

Employability Skill Factors in Retail Vocational Education: An Empirical Analysis

**Dr. Pratiksha Tiwari, **Dr. N. Malati*

ABSTRACT

Skills and knowledge are the driving force for economic growth and social development of any country. The economy becomes productive, innovative and competitive through the existence of a skilled human potential. The biggest challenge Indian education currently faces, is that of a skill gap in the context of academic, technical, and employability skills of the students. Employability skills consist of non-technical skills that can be transferred into different fields of work which are required for entering the working world or to remain in the job, as well as developing a career in the workplace, or for career development at a new place of work. This research is aimed to validate the student perspective for employability skills in vocational education in the retail sector through confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) technique. The retail vocational education students were surveyed to validate the CFA model through a structured questionnaire. The CFA model enables us to identify the various factors responsible for enhancing employability skills

of the retail vocational education students. The final model identified three major factors, Interpersonal skills (IPS), Integrating Theory & Practice (ITP) and Learning Skills (LS) that affect employability.

Keywords: Employability, Retail Sector, Interpersonal skills, Learning skills, Integrating Theory & Practice.





INTRODUCTION

“The skills, knowledge and competency enhances a worker's ability to secure and retain a job, progress at work and cope with change, also secure another job if he/she so wishes or has been laid off and enter more

easily into the labor market at different periods of the life cycle”



INTERNATIONAL LABOR ORGANIZATIONS (2013)

Education and its role in enabling the economic and social progress of the country has long been recognized. Education advances functional and analytical abilities. It

provides openings for both; individuals and groups to achieve heights. Education isn't just an instrument of improving effectiveness, but also a model for updating the general nature of individual and societal life.

Since the 1970s, the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) differentiated three types of education: formal, non-formal and informal. Formal education comprised “regular school and university education”; non-formal education (NFE) comprised “out-of-school and continuing education, on the job training, etc.”; and informal education comprised “family and socially directed learning”. A fourth category, experiential learning, was added to embrace “learning by doing, self-directed learning, etc.” (UNESCO 1991:17-18).

In the current context education for employment is gaining popularity and vocational education fulfils that gap. Vocational education is general and includes every form of education that aims to the acquirement of qualifications related to a certain profession, art or employment or that provides the necessary training and the appropriate skills as well as technical knowledge, so that students are able to exercise a profession, art or activity, independently of their age and their training level, even if the training program contains also elements of general education (Kotsikis, 2007).

Vocational Education is also looked as a rule that incorporates every type of instruction, that expects to get capabilities identified with a specific activity, craftsmanship, business or that gives the essential preparation, required aptitude and specialized information, so that an intern can practice a skill or workmanship freely as per their age, preparation level regardless of whether the preparation program additionally contains components of general training. (Kotsikis, 2007)

GOVERNMENTAL INITIATIVES FOR SKILL DEVELOPMENT

According to The National Policy for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship 2015, India is one of the top-ranking countries in the globe in terms of population, with over 54% of the population under the age of 25 years and yet the country faces a scarcity of skilled workforce. A skill gap study was undertaken by National Skill Development Corporation in 2015. The study projected that India requires an additional 109.73 million skilled manpower by 2022 in twenty four key

sectors. This challenge becomes tougher as just 4.69% of the aggregate workforce in India has the requisite expertise in contrast to 68%, 75%, 52%, 80% and 96% in UK, Germany, USA, Japan and South Korea respectively.

The central government in order to deal with this issue has launched various skill development programs across 20 Ministries/ Departments, with the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD), Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) and Ministry of Labor and Employment (MoLE) being the important ones. In addition, the Eleventh Five Year Plan (2007-12), also established a major 'Skill Development Mission' with an outlay of Rs. 228 billion which was launched by the Government of India in 2008. Further, in the year 2009, under the aegis of the Department of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, the National Skill Development policy was formulated. Later in the year 2013 it was accorded the Ministerial status. The National Policy for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship 2015 superseded the policy of 2009.

The National Policy for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship 2015 provides an umbrella system for all Skilling activities undertaken in the nation. The aggregate workforce in India is evaluated to be 487 million, of which 57% is in the non-cultivate segment. Out of these 487 million, 241.86 million are either unskilled or skilled through non-formal channels, with 170 million in the age group of 15-45 years, making it imperative to focus on vocational education and training (VET) programs.

The major objective of skill development is to act as a tool that ensures both vertical and horizontal pathways to a skilled workforce resulting in improved employability and livelihood for individuals. Skill development also aims to translate into enhanced efficiency across primary, secondary and tertiary sectors. As per the National Policy for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship 2015 to map this workforce, their prevailing skills need to be recognized followed by essential skilling which can be imparted through VET.

AIM OF VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

According to Efstratoglou & Nikolopoulou, (2011) the aim of initial vocational training is to connect the given offer and demand of specialties with the structural characteristics of each county's economy. The major objective of vocational education and training is to prepare youth for the world of work. The aim is to impart training in specific areas to make them employable or create opportunities for self-employment. (Statement 2.9, NSS Report No 566: Status of Education and Vocational Training in India 2011-12)

The training programmes are offered at the school level in classes 11 and 12 alongside the formal tutoring cycle offered principally through open Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs), private Industrial Training Centers (ITCs) and polytechnics (both open and private). According to Biswas(2008) different institutions which provide vocation training can be classified into five categories : (i) Government, (ii) Local body, (iii) Private helped, (iv) Private unaided, and (v) not known.

According to MSDE Annual report 2016-2017, Retail sector will

have 10.7 % incremental human resource requirement by 2022. It is rising to be one of the biggest segments in the economy. The aggregate market measure was assessed around US\$ 672 billion in 2016 and will increase to US\$ 1.3 trillion by 2020 as per the *BCG Retail 2020*, *Ernst and Young*, *Deloitte*, *indiaretailing.com*, *Economist Intelligence Unit*, *Euro monitor*. Organized Retail Penetration (ORP) in India is low in contrast to different nations. This demonstrates the huge development potential for organized retail in India. Growing skill gaps in the retail sector have been observed with estimated 107 lakhs trained manpower requirement by 2022 ranked second after construction sector thereby increasing the need for vocational education. As per the MSDE Annual report 2016-17, training was imparted to only 4,63,221 people, which is 18.52% of the accepted targets by the Ministry/ Department.

It is observed that rigorous efforts are needed by the government to promote employability skills amongst students. The sole objective of vocational education is to assure student employability rather than providing them employment. It becomes imperative that a student understands the factors affecting their employability and focuses on enhancing the required skill set. It has also been observed that there has been a paucity of literature in the Indian context in the skill development especially in the retail sector. This paper aims to examine factors assisting in the employability of students in retail vocational education.



LITERATURE REVIEW

The call for developing skills is currently high (Hogstedt, et al., 2007; Maclean and Lai, 2011). During the recent years, proficiency and diagnostics in Technical and Vocational Education (TVE) have made great progress in

providing an empirical foundation for occupation- related competence models and their assessment.

TVE can be utilized to develop and arrange skilled labor. Apprenticeship, Evaluation, and Use of Information & Communication Technology in TVE surfaced as major methods in Technical and Vocational Education. TVE should work in tandem with agencies and try to encourage more studies at the grass root level to identify and meet current and future demands. Ruhizan & Yasin (2013) and Grubb (2006) also raise the issue that TVE teaching takes place in a variety of settings from specialized workshops to classrooms. The degree to which TVE preparation is "hands-on" changes as deciphered distinctively by mentors. As far as worldwide settings are concerned TVE's fill in as one of the significant preparing segments giving skilled labor to horticulture, modern and business development. Although the research on social skills in TVE has expanded extensively in the previous decade, a comprehensive knowledge with regards to, basic aptitude is yet to be found (Monnier 2015).

VET is designed to prepare individuals for a vocation or a specialized occupation and so is directly linked with nation's productivity and competitiveness. From a theoretical perspective, VET can be divided into four categories (Grubb

and Ryan, 1999): Pre-Employment VET, Upgraded Training, Retraining and Remedial VET.

The notion that employability should be an explicit outcome of vocational education and training is gaining attention everywhere. Hartl, (2009) found that better training produces higher income which improves quality of life, occupational safety, diversity and the livelihood of individuals. Employability abilities are the aptitude, information, understanding and individual qualities that empower a man to acquire work, and be fruitful and fulfil their identified vocations (Lorraine & Sewell, 2007).

Employability aptitude are those essential abilities important for getting, keeping and doing great on the job and they can be put into three categories: Basic Academic Skills, Higher-Order Thinking Skills and Personal Qualities (Robinson, 2000). Barnett (2006) clarifies that employability aptitude empowers individuals to acquire reasonable work and in the meantime, build up their vocations amid social and innovative changes. Employability abilities in college include data proficiency, working with innovative, composed and verbal correspondence, working in groups and numeracy (Bennett, 2002). The significance of preparing and furnishing people with individual abilities and characteristics with the end goal of the work cannot be overemphasized as this requires cooperative endeavors from all partners (Wye and Lim, 2009). Smith et al. (2014), conceptualized and measured employability in higher education amongst students in Australia through CFA and identified six dimensions of employability which are: lifelong learning; professional practices and standards; integration of knowledge/theory and practice; informed decision-making (applied information literacy); commencement readiness; and collaboration.

In the global Skilling ecosystem, India occupies a unique and special place today on account of being a developing economy with a population of 1.2 billion. To add to that, it is evaluated that by 2022, India will have the greatest number of working age populace (between the ages 15 to 59) on the planet who could add to the growth of the country, emphasizing the significant requirement for Skilling India's youth . The need further arises due to the diverse demographic disparity in the country. Different states in India face diverse scenarios in relation to demographics and skill development. There needs to be a shared sense of urgency to address these challenges. National Capital Region attracts people from varied socio-economic strata with increasing demand for such offering.

The administration alongside different organizations is also attempting to increase the number of interns for providing advanced education and professional preparation with widening interest for talented work force (XII Plan Document Volume III, Planning Commission, 2012-2017). Hence the current study aims at understanding the student perspective with respect to the factors which would help them enhance their employability.

The broad Literature Review exploring Vocational Education and Training (VET) for the identification of factors of Employability administered in the study is as follows:

TABLE 1

Articles	Variables
McLeish(2002), Jackson(2010), Idris et al.(2012), Smith et al. (2014)	Q1: Speaking clearly and directly
	Q2: Learn from and collaborate with people representing diverse backgrounds or view points.
	Q3: Give clear instructions or advice to colleagues to achieve an outcome.
	Q4: Ability to share information using various communication technologies, like voice mail, e-mail and computers.
McLeish(2002), Harvey et al. (1997)	Q5: Use information to come to reasonable decisions and then act on these.
	Q6: Appraise the quality of information obtained e.g. from the web, from books or from other people.
	Q7: Understand the key drivers for success in this enterprise / profession.
	Q8: Collect, analyze and organize information.
Pool & Sewell (2007), Idris et al. (2012)	Q9: Seek clarification when I do not understand an instruction.
	Q10: Person who likes to take responsibility
	Q11: Be prepared to invest time and effort in learning new skills.
	Q12: Recognize ethical practice in the workplace.
McLeish(2002), Moon (2004)	Q13: Learn from mistakes and can accept feedback.
	Q14: Ready to commence work in your field or discipline
	Q15: Acknowledge and praise another person's work
	Q16: Present myself effectively in selection interviews and processes.
Harvey et al. (1997), Smith et al. (2014)	Q17: The kind of person who has the energy to get the work done.
	Q18: Respect the thoughts, opinions and contributions of others.
	Q19: Can adapt to new circumstances or information.
	Q20: Apply knowledge and skills gained in my studies in the workplace.
	Q21: Link together different theoretical perspectives when working in a workplace or professional task or problem
	Q22: Recognize and value the role of theoretical ideas in work or professional contexts.
	Q23: Understand the theories and principles in my discipline
	Q24: Understand the practices and methods used in my discipline
	Q25: Set goals, plan and manage my time, money and other resources to achieve my goals.

It has been observed that there is a paucity of Indian literature in regard to the studies pertaining to student perspective for employability. The current paper intends to contribute to the existing body of literature.



OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study has following objectives:

1. To identify preliminary factors for employability with respect to student's perspective in retail vocational education.

2. To identify the relation amongst the identified factors



RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The nature of the study is exploratory in nature as it tries to examine the factors responsible for employability of students in retail vocational education courses. The present study is based both on primary and secondary

data. The secondary data was acquired through periodicals, journals, newspapers, industry publications, research reports

and the primary data was collected through a scheduled format of structured questionnaire containing bilingual questions present in both Hindi and English (attached as Appendix) for better understanding of the respondents. The population of the study consists of students opting for retail vocational education courses in the National Capital Region. Retail vocational education institutes / centres were identified from the website of Retail Skill Council of India. After preparing the list of institutes /centres providing vocational education in retail sector, the institutes were divided in to strata's on the basis of location of institutes. The data from students at these selected institutes was collected through convenience sampling. A sample of around 211 respondents was collected from Delhi and NCR. After data cleaning 172 responses were found to be suitable for further analysis of the data. Exploratory factor analysis, Confirmatory factor analysis and descriptive techniques were used to analyse the data.

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

The gender of the respondents revealed that 17.44%(30) are female and 82.55%(142) are male. In the age category the sample distribution has been 4%(7) in 15-17 years category, 20%(34) in the 18-20 years category, 75%(129) in the 21-23 years category, 1.16%(2) in more than 23 years category. Thus most people pursuing retail vocational education courses may not be pursuing their vocational education immediately after their higher/senior secondary school as 75% belong to the age group 21-23 years. Family income of 19.18 %(33) ranges between Rs.5001-10000, 41.27%(71) between Rs.10001-15000, 28%(48) earn Rs.15000-20000 and 11.6%(20) earn more than Rs.20000 income per month. Thus 60.5%(19.18+41.27) of the respondents pursuing retail vocational education belong to families earning less than 15000 per month

STATISTICAL TOOLS

The Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) and Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) are considered as the two major modules of factor analysis. In EFA, the number or nature of the variables is not known and it provides an opportunity to explore the dimensions to create a theory, or model from a large set of latent constructs. Exploratory factor examination (EFA) could be depicted as methodical rearrangements of interrelated measures. EFA, customarily, has been utilized to investigate the conceivable hidden factor structure of an arrangement of watching factors without forcing a biased structure of the result (Child, 1990). By performing EFA, the

basic factor structure is distinguished. Principal component analysis was used with varimax rotation. The correlations between factors and the different items expressed by means of the factorial loads were significant. In CFA, testing an anticipated theory or model is permissible. CFA also has assumptions and expectations based on priori theory regarding the number of factors that offer best model fit.



ATA ANALYSIS

Exploratory factor analysis was applied to develop a tool for measuring the perception of students corresponding to the factors affecting their employability using SPSS V 22. 25 items (given in table 1) were subjected to exploratory factor analysis. The data on these items was collected on a 5 point Likert scale. Exploratory factor analysis reduced variables to sixteen and four factors were identified. The Kaiser- Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy came out to be 0.720 which is above 0.65 (the acceptance level) as shown in Table 2. This shows that the items selected for the questionnaire were appropriate. The chi- square value of Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was found to be significant (chi sq. = 1758.523, p=. 000), which means the factor analysis is acceptable. The factor analysis generated four components with eigenvalues above 1 with total variance explained 68.575%. The varimax rotation clubbed the items on four components as shown in Table 3. Cronbach alpha corresponding to each identified factor was found to be high as shown in Table 3.

Table 2: KMO and Bartlett's test of Sphericity

Kaiser- Meyer- Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.720
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	1758.523
	Df.	120
	Sign.	.000

Table 3: Rotated Component Matrix and Cronbach Alpha

Identified Factors	variable	Components	Cronbach alpha
Adaptive Skills (AS)	Q5 uses information to come to reasonable decisions and then act on these.	0.790	0.862
	Q13 learn from mistakes and can accept feedback.	0.757	
	Q4 able to share information using various communication technologies, like voice mail, e-mail and computers.	0.755	
	Q8 collect, analyze and organize information.	0.733	
	Q9 seek clarification when I do not understand an instruction.	0.667	
	Q21 link together different theoretical perspectives when working in a workplace or professional task or problem.	0.639	
	Q19 can adapt to new circumstances or information.	0.548	
Professional Excellence (PE)	Q16 present myself effectively in selection interviews and processes.	0.919	0.858
	Q23 understand the theories and principles in my discipline	0.901	
	Q17 the kind of person who has the energy to get the work done.	0.676	

Integrating Theory & Practices (ITP)	Q14 ready to commence work in your field or discipline	0.798	0.725
	Q20 apply knowledge and skills gained in my studies in the workplace.	0.791	
	Q24 understand the practices and methods used in my discipline	0.795	
Learning Skills (LS)	Q10 person who likes to take responsibility	0.778	0.658
	Q11 be prepared to invest time and effort in learning new skills.	0.744	
	Q12 recognize ethical practice in the workplace.	0.625	

On the basis of exploratory factor analysis, a diagram depicting the preliminary measurement model (Figure 1) was designed. The model displayed sixteen measured indicator variables and four latent variables which were subjected to CFA with AMOS V21. The latent variables were identified as an Adaptive Skill (AS), Professional Excellence (PE), Integrating Theory & Practices (ITP) and Learning Skills (LS) comprising items mentioned in Table 3.

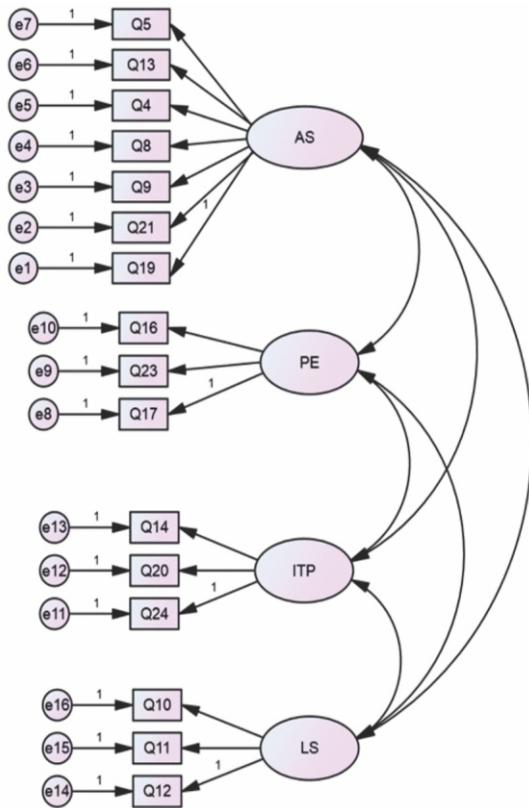


Figure 1: Preliminary Model

The output of the preliminary model (Figure 2) shows that the discriminant and convergent validity of AS and LS does not exist as the square root of the average variance extracted (AVE) of both the items are less than absolute values of the correlation with the other factors and AVE of both factors is less than 0.5. The construct reliability (CR) of LS was less than 0.7 and is not reliable as given in Table 4 (Hair et al., 2017). Preliminary model does not provide a good fit with the value of CMIN/ DF= 5.315, AGFI= 0.682, CFI 0.717 (Chi square value 520.843, p value=0.00), RMSEA=0.147.

Table 4: Validity and Reliability of Preliminary Model

	CR	AVE	MSV	MaxR (H)	ITP	AS	PE	LS
ITP	0.753	0.508	0.042	0.781	0.713			
AS	0.852	0.456	0.764	0.910	-0.051	0.675		
PE	0.799	0.579	0.247	0.948	0.204	0.497	0.761	
LS	0.613	0.390	0.764	0.961	0.023	0.874	0.358	0.625

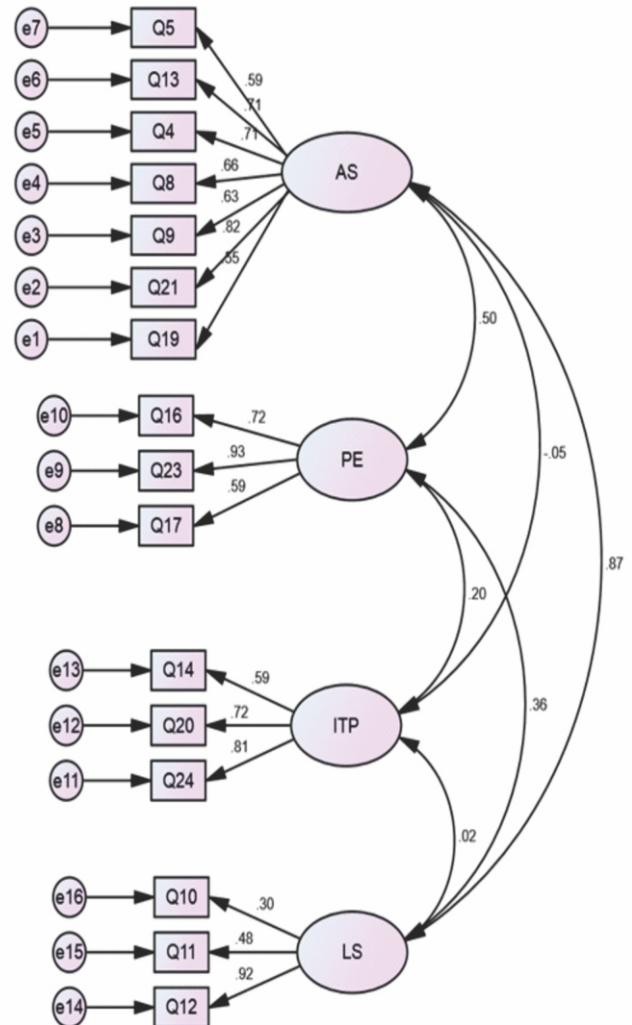


Figure 2: Output Preliminary Model

Hence it was amended to establish validity, reliability and improve the model fit. Modification indices and standardized residuals calculated through AMOS V 21 were used to modify the model resulting in the final model (Figure 3). Table 5 shows the reliability and validity of the model as the final model was significantly better fit in comparison to the preliminary model with Chi Square value = 109.364, p=0.000. The CFI for the final model was 0.918, indicating that the model provided a good fit. Other indices also indicated a good fit (CMIN=2.734, RMR=0.074, AGFI=0.873, RMSEA=0.093). All the factor loadings (standardized coefficients in figure 4) ranging from 0.59 for Q17 to 0.99 for AS and PE were highly significant and exceeded the 0.5 level which is meaningful in factor analysis approach. It was observed that both Adaptive Skills (AS) and Professional Excellence (PE) are equally important for Inter Personal Skills (IPS). The R² Statistic for Q21 (link together different theoretical perspectives when working in a workplace or professional task or problem) was found to be highest (0.8281) for Adaptive Skills (AS), R² Statistic for Q12 (recognize ethical practice in the workplace) was found to be highest (0.7056) for Professional Excellence (PE), R² Statistic for Q23 (understand the theories and principles in my discipline) was found to be highest (0.8464) for Integrating theory and Practice (ITP), and R² Statistic for Q24 (understand the practices and methods used in my discipline) was found to be highest (0.64) for Learning skills (LS).

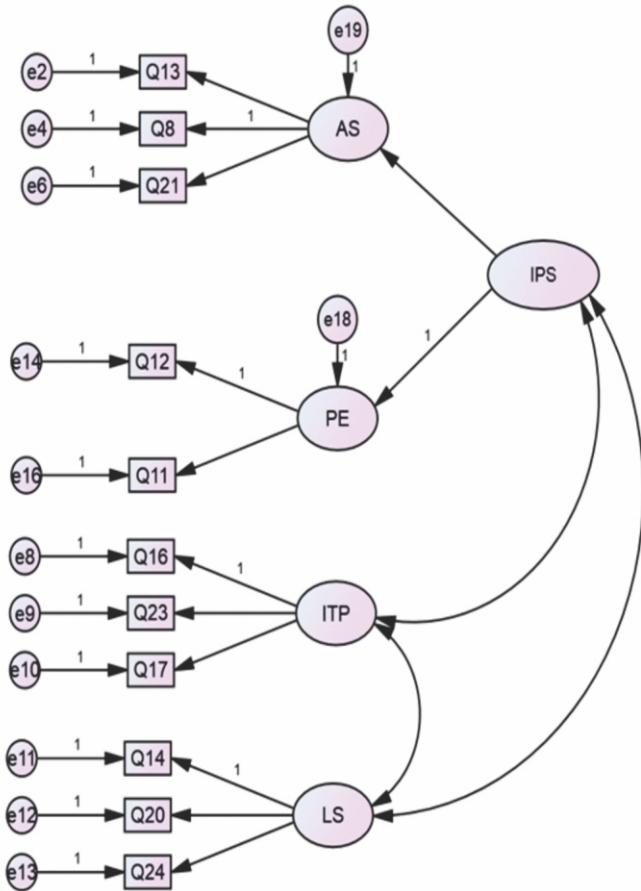


Figure 3: Final Model

Table 5: Reliability and validity of Final Model

	CR	AVE	MSV	MaxR(H)	LS	ITP	IPS
LS	0.754	0.509	0.041	0.775	0.713		
ITP	0.799	0.578	0.174	0.917	0.202	0.761	
IPS	0.990	0.981	0.174	0.992	-0.028	0.417	0.991

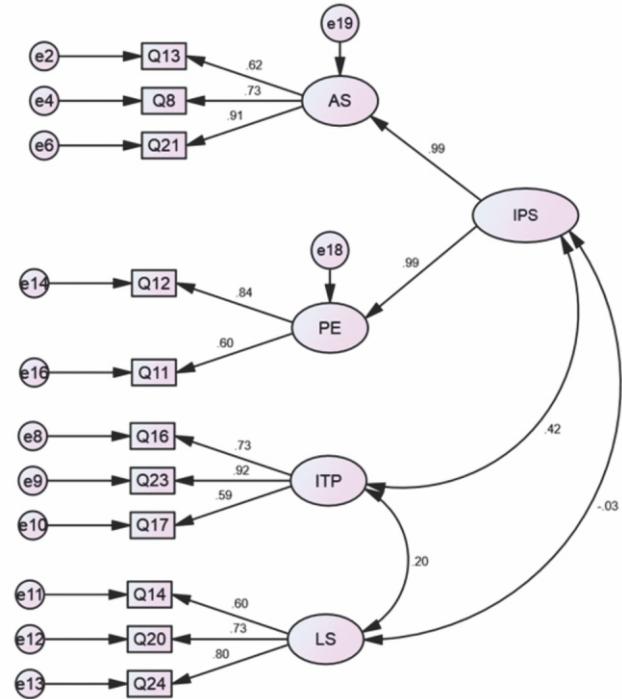


Figure 4: Output Final Model

The study revealed that the students perceive Interpersonal skills (IPS), Integrating Theory & Practice (ITP) and Learning Skills (LS) to be important in their employability.



CONCLUSION

The study has reiterated that skills are an important component for seeking employment. The skills identified in the study include Inter Personal Skills (IPS), Integrating Theory & Practice (ITP) and Learning Skills (LS). Enhancing these skills can only be achieved by training. Further, it also helps us understand the areas of focus for skill development as perceived by the students.

In current times the population of the country is over 1.2 billion and less than 35 age group's population is two third of the total population. A recent *Bloomberg News Analysis* also identified that by 2027, India would have a billion people in the 15 to 64 years category, the largest workforce in the world. The government has a bigger responsibility to provide them with adequate employment opportunities. Further, to be successfully employed students should be qualified and

trained in the requisite areas. The National Youth Policy was launched in 2014 for providing a holistic vision for the country's youth to empower them to achieve their potential. The National Policy on Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, 2015, also aims at providing a framework for the skilled activities carried in the country and links skills with demand centers. The establishment of the National Skills Council and other allied agencies are also some of the positive steps taken by the government in this direction. To augment the prospects of employment, the focus should be on enhancing interpersonal skills, integrating theory and practices and learning skills. The studies taken by the Employment skills and VET Policy, Australia also suggests the importance of organizational and training skills. Banerjee (2016) also opines that vocational education and training play a pertinent role in developing skilled manpower in the country. India has also been emphasizing on offering convenient access to technical and vocational education along with general education for meeting the demand for skilled employees (Goel, n.d).

Hence, the role of all stakeholders- government, employees, both current and prospective is to constantly enhance/update skill sets for being relevant in their respective areas. Further, the training programs should also be designed after undertaking a thorough need based analysis. The government should continuously monitor and elicit feedback from parties involved in providing training to understand the effectiveness

of existing policy and plan for future policy initiatives. The country is poised at a stage where new employability models need to be generated to achieve the mission of 'Skilling India'.

FUTURE RESEARCH

The current research was limited to comprehending the factors responsible for enhancing employability skills of the retail vocational education students like Interpersonal skills (IPS), Integrating Theory & Practice (ITP) and Learning Skills (LS). Further research can be extended to other regions of the country and other sectors to identify additional factors affecting employability.

Moreover, studies can also evaluate the perspective of managers/employers in assessing the factors responsible for enhancing employability skills. This will be useful in recruiting, training and retaining personnel in the organizations. The research can also be extended to students pursuing technical education and the impact of social factors on employability can also be assessed.

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APPENDIX

Dear Participants

The purpose of this study is to examine employment skills of vocational education students in retail sector. The data would be collected from the students pursuing retail vocational education. This questionnaire collects information regarding the perception of students on various factors of skill development. All the responses provided by the respondent will be confidential and used only for educational purposes, for the project titled “A Study of Skill Development Situation and Model Development Relating to Employability for Vocational Education in National Capital Region, India” sponsored by ICSSR.

Name:				
Gender:				
Institute:				
Age:	15-17 years,	18-20 years,	21-23 years,	more than 24 years
Education:	10th	12th	others	
Family Income (per month):	Less than Rs 5000,	5001- 10000,	10001- 15000,	15001- 20000,
	More than 20000			

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20	Apply knowledge and skills gained in my studies in the workplace.					
21	Link together different theoretical perspectives when working in a workplace or professional task or problem.					
22	Recognize and value the role of theoretical ideas in work or professional contexts.					
23	Understand the theories and principles in my discipline.					
24	Understand the practices and methods used in my discipline.					
25	Set goals, plan and manage my time, money and other resources to achieve my goals.					