



EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS ASSESSMENT AMONGST PHARMACY POST GRADUATES IN NAGPUR REGION

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Abstract: - Education is considered as the process of facilitating learning along with acquiring knowledge, skills, beliefs and values among the graduates passing from institutes assuming that it creates assets in the form of human capital for the corporate world and improving their employment scenario. With the mushrooming growth of educational institutes, it is observed that only quantity of qualified students is increasing with lower set of skills. Recruiters today expect students to have some additional set of skills required for employment known as ‘employability skills’, so that they can make an immediate contribution to the workplace when recruited to drive full economic benefit from the talent base. So the present study was undertaken to investigate the awareness and importance about the employability skills required for the pharmacy post graduates and to assess their value creation through effective knowledge management. The findings of the study suggested that only technical knowledge (Degree) is not sufficient for securing a good job, but students should concentrate on adding value to their profile in the form of employability skills. Only 22% respondents were well aware about these skills whereas 66% were very less aware and 12% were totally unaware about the concept of employability skills. But on making them aware about it, more than 90% agreed that these skills are most and absolutely essential for securing a good job in the today’s competitive world. The paper also explores some of the conceptual thoughts that are understood by the students about employability and argues for a broader understanding of employability skills among them.

Keywords: Employability skills, Education, Qualification, Knowledge

Introduction:

As we are all aware that Education is regarded as one that contributes to social, cultural, political and economic transformation of any country. Considering Education as a process of knowledge and skill formation it could be treated at par with the process of capital formation. And it’s the fact that the prosperity and growth of any nation is essentially linked to its human resources. Therefore the human capital could be considered as one of the most significant assets of any country and so a key determinant of a nation’s economic performance. An increase in the human development index would lead to high levels of economic growth of the country (Adam Smith 1776/2009). Economists over the world argue that the systems need to meet the country’s requirement for human resource with high levels of skill and knowledge increases with the increasing demand for educational training. The strength of a nation is therefore dependent on its intellectual and skillful citizens. It can be observed that education is an essential tool for



achieving sustainability. A carefully designed and well planned education system is therefore very critical in developing such human capital. Thus, institutions of higher learning like pharmaceutical sciences play a very important role in the teaching and learning processes that helps in providing knowledge and skills to future graduates.

Entry level college graduates have not acquired the skills necessary for the workforce and, as such, are not prepared for the demands of industry careers (Peddle, 2000). Rising unemployment among well-qualified youth population is a big concern and indicates three possible reasons; a) Demand-supply mismatch b) Expectation mismatch and c) Skill mismatch. This problem has to be fixed by the players within the ecosystem i.e. academia, corporate and students approach. The lack of adequate skills and high attrition rates has a huge impact in terms of India's ability to absorb new technologies and new solutions. So there seems to be need for a fundamental shift toward an emphasis on 'general skills in education' because 'the skills most in demand are least in supply' (Evers et al. 1998)

But the major problem faced in this growth path is the inadequate skill set of the employees and the reluctance of the students to adapt the industrial skill requirement set up. Over the last five decades, the technical and management education system in the country has grown extremely. While on the one side we say that we have the world's largest stock of engineers, scientists and management graduates, we have not been able to derive full economic benefit from this talent base probably because of the mismatch between industrial needs and educational output. It also seems that students often undervalue the need to possess transferable skills. Instead, they deem that mastery of disciplinary content is more important than transferable skills to employers. Though, employers desire graduates who can think and work on their feet and determine ways to accomplish tasks. (Dunne and Rawlins, 2000). Skillful management of the intellectual capital could be a driver for growth and is imperative for Indian economy as could be seen in skill India concept of the government.

The two greatest concerns of employers/recruiters today are finding good employees and training them. It is observed that there lies a difference between the skills needed on the job and those possessed by applicants, called the skills-gap, which is of real concern to human resource managers and business owners looking to hire competent skillful employees. While employers would prefer to hire people who are trained and ready to go to work, they are usually willing to provide the specialized, job-specific training necessary for those lacking such skills. Employability has become a far bigger challenge than unemployment, probably because there are still large vacancies in industries but lack of employable candidates (Robinson, 2000).

Today, employers in every industrial sector stress the need for employees with certain set of foundational skills. These include a strong academic grounding along with individual abilities such as teamwork, problem solving, work ethic and integrity. While employers rely on employees to have the same basic skills, they do not always talk about or label them the same way. This makes it difficult for prospective employees and educators to know exactly what it takes to be ready to succeed in *any* career path in *any* industry (National Network of Business and Industry Association, 2014).

Due to all this, the concept of Employability has become the key requirement for the applicant. Employability denotes skills and attributes that make an individual desirable to potential employers. It has also been defined as 'a set of achievements—skills, understandings, and personal attributes—that make graduates more likely to gain employability and be successful in their chosen field at large' by the Engineering Subject Centre of the UK Higher Education Academy.

Employability skills can be defined as a range of abilities or competencies that may be developed during education, training, work experience, interests and extra-curricular activities that may be sometimes referred to as generic skills, life skills, core skills, essential employment skills, key competencies or transferable skills. Employability skills denote characters that may make an individual attractive to potential employers (Bridgstock, 2009).

It also refers to those skills required to acquire and retain a job. These transferable skills include the ability to "solve complex multidisciplinary problems, work successfully in teams, exhibit effective oral and written



communication skills, and practice good interpersonal skills” (Schmidt, 1999). In recent practice today this term ‘employability skills’ is often used to describe the preparation skills upon which an applicant student must build job-specific skills which relate to communication, personal and interpersonal relationships, problem solving, and management of organizational processes (Lankard, 1990). Employability skills are therefore valued as they apply to many jobs and so can support common preparation to meet the needs of many different professions. (Robinson, 2000) defined employability skills as “those basic skills necessary for getting, keeping, and doing well on a job.” Employability skills are teachable (Lorraine, 2007) and transferable (Yorke, 2006). These are the skills required to be "self-reliant" in career and personal development; skills to manage processes rather than functional skills (Robinson, 2000)

According to the India skill report, Businesses around the world are reporting a skills shortage epidemic that is weighing on growth prospects. Almost 39% business organizations around the world are struggling to recruit the right people, with a lack of technical skills cited as the primary problem (64 percent). The concern is that this lack of talent is dampening the productivity, ultimately threatening future growth and profitability. Infact for about 75% Indian companies, one of the primary challenges faced is the shortage of technical or specific skills. The other challenges are shortage of general employability skills such as teamwork, communications. While on one side there is a skill dearth, on the other side there India’s ‘demographic bulge’ - the hundreds of millions of young people who will flood its job markets in the next decade - is in danger of sliding into a lopsided paunch that will weigh the nation down and crimp its gross domestic product.

If the forecasts are to be believed, by 2020, India would have a working population of about 0.8 billion out of the total population of 1.3 billion. With lakhs of students being added every year to this mass of job seekers in absence of proper management, the time when the entire system fails is not far away. Probably that is the reason why skill development has been in the middle of the discussion lately. Government is also taking lots of initiatives in this regards with the target to provide pool of skilled employees that are ready for market and employable by the Industry.

According to Devesh Srivastava, Sr. Vice President - Group HR, Teva Group, “Global challenges have given India an opportunity to raise the bar and exceed global standards. Only competitive advantage for India to be ahead is through bridging the skill gap. Education factories match demand & supply by producing qualified people, though skills have taken a back seat. Corporate needs Skills of Quality, Productivity and Sustainability. Only aspirants without skills are creating a huge talent shortage especially in niche markets like Pharma & Bio tech”.

Since it has been proven now that these employability skills promote performance in the workplace and have become one of the important parameter for securing the job, we assumed the necessity of exploring the awareness, importance and requirement of these skills among the Pharmacy post graduates in Nagpur region. Though as per our knowledge there has been no prior investigation that explored such parameters about employability skills in the region of study. Therefore, the aim of this paper is to evaluate the connection between employability skill and career prospects of Pharmacy post graduate students by analyzing the results of our survey. It is hoped that this study may identify the related factors of these skills and provide strategies to encourage it to increase the employability of these students.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this research work is to ascertain the awareness, importance, requirement and preparation of the employability skills by Pharmacy post graduate students.

The specific purposes are:

- i. To ascertain the level of awareness of employability skills possessed by Pharmacy post graduate students.
- ii. To find out the level of employability skills in terms of the aspects of basic skills, thinking, resource, information, interpersonal, system/technology and personal quality.



iii. To ascertain the link between career opportunities and employability skills required therein.

Significance of the Study

The results of this research work will no doubt be of great importance to all stakeholders that includes the researchers, students, Institutes and employers. The findings will enable the students to take necessary actions to plan their career and know and reinforce the employability skills. Similarly the institutes will be able to plan for value addition to their students to make them more employable. This study will equally form useful reference materials to both the researchers and students.

Methodology

Survey research design method was used for the study, which involves the collection of information from a sample of individuals through their responses to predetermined questions. Survey design was chosen for this study as it is supposed to be the most appropriate for gathering first hand information on students employability skills and opportunities, without changing or modifying the situation under investigation. No cause-and-effect relationship was sought.

A systematic random sampling technique was used in selecting a sample of 125 Pharmacy post graduate students drawn from different institutes in Nagpur region from the academic session (2015/16). A structured questionnaire titled 'Critical study on Pharmacy Post Graduate students Employability' was used for collection of data. The test –retest method of reliability was used. The questionnaire was first administered to 20 post graduate students outside the sample but in the population. After an interval of 12 days, it was re-administered to same group and almost equally retrieved. The mean, standard deviation, frequencies, percentages and tables were used in analyzing the data.

Results

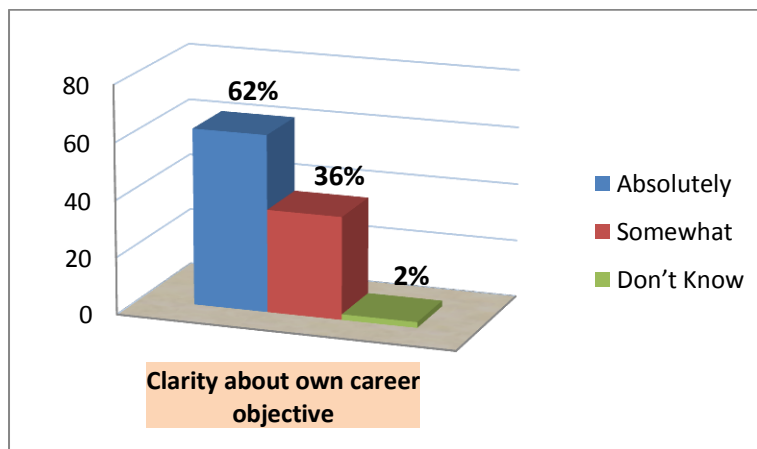


Figure 1: Career Objective

Figure 1 of the survey conducted for the above study revealed that almost 62% candidates were absolutely aware about their own career, whereas around 36% were not much clear about their own career objectives and 2% were not at all aware about their own career objective.

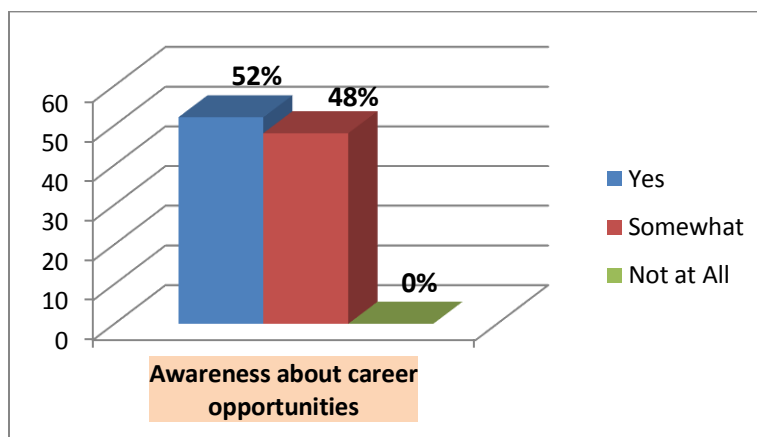


Figure 2: Career Opportunities

Figure 2 depicts that 52% respondents were aware about the career opportunities available in the field, but nearly 48% were not fully aware about such opportunities. This shows that nearly half the population did not take any efforts or took very less efforts to know the opportunities in the field.

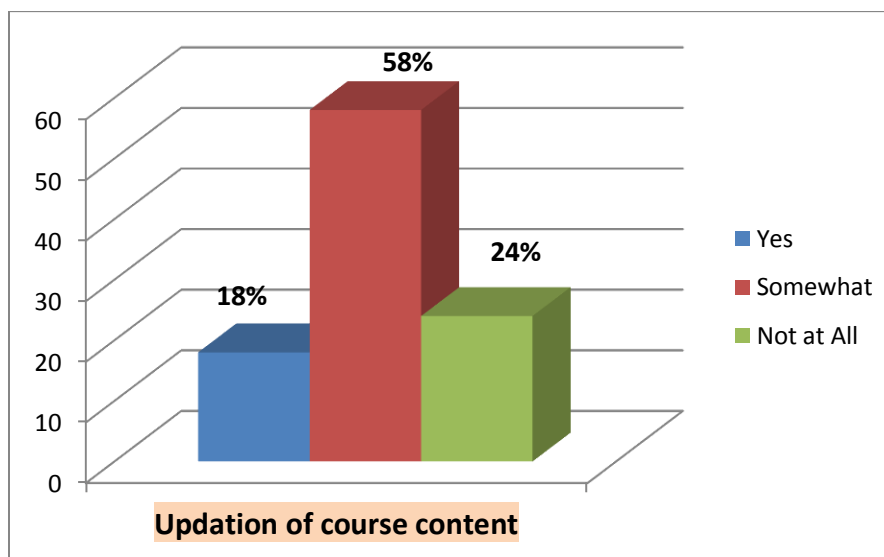


Figure 3: Course content Updation

Figure 3 reveals that only 18% respondents think that their course content is updated with the current industrial requirement whereas around 58% candidates believe that their syllabus is not completely updated with the current industrial requirement and 24% believe that it is not at all updated with current industrial requirement, which has probably become one of the major constraints for the fresher's to get an opportunity in industry. It has also been found that some private universities who update their syllabus regularly do not face such a problem and that increases the chances of opportunity for their students.

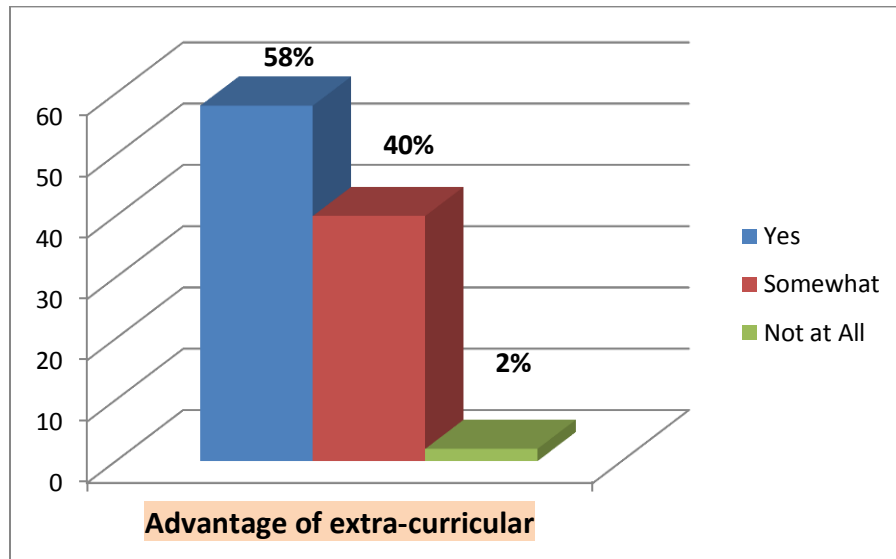


Figure 4: Advantage of Extra Curricular

Figure 4 depicts that 58% respondents believed that participation in extracurricular activities during college definitely/surely adds an advantage during recruitment process whereas 40% think that it is less advantageous.

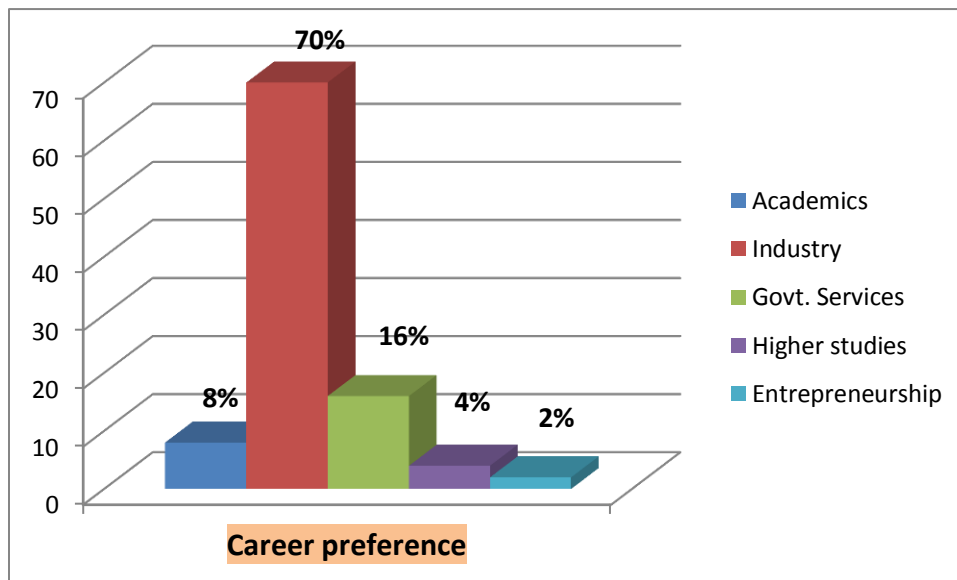


Figure 5: Career preference

Figure 5 reveals that 70% of the candidates preferred to make their career in industry followed by government services (16%) and few preferred to join academics (8%). And very few preferred to go for higher studies and start their own business as an entrepreneur. This shows that majority of population is interested to do their career in industry where as they are not equipped with the current industrial requirement could be one of the reason for unemployment.

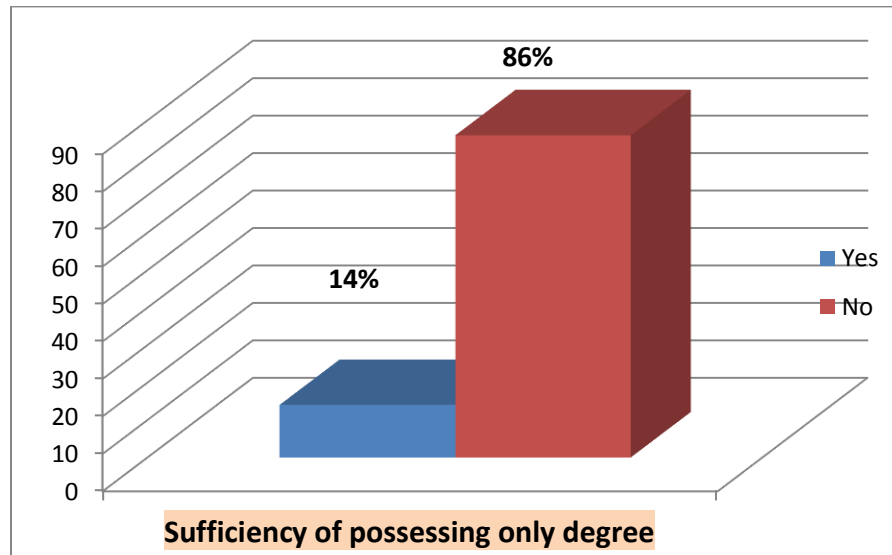


Figure 6: Sufficiency of Possessing only Degree

Figure 6 reveals that 86% of candidates strongly believe that only possessing a degree is not sufficient for securing good opportunity in the industry and believed that some additional skills are surely required along with the degree to convert a good opportunity into a job. But most of the candidates were not sure about the exact set of additional skills required for the same.

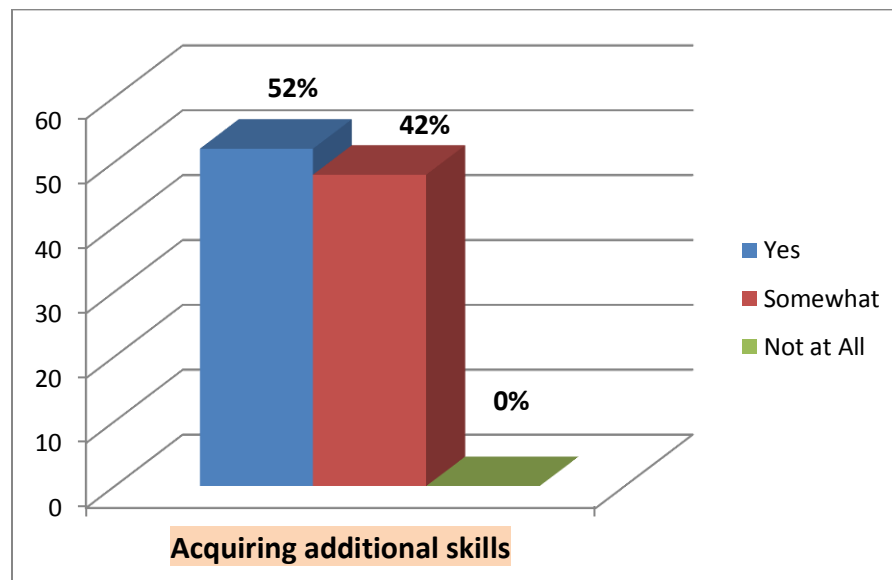


Figure 7: Acquiring Additional Skills

Figure 7 depicts that around 52% respondents agreed to and tried to acquire such additional skills which they think is essential, whereas remaining 48% tried less seriously to acquire such additional skills.

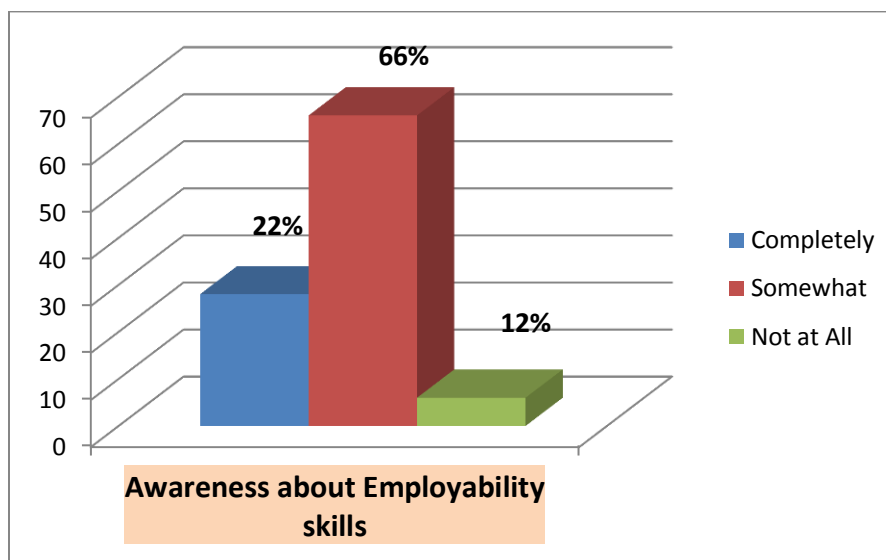


Figure 8: Awareness about Employability Skills

Figure 8 reveals that only 22% respondents were well aware about the employability skills whereas 66% were little aware and 12% were totally unaware about the concept of employability skills. But when they were made aware about the concept of employability skills, more than 90% agreed that these skills are most and absolutely essential for securing a good job in the today's competitive world.

Table 1: Responses for the different employability skills

Sr. No.	Employability skills	Only Aware (%)	Tried to Acquired (%)
1	Communication Skills	46	54
2	Teamwork Skills	62	38
3	Problem Solving Skills	64	36
4	Initiative & Enterprise Skills	78	22
5	Planning & Organizing Skills	56	44
6	Learning Skills	58	42
7	Technology Skills	42	58
8	Self Management Skills	56	44
9	Personal Attribute skills	60	40

Table 1 shows the responses of the candidates regarding awareness about nine different employability skills identified. It reveals that majority of these skills, the candidates were only aware of and therefore required to analyse and acquire such skills to increase their employability. Out of the nine set of skills identified students have mainly concentrated on communication and technology skills and less on the other skills which might be the reason for generation of qualified but less skillful candidates required today by the corporate.



Table 2: Responses for the different activities undertaken to increase employability skills

Sr. No.	Activities	Yes (%)	No (%)
1	Prepared/updated my CV	94	6
2	Sought advice on how to write a CV	80	20
3	Found out what skills/qualities employers are looking for	39	61
4	Kept record of my personal development and achievements	66	34
5	Did some research on careers I am interested in	42	58
6	Visited a careers/job fairs	28	72
7	Undergone any careers module/course	10	90
8	Attended any Short term courses/ seminars/conference	88	12
9	Worked on enhancing communication skills	52	48
10	Tried to communicate with employers by sending resumes	72	28
11	Worked part time to get additional experience	12	88
12	Took advise of counselor	4	96
13	Used internet to get important information of the field	100	0

Table 2 shows the responses of the candidates regarding the various activities undertaken by them to enhance their awareness to increase their chances of employment. It reveals that most of the identified activities were undertaken by the students (some knowingly and some unknowingly) but with a less serious note probably due to lack of awareness about existence of such employability skills and therefore it is required to be taken seriously to make them more employable.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The concept of employability skills has increasingly become the concern of stakeholders like industries, employers, education institutes and indeed almost all the students. It largely includes student's skills and potentials for obtaining and succeeding in a job apart from their routine academic knowledge and skills. From the present study we can therefore conclude that only technical knowledge (Degree) is not sufficient for securing a good job, but students should concentrate on adding value to their profile in the form of some set of skills now called as employability skills required by the employers in their field to make them more employable. The study also concludes that in the competitive age students should voluntarily try to identify and acquire these skills along with their course to make them more employable. The institutes should also create an environment that will assist the students to boost their employability skills by conducting mocks, seminars, workshops, in-house skill improvement programme etc. With Industry's increasing demand for skilled rather than qualified talent; it is important to understand the needs of demand side better and take combined efforts by all the stakeholders at large.

This study has highlighted the importance of employability skills of the students for better employment opportunity. It will also help in identifying the challenges that need to be overcome if more students are to embrace the potential benefits by acquiring these skills.

So it could be recommended that students during their post graduation should try to identify the employability skills required in the pharmaceutical field or their field of interest and work on it to make themselves potent employable candidates.



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