

Employability Skills of Management Graduates : The Comparative Status of SC/ST Students in Andhra Pradesh

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Abstract

The current research was concerned with the employability skills of SC/ST students in comparison with other students of various colleges in Andhra Pradesh. For the purpose, 200 MBA students were selected as sample by using multistage random sampling and data were collected with the help of a structured questionnaire. The statistical techniques, that is, descriptive statistics and independent sample *t* - test were carried out for the analysis, and interpretation of the data were done through SPSS package. The study revealed that SC/ST management graduates were way behind the other students in almost all employability skill components such as personal qualities, communication skills, team leading, technical skills, higher - order thinking, planning & time management, and analytical skills. It was proposed that the departments and the ministry exclusively meant for providing training to the SC/ST students should function actively. The governments should monitor the activities, budget spending, and the progress of the SC/ST students periodically to address this issue.

Keywords : employability skills, SC/ST students, other students, comparison

JEL Classification : J6, I21, I23, I25, J21, J24, P50

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Students require several skills to be job ready collectively amidst scholastic acquaintances and technical expertise. The skills which are necessary for attaining the desired job are called as employability skills. In addition to this, the skills and knowledge which are needed for efficient contribution in the workforce are also referred to as employability skills (Nawaz & Reddy, 2013). Hence, the employability skills comprehensively can be defined as a set of accomplishments, abilities, and personal attributes that make graduates more likely to achieve employment and be successful in their chosen occupations (Brewer, 2013).

Employability skills are also referred to as generic skills. As the skill shortage has become a point of concern for the employers and government agencies alike (Tripathi, Gautam, & Lal, 2017), the employability skills are needed for success in the job market at all employment levels and in all sectors. Employability skills are an outcome of curriculum designed by higher education institutions (Paadi, 2014).

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Management Students in Andhra Pradesh

The management education market in India has taken rapid strides during the last two decades. It is one of the growing disciplines and is in demand worldwide (Bohra, 2013). The need of management education is due to globalization and industrialization as well collaboration among the different parts of the country or even among the international venture developments (Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Human Resource Development, 2017). India has emerged as a major centre for management education since the last four decades. Higher education institutions are the educational hotspots which are highly responsible for knowledge creation, information storage, knowledge sharing, learning, and reuse (Kumar & Shekhar, 2017). India has been producing more than 3,00,000 management graduates annually (Tanius & Susah, 2013). In India, Andhra Pradesh is one state which is fast developing and there are quite a good number of management institutions offering business education with different specializations.

The Table 1 provides information related to status of management graduates in Andhra Pradesh. The total intake and enrolled students is showing an increasing trend irrespective of the total institutions. This is because of the demand that the management programs encompass (Harvey, 2001).

Today, employment opportunities in the government sector have dried up. All the students, irrespective of community, are dependent upon the private sector for their livelihood. Organizations require a talented and an efficient work force (Choudhury & Sharma, 2014). Thus, SC/ST students are also now opting for specialized education in management for availing opportunities in the private sector. So, management education is not anymore an additional asset, but an important aspect for every SC/ST student (Rashmi, 2013).

The Table 2 shows the status of SC/ST students' intake in comparison with all other students in the area of management in Andhra Pradesh (Andhra Pradesh State Council of Higher Education, 2017). As can be inferred from the Table 2, the level of intake in management education among SC/ST was very low in comparison to other

Table 1. Status of Management Graduates in Andhra Pradesh as in 2016-17

Year	Total Institutions	Total Intake	Total Enrolled	Students Passed
2012-13	417	45,070	25,184	20,457
2013-14	397	45,210	28,608	21,106
2014-15	397	51,750	32,929	23,811
2015-16	386	50,670	35,061	24,268
2016-17	377	49,020	29,734	N.A

Source : Compiled from AICTE Annual Report 2017

Table 2. Year Wise Admissions of SC/ ST Students in Management Colleges in Andhra Pradesh

Years	Students Admitted in Management Education			
	SC	ST	Others	Total
2012-13	3056	317	20457	23830
2013-14	3548	347	23052	26947
2014-15	4055	413	26838	31306
2015-16	4346	484	27609	32439
2016-17	4072	468	25194	29,734

Source : Compiled from AICTE Annual Report 2017

students. The educational gap between the SCs/STs and the rest of the society is still very wide and the rate of improvement is very slow, which may be due to lack of proper guidance and meagre financial resources (Savatkar, 2014).

Literature Review

The investigation of Parimal (2017) was aimed at comparing the personality differences among scheduled caste (120 students) & non - scheduled caste (120) college students. The study revealed that caste, gender, and locality influenced the personality traits of college students.

A research conducted by Nagaraju and Subbarayudu (2017) was targeted to measure the management graduates' actual skill levels. About 160 MBA students from different colleges of the study area were chosen by using convenience sampling and collected the data from the respondents using a structured questionnaire. The study revealed that the management graduates possessed team lead skills and communication skills while they were very poor in holding of technical, planning, and control skills.

Selvam and Rozario (2016) emphasized on the need to recognize the rural college students' actual levels of skills for their employability. For the purpose, 140 MBA students from different colleges of the study area were selected and data were collected through a structured questionnaire. The study resulted in saying that 50% of the total respondents did not possess the needed employability skills.

Shah and Srivastava (2014) intended to explore the responsible factors that affected the employability skills of management graduates in Ahmedabad, Gujarat. The data were collected from 160 management graduates by employing a structured questionnaire. The study results revealed that there was a significant impact of employability skill elements such as analytical skills, self-understanding, general management, leadership, and communication on employability of management graduates.

Suresha and Mylarappa (2012) aimed at examining the socio-economic background of rural scheduled caste female students studying in graduate and post-graduate courses in Tumkur town of Karnataka. The data were collected from a sample size of 250 students drawn on the basis of simple random technique by using interview schedule. The study revealed the significant impact of demographic, social, and economic background of rural female students on their higher education.

In a report of Planning Commission, Government of India (2007) on career perception of SC/ST students in institutions of higher learning, a survey was conducted in five states, that is, U.P., Tamil Nadu, Gujarat, West Bengal, and Delhi with the principal objective of ascertaining perceptions and aspirations of SC/ST students in the final year of graduate/post graduate courses with regard to further education/choice of employment/future course of action. The study revealed that the education level of family members had an effect on the children in their educational career and on their career perceptions.

Objectives of the Study

- (i) To measure the perceived level of employability skills among management graduates in Andhra Pradesh with special reference to SC/ST and other students.
- (ii) To compare the perceived level of employability skills between SC/ST and other management graduates in Andhra Pradesh.

Methodology

(1) Statement of the Problem : Higher education is recognized as one of the significant elements of the national

development effort and management education in particular. It may be said as one of the key factors in the growth and development of the industrial sector. It is of vital importance for the nation and works as a powerful tool to build a knowledge-based society also. However, the acquisition of this knowledge is possible only by certain groups in the society. Due to economic, political, and social imbalances in the society, some sections, especially the SC and ST communities in the society, are not in a position to acquire this management education and are not equally taking part in the establishment and development of the entrepreneurial and industrial sector. Just because of the reservations in education, they are getting admissions in some govt. and affiliated colleges, but because of their financial and social illnesses, they are backward in acquiring and developing management education and knowledge and are not stepping into the areas of start-ups and executive lines.

The demand for workforce is increasing from the industrial sector, and recruiters obviously look for people who possess employability skills. As there are no rules of reservation in the private sector, the weaker sections like SC and ST management graduates need to compete with the open category people. So, irrespective of the community and their financial and social impediments, all the management graduates should gain abilities and skills which will enhance their prospects of employment. Hence, this study attempts to examine the status or level of employability skills prevailing among the SC/STs in comparison with other social communities with respect to management education in Andhra Pradesh.

(2) Hypotheses

↪ **H01** : There is no significant difference between SC/ST students and other students' skill sets with respect to personal qualities of employability skills.

↪ **H02** : There is no significant difference between SC/ST students and other students' skill sets with respect to communication skills of employability skills.

↪ **H03** : There is no significant difference between SC/ST students and other students' skill sets with respect to team leading of employability skills.

↪ **H04** : There is no significant difference between SC/ST students and other students' skill sets with respect to technical skills of employability skills.

↪ **H05** : There is no significant difference between SC/ST students and other students' skill sets with respect to higher - order thinking skills of employability skills.

↪ **H06** : There is no significant difference between SC/ST students and other students' skill sets with respect to decision making of employability skills.

↪ **H07** : There is no significant difference between SC/ST students and other students' skill sets with respect to planning & control of employability skills.

↪ **H08** : There is no significant difference between SC/ST students and other students' skill sets with respect to analytical skills of employability skills.

(3) Sampling Design : The paper attempts to identify the level of perceptions related to employability skills among SC/ST management graduates in a higher learning institution in Andhra Pradesh. For the purpose of the study, 20 reputed colleges were selected from different parts of the state using convenience sampling. A total of 200 final year management graduates, 10 from each college who belonged to different social communities, participated in the study and they were administered a questionnaire to collect the data. The survey was made during the months of October - December, 2017. The questionnaire consisted of 40 questions that were evaluated

Table 3. Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.863	.868	40

according to a 5 - point Likert type scale (*strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree nor disagree, agree, and strongly agree*), which was tested for reliability. The reliability result is shown in the Table 3, in which Cronbach's alpha (0.863) indicates a healthy reliability. The collected data were analyzed both qualitatively and quantitatively. The secondary data were collected from related books, journals, and websites. Statistical techniques, that is, descriptive statistics and independent sample *t* - test were applied with the help of SPSS at the required stage for analysis and interpretation. As different organizations look for different skills, we formulated the common employability skills questionnaire by keeping in view the requirements such as : (a) personal qualities, (b) communication, (c) team leading skills, (d) technical knowledge, (e) higher - order thinking, (f) decision making, (g) planning & control, and (h) analytical skills.

Analysis and Results

(1) Students' Personal Qualities - Comparison Between SC/ST and Others : The Table 4 shows the comparative mean scores of students' personal qualities. The average mean score of SC/ST students (3.83) is below the average mean score of other communities (4.09). SC/ST students have comparatively lesser personal qualities such as passion towards work, multitasking, high energy level with positive attitude, and adaptability. It may be because of dearth in career aspirations coupled with lack of desire to pursue excellence that their contribution and commitment are not at par with other management students. On the other hand, SC/ST students are found to be dominant in personal qualities like self - confidence and responsibility than the other students.

(2) Students' Communication Skills - Comparison Between SC/ST and Others : Mean and standard deviations of students' communication skills are depicted in the Table 5. For communication also, the average mean score of SC/ST students (3.65) is below the average mean score of other students (3.71). The SC/ST students are far behind in communication skill elements such as effective business presentations and participative communication in contrast to other students. It is because of deficiency in sufficient grasping power, sufficient retention capacity, insufficient knowledge of fundamentals and learning opportunities at the college level. However, the SC/ST students are leading in conveying information one-to-one and ability to communicate effectively within the team and at large when compared to other students.

Table 4. Means and Standard Deviations of Students' Personal Qualities

PERSONAL QUALITIES	SC/ST		Other Students	
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation
1. Self-discipline and responsibility.	4.08	1.168	4.01	1.284
2. Adaptability according to the situation.	3.77	1.138	3.78	1.292
3. Skill of passion towards work.	3.83	1.243	4.42	0.666
4. Skill of managing multitasking.	3.77	1.22	4.22	0.826
5. High energy levels with positive attitude.	3.69	1.222	4.03	0.993
Average Score	3.83	1.20	4.09	1.01

Table 5. Means and Standard Deviations of Students' Communication Skills

COMMUNICATION SKILLS	SC/ST		Other Community	
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation
6. Ability of good written communication.	3.69	1.189	3.68	1.518
7. Ability of conveying information one-to-one.	3.88	1.191	3.5	1.353
8. Ability to make effective business presentations.	3.27	1.283	4.07	1.092
9. Ability to communicate effectively within the team and at large.	3.79	1.246	3.39	1.469
10. Ability of participative communication.	3.61	1.152	3.89	0.928
Average Score	3.65	1.21	3.71	1.27

Table 6. Means and Standard Deviations of Students' Team Leading Skills

TEAM LEADING SKILLS	SC/ST		Other Community	
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation
11. Skill of motivating and directing others.	3.67	1.262	4.21	0.838
12. Ability of introducing improvements on a regular basis.	3.56	1.228	4.22	0.967
13. Ability to function with multidisciplinary teams.	3.59	1.258	3.76	0.911
14. Ability of establishing good rapport with superiors and subordinates.	3.66	1.096	3.76	0.722
15. Ability of identifying sources of conflict among people and resolving conflicts.	3.27	1.187	3.78	0.982
Average Score	3.55	1.21	3.95	0.88

Table 7. Means and Standard Deviations of Students' Technical Knowledge

TECHNICAL KNOWLEDGE	SC/ST		Other Community	
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation
16. Ability to design a system, component, or process to meet desired needs.	3.06	1.35	3.99	1.132
17. Ability to identify problems.	3.47	1.279	4.06	0.82
18. Ability to sort out the relevant data to solve the problem.	3.37	1.315	3.46	1.373
19. Ability of contributing to group problem solving.	3.52	1.217	4.06	0.87
20. Skill of in-depth technical competence in a specific engineering/ management discipline.	3.09	1.352	3.08	1.581
Average Score	3.30	1.30	3.73	1.16

(3) Students' Team Leading Skills - Comparison Between SC/ST and Others : The Table 6 represents the comparison of mean scores and standard deviations of SC/ST and other students with respect to their team leading skills. In all the five elements of team building skills, students of other community possessed comparatively more skills than the SC/ST students. The average mean score of SC/ST (3.55) students is below the mean score of other students (3.95). It may be because of poor diligence, which might be due to poor family support, weak financial conditions, etc.

(4) Students' Technical Knowledge - Comparison Between SC/ST and Others : Technical knowledge is one of the

Table 8. Means and Standard Deviations of Students' Higher - Order Thinking Skills

HIGHER-ORDER THINKING SKILLS	SC/ST		Other Community	
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation
21. Capacity for creativity and innovation.	3.48	1.273	3.96	1.067
22. Strategic thinking skills.	3.64	1.247	3.82	1.117
23. Ability to understand professional and ethical responsibilities and commitment towards them.	3.54	1.248	3.53	1.186
24. Ability to understand social, cultural, global, and environmental responsibilities.	3.65	1.343	3.58	1.084
25. Skill of thorough analysis, evaluation, and creation of new ideas.	3.49	1.217	3.82	1.26
Average Score	3.56	1.27	3.74	1.14

Table 9. Means and Standard Deviations of Students' Decision Making Skills

DECISION MAKING SKILLS	SC/ST		Other Community	
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation
26. Skill of risk taking ability.	3.32	1.304	4.11	0.928
27. Ability to pick up new skills and adapt to new situations.	3.63	1.298	3.46	1.424
28. Ability of maintaining a back-up plan.	3.46	1.19	2.97	1.162
29. Skill of making decisions in a short time period and assessing the long-term effects of decisions.	3.52	1.273	3.54	1.186
30. Ability of making decisions on the basis of thorough analysis of the situation.	3.35	1.308	4.08	0.835
Average Score	3.46	1.27	3.63	1.11

important employability skill measurement factors. In case of technical skills also, the average mean score of SC/ST students is (3.30) below the average mean score of other students (3.73) (Table 7). SC/ST students are left behind the other students in the technical skill elements such as : ability to design a system, component, or process to meet desired needs ; ability to identify technical problems ; ability to sort out the relevant data to solve the problem ; and ability of contributing to group problem solving. In case of in-depth technical competence, the mean scores of both categories of students are more or less the same.

(5) Students' Higher - Order Thinking Skills - Comparison Between SC/ST and Others : The Table 8 shows the mean scores and standard deviations of higher-order thinking skills based on social status. Here, the average mean score of SC/ST students (3.56) is just below the average mean score of other students (3.74). The SC/ST students do not have as much higher order thinking skills as the other students in the elements of creativity and innovation, strategic thinking, thorough analysis, evaluation, and creation of new ideas. However, they are somewhat better in the areas of professional and ethical responsibilities and commitment and social, cultural, global, and environmental responsibilities.

(6) Students' Decision Making Skills - Comparison Between SC/ST and Others : In case of decision making skills also, the SC/ST students are lagging behind when compared to the other students. The average mean score of SC/ST students (3.46) is below the average mean score of other students (3.63) (Table 9). But in the areas like

Table 10. Means and Standard Deviations of Students' Planning and Time Management

PLANNING AND TIME MANAGEMENT	SC/ST		Other Community	
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation
31. Skill of allocating time efficiently.	3.39	1.108	3.62	1.323
32. Skill of establishing the critical events to be completed.	3.56	1.443	3.68	1.21
33. Skill of assigning/delegating responsibility.	3.35	1.064	3.41	1.22
34. Skill of monitoring progress against the plan.	3.32	1.032	3.34	1.226
35. Skill of recognizing alternative routes in meeting objectives.	3.26	1.163	3.38	1.217
Average Score	3.38	1.16	3.49	1.24

Table 11. Means and Standard Deviations of Students' Analytical Skills

ANALYTICAL SKILLS	SC/ST		Other Community	
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation
36. Skill of data interpretation and analysis.	3.49	1.28	3.06	1.047
37. Ability of analyzing arithmetic ability.	3.33	1.198	3.93	1.039
38. Skill of analyzing quantitative aptitude.	3.23	1.311	3.07	1.167
39. Skill of analyzing business computations.	3.38	1.217	3.26	1.163
40. Skill of researching for facts to come up with a conclusion.	3.49	1.217	3.82	1.26
Average Score	3.38	1.24	3.43	1.14

ability of maintaining backup plan and ability to pick-up new skills and adapt to new situations, the SC/ST students are better than the other students.

(7) Students' Planning & Time Management Skills - Comparison Between SC/ST and Others : In case of the personality factor of planning and time management also (Table 10), differences exist but not much. It is just above the average mean scores of SC/ST students. It may be said that in some areas of personal skills, SC/ST students also possess the requisite skills.

(8) Students' Analytical Skills - Comparison Between SC/ST and Others : Even for the analytical skills, the

Table 12. Average Mean Score of Employability Skills

Employability Skills	SC/ST	Other Community
1. Personal Qualities	3.83	4.09
2. Communication	3.65	3.71
3. Team Leading	3.55	3.95
4. Technical Knowledge	3.30	3.73
5. Higher Order Thinking	3.56	3.74
6. Decision Making	3.46	3.63
7. Planning and Time Management	3.38	3.49
8. Analytical Skills	3.38	3.43
Overall Skill Set	3.51	3.72

Table 13. t - Test for Significant Differences Between SCs/STs and Other Caste Respondents with Respect to Employability Skills

Independent Samples Test										
t - Test for Equality of Means										
Levene's Test for Equality of Variances										
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		Hypotheses Result
								Lower	Upper	
H01-PERSONAL QUALITY	3.955	.048	-2.805	198	.006	-.366	.131	-.624	-.109	Rejected
			-2.954	174.080	.004	-.366	.124	-.611	-.121	
H02-COMMUNICATION	2.376	.125	-2.633	198	.009	-.323	.122	-.564	-.081	Rejected
			-2.553	136.499	.012	-.323	.126	-.572	-.073	
H03-TEAM LEADING	4.398	.037	-3.649	198	.000	-.401	.110	-.618	-.184	Rejected
			-3.847	174.508	.000	-.401	.104	-.607	-.195	
H04-TECHNICAL KNOWLEDGE	7.195	.008	-3.057	198	.003	-.427	.140	-.702	-.151	Rejected
			-3.247	177.790	.001	-.427	.131	-.686	-.167	
H05-HIGHER ORDER THINKING	4.453	.036	-3.052	198	.003	-.430	.141	-.708	-.152	Rejected
			-3.242	177.905	.001	-.430	.133	-.692	-.168	
H06-DECISION MAKING	4.036	.046	-3.000	198	.003	-.456	.152	-.756	-.156	Rejected
			-3.190	178.337	.002	-.456	.143	-.738	-.174	
H07-PLAN & TIME MANAGEMENT	9.903	.002	2.251	198	.025	.325	.144	.040	.609	Rejected
			2.076	117.261	.040	.325	.156	.015	.634	
H08-ANALYTICAL SKILLS	1.507	.221	-1.992	198	.048	-.287	.144	-.571	-.003	Rejected
			-2.038	160.646	.043	-.287	.141	-.565	-.009	

average mean score of SC/ST students (3.38) is just behind the average mean score of other students (3.43) (Table 11). It can be inferred from the Table 11 that the SC/ST students have lesser analytical skills particularly in the elements like arithmetic ability and skill of researching for facts to come up with a conclusion.

(9) Students' Overall Employability Skills - Comparison Between SC/ST and Others : The Table 12 discloses the average mean scores of employability skill elements related to SC/ST and other management graduates. The mean value of overall skill set score of SC/ST students (3.51) is below the mean value of the overall skill set score of other students (3.72).

(10) Hypotheses Testing :

↳ **Independent Sample *t* - test :** Independent sample *t* - test was used to establish the relationship among SC/ST and other management students with respect to employability skill determinants.

The Table 13 reveals the relationship between SC/ST students and other students with respect to employability skills. All the predictors such as personal qualities (0.006), communication (0.009), team leading (0.00), technical knowledge (0.003), higher - order thinking (0.003), decision making (0.003), planning & control (0.025), and analytical skills (0.048) are significant as the *p* - value is less than the critical value (0.05). Hence, all the null hypotheses (H01, H02, H03, H04, H05, H06, H07, and H08) are statistically rejected. It means that there are significant differences between SC/ST students and other students relating to employability skill determinants such as students' personal qualities, communication skills, team leading, technical knowledge, higher-order thinking, planning & time management, and analytical skills.

Conclusion

The present research aimed at exploring the level of employability skills among management graduates related to SC/ST students and other students in Andhra Pradesh. Though there is not much difference between SC/ST and other students in the employability skill set, SC/ST management graduates were found to be behind the other students in some qualities such as personal qualities, communication skills, team leading, technical knowledge, higher-order thinking, planning & time management, and analytical skills.

Managerial Implications

As per the findings of the study, care should be taken both by the institutions offering management education as well as the Andhra Pradesh Government to improve the skills required by the industry as the government has been spending much in the form of fee reimbursement scheme. Equipping themselves with the required knowledge and skills is essential for all the students, irrespective of community if they want to take the opportunity of stepping into the field of business or become management executives in the corporate world because skills only matter in the private corporates, and they do not follow any kind of reservations. Institutes need to upgrade their curriculum frequently to match the expectations of the industry by incorporating the industry leaders in their Board of Studies and other boards. Proper assessment should be made by the government for finding out whether the management educational institutions are trying to impart quality education and skills expected by the corporate world as there is a lot of gap between skills expected by the employers and skills possessed by the management students, particularly the SC/ST students. The SC/ST corporations need to monitor periodically the improvement in the skill set of the said students and their employability levels.

Limitations of the Study and Scope for Future Research

- (1) The study has focussed only on the management graduates in Andhra Pradesh and further research can focus on graduates of other disciplines and the entire country as well with some specific studies in particular states.
- (2) A sample of only 200 management final year graduates was taken. Further research may take a bigger sample to provide a much representative sample.
- (3) The study is focused on comparison between SC/STs and other management students. Further studies can concentrate on other communities like BC, MBC, and OC management graduates.

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