

HOLISTIC DEVELOPMENT OF FRESH GRADUATES AND ITS IMPACT ON THEIR EMPLOYABILITY

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Abstract

In today's competitive job market, the employability of fresh graduates is increasingly influenced by more than just academic achievements. This research paper explores the holistic development of fresh graduates and its impact on their employability. This study aims to identify the key components of holistic development that significantly enhance employability and understand employer expectations. It also aims to understand the relationship between a well-rounded education and the ability of graduates to secure meaningful employment. The paper concludes with recommendations for educational institutions to adopt practices that align with industry needs, ultimately enhancing the employability and long-term career success of graduates in the light of implementation of NEP 2020.

Keywords: Holistic Development, Employability, Fresh Graduates, Academic Achievements.

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Introduction:

In today's rapidly evolving job market, the employability of fresh graduates has become a critical concern for educational institutions, policymakers, and employers alike. While academic excellence remains a cornerstone, there is growing recognition of the importance of holistic development in preparing graduates for the multifaceted demands of the workplace. Holistic development encompasses a broad spectrum of competencies, including technical expertise, soft skills, emotional intelligence, adaptability, and an ethical mindset. These attributes collectively empower graduates to navigate complex professional landscapes and thrive in their careers.

This research explores the interplay between holistic development and employability from the perspective of employers, who are among the most critical stakeholders in the graduate ecosystem. Employers often highlight gaps between graduates' academic training and the skills required to perform effectively in real-world settings. By focusing on primary data collected from employers across diverse industries, this study seeks to identify the key attributes that enhance employability and evaluate how a well-rounded educational approach can address existing challenges.

The findings aim to provide actionable insights for educators, curriculum developers, and policymakers to design interventions that bridge the employability gap. By fostering a deeper understanding of what constitutes holistic development and its direct impact on employment outcomes, this paper aspires to contribute meaningfully to the ongoing discourse on aligning educational outcomes with market needs.

Literature Review:

Rasmy Kiran (2022) in her study titled “Emotional Intelligence and employability - A Study among graduate job aspirants in Kerala” concludes that Emotional Intelligence especially with its three facets; well-being, self-control, and sociability exerts a significant influence on employability.

Tahir Hussain Ansari and Mohd. Azam Khan (2018) in their study titled “Role of Education and Skill development to promote employment in India” emphasized on the importance of skill development and inclusion of skill enhancement courses in education for enhancing the employability of the learners.

Studies by FICCI and Ernst & Young (2014) revealed that only a fraction of Indian graduates are considered employable due to deficits in soft skills, critical thinking, and workplace readiness.

Research by NASSCOM and McKinsey (2019) highlighted that Indian employers often find graduates lacking in communication, teamwork, and leadership skills.

Objectives of the Study:

1. To assess the familiarity and perception of employers regarding the concept of holistic development in education.
2. To identify the key components of holistic development that employers consider critical for employability.
3. To evaluate the current level of holistic development among fresh graduates from the employers' perspective.
4. To examine the perceived effectiveness of professional development programs offered by educational institutions in preparing graduates for employment.
5. To explore the relative importance of academic qualifications versus holistic development in hiring decisions.
6. To determine the areas of holistic development that are most lacking among fresh graduates.
7. To understand employer expectations of industry-relevant skills in fresh graduates.
8. To rank professional development opportunities based on their perceived benefits to employability.
9. To assess the extent and nature of industry-academia collaboration in promoting holistic development.
10. To recommend strategies for enhancing holistic development to improve graduate employability.

Hypothesis of the Study:

1. H_{0A} : Employers do not perceive holistic development as a significant factor in determining the employability of fresh graduates.

H_{1A} : Employers perceive holistic development as a significant factor in determining the employability of fresh graduates.

2. H_{0B} : Employers do not give greater weightage to holistic development over academic qualifications.

H_{1B} : Employers give greater weightage to holistic development over academic qualifications.

3. H_{0C} : There is a no significant gap between the current level of holistic development in fresh graduates and employers' expectations.

H_{1C} : There is a significant gap between the current level of holistic development in fresh graduates and employers' expectations.

4. H_{0D} : Perception of the employers related to gaps in holistic development among fresh graduates is not independent of the skill areas.

H_{1D} : Perception of the employers related to gaps in holistic development among fresh graduates is independent of the skill areas.

5. H_{0E} : The current professional development programs offered by educational institutions are perceived as not effective by the employer.

H_{1E} : The current professional development programs offered by educational institutions are perceived as effective by the employer.

6. H_{0F} : Employers who collaborate with academic institutions do not have favourable perceptions of the holistic development of students.

H_{1F} : Employers who collaborate with academic institutions have more favourable perceptions of the holistic development of students.

7. H_{0G} : Participation in internships, soft skills training, and certificate courses are not perceived as beneficial activities to enhance employability.

H_{1G} : Participation in internships, soft skills training, and certificate courses are perceived as the most beneficial activities to enhance employability.

Methodology of the Study:

The study is based on **primary** data collected through questionnaire from employers, HR professionals and people involved in the process of hiring fresh graduates.

Sample size is 103 respondents

Statistical Test used: Chi Square Goodness Fitness Test

Data Analysis:

Q. 1. How familiar are you with the concept of holistic development in education?

Table 1. Frequency Distribution of the response

Response	Count	Percentage (%)
Extremely familiar	10	9.71
Very familiar	31	30.10
Moderately familiar	37	35.92
Slightly familiar	19	18.45
Not familiar	6	5.82
Total	103	100

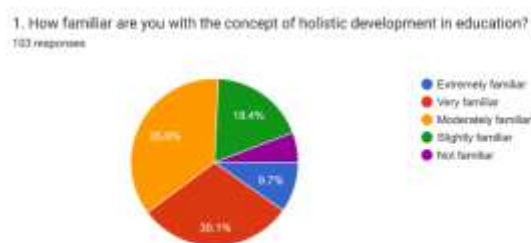


Fig. 1. Familiarity of the concept of Holistic Development

Table 2. Summary of Results

Metric	Value
Mean	3.19
Median	Moderately familiar
Mode	Moderately familiar
Standard Deviation	1.04

Interpretation

The majority of respondents are moderately or very familiar with the concept. Only a small fraction is unfamiliar, indicating a generally well-informed group.

Q. 2. How important do you believe holistic development is in determining employability?

Table 3. Frequency Distribution of the response

Response	Count	Percentage (%)
Extremely Important	37	35.92
Very Important	50	48.55
Moderately Important	15	14.56
Slightly Important	0	0.00
Not Important	1	0.97
Total	103	100

2. How important do you believe holistic development is in determining employability?
103 responses



Fig. 2. Perception about importance of holistic development in determining employability

Table 4. Summary of Results

Metric	Value
Mean	4.18
Median	Very Important
Mode	Very Important
Standard Deviation	0.75

Interpretation

There is a strong consensus on the importance of holistic development for employability, with nearly 85 % selecting 'Very' or 'Extremely Important'.

Q. 3. Rate the key components of holistic development for the evaluation of fresh candidates from their employability point of view.

Table 5. Summary Table – Rating of Holistic Development Components

Component	5	4	3	2	1	Mean	S.D.	Ranking
Academic Knowledge	31	51	18	3	0	4.07	0.77	7
Self-awareness & Emotional Intelligence	55	40	6	2	0	4.47	0.70	2
Communication Skills	53	43	5	2	0	4.43	0.68	4
Social Skills (Teamwork, etc.)	58	37	6	1	1	4.46	0.74	3
Professional Skills (Internships, etc.)	42	47	11	1	2	4.21	0.86	6
Physical Well-being	44	44	11	4	0	4.24	0.80	5
Ethical/Moral Values	77	23	1	2	0	4.70	0.59	1
Leadership Abilities	39	41	17	4	2	4.08	0.94	8

5 = most important, 4 = important, 3 = moderately important, 2 = slightly important, 1 = not important

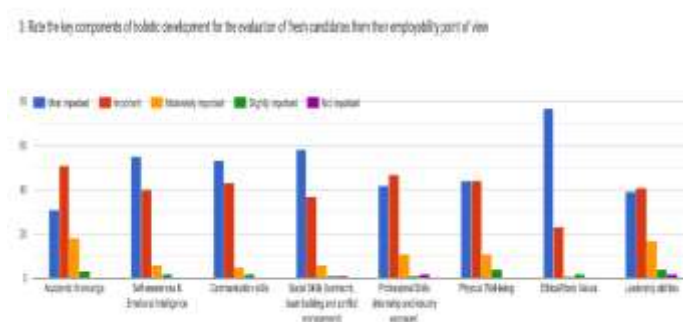


Fig. 3. Key components of holistic development for the evolution of candidates

Interpretation

Ethical/moral development is seen as foundational, even more than academic or professional skills. Soft skills (emotional intelligence, social, and communication skills) are consistently rated higher than traditional academic knowledge. Leadership and academic knowledge, while still important, have relatively lower mean scores, possibly reflecting a broader definition of success beyond grades and positions.

Q. 4. State your weightage on academic qualifications versus their holistic development when hiring fresh graduates

Table 6. Frequency Distribution of the response

Response	Count	Percentage (%)
Strongly Academic Qualifications	6	5.83
Academic over Holistic Development	7	6.80
Equal Emphasis on Both	61	59.22

Holistic development over academic qualifications	28	27.18
Strongly holistic development	1	0.97
Total	103	100.00

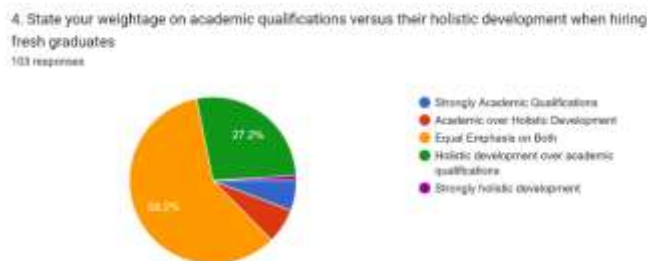


Fig. 4. Weightage of academic qualifications versus holistic development

Interpretation

A strong majority (59.22%) believe both academic qualifications and holistic development should be weighed equally when hiring fresh graduates. A combined **28.15%** lean toward holistic development, compared to **12.63%** who lean more toward academics. Only a handful (less than 7%) express a strong preference in either direction, suggesting balanced thinking across the board. While academic qualifications remain important, there is a clear **trend toward valuing holistic attributes**—like communication, emotional intelligence, teamwork, and ethics—especially when considering fresh graduates. Employers increasingly recognize that success in the workplace goes beyond grades.

Q. 5. Which aspect of holistic development overall do you think contributes the most to a graduate's employability?

Table 7. Summary Table – Rating of Aspects of Holistic Development Components

Component	5	4	3	2	1	Mean	S.D.	Ranking
Academic Development	21	48	25	7	2	3.77	0.92	5
Personal Development	42	27	19	7	8	3.85	1.25	3
Social Development	26	46	19	7	5	3.79	1.05	4
Professional Development	39	35	14	11	4	3.91	1.14	2
Life Skill Development	47	27	15	7	7	3.97	1.22	1

5 = extremely important, 4 = very important, 3 = moderately important, 2 = slightly important, 1 = not important

5. Which aspect of holistic development do you think contributes the most to a graduate's employability? Rate in the order of importance. (1 being most important and 5 being least important)

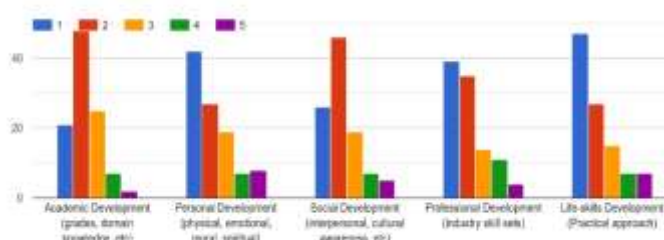


Fig. 5. Rating of different aspects of holistic development

Interpretation

There is a clear shift toward **holistic development**, with life skills, professional, and personal growth being seen as equally or even more important than academic development by many. This aligns with earlier findings showing employers value more than just grades when hiring fresh graduates.

Q. 6. How would you rate the current level of holistic development in most fresh graduates?

Table 8. Frequency Distribution of Response

Rating	Count	Percentage (%)
Excellent	5	4.86
Good	24	23.30
Average	51	49.51
Below Average	21	20.39
Poor	2	1.94
Total	103	100

6. How would you rate the current level of holistic development in most fresh graduates?
103 responses

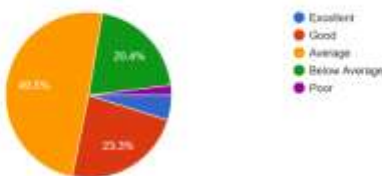


Fig. 6. Current level of holistic development in graduates

Interpretation

Nearly half of the respondents (49.5%) rated the holistic development of fresh graduates as average. 22.3% rated it as *Below Average* or *Poor*, indicating a notable concern among respondents. Only about 28% rated it as *Good* or *Excellent*, showing that while there's some satisfaction, it's not widespread.

Q. 7. Which of the following areas of holistic development do you find most lacking in fresh graduates? (Absolutely lacking, lacking, neutral, slightly lacking, not lacking)

Table 9. Frequency Distribution Response

Component	5	4	3	2	1	Mean	S.D.	Ranking
Practical Knowledge/ Application	24	50	7	18	4	3.70	1.13	1
Communication Skills	8	29	17	39	10	2.86	1.16	7
Leadership Qualities	15	39	15	33	1	3.33	1.11	3
Professionalism and Work Ethics	23	37	17	24	2	3.53	1.14	2
Teamwork and Interpersonal Skills	9	28	20	41	5	2.95	1.11	6
Adaptability	15	25	23	31	9	3.06	1.22	5
Critical or creative thinking	14	33	17	31	8	3.14	1.21	4

5 = absolutely lacking, 4 = lacking, 3 = slightly lacking, 4 = neutral, 5 = not lacking

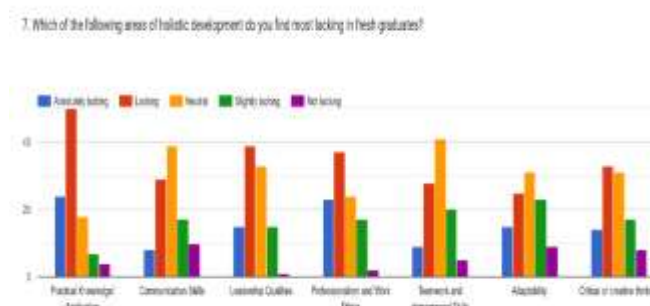


Fig. 7. Areas of holistic development lacking in graduates

Interpretation:

Practical Knowledge & Experience is by far the biggest gap area. Professionalism, Leadership, and Critical Thinking are also key concerns. Soft skills like Teamwork and Communication are relatively stronger, though still not without issues.

Q. 8. How would you rate the effectiveness of current professional development programs offered by educational institutions in preparing students for employment?

Table 10. Frequency Distribution of Response

Rating	Count	Percentage (%)
Extremely Effective	6	5.83
Very Effective	25	24.27
Somewhat Effective	51	49.51
Not so effective	12	11.65
Not at all effective	9	8.74

Total	103	100
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8. How would you rate the effectiveness of current professional development programs offered by educational institutions in preparing students for employment?
103 responses

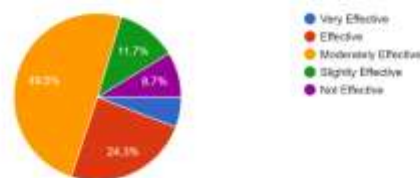


Fig. 8. Effectiveness of professional development programs

Interpretation: Majority of the respondent are of the opinion that current professional development programs offered by education institutions are somewhat effective.

Q. 9. Your expectations of level of industry relevant skills for fresh graduates while entering the workforce.

Table 11. Frequency Distribution of response

Expected Skill Level	Count	Percentage (%)
Expert Knowledge	2	1.94
Good Knowledge	32	31.07
Working knowledge	47	45.63
Slight knowledge	18	17.48
No requirement	4	3.88
Total	103	100

9. Your expectations of level of industry relevant skills for fresh graduates while entering the workforce.
103 responses

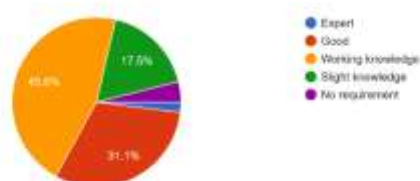


Fig. 9. Level of industry relevant skills in fresh graduates

Interpretation

The survey reveals that a significant majority of employers (76.70%) expect fresh graduates to possess **at least a working knowledge or a good level** of industry-relevant skills upon entering the workforce. Specifically, 45.63% of respondents expect **working knowledge**, while 31.07% look for a **good level of proficiency**. Only a small percentage (1.94%) expect **expert-level skills**, recognizing the entry-level nature of most graduate roles. Interestingly, 17.48% expect only **slight knowledge**, and 3.88% have **no requirement**, possibly indicating flexibility in training new hires.

These insights highlight the need for educational institutions to focus on **practical and applied learning experiences** to better align graduates with industry needs.

Q. 10. What types of professional development opportunities do you think are most beneficial for students / fresh graduates with respect to their employability?

Table 12. Frequency Distribution of the response

Professional Development Opportunities	5	4	3	2	1	Mean	S.D.	Ranking
Internship	52	34	14	3	0	4.31	0.82	1
Live Projects	44	40	16	3	0	4.20	0.83	2
Part Time Jobs	33	31	33	6	0	3.87	0.95	3
Seminars	10	27	41	19	6	3.15	1.04	5
Certificate Course	16	28	41	12	6	3.34	1.07	4
YouTube Lectures & Videos	11	26	38	22	6	3.14	1.06	6

5 = most beneficial, 4 = very beneficial, 3 = moderately beneficial, 2 = slightly beneficial, 1 = not beneficial

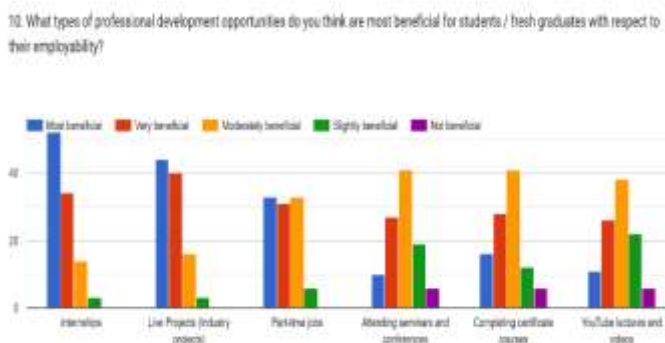


Fig. 10. Types of professional development opportunities beneficial for students

Interpretation

Internships are overwhelmingly perceived as the most beneficial professional development opportunity for employability. Live Project is also seen as vital as internship. Part Time jobs are considered beneficial but less consistent in how strongly people feel about it. Certificate Course is perceived as useful, but not universally valued. Seminars and YouTube lectures and videos are perceived as less effective.

Q. 11. Does your company collaborate with academic institutions to enhance the holistic development of students (e.g., through internships, workshops, guest lectures)?

Table 13. Frequency Distribution of response

Response	Count	Percentage (%)
Yes	49	47.57
No	54	52.43
Total	103	100

11. Does your company collaborate with academic institutions to enhance the holistic development of students (e.g., through internships, workshops, guest lectures)?

103 responses

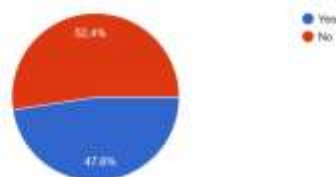


Fig. 11. Industry Academia collaborations

Interpretation

The responses are nearly evenly split, with a slight majority (52.43%) indicating no collaboration between their companies and academic institutions. Only 47.57% confirmed that their companies do engage in collaborative activities like internships, workshops, and guest lectures. This suggests a gap in institutional partnerships, which could limit students' exposure to industry practices.

Q. 12. Suggestions to enhance the holistic development of students to increase their employability

Table 14. Frequency Distribution of the response

Suggestions	5	4	3	2	1	Mean	S.D.	Ranking
Participation in Extra Curricular Activities	56	33	2	12	0	4.29	0.98	3
Attending Seminar and Conference	26	40	9	28	0	3.62	1.14	6
Undertaking Internship	68	25	1	8	1	4.46	0.94	1
Undertaking soft skill training programme	60	32	4	7	0	4.41	0.86	2
Undertaking Certificate Course	32	44	5	22	0	3.83	1.09	5
Undertaking physical and mental well-	56	32	1	14	0	4.25	1.03	4

being programmes								
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5 = extremely recommended, 4 = moderately recommended, 3 = somewhat recommended, 2 = neutral, 1 = not recommended

1. What improvements would you recommend to enhance the holistic development of students to increase their employability?

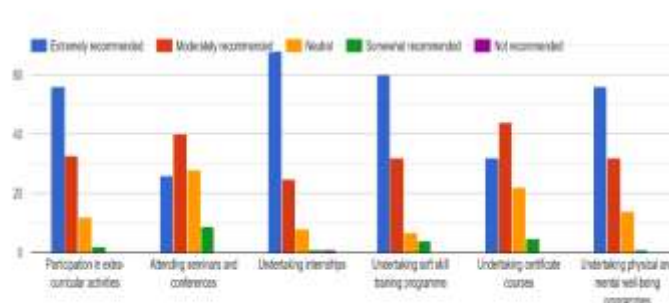


Fig. 12. Recommended improvements to enhance holistic development

Interpretation

Prioritize internships and skill development programs in employability enhancement frameworks. Consider revamping seminars into more interactive, outcome-based sessions. Use certificate courses more strategically (e.g., tech-based or in-demand skills). Do not underestimate well-being programs – they are gaining ground.

Q. 13. Are there any specific skills or qualities that you believe should be emphasized more in educational programs to improve employability?

Table 15. Frequency Distribution of the response

Skills to be focused to improve employability	5	4	3	2	1	Mean	S.D.	Ranking
Critical Thinking and Problem Solving	66	18	10	6	3	4.34	1.06	1
Communication Skills	53	34	9	5	2	4.27	0.95	4
Presentation Skills	38	45	10	7	3	4.05	1.00	10
Digital Literacy	44	39	9	6	5	4.08	1.09	9
Creativity and Innovation	47	37	10	7	2	4.16	1.02	7
Time Management and	62	24	7	4	6	4.28	1.13	3

Organisation Skills								
Adaptability and resilience	56	33	4	8	2	4.29	1.00	2
Self-Motivation and	61	26	6	3	7	4.27	1.15	5
Team Building	40	48	7	5	3	4.14	0.95	8
Conflict Management	47	36	12	5	3	4.16	1.01	6

5 = most important, 4 = very important, 3 = moderately important, 2 = slightly important, 1 = least important

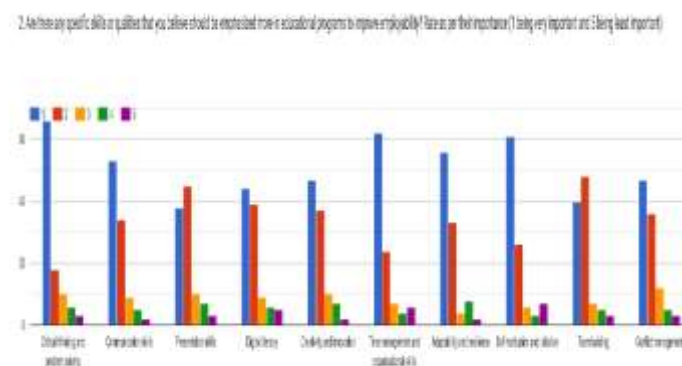


Fig. 13. Skills to be focused to improve employability

Interpretation

Top 3 skills identified as most critical are:

1. Critical Thinking and Problem Solving
2. Adaptability and Resilience
3. Time Management and Organisation Skills

Skills like **Presentation Skills** and **Digital Literacy** are still considered important but rank lower

Table 16. Testing of Hypothesis

No .	Hypothesis	Test Used	χ^2 Value	Table Value	Decision	Interpretation
1	H_{0A} : Employers do not perceive holistic development as a significant factor in determining the employability of fresh graduates.	Chi-Square Goodness of Fit	95.79	9.488	Reject H _{0A}	Employers consider holistic development essential for graduate employability.
2	H_{0B} : Employers do not give greater weightage	Chi-Square	119.86	9.488	Reject H _{0B}	Employers value holistic attributes more

	to holistic development over academic qualifications.	Goodness of Fit				than just academic qualifications.
3	H₀C There is no significant gap between the current level of holistic development in fresh graduates and employers' expectations.	Chi-Square Goodness of Fit	74.04	9.488	Reject H ₀ C	There is a significant gap between what employers expect and what fresh grads offer.
4	H₀D : Perception of the employers related to gaps in holistic development among fresh graduates is not independent of the skill areas.	Chi-Square Test of Independence	62.02	36.415	Reject H ₀ D	Employer perceptions do vary by skill area.
5	H₀E : The current professional development programs offered by educational institutions are perceived as not effective by the employer.	Chi-Square Goodness of Fit	66.27	9.488	Reject H ₀ E	Professional development programs are seen as effective.
6	H₀F : Employers who collaborate with academic institutions do not have favourable perceptions of the holistic development of students.	Chi-Square Test of Independence	4.37	9.488	Fail to reject H ₀ F	No statistical relationship between collaboration and favourable perception — a surprising insight.
7	H₀G : Participation in internships, soft skills training, and certificate courses are not perceived as beneficial activities to enhance employability	Chi-Square Test of Independence	75.04	31.41	Reject H ₀ G	These activities are strongly perceived as beneficial for employability.

Conclusions:

1. Holistic development is critical, both in perception and as a driver of employability.
2. Practical experiences (internships, soft skills, etc.) are top-rated for enhancing employability.
3. Significant skills gap exists between current graduate capabilities and employer expectations.
4. Educational institutions need to prioritize programs that enhance holistic development as these are valued even more than grades.

5. Collaboration alone does not guarantee positive employer perception. The study suggests a need for quality and depth of collaboration, not just quantity.
6. Employer perceptions differ by skill area, suggesting the need for targeted interventions (e.g., leadership, communication, etc.)
7. Critical Thinking and Problem Solving, Adaptability and Resilience, Time Management and Organisation Skills are the three critical skills required to be developed to improve employability amongst the students in educational institutions.

Suggestions:

- Prioritize experiential learning (internships, real-world projects, soft skills training).
- Design holistic development programs that align closely with employer expectations.
- Assess and revise existing curriculum to include critical soft and life skills.
- Institutions should engage more meaningfully with industry and not just invite guest speakers, but co-design curriculum, run simulations, co-evaluate projects.
- Conduct skill-gap assessments per department to tailor interventions.
- Establish feedback loops with employers to consistently evaluate and refine employability efforts.

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