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ROLE OF SKILL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS IN ENHANCINGEMPLOYABILITY AMONG STUDENTS

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Abstract
Basic education is vital in today's society, offering individuals the skills and knowledge to enhance their lives, communication, job prospects, and careers. Skill development programs play a key role in filling the gap between young people's skills and the demands of the job market. These programs aim to identify potential and provide the necessary resources and opportunities to achieve goals. Students acquire technical and non-technical skills during their academic journeys, with technical skills specific to disciplines and non-technical skills applicable across professions. However, inadequate competency and skill development exacerbate unemployment, especially with the Fourth Industrial Revolution and shifting job market demands. Insufficient quality control, outdated training methods, and limited access hinder skill development. A National Skill Development Policy is essential to address these challenges by establishing a common understanding, coordinating stakeholders, and emphasizing skill development for employment andoverall growth. Investment in training programs and educational infrastructure can meet the demand for specialized skills and ensure graduates are workforce-ready.

Introduction

In today's fast-paced society, basic education alone is insufficient for individuals to thrive. Recognizing this, skill development programs have gained importance in enhancing employability.These programs aim to bridge the gap between students' skills and employers' demands, improvingtheir career prospects and quality of life. Skill development includes technical and non-technical skills, with the former being discipline-specific and the latter applicable across professions. However, the mismatch between job requirements and available skills has led to increased unemployment, exacerbated by the Fourth Industrial Revolution. Low- and middle-income countries face additional challenges, such as quality control, accessibility, and inclusivity in skill development initiatives. To address these issues, a comprehensive national skill development policy is crucial, fostering coordination among stakeholders and aligning goals. Such policies support employment, economic growth, and career advancement, filling the gaps in specialized skills that traditional education often overlooks. Skill development programs play a vital role in empowering students and enhancing their employability in an increasingly competitive job market. This study aims to investigate the impact of these programs on improving employment opportunities for students.

Statement of the problem

It is essential for students at the graduate and postgraduate levels to not only receive formal education but also participate in skill development programs to enhance their job prospects in the workforce. While the majority of students typically focus solely on formal education, there is a need for a shift in this approach. Students should be encouraged to identify and develop their idealskill set to contribute to the overall skill level of the economy. Skill development programs have been implemented, but their effectiveness and impact on improving employment opportunities forstudents in Ernakulam need to be examined. This study aims to explore the current state of skill development programs in Ernakulam city and investigate their influence on students' employability.

Objectives of the study
- To examine to extent, role of skill development programs enhancing employability among students.
- To study students' awareness on skill development programs
- To study the satisfaction of students on skill development programs

Review of literature

Totskaya (2021): This paper discusses the use of work integrated learning (WIL) strategies in post-secondary education to develop general skills. Students participate in WIL through coursework or work placements, which enhance their employability and general skill growth. However, traditional WIL models have limitations when implemented on campuses.

Paud and Desa (2020): The study evaluates the work orientation and self-confidence of graduates who participated in the SL1M program. Graduates exhibit high self-confidence and are aware of the competitiveness in the job market. However, the SL1M program falls short in preparing unemployed graduates for the workforce.

Punjani (2019): This study emphasizes the need for skill development in India and suggests simplifying the institutional structure, increasing investment in training infrastructure, and promoting private sector involvement. It aims to equip India's young population with the skills necessary for global employment.

Afroze, Sarker & Eva (2019): Engineering colleges should prioritize the development of soft skills in undergraduate engineering students. Soft skills such as interpersonal, problem-solving, teamwork, and communication abilities are essential for engineers' career advancement.

Tang (2019): Graduates perceive their education and abilities as adequate, but they lack critical soft skills necessary for work. Unrealistic expectations and salary demand hinder their employability. Addressing these discrepancies is crucial to enhance graduate employment.

Methodology

This study is carried out under descriptive research method. The data required for the study was collected from primary and secondary sources. The area selected for the study was cochin city in Ernakulam District. The primary data was collected through a structured interview schedule. Secondary data was collected from books, journals and websites. The sample size of the study consists of 100. Convenient sampling method is used for selection of sample.

Results

Table 1: Profile of Sample

Variable	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male Female Total	49 51 100	49 51 100.0
Age	Below 20 years 20 – 25 years 25 – 30 years 30 years & above Total	14 71 8 7 100	14 71 8 7 100.0

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Locality	Urban Semi UrbanRural	36	36
	Total	35	35
		29	29
		100	100

Source: Survey Data

Table 2: Personal opinion on various aspects related to skill development programmes

Variable	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Awareness level	Highly awareAware Neutral Unaware Highly unaware Total	22 63 8 5 2 100	22 63 8 5 2 100.0
Source of information on skilldevelopment programmes	Newspaper Television Friends Social media Others Total	16 21 17 35 11 100	16 21 17 35 11 100.0
Satisfaction	Highly satisfiedSatisfied Neutral Unsatisfied Highly unsatisfied Total	16 54 29 1 0 100	16 54 29 1 0 100

Source: Survey Data

Table 3: Outcomes of skill development programmes

Variable	Mean Rank	
Motivation Innovation Enhanced skills Confidence and assuranceProfessional network Conflict resolution Others	3.76 4.14 3.13 1.86 5.18 4.70 6.57 6.45	Chi – square: 200.701Degrees of freedom: 7 P value: 0.000

Source: Compiled from Survey Data

Inference: Computed the mean rank of variables related to outcomes of skill development programmes using Friedman test. The highest mean rank is for confidence & assurance, skill development followed by motivation. The least expenses were for the conflict resolution and the other category which is significant at 5% level of significance.

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Table 4: Association between gender and satisfaction level

	Gender	N	Mean	Std	Std. Error Mean
Satisfaction	Male	49	3.6286	0.60828	0.0869
	Female	51	3.7451	0.56721	0.7943

Independent sample T Test

		Levens Test for Equality of Variance					T test for Equality means		95% conf. interval	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig.	Mean	Std.error	Lower	Upper
Satisfaction	Equal variances not assumed	0.207	0.65	-0.991	98	0.324	-0.11653	0.11756	-0.34982	0.1167
	Equal variances not			-0.99	96.826	0.325	-0.11653	0.11773	-0.35019	0.1173

Inference: As the p value obtained is higher than 0.05 at 5% level of significance the null hypothesis is accepted. Therefore it can be inferred that there is no significant difference in relationship between satisfaction level of skill development programs among male and female.

Discussion

This suggests that the majority of participants had a positive perception of the skill development programs. It indicate that the skill development programs had a positive impact on participants' confidence, skills, and motivation, while they might have been less effective in terms of conflict resolution. The mean satisfaction score for males was 3.63, while for females it was slightly higher at 3.75. However, the independent sample t-test results suggest that there is no significant difference in the relationship between satisfaction levels of skill development programs among males and females. Therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted, indicating that gender does not play a significant role in determining satisfaction levels.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the findings of the study indicate that the introduction of skill development programs in the early stages of education can greatly benefit students by providing them with a broader perspective beyond traditional test scores. These programs offer students the opportunity to explore their true skills and strengths, helping them gain a better understanding of their future career paths. By participating in skill development programs, students can identify their areas of expertise and areas that need improvement, ultimately enhancing their employability and preparing them for the real world.

The study also reveals a positive perception of skill development programs among the surveyed population, with high levels of satisfaction reported. Factors such as program organization, knowledgeable instructors, reasonable pricing, favorable facility environments, and efficient administration processes contribute to the overall satisfaction of students. Additionally, the influence of social media platforms plays a significant role in attracting students to these programs and facilitating recommendations to their peers. Overall, the findings emphasize the importance of skill development programs in equipping students with the necessary skills and employability for success in their future endeavors.

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