RESEARCH ARTICLE

Self-Efficacy and Employability: Bridging the Gap Between Learning and Earning

👤 **Mrs. L. Deepika**

🏛 Assistant Professor, Department of English, Keshav Memorial Institute of Commerce & Sciences, Narayanaguda, Hyderabad, India;

✉ deepikaengdept@gmail.com

🔖 Accepted version published on 5 September 2025

ABSTRACT

Self-efficacy, the belief in one's own ability to accomplish tasks, plays a crucial role in shaping students' academic progress and career readiness. This paper examines how a lack of self-efficacy gradually develops across different levels of education and how it becomes a significant factor contributing to unemployment. At the school level, excessive dependence on rote learning, exam pressure, and limited encouragement for creativity or independent thinking weaken students' confidence. By the college stage, gaps between theoretical knowledge and practical application become evident, leaving students unsure of their abilities. At the undergraduate level, this lack of confidence often translates into poor communication, hesitation in decision-making, and an inability to meet workplace expectations, resulting in low employability despite holding degrees. The paper further analyzes the causes of poor self-efficacy, including rigid teaching methods, a lack of mentorship, inadequate skill-based training, and limited exposure to real-life challenges. It then discusses the consequences, which include underemployment, job insecurity, and reduced professional growth. The findings offer insights into how students perceive their readiness for the world of work. The paper suggests recommendations, including introducing activity-based learning in schools, strengthening career guidance at the college level, integrating internships and soft-skill training at the undergraduate level, and providing mentorship programs to build resilience and self-belief.

Keywords: cultural memory; ecocriticism; feminist narratology; postcolonial resistance

FULL PAPER

1. Introduction

Self-efficacy is a psychological concept that refers to a person's confidence in their own ability to perform a task and succeed in a particular situation. Albert Bandura, who introduced this theory, explained that self-efficacy influences the choices people make, the effort they put in, and the way they respond to challenges. In education, self-efficacy is closely linked to learning outcomes, motivation, resilience, and career development. A student who believes in their abilities is more likely to take risks, engage actively in learning, and prepare confidently for future employment. On the other hand, a lack of self-efficacy results in hesitation, self-doubt, and poor performance, which can eventually influence employability. In recent years, unemployment among graduates has become a growing concern. Despite possessing academic qualifications, many students struggle to secure suitable employment. One of the reasons for this gap between learning and earning is low self-efficacy. From the school stage, students are often trained in an exam-centered environment where creativity and independent thinking are neglected. As they progress to college and undergraduate levels, the pressure of competition, lack of exposure to real-life applications, and absence of career guidance further weaken their confidence.

This study aims to investigate how a lack of self-efficacy develops from the school to the the undergraduate level and how it contributes to unemployment. To understand this issue more deeply, a survey was conducted among students at different levels of education. The findings are used to analyze the connection between self-belief and employability and to suggest possible measures to strengthen students' confidence. The paper argues that building self-efficacy is not only important for academic progress but also for developing competent, employable individuals who can successfully face workplace challenges.

2. Literature Review

The concept of self-efficacy was introduced by Albert Bandura in 1977. He described it as an individual's belief in their ability to execute tasks and achieve goals successfully. Bandura emphasized that individuals with strong self-efficacy are usually more determined, motivated, and resilient, which enables them to accomplish desired outcomes.

2.1 Self-Efficacy and Academic Performance

Several educational researchers have explored the influence of self-efficacy on student learning. Schunk (1985) noted that students who possess higher self-efficacy actively participate in learning and demonstrate improved academic achievement. Similarly, Pajares (1996) stated that self-efficacy significantly impacts students' selection of tasks, persistence during challenges, and overall coping strategies. These studies highlight that belief in one's capabilities is as vital as cognitive ability in achieving success in education.

2.2 Role of Self-Efficacy in Employability

Employability requires more than subject knowledge—it demands confidence and practical application skills. Yorke and Knight (2004) highlighted that attributes such as communication, teamwork, and adaptability are essential for career readiness and are closely tied to self-efficacy. Fugate et al. (2004) further explained that employability is not limited to academic credentials but also depends on an individual's confidence to apply learned skills in real-life scenarios. Thus, self-efficacy acts as a critical link between academic knowledge and workplace performance.

2.3 Indian Context: Self-Efficacy and Job Readiness

In the Indian job market, graduate unemployment remains a pressing concern despite the increasing number of degree holders. The All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE, 2019) reported that only a small proportion of engineering graduates were employable due to deficiencies in soft skills and self-confidence. Similar patterns exist across other fields, where many students feel unprepared for job interviews and the demands of the workplace.

2.4 Educational Practices and Self-Efficacy Development

The Indian education system, particularly at the school level, has traditionally been exam-centric, focusing more on memorization than on skill development or personality growth. Kumar (2018) found that secondary school students often exhibit low confidence due to rote learning and limited avenues for self-expression. This lack of confidence becomes more evident in higher education, where students struggle with communication, leadership, and problem-solving skills essential for employability.

2.5 Research Gap

The literature clearly establishes a strong association between self-efficacy and employability. However, limited research has examined the progression of self-efficacy from school education to undergraduate studies and its direct impact on

unemployment. This gap justifies the present study, which aims to analyze students' perceptions of their self-efficacy levels and propose strategies to enhance employability skills.

3. Theoretical Framework

The present study is grounded in well-established communication and learning theories that explain the relationship between communication skills and academic performance. These theoretical perspectives provide a foundation for understanding how communication influences the learning process and academic outcomes of B.Ed. Students.

3.1 Social Learning Theory (Albert Bandura, 1977)

Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory emphasizes that learning occurs through observation, modeling, and social interactions (Bandura, 1977). According to this theory, communication plays a critical role in observational learning, where students acquire behaviors, skills, and knowledge by interacting with peers and teachers. In the context of B.Ed. Students with practical communication skills can participate actively in classroom discussions, collaborative projects, and peer teaching, which enhances their comprehension and retention. Poor communication skills, on the other hand, may lead to isolation, reduced engagement, and lower academic performance.

3.2 Vygotsky's Socio-Cultural Theory (1978)

Lev Vygotsky's Socio-Cultural Theory asserts that social interaction and language are essential tools for cognitive development (Vygotsky, 1978). Communication acts as a medium through which knowledge is constructed and shared. For B.Ed. Students, teacher-student, and peer communication within the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) helps in scaffolding learning experiences, thereby improving academic outcomes. Strong communication skills enable students to seek clarification, share ideas, and collaborate effectively, which supports deeper understanding and higher academic achievement.

3.3 Shannon and Weaver's Communication Model (1949)

The Shannon and Weaver Model of Communication provides a foundational understanding of the communication process, involving a sender, message, channel, receiver, and feedback (Shannon & Weaver, 1949). In the educational context, clarity of the message and effective feedback are critical for successful learning. Barriers such as "noise" (misinterpretation, lack of articulation, or language issues) can hinder communication and negatively impact academic performance. Therefore,

B.Ed. Students with strong communication skills can minimize misunderstandings, enhance clarity, and engage in meaningful dialogue, contributing to academic success.

3.4 Constructivist Learning Theory

Constructivism argues that learners actively construct knowledge through experiences, dialogue, and interaction (Piaget, 1972; Bruner, 1996). Communication skills are essential for collaborative learning, where students co-construct knowledge through discussions and problem-solving activities. Effective communicators can articulate their thoughts, question assumptions, and effectively integrate feedback, which leads to a deeper conceptual understanding and higher academic achievement.

3.5 Integration of Theories

These theories collectively highlight that communication skills are not merely tools for expression but fundamental to learning and cognitive development. Social learning, cultural mediation, effective message transmission, and collaborative construction of knowledge all require strong communication competencies.

4. Methodology

4.1 Research Design

The present study employs a descriptive survey method, aiming to understand the perceptions and self-efficacy levels of students in higher education. A survey method is appropriate because it allows the researcher to collect direct responses from students about their confidence, learning experiences, and readiness for employment.

4.2 Objectives of the Survey

1. To assess the self-efficacy levels of undergraduate and postgraduate students.

2. To identify the causes that lower students' self-belief and confidence.

3. To analyze the relationship between low self-efficacy and employability concerns.

4. To suggest recommendations for strengthening self-efficacy to improve career readiness.

4.3 Sample of the Study

The study covers two groups of students:

Undergraduate students (final-year degree)

Postgraduate students (various streams)

A structured questionnaire was prepared to collect primary data from students at these two levels. The questionnaire included closed-ended questions to measure aspects such as confidence in academic tasks, ability to face challenges, decision-making, and perception of career readiness.

A sample of 150–200 students was selected using stratified random sampling to ensure representation from both UG and PG levels.

4.4 Data Analysis

The survey responses were analyzed using:

Descriptive statistics to summarize self-efficacy levels. Inferential statistics such as t-test (to compare UG and PG students) and correlation analysis (to study the relationship between self-efficacy and employability skills such as communication, teamwork, problem-solving, and adaptability).

The findings are interpreted to identify key gaps that hinder smooth transition from education to employment. This methodology provides evidence-based insights that can contribute to policy recommendations for higher education institutions and skill development programs.
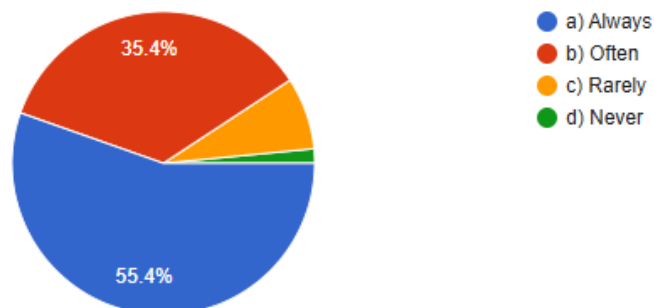
1. At your current academic level, how confident are you in handling complex tasks or challenges?
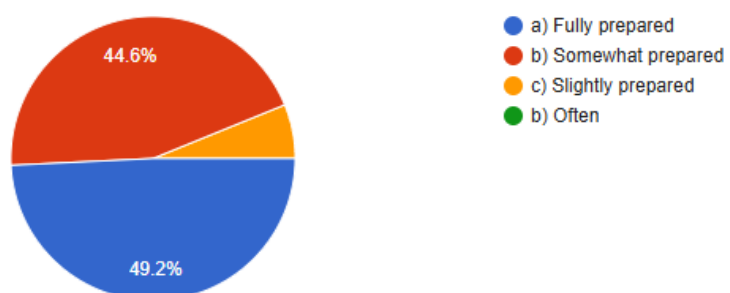64 responses

Legend:
- Very confident
- Somewhat confident
- Slightly confident
- Not confident at all

29.7%
10.9%
57.8%
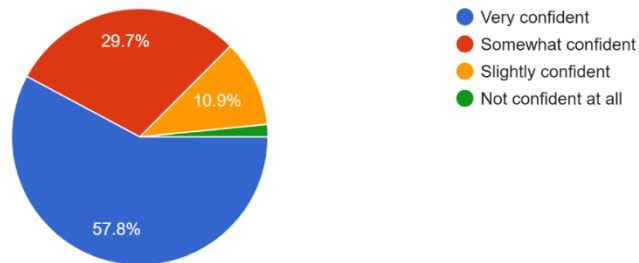
2. How often do you set clear goals for your academic or professional growth?

55 responses

Legend:
- a) Always
- b) Often
- c) Rarely
- d) Never

35.4%
55.4%

3. How prepared do you feel for entering the workforce in your field of study?

65 responses

Legend:
- a) Fully prepared
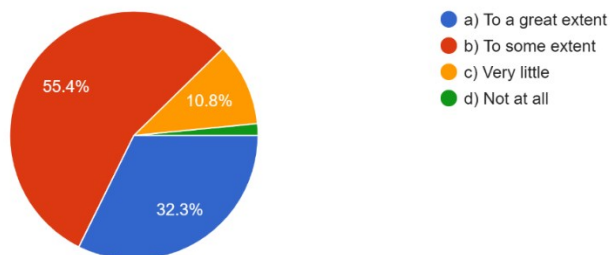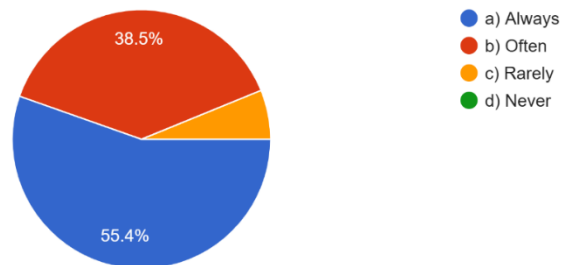- b) Somewhat prepared
- c) Slightly prepared
- b) Often

44.6%
49.2%

4. To what extent does your current program equip you with skills needed by employers?

65 responses

- a) To a great extent
- b) To some extent
- c) Very little
- d) Not at all

5. To what extent does your current program equip you with skills needed by employers?

65 responses

- a) To a great extent
- b) To some extent
- c) Very little
- d) Not at all

.
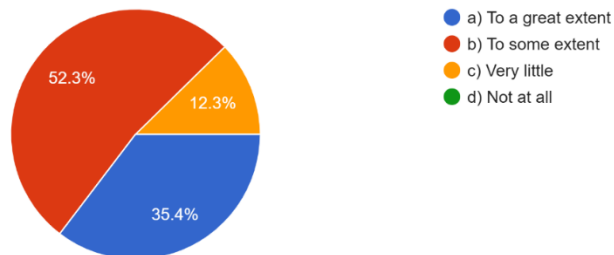
6. At your current academic level, how confident are you in handling complex tasks or challenges?

65 responses

- a) Very confident
- b) Somewhat confident
- c) Slightly confident
- d) Not confident at all
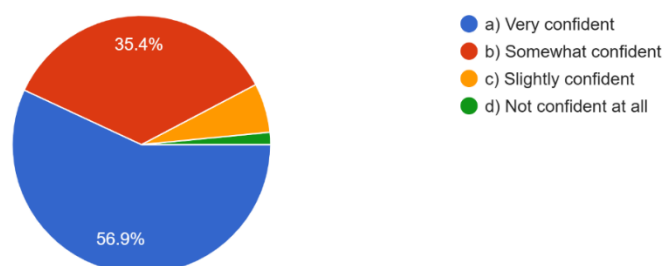
7. How often do you set clear goals for your academic or professional growth?
65 responses

- a) Always
- b) Often
- c) Rarely
- d) Never

38.5%
55.4%

8. How prepared do you feel for entering the workforce in your field of study?
65 responses

- a) Fully prepared
- b) Somewhat prepared
- c) Slightly prepared
- d) Not prepared at all

40%
9.2%
50.8%

9. To what extent does your current program equip you with skills needed by employers?
65 responses

- a) To a great extent
- b) To some extent
- c) Very little
- d) Not at all

47.7%
16.9%
35.4%
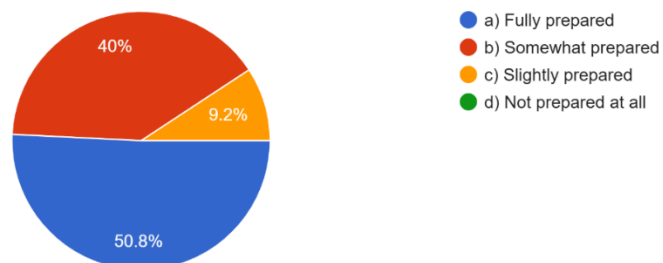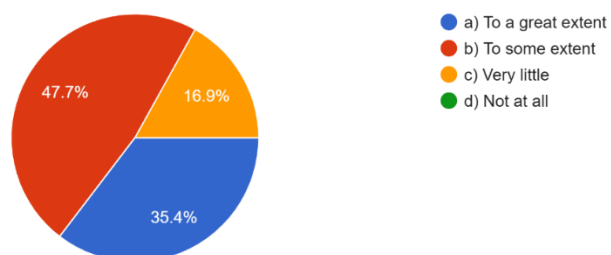
10. How confident are you in your communication and interpersonal skills in professional settings?
65 responses

- a) Very confident
- b) Confident
- c) Slightly confident
- d) Not confident

44.6%
18.5%
33.8%
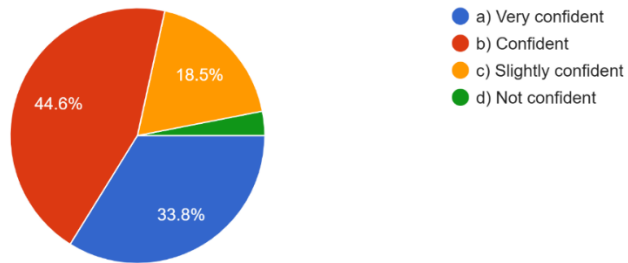
11. How often do you take initiative to improve your employability (e.g., certifications, networking)?
65 responses

- a) Regularly
- b) Occasionally
- c) Rarely
- d) Never

44.6%
13.8%
38.5%
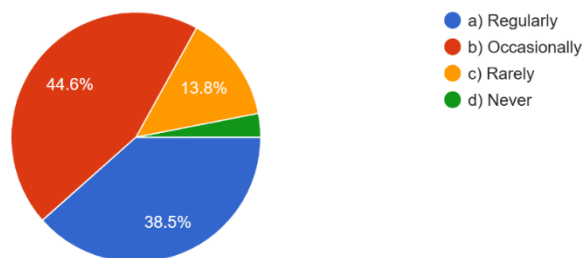
12. Have you participated in any internships, live projects, or industry-based learning activities?
65 responses

- a) Yes, multiple
- b) Yes, one
- c) Heard about them but didn't participate
- d) No

36.9%
29.2%
12.3%
21.5%
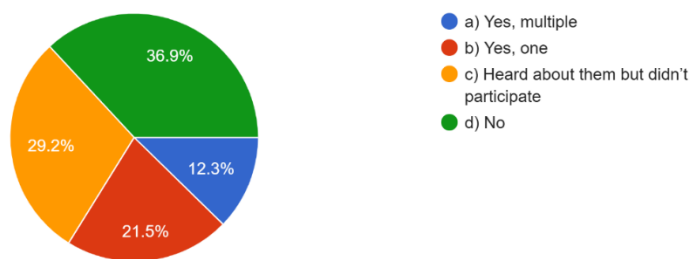
13. Do you think your academic learning aligns well with industry requirements?

65 responses


- a) Strongly agree
- b) Agree
- c) Disagree
- d) Strongly disagree
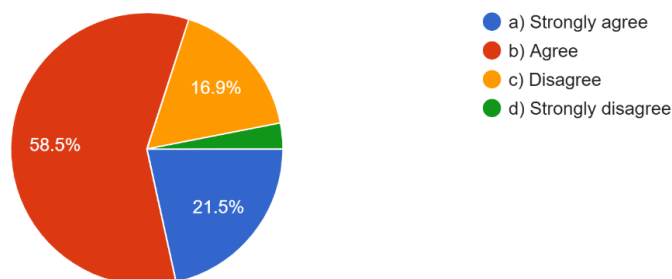
14. How aware are you of the soft skills (e.g., teamwork, leadership, adaptability) required in your field?
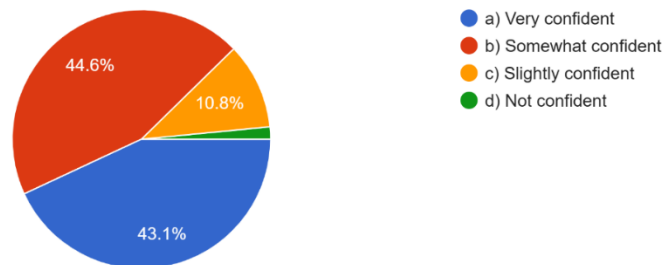
65 responses

- a) Very aware
- b) Somewhat aware
- c) Slightly aware
- d) Not aware
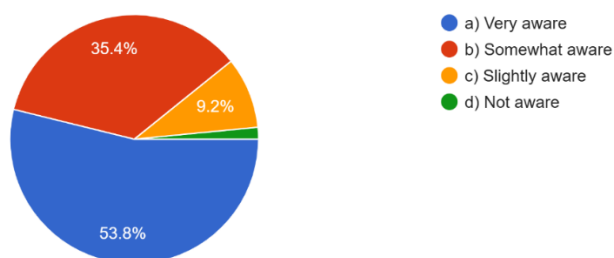
15. To what extent has your institution supported your career development (placement, training, etc.)?

65 responses

- a) Excellent support
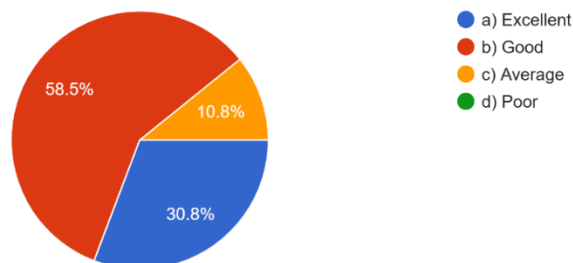- b) Moderate support
- c) Minimal support
- d) No support
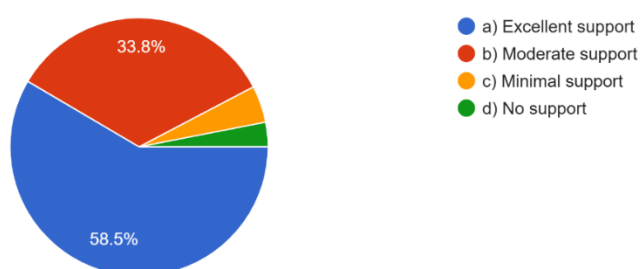
16. How confident are you in applying theoretical knowledge to real-world problems?
65 responses

- a) Very confident
- b) Somewhat confident
- c) Slightly confident
- d) Not confident

44.6%
10.8%
43.1%

17. How would you rate your problem-solving and decision-making skills?
65 responses

- a) Excellent
- b) Good
- c) Average
- d) Poor

58.5%
10.8%
30.8%

18. Do you feel the need for more industry exposure (e.g., guest lectures, field visits)?
65 responses

- a) Yes, strongly
- b) Yes, somewhat
- c) Not really
- d) No

27.7%
66.2%
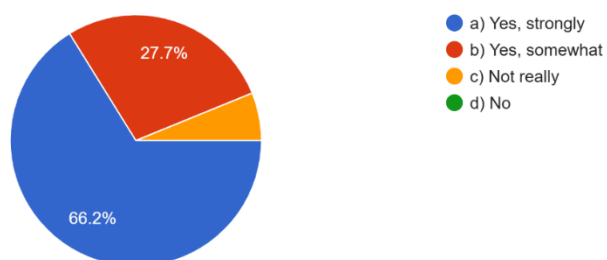
19. Do you believe that self-confidence (self-efficacy) plays a key role in getting hired?

65 responses

- a) Strongly agree
- b) Agree
- c) Disagree
- d) Strongly disagree

84.6% / 15.4%
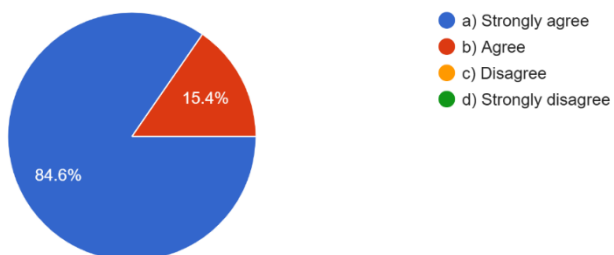
20. Have you received adequate career guidance or mentorship during your academic journey?

65 responses

- a) Yes, consistently
- b) Yes, occasionally
- c) Very little
- d) Not at all

21.5% / 30.8% / 7.7% / 40%
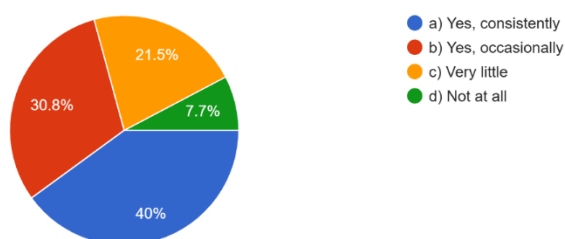
21. How familiar are you with resume-building and interview preparation?

65 responses

- a) Very familiar
- b) Somewhat familiar
- c) Slightly familiar
- d) Not familiar

20% / 40% / 33.8%
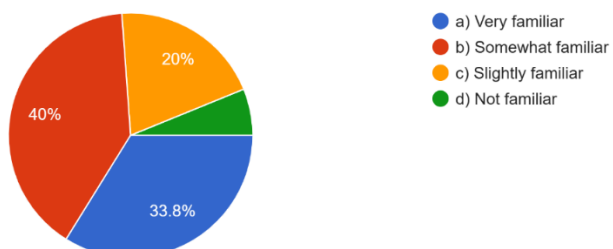
22. Do you actively seek feedback to improve your professional or academic performance?

65 responses

- a) Always
- b) Sometimes
- c) Rarely
- d) Never

30.8% / 58.5%
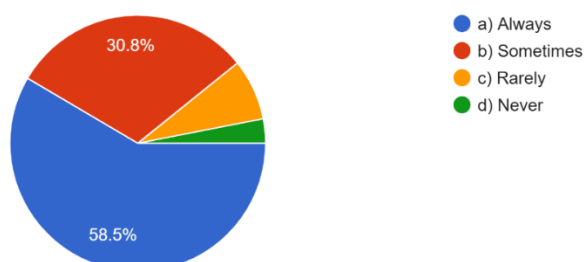
23. What do you think is the biggest barrier to your employability?
65 responses

- a) Lack of industry exposure
- b) Lack of confidence or self-efficacy
- c) Lack of technical skills
- d) Lack of soft skills

27.7%
7.7%
35.4%
29.2%
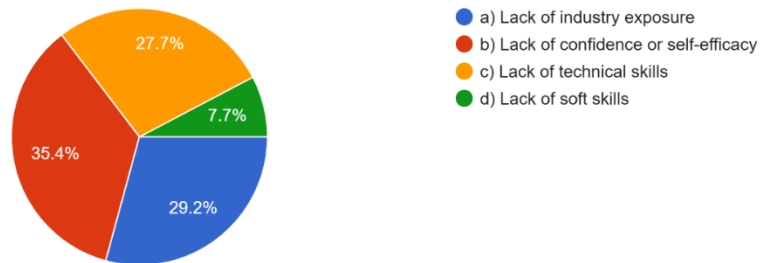
24. What would most help bridge the gap between your education and employment?
65 responses

- a) Internships and hands-on training
- b) Industry-academia collaboration
- c) Soft skills and personality development
- d) Career counseling and mentorship

38.5%
49.2%
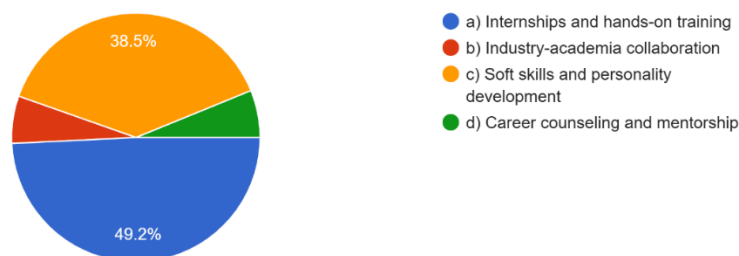
4.5 Survey Report on Self-Efficacy and Employability Skills among UG and PG Students

The survey aimed to examine the self-efficacy levels and employability readiness of undergraduate and postgraduate students. A total of responses were collected to assess confidence in handling academic and professional challenges, career preparedness, institutional support, and perceived gaps between educational requirements and industry needs.

Confidence and Goal Setting

The findings reveal that a significant majority of students demonstrate high self-confidence in managing complex tasks. About 57.8% reported being very

confident, and 29.7% somewhat confident, indicating strong belief in their problem-solving abilities. Similarly, when asked about goal-setting behavior, 55.4% of students stated that they always set clear academic or career goals, while 35.4% do so often. This suggests that most students have a structured approach toward personal and professional growth.

Workforce Readiness and Skill Development

Only a small proportion feels slightly prepared, indicating that most students have moderate confidence in transitioning from education to employment. When asked about the extent to which their programs equip them with practical skills, 52.3% agreed it does so to some extent, and 35.4% felt it does to a great extent. However, 12.3% believed their programs provide very little preparation, highlighting the need for stronger skill-based interventions.

Communication and Industry Exposure

Confidence in communication and interpersonal skills was moderate, with 44.6% reporting being confident and 33.8% very confident, while a small segment expressed low confidence. Participation in internships remains limited, as only 12.3% completed multiple internships, and 21.5% did at least one. The largest group (36.9%) never participated in internships, underlining a significant gap in industry exposure. In fact, 66.2% of students strongly agreed that greater industry exposure is essential, and another 27.7% somewhat agreed, signaling a strong demand for practical learning opportunities.

Institutional Support and Career Guidance

Institutional support for career development was rated as moderate by 58.5% of respondents, while 33.8% rated it excellent. A notable proportion of students (21.5%) reported receiving very little guidance, and 7.7% received none at all, which could negatively affect employability. Most students (56.9%) regularly seek feedback to improve their performance, showing a proactive attitude toward self-improvement.

Key Barriers and Suggestions

The primary barriers to employability identified were lack of technical skills (38.4%), limited industry exposure (23.2%), and lack of confidence (21.5%). Students strongly acknowledged the role of self-confidence in employability, with 84.6% strongly agreeing and 15.4% agreeing. To bridge the education-employment gap, students suggested increasing the number of internships and hands-on training opportunities.

(46.2%), stronger industry-academia collaboration (38.5%), and personality development programs (10.8%).

The survey indicates that while students possess a reasonable level of self-confidence and awareness of employability skills, there is a pressing need for practical exposure, technical training, and consistent career guidance. Strengthening these areas will not only improve self-efficacy but also enhance job readiness among graduates.

5. Findings and Interpretation

The survey responses collected from undergraduate students provide insight into their self-efficacy levels. The majority of students reported having confidence in their ability to achieve academic goals, indicating a positive sense of self-belief. However, a small percentage expressed uncertainty when faced with challenging situations, suggesting the need for better coping strategies and support systems. Most students agreed that setting personal goals and maintaining consistency in studies improves their performance, reflecting that self-efficacy is closely related to self-regulation. Responses also revealed that peer influence and encouragement from teachers significantly impact confidence levels, indicating that social support plays a crucial role in strengthening self-efficacy. A notable observation is that students who regularly plan and organize their work demonstrated higher confidence in handling academic tasks compared to those who do not. Overall, the findings suggest that while many students possess moderate to high self-efficacy, there is still a need for programs that enhance motivation, planning skills, and resilience among those with lower confidence levels.

6. Conclusion

A study on the self-efficacy of undergraduate students reveals that most students hold a positive belief in their ability to achieve academic goals. High self-efficacy was found among those who practice goal setting, time management, and consistent study habits. Social support from peers and teachers also plays a crucial role in strengthening confidence. However, a small group of students exhibited low self-efficacy, especially when dealing with academic challenges and stressful situations. This suggests the need for targeted interventions to enhance confidence and coping skills among these students. Overall, self-efficacy is a crucial factor in academic success, as it significantly influences motivation, persistence, and performance. Therefore, institutions should focus on strategies to enhance

students' confidence and resilience, thereby improving their overall academic outcomes.

7. Suggestions

1. Skill Development Workshops – Organize regular workshops on time management, stress management, and goal setting to improve self-efficacy among students.

2. Counseling and Mentoring – Provide counseling sessions and assign mentors to students who struggle with self-confidence in academics.

3. Positive Reinforcement – Teachers should encourage and appreciate students' efforts to strengthen their confidence and motivation.

4. Peer Support Programs – Promote peer learning and group activities to build a supportive learning environment.

Works cited

Bandura, A. (1986). *Social foundations of thought and action: A social cognitive theory*. Prentice Hall.

Bandura, A. (1997). *Self-efficacy: The exercise of control*. W.H. Freeman.

Pajares, F. (2002). Overview of social cognitive theory and self-efficacy. Retrieved from http://www.emory.edu/EDUCATION/mfp/eff.html

Schunk, D. H. (1995). Self-efficacy and education and instruction. *Educational Psychologist, 30*(3), 117–138. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15326985ep3003_1

Schunk, D. H., & DiBenedetto, M. K. (2020). Motivation and social-emotional learning: Theory, research, and practice. *Contemporary Educational Psychology, 60,* 101830. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cedpsych.2019.101830

Schwarzer, R., & Jerusalem, M. (1995). Generalized self-efficacy scale. In J. Weinman, S. Wright, & M. Johnston (Eds.), *Measures in health psychology: A user's portfolio. Causal and control beliefs* (pp. 35–37). NFER-Nelson

Zimmerman, B. J. (2000). Self-efficacy: An essential motive to learn. *Contemporary Educational Psychology, 25*(1), 82–91. https://doi.org/10.1006/ceps.1999.1016

Zimmerman, B. J., & Schunk, D. H. (2011). *Handbook of self-regulation of learning and performance.* Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203839010