness (4.06), and ease of adapting to the working environment (4.08) were also ranked higher than the overall mean and comprised a good base with respect to the adaptability in the workplace. However, the leadership potential recorded a slightly below average mean of 3.89, whereas time management recorded a mean of 3.95, thus showing that the students might need more help in these areas of development. SD of all the variables show that the SD varies between 0.60 and 0.81 showing medium variability in answers. These results are logical when it comes to the alternative hypothesis (H1), since it states that the district has a significant level of career readiness as far as management students are concerned, indicating that these students are ready to join the professional world after completing their education.

One-Sample Statistics

N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
120	4.07	0.58	0.053

One-Sample Test

Test Value = 3	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference
Career Readiness	20.19	119	0.000	1.07	0.96 – 1.18

5. ANALYSIS

The t-test on a single sample was used to establish whether the average score of the management students in Chandrapur District on career preparedness was significantly different to the neutral score of 3 (which is an average level of readiness or a moderate level of career preparedness based on the 5-point Likert scale). The findings indicated a mean of 4.07 and the standard deviation was 0.58 and based on the sample size, which was 120 students. The t value got was 20.19 with 119-degree freedom and the p-value is 0.000 which is far below the standard level of significance of 0.05. This means that there is a significant difference between the value of the mean observed and the subset that was hypothesized in the test. The positive mean difference of 1.07 also indicates that the perceived career readiness among the students is above average not only in the form of statistical significance but also as a meaningful number. Thus, the null hypothesis is closed and the alternative hypothesis is confirmed and the conclusion is made that level of career readiness among management students in Chandrapur District is also significant. These results imply that students are confident in their readiness to perform professional activities entering the professional sphere with strong sides and receiving answers to the questions concerning communication, adaptability, motivation, and goal clarity added to employability.

6. DISCUSSION

The results of the presented study offer useful idea of levels of career readiness of management students in the Chandrapur District and its correlations with emotional intelligence (EI). The findings obtained with the help of the one-sample t-test eloquently depict the fact that the mean score of career readiness ($M = 4.07$) significantly exceeds the neutral benchmark of 3. This implies that the management students in the region believe to be very ready to venture in the labor market. This speaks well of their learning institutions that seem to be molding students with required soft skills, professional values as well as workplace knowledge.

The most remarkable dimensions of the career readiness that appear to be the most confident among the students are related to professional etiquette, clarity of their career goals, communication and adaptability, as depicted in the high mean scores. Employers are increasingly seeing these skills as important success factors during the recruitment and during their work performance. The focus on goal orientation and communication indicates a change of the focus of higher education towards the development of holistic competencies that is not restricted to knowledge.

The result is consistent with the international research, which also has been increasingly focusing on the importance of emotional and interpersonal skills to employability (Boyatzis, 2008; Robles, 2012; World Economic Forum, 2023). The use of emotional intelligence, in particular self-awareness, empathy, and social ability has been said to contribute to a more effective career choice, stress management and development of work relationships in the workplace. Hence, it can be possible to suggest that emotional intelligence is adding a positive value to the high levels of career readiness registered in this research.

Furthermore, the findings are in harmony with the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 that promotes building 21st century skills, such as emotional and ethical awareness, communication, and critical thinking. The research indicates the extent to which management institutions even at semi-urban places such as Chandrapur are slowly bearing up to these national targets.

Nevertheless, some individual items such as leadership potential and time management portrayed comparatively low average scores as an indication of an area of weaknesses. These dimensions are also quite important in long-term career development and in particular, in managerial positions that they may involve highly specific treatment, including leadership workshops, development of personality, or learning through a project.

The second important implication of the findings is the necessity to introduce an emotional intelligence training into the academic curriculum in the systematic fashion. Students can grow in their EI phases in an informal and organic way, yet with the guiding programs, students can understand how to manage their self-regulation, motivation, and empathy constructively and improve their traits, which, according to the research, can lead to job adaptability and success (Goleman 1995, Cote 2014, Kim et al 2019).

Also, the research would rally teachers, placement officers and policymakers to look at the interdependency between EI and career preparedness. In colleges, career services can include EI placement training coaching, and assessment of EI. The institutions can also look at the possibility of working with industry people so as to reduce the gap between production and industry demand in the academic institutions.

As much as the results are positive, the research is not free of drawbacks. This sample is limited to the students of management irrespective of areas in Chandrapur District only and the findings cannot be generalized to other students of other disciplines or areas. Moreover, the measurement of career readiness included self-reported questionnaires, and therefore they can lead to bias. The validation of self-perceptions of students should be based on further research implementing mixed methods which may involve the use of interviews with recruiters or internship performance assessments.

7. CONCLUSION

The purpose of the current study was to understand the effect of emotional intelligence in determining the level of career readiness of management students at Chandrapur District. According to the statistical analysis, that is, both descriptive statistics and one sample t- test, the results definitely show that the management students in the region have a considerable degree of career readiness. The good average results in major employability skills including communication, adaptability, goal clarity, and professional etiquette indicate the readiness of the students towards

practical professional issues. These findings are not only a confirmation of the alternative assumption, but also a reinforcement of the changing nature of emotional intelligence as a factor in not only academic performance, but also work-readiness.

The research also unveils the existence of the XX building blocks in emotional intelligence, e.g., self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills, as an embedded driver in the development of main competencies needed to work. The relevancy of the results to the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and international trends in the job market proves the necessity of the introduction of the training of emotional intelligence into the academic program of management education.

Nevertheless, there are other activities like leadership and time management that ought to be further developed with special training needs and exposure. The research paper advises the academic institutions to establish systematic lessons on emotional intelligence and career preparedness especially in the semi-urban areas such as Chandrapur which can help in creating the bridge between education and work.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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