

Strategies For Enhancing Employability Skills Of College Students In Erode District

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ABSTRACT

Higher education institutions play a pivotal role in shaping the career readiness of students. However, traditional curriculum frameworks often emphasize theoretical knowledge over practical, skill-based learning. In today's rapidly evolving job market, employability skills have emerged as critical determinants of a graduate's success in securing and sustaining meaningful employment. These skills, which include communication, teamwork, problem-solving, adaptability, and digital literacy, go beyond academic knowledge and are essential for navigating the dynamic demands of the modern workplace. In India, particularly in semi-urban and rural districts like Erode, there exists a noticeable gap between the skills acquired by students during their college education and the expectations of employers. This gap often results in decreased job opportunities and underemployment among graduates, underscoring the urgent need for strategic interventions to enhance employability skills at the college level. Despite academic qualifications, many graduates struggle to meet industry expectations due to a lack of practical and soft skills. Hence, this study aimed to examine the strategies for enhancing employability skills of Arts and Science college students in Erode district. This study adopts a descriptive research design and utilizes quantitative methods to gather information from students regarding strategies for enhancing employability skills. The study population has involved students from Arts and Science colleges in Erode, Tamilnadu. The primary data are collected from 350 randomly selected students through a structured questionnaire using a 5-point Likert's scale and managed by using MS-Excel software. The sample data are analyzed using statistical tools such as percentage analysis, mean score, standard deviation, ANOVA, correlation analysis and multiple regression analysis with the help of SPSS version 27.0 whereas the null hypotheses is framed to examine the significant relationship between selected independent variables and strategies for enhancing employability skills.

Keywords: Employability Skills, Skill Development, Higher Education, Career Readiness, Industry Expectations, Curriculum Enhancement, Student Empowerment.

1. INTRODUCTION

In today's competitive job market, employability skills have emerged as a critical factor in determining the career success of college graduates. These skills, which include communication, teamwork, problem-solving, adaptability, digital literacy, and leadership, go beyond academic qualifications and are essential for thriving in dynamic workplace environments. Employers increasingly emphasize the need for graduates to be job-ready, with not only technical knowledge but also soft skills and practical experience. However, a persistent gap remains between the skills acquired in higher education and those demanded by employers, raising concerns over graduate employability. To bridge this gap, educational institutions must adopt strategic approaches that integrate employability development into the academic curriculum. Strategies such as experiential learning, industry collaborations, internships, skill-based workshops, and career counselling play a pivotal role in equipping students with the competencies required for the workforce. Furthermore, the incorporation of digital tools and platforms, peer learning, and mentorship can foster a well-rounded

professional persona among students. In the Indian context, particularly, enhancing employability skills has become an urgent priority given the growing youth population and the evolving demands of the global economy. The higher education institutions need to proactively align their training methodologies with industry standards and foster a culture of continuous learning and self-improvement. This study explores various effective strategies to enhance employability skills among Arts and Science college students, aiming to contribute to their career readiness and long-term professional success.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In view of Xu et al. (2025) pointed out that higher education strategies significantly enhanced the employability of international students when aligned with the USEM framework. Also, culturally responsive reflective practices and work-integrated learning (WIL) were particularly effective in building relevant skills and experiences. Thus, tailored career support services helped address individual needs, while curriculum-embedded skill development fostered both academic and professional growth. The study of Ma'dan et al. (2020) revealed that Malaysian public universities actively implement strategies to enhance graduate competency and meet labor market demands. These included improving teaching methods, reforming academic programs, and fostering stronger university–industry collaboration. Despite existing efforts, the study highlighted the need for institutional-level reforms to support long-term employability. Also, practical roles and strategies are stressed to align graduate skills with employer expectations. The authors Sawant and Fernandes (2019) mentioned that the C-T-F-E strategy (Curriculum, Teaching, Faculty, Evaluation) implemented at Chowgule College emphasized the development of soft skills, critical thinking, and team collaboration. Further, these interventions promoted problem-solving abilities, communication, and time management whereas despite national policy initiatives, institutional-level action remains essential. The study confirmed that a synergy between policy and grassroots implementation can significantly bridge the industry-academia gap.

According to Thayumanavan et al. (2015) noticed that enhancing employability among management students requires a shift in classroom strategies, emphasizing interactive and simulation-based learning. Further, traditional methods are insufficient in bridging the skills gap, particularly in communication. This study stated that academicians must adopt innovative approaches using technology and engaging materials like films, advertisements, and newspapers. The analysis of Chen et al. (2025) found a mismatch between educational programs and labor market needs as a critical barrier to employability for students in ordinary undergraduate institutions. Moreover, vocational training is often insufficient, and many students lack access to useful social networks and job-related resources. Also, principal component analysis highlighted the need for more career-oriented and practical curricula. The authors Lele et al. (2021) emphasized that employability goes beyond technical knowledge and includes soft skills, aptitude, and attitude. They noted that the 'Master Student Programme' (MSP) under ISTE fosters skill development through student-led teaching and mentoring. Also, participation improved communication, leadership, and self-learning skills, particularly benefiting female students and increasing placement rates whereas peer training and presentations build confidence and presentation ability. Also, feedback from alumni confirms that MSP significantly enhances employability skills in engineering students.

3. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In today's competitive job market, Arts and Science college graduates often face significant challenges in securing employment due to a lack of essential employability skills. While academic institutions in regions like Erode district provide subject-specific knowledge, many fail to equip students with the practical and soft skills required by employers, such as communication, teamwork, adaptability, and critical thinking. This disconnect between academic training and industry needs results in a growing number of graduates who are underprepared for real-world job demands. The problem is particularly acute for Arts and Science students, whose curricula may not always include structured skill development initiatives. In this point of view, this study aimed to examine the strategies for enhancing employability skills of college students in Erode district.

4. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To present the profile including demographic and academic details of the selected Arts and Science college students in Erode, Tamilnadu.
- To examine the strategies for enhancing employability skills of selected college students in the study area.

5. HYPOTHESIS OF THE STUDY

- There is no significant relationship between type of skill development program attended and strategies for enhancing employability skills.

- There is no significant relationship between frequency of participation in co-curricular activities and strategies for enhancing employability skills.
- There is no significant relationship between source of career guidance and strategies for enhancing employability skills.
- There is no positive significant association in strategies for enhancing employability skills.
- There is significant relationship with strategies for enhancing employability skills among selected variables.

6. RESEARCH METHODS

This study utilized a descriptive research design and employed quantitative methods to examine strategies for enhancing employability skills among Arts and Science college students. Both primary and secondary data sources were used for this study purpose. The primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire designed to capture students' profiles and their perceptions of various employability enhancement strategies. The questionnaire incorporated a 5-point Likert scale to quantify students' opinions into measurable data. A sample of 350 students from Arts and Science colleges was selected through a random sampling technique. The collected responses were entered into Microsoft Excel and analyzed using the statistical tools such as percentage analysis, mean score, standard deviation, ANOVA, correlation analysis and multiple regression analysis via SPSS version 27.0.

7. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

7.1 Profile of the selected College students and Strategies for Enhancing Employability Skills

The details about the college students' profile including demographic and academic information and strategies for enhancing employability skills are given in the table.

Table 1: Profile of the selected College Students and Strategies for Enhancing Employability Skills

No.	Variables Name	Number Respondents	of %	Mean	SD
1	Gender				
	• Male	191	54.6	3.78	0.64
	• Female	159	45.4	3.76	0.65
	Total	350	100.0		
2	Department Studying				
	• Arts	219	62.6	3.77	0.69
	• Science	131	37.4	3.79	0.57
	Total	350	100.0		
3	Degree of Studying				
	• UG	247	70.6	3.80	0.65
	• PG	103	29.4	3.69	0.63
	Total	350	100.0		
4	Year of Studying				
	• I Year	81	23.1	3.62	0.65
	• II Year	149	42.6	3.77	0.67
	• III Year	120	34.3	3.85	0.61
	Total	350	100.0		
5	Type of Skill Development Program Attended				
	• Technical training	75	21.4	3.76	0.61
	• Soft skills workshop	123	35.2	3.80	0.71
	• Internship/Industrial exposure	47	13.4	3.55	0.62
	• Career counselling sessions	105	30.0	3.84	0.58
	Total	350	100.0		
6	Frequency of Participation in Co-curricular Activities				
	• Rarely (1–2 times per semester)	42	12.0	3.51	0.62
	• Occasionally (monthly)	147	42.0	3.74	0.63
	• Regularly (weekly)	96	27.4	3.79	0.68
	• Very frequently (multiple times per week)	65	18.6	3.84	0.60
	Total	350	100.0		

No.	Variables Name	Number of Respondents	%	Mean	SD
7	Source of Career Guidance				
	College-based placement cell	126	36.0	3.86	0.64
	External career consultants	57	16.3	3.64	0.63
	Online platforms (LinkedIn, Coursera, etc.)	94	26.8	3.78	0.60
	Peer / Mentor support	73	20.9	3.70	0.70
	Total	350	100.0		

- It is mentioned from the above table that 54.6% of the students are male and 45.4% are female among the selected students. Also, the mean score is slightly higher for male students (3.78) than for female students (3.76), indicating a marginal difference in strategies for enhancing employability skills.
- The analysis indicated that the majority of the students, 62.6%, are from Arts departments, while 37.4% are from science departments. Further, science students have a slightly higher mean (3.79) compared to Arts students (3.77), showing a minimal variation in employability strategies across departments.
- From the analysis, a significant proportion of the students, 70.6%, are pursuing undergraduate (UG) degrees, while 29.4% are enrolled in postgraduate (PG) programs. In addition, undergraduate students show a higher mean score (3.80) than postgraduate students (3.69), reflecting greater engagement in employability strategies at the UG level.
- It is assumed from the analysis that among the students, 23.1% are in their first year, 42.6% are in the second year, and 34.3% are in their third year. Thus, third year students have the highest mean (3.85), followed by second-year (3.77), and first-year students (3.62), indicating that employability strategies improve with academic progression.
- The analysis displayed that 35.2% of students attended soft skills workshops, 30.0% attended career counselling sessions, 21.4% attended technical training and 13.4% gained internship or industrial exposure regarding participation in skill development programs. Moreover, career counselling sessions (3.84) and soft skills workshops (3.80) have higher mean scores, while internship/industrial exposure has the lowest (3.55), indicating varying effectiveness across program types.
- From the analysis, it is mentioned that 42.0% of students participate occasionally (monthly), 27.4% participate regularly (weekly), 18.6% very frequently (multiple times per week), and 12.0% rarely participate in terms of participation in co-curricular activities. Additionally, students participating very frequently have the highest mean (3.84), and those participating rarely have the lowest (3.51), showing a positive link between co-curricular involvement and employability strategies.
- It is showed that among the sources of career guidance, 36.0% of students rely on college-based placement cells, 26.8% use online platforms, 20.9% depend on peer or mentor support, and 16.3% consult external career advisors. Furthermore, college-based placement cells have the highest mean (3.86), while external consultants have the lowest (3.64), suggesting institutional support is perceived as most effective.

7.2 Strategies for Enhancing Employability Skills of Students

The following table presents various factors related to strategies for enhancing employability skills of college students. The factors include workshops and seminars, internships, soft skills training, industry interaction, co-curricular activities, placement cell support, online platforms, and career counselling. Each factor reflects different institutional and individual efforts aimed at preparing students for the job market and evaluated based on the mean score and standard deviation derived from student responses.

Table 2: Strategies for Enhancing Employability Skills of college Students

S. No	Factors	Mean Score	SD
1	College provides adequate opportunities to develop employability skills through workshops and seminars	3.46	1.16
2	Participating in internships has significantly improved job readiness	4.36	0.92
3	Soft skills training offered by college is effective	3.76	0.91
4	Regular interaction with industry professionals helps understand current job market expectations	3.45	1.32
5	Institution encourages participation in co-curricular activities to boost employability	3.76	0.91
6	The placement cell in college plays a vital role in enhancing career preparedness	4.39	0.90
7	Online courses and digital platforms have improved employability skills	3.48	1.16
8	Career counselling sessions have helped identify and develop key employability competencies.	3.45	1.32

The Cronbach Alpha value for the statements of strategies for enhancing employability skills of students is 0.917 whereas student responses were recorded using a 5-point Likert scale. This study indicates that the reliability of the strategies for enhancing employability skills is good and fit for analysis. It is noticed from the above table that the placement cell in college has the highest mean score of 4.39, indicating its strong role in enhancing students' career preparedness. Also, participating in internships follows with a mean score of 4.36, showing its significant impact on job readiness. On the other hand, regular interaction with industry professionals and career counselling sessions both have the lowest mean score of 3.45, reflecting comparatively lower student agreement on their effectiveness in enhancing employability skills.

Testing of Hypothesis (Chi-Square Test)

7.3 Relationship between Demographic Profile and Strategies for Enhancing Employability Skills (Chi-Square Test)

With a view to find the degree of association between demographic profile of the selected college students and strategies for enhancing employability skills, a cross-tabulation has been framed. In order to find the relationship between selected independent variables and strategies for enhancing employability skills, hypotheses are developed and analyzed by applying Chi-square test.

Type of Skill Development Program Attended and Strategies for Enhancing Employability Skills

H₀: There is no significant relationship between type of skill development program attended and strategies for enhancing employability skills.

Table 3: Type of Skill Development Program Attended and Strategies for Enhancing Employability Skills

S. No	Type of Skill Development Program Attended	Strategies for Enhancing Employability Skills			Total	Chi-Square Value
		Low	Medium	High		
1	Technical training	10 (13.3%)	13 (17.3%)	52 (69.3%)	75 (100.0%)	51.860 (0.000*)
2	Soft skills workshop	16 (13.0%)	44 (35.8%)	63 (51.2%)	123 (100.0%)	
3	Internship / Industrial exposure	17 (36.2%)	23 (48.9%)	7 (14.9%)	47 (100.0%)	
4	Career counselling sessions	32 (30.5%)	42 (40.0%)	31 (29.5%)	105 (100.0%)	
	Total	75	122	153	350	

Note: Parenthesis indicates 'p' value; * – Significant at 1% level

It is confirmed from the above table that the 'p' value is lesser than 0.05 and the null hypothesis is rejected. Hence, there is a close significant relationship between type of skill development program attended and strategies for enhancing employability skills.

Frequency of Participation in Co-curricular Activities and Strategies for Enhancing Employability Skills

H₀: There is no significant relationship between frequency of participation in co-curricular activities and strategies for enhancing employability skills.

Table 4: Frequency of Participation in Co-curricular Activities and Strategies for Enhancing Employability Skills

S. No	Frequency of Participation in Co-curricular Activities	Strategies for Enhancing Employability Skills			Total	Chi-Square Value
		Low	Medium	High		
1	Rarely (1–2 times per semester)	13 (31.0%)	23 (54.8%)	6 (14.3%)	42 (100.0%)	61.371 (0.000*)
2	Occasionally (monthly)	38 (25.9%)	53 (36.1%)	56 (38.1%)	147 (100.0%)	
3	Regularly (weekly)	12 (12.5%)	44 (45.8%)	40 (41.7%)	96 (100.0%)	
4	Very frequently (multiple times per week)	12 (18.5%)	2 (3.1%)	51 (78.5%)	65 (100.0%)	
	Total	75	122	153	350	

Note: Parenthesis indicates 'p' value; * – Significant at 1% level

It is justified from the above table that the 'p' value is lesser than 0.05 therefore the null hypothesis is rejected. So, there is a close significant relationship between frequency of participation in co-curricular activities and strategies for enhancing employability skills.

Source of Career Guidance and Strategies for Enhancing Employability Skills

H₀: There is no significant relationship between source of career guidance and strategies for enhancing employability skills.

Table 5: Source of Career Guidance and Strategies for Enhancing Employability Skills

S. No	Source of Career Guidance	Strategies for Enhancing Employability Skills			Total	Chi-Square Value
		Low	Medium	High		
1	College-based placement cell	19 (15.1%)	36 (28.6%)	71 (56.3%)	126 (100.0%)	43.909 (0.000*)
2	External career consultants	17 (29.8%)	23 (40.4%)	17 (29.8%)	57 (100.0%)	
3	Online platforms (LinkedIn, Coursera, etc.)	27 (28.7%)	19 (20.2%)	48 (51.1%)	94 (100.0%)	
4	Peer / Mentor support	12 (16.4%)	44 (60.3%)	17 (23.3%)	73 (100.0%)	
	Total	75	122	153	350	

Note: Parenthesis indicates 'p' value; * – Significant at 1% level

It is pointed out from the above table that the 'p' value is lesser than 0.05 consequently the null hypothesis is rejected. Therefore, there is a close significant relationship between frequency of participation in co-curricular activities and strategies for enhancing employability skills.

Degree of Relationship between selected independent variables and Strategies for Enhancing Employability Skills

The following analysis has examined that the relationship between the selected independent variables and the dependent variable strategies for enhancing employability skills by using correlation analysis. For this study, the independent variables have been preferred like year of study and frequency of participation in co-curricular activities.

H₀: There is no positive significant association in strategies for enhancing employability skills.

Table 6: Degree of Relationship between Selected Independent Variables and Strategies for Enhancing Employability Skills

Variables	Year of Study	Frequency of Participation in Co-curricular Activities	Strategies for Enhancing Employability Skills
Year of Study	1.000		
Frequency of Participation in Co-curricular Activities	0.224 (0.000*)	1.000	
Strategies for Enhancing Employability Skills	0.368 (0.000*)	0.246 (0.000*)	1.000

Note: * - Significant at 1% level; NS - Not Significant

The values in the table represent correlation coefficients that measure the association between the selected variables. The correlation analysis observed that the interrelationship between the year of study (0.368), frequency of participation in co-curricular activities (0.246), and strategies for enhancing employability skills.

Relationship of Strategies for Enhancing Employability Skills

The relationship of strategies for enhancing employability skills with selected variables among college students is discussed in the following table.

H₀: There is significant relationship with strategies for enhancing employability skills among selected variables.

**Table 7: Relationship of Strategies for Enhancing Employability Skills
(Multiple Regression Analysis)**

No.	Variables	Coefficient	SE	't' value	'p' value
	(Constant)	3.602			
1	Year of Study	0.152	0.037	4.108	0.000*
2	Frequency of Participation in Co-curricular Activities	0.223	0.038	5.868	0.000*
	R Value	0.875			
	R² Value	0.766			
	F Value	80.645*			

Note: * - Significant at 1% level

From the above table, results of a multiple regression analysis examining the relationship between selected variables and strategies for enhancing employability skills. Both the year of study (0.152) and frequency of participation in co-curricular activities (0.223) show statistically significant positive coefficients. The R² value of 0.766 indicates that 76.6% of the variation in employability strategies is explained by the model. The F value of 80.645 confirms the overall significance of the regression equation at the 1% level.

8. FINDINGS

- It is assumed that male students form the majority with 54.6% participation in the study. Further, male students have maximum level of strategies for enhancing employability skills.
- It is justified that Arts students constitute the largest group, accounting for 62.6% of the respondents. In addition, science students have maximum level of strategies for enhancing employability skills.
- It is indicated that undergraduate students dominate the sample, representing 70.6% of the total. Furthermore, undergraduate students have maximum level of strategies for enhancing employability skills.
- It is explored that second-year students have the highest representation at 42.6%. But III-year students have maximum level of strategies for enhancing employability skills.
- It is identified that soft skills workshops are the most attended, with 35.2% of students participating. Additionally, students who attended career counselling sessions have maximum level of strategies for enhancing employability skills.
- It is showed that most students participate occasionally (monthly), making up 42.0% of the total. Though, students who participate very frequently in co-curricular activities have maximum level of strategies for enhancing employability skills.
- It is confirmed that college-based placement cells are the primary source of career guidance, used by 36.0% of students. Further, students who received guidance from college-based placement cells have maximum level of strategies for enhancing employability skills.
- It is mentioned from the mean score analysis that the placement cell in college plays a strong role in enhancing students' career preparedness and participating in internships showing significant impact on job readiness.
- It is revealed from the Chi-square test that there is a close significant relationship between type of skill development program attended and strategies for enhancing employability skills.
- The Chi-square test observed there is a close significant relationship between frequency of participation in co-curricular activities and strategies for enhancing employability skills.
- From the Chi-square test, it is noticed that there is a close significant relationship between frequency of participation in co-curricular activities and strategies for enhancing employability skills.
- The correlation analysis displayed that the interrelationship between the year of study, frequency of participation in co-curricular activities and strategies for enhancing employability skills.
- The multiple regression analysis proved that both the variables namely year of study and frequency of participation in co-curricular activities of students had statistically significant positive coefficients with the strategies for enhancing employability skills.

9. SUGGESTIONS

- It is observed that male students have maximum level of strategies for enhancing employability skills. This study suggested that male students could be encouraged to mentor their peers in employability skill development activities.
- It is indicated that science students have maximum level of strategies for enhancing employability skills. Hence, the higher education institutions should motivate the students of arts department students to participate more effective practices to promote their employability skill enhancement.

- It is justified that III-year students have maximum level of strategies for enhancing employability skills. So, the researchers suggested that more targeted skill-building programs can be introduced in earlier years to match the III-year students' level.
- It is showed that students who attended career counselling sessions have maximum level of strategies for enhancing employability skills. Therefore, it is suggested that career counselling sessions should be expanded and promoted across all departments to reach more students.
- It is confirmed that students who participate very frequently in co-curricular activities have maximum level of strategies for enhancing employability skills. Hence, the Arts and Science colleges should encourage their students for frequent participation in co-curricular activities through structured incentives.
- It is assumed that students who received guidance from college-based placement cells have maximum level of strategies for enhancing employability skills. Then, Strengthening and expanding the reach of college placement cells can further support student career readiness.

10. CONCLUSION

This study aimed to analyze the strategies for enhancing employability skills of college students in Erode district. This study mentioned from the analysis that there is a close significant relationship between the selected variables like type of skill development program attended, frequency of participation in co-curricular activities & frequency of participation in co-curricular activities and strategies for enhancing employability skills. Hence, enhancing employability skills among college students in Erode district requires a strategic focus on industry-aligned training, soft skills development, and practical exposure. So, institutions must collaborate with industries to bridge the skill gap while regular workshops, internships, and career guidance programs can significantly improve job readiness. Also, emphasis on communication, teamwork, and problem-solving is crucial whereas ultimately, a holistic and continuous approach will empower students for a competitive job market.

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