



**AN EMPIRICAL STUDY ON THE EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS OF PHARMACY  
UNDERGRADUATES IN SATARA REGION**

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Article Received on 24/01/2019

Article Revised on 14/02/2019

Article Accepted on 06/03/2019

**ABSTRACT**

Today's generation of university graduates will be required to continuously update existing employability skills and obtain new skills and qualifications as a result of the rapidly changing economy market. In order to engage in a multilateral discourse on employability skills between various educational stakeholders, it is important to consider the perceptions of both recent university graduates and faculty members. Often, recent university graduates do not fully possess the types and range of skills necessary for success in the workplace. Where such skills are taught, however, students often lack the awareness to articulate the types of skills learnt or developed in the classroom. Employability skills are best developed when these skills are integrated across the curriculum. Effective teaching practices such as promoting active learning, using multiple teaching strategies and providing prompt feedback all contribute to the skills development of students and recent university graduates. Results suggest that, whilst students would accept peer assessment as an element of their course, its introduction at least should focus on the development of evaluative skills and provide support to alleviate an onerous sense of responsibility. It is concluded that, if the value of peer assessment in terms of employability skill development is accepted, then it should be adopted as regular practice on undergraduate programmes wishing to equip students with a complete repertoire of employment-relevant skills. A systematic random sampling technique was used in selecting a sample of 392 Pharmacy graduate students drawn from different 6 institutes in Satara region from the academic session (2018-19).

**KEYWORDS:** Employability skills, Education, Knowledge.

**INTRODUCTION**

The landscape of graduate recruitment has changed drastically over the last few decades. The era where candidates were hired based solely on hard technical knowledge as reflected in academic qualifications or work experience has given way to a call for graduates who wield a formidable array of the softer, people-oriented, work-related skills. Graduates' employability is one of the fiercely debated issues in the current economic climate. Rapid changes taking place in the economy create a pressure upon employers to identify and recruit graduates that possess critical employability skills relevant to current demands. The emphasis being placed on these soft skills, also known as employability skills, is associated with and reflective of the current trends in graduate recruitment. Employers expect students to have well developed employability skills, so that they can make an immediate contribution to the workplace when recruited. Employability skills term varies by country. Another term used for Employability skills were the soft skills, generic skills, core skills or essential skills.<sup>[1]</sup>

The best results seem to be achieved when employability skill training is integrated with academic and vocational

skill training forming a set of five basic skills. In this way, the relevance of the five types of skills are interrelated and taught as basic to job market success something in which the learner has a level of interest. The following strategies are suggested for incorporating employability skill development concepts in the classroom.<sup>[2]</sup>

Shivpuri & Kim, pointed that employers want to hire students with the appropriate skill set for the job. These skills include communication, problem-solving, and teamwork skills. Employability skills studied were problem-solving skills, communication skills, teamwork skills, change and innovation behavior, ability to manage self, and being civic-minded.<sup>[3]</sup>

The demand for graduates to use their subject knowledge in subsequent employment is minimal, but the opportunity to utilize their employability skills is tremendous. They have suggested that graduates must not only be able to access information, but apply the information through problem solving and teamwork processes.<sup>[4]</sup>

Based their study on employability skills: communication, team-working, problem solving, literacy, numeracy, general information technology (IT), timekeeping, business awareness, customer-care, personal presentation, enthusiasm/commitment, enterprising, vocational job-seeking and advanced vocational job specific skills.<sup>[5]</sup>

Overtom, proposed that employability skills are those basic skills necessary for getting, keeping, and doing well into job. It is a group of important skills instilled in each individual in order to produce productive workforce. This is parallel with individuals who have strong characteristics such as a high sense of self, innovative, productive, skilful, and competitive, a strong sense of determination, and creative in facing the challenges of the national as well as global platforms. Besides that, employability skill is also crucial in all professions as well as in education. The Conference Board 1996 defined employability skills as individual quality required by the employer which can be applied in various fields of work.<sup>[6]</sup>

Khaled Nordin proposed that changes in the industrial sector require educational institutions to provide graduates with employability skills Technical and vocational education systems need to plan strategies to improve the quality of graduates in order to meet the current needs of employers.<sup>[7]</sup>

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.<sup>[8]</sup>

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.<sup>[9]</sup>

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.<sup>[10]</sup> 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.<sup>[11]</sup>

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.<sup>[12]</sup>

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.<sup>[13]</sup>

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.<sup>[14]</sup>

The National Association of College and Employers 2014, have compiled a list of the top 18 skills requested by employers. These skills in rank order are as follows: (1) Communication skills (2) Leadership (3) Analytical/quantitative skills; (4) Strong work ethic (5) Teamwork skills (6) Problem solving skills (7) Initiative (8) Detail-oriented (9) Computer skills (10) Technical skills (11) Flexibility/adaptability (12) Interpersonal skills (13) Organizational ability (14) Strategic planning skills (15) Friendly/outgoing personality (16) Entrepreneurial skills/risk-taker (17) Tactfulness and (18) Creativity. These skills are considered to be important for potential employees to possess and apply to their job.<sup>[15]</sup>

#### **Purpose of study**

1. To identify the new ways to improve the skills in the course of higher education
2. To assess skill gap of management students that are developed in academic with regards to the level of expectation of the industry.
3. To identify the employability skills, which are classified into three groups - Person to Person, Person to Vocation and Person to Job.

### Significance of the Study

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. The results of this research work will no doubt be of great importance to all stakeholders that includes the researchers, students, Institutes and employers. This study will equally form useful reference materials to both the researchers and students.

### METHODOLOGY

This study used a descriptive research design with quantitative approached. This study aims to identify the importance of employability skills. 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 392 Pharmacy graduate students drawn from different 6 institutes in Satara region from the academic session (2018-19). A structured questionnaire titled study on Pharmacy Graduate students Employability was used for collection of data. The test-retest method of reliability was used.

### RESULTS

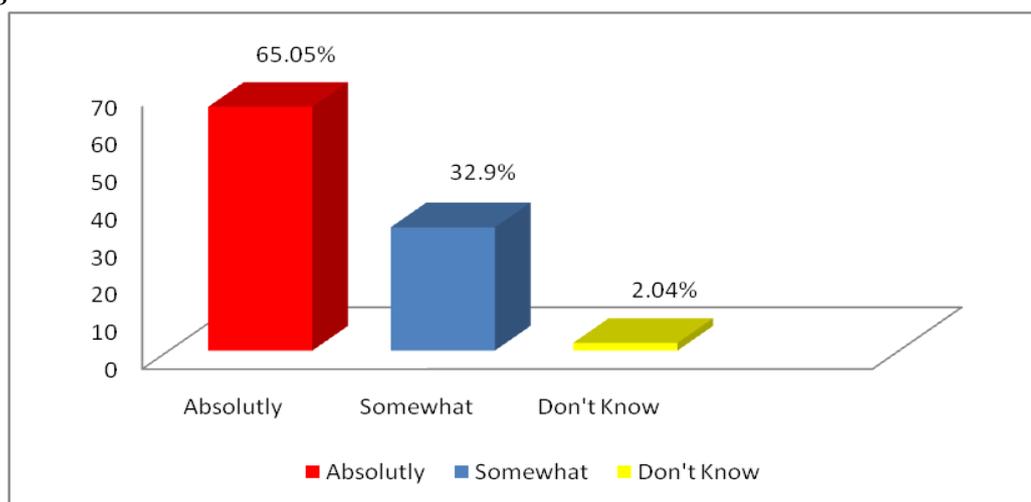


Figure 1: Career Objective.

Figure 1:- The survey conducted for the above study revealed that almost 65.05% candidates were absolutely aware about their own career, whereas around 32.9%

were not much clear about their own career objectives and 2.04% were not at all aware about their own career objective.

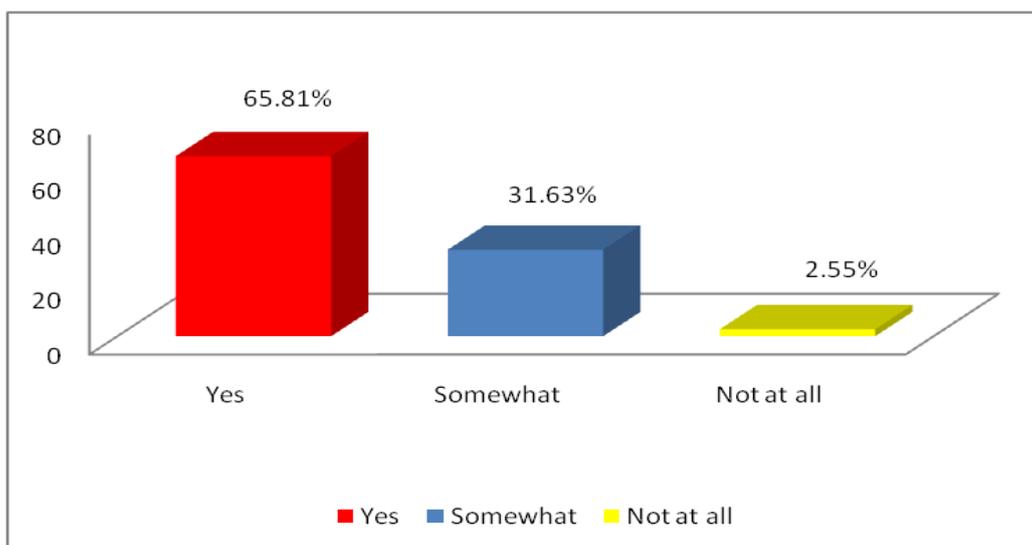
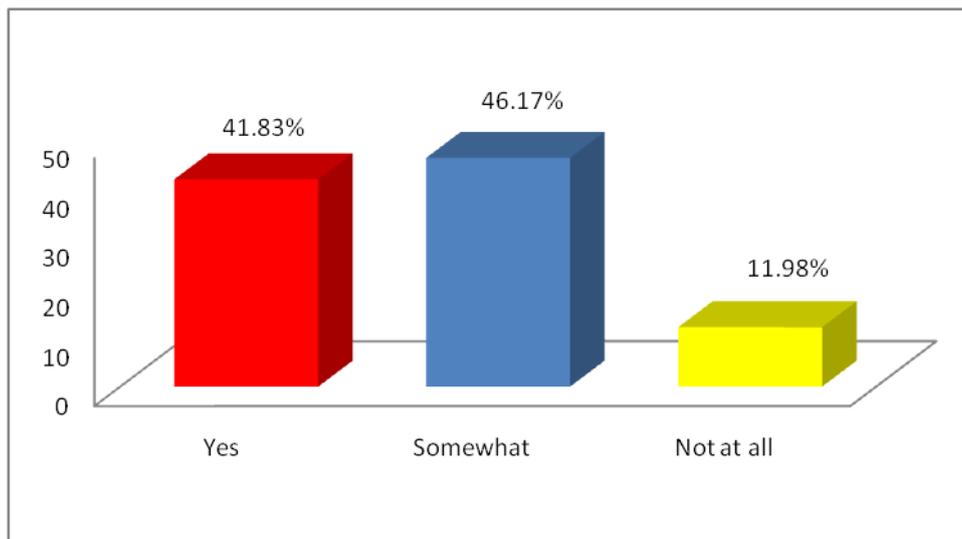


Figure 2: Career Opportunities.

Figure 2:- Depicts that 65.81% respondents were aware about the career opportunities available in the field, but nearly 31.63% were not fully aware about such

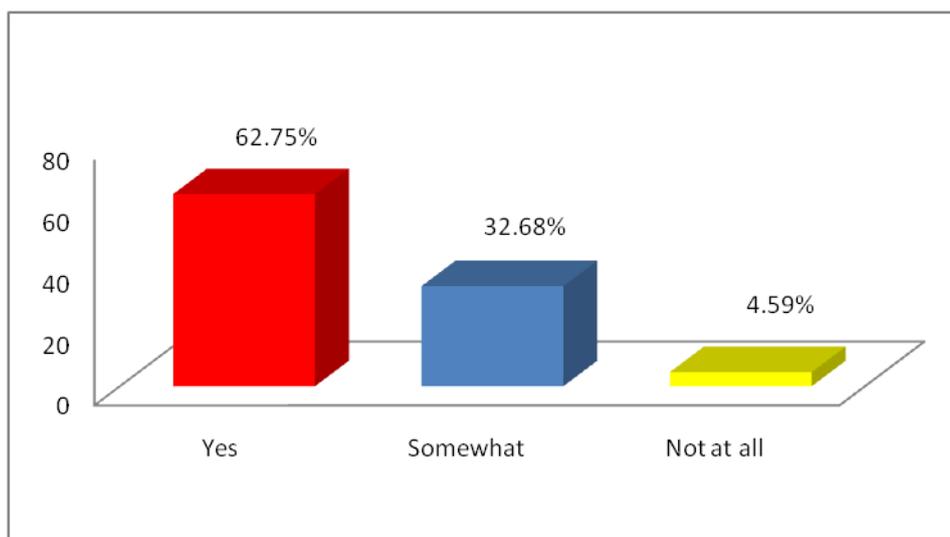
opportunities 2.55% were not at all aware about their own career opportunities.



**Figure 3: Course content Updation.**

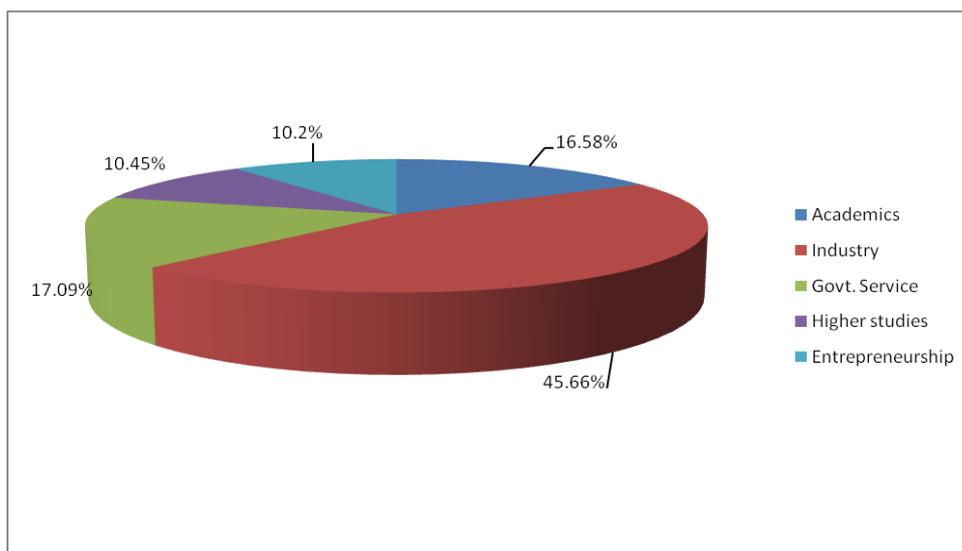
Figure 3:- reveals that only 41.83% respondents think that their course content is updated with the current industrial requirement whereas around 46.17% candidates believe that their syllabus is not completely updated with the current industrial requirement and

11.98% believe that it is not at all updated with current industrial requirement. It has also been found that some private universities who update their syllabus regularly do not face such problem and that increases the chances of opportunity for their students.



**Figure 4: Advantage of Extra Curricular.**

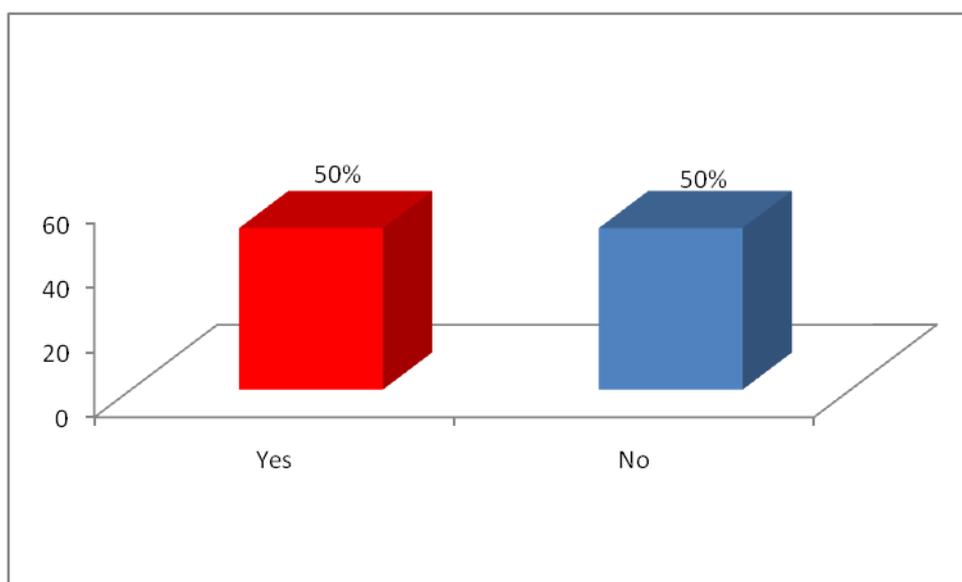
Figure 4:- Depicts that 62.75% respondents believed that participation in extracurricular activities during college definitely/surely adds an advantage during recruitment process whereas 32.68% think that it is less advantageous and 4.59% were not at all advantageous about extra-curricular.



**Figure 5: Career preference.**

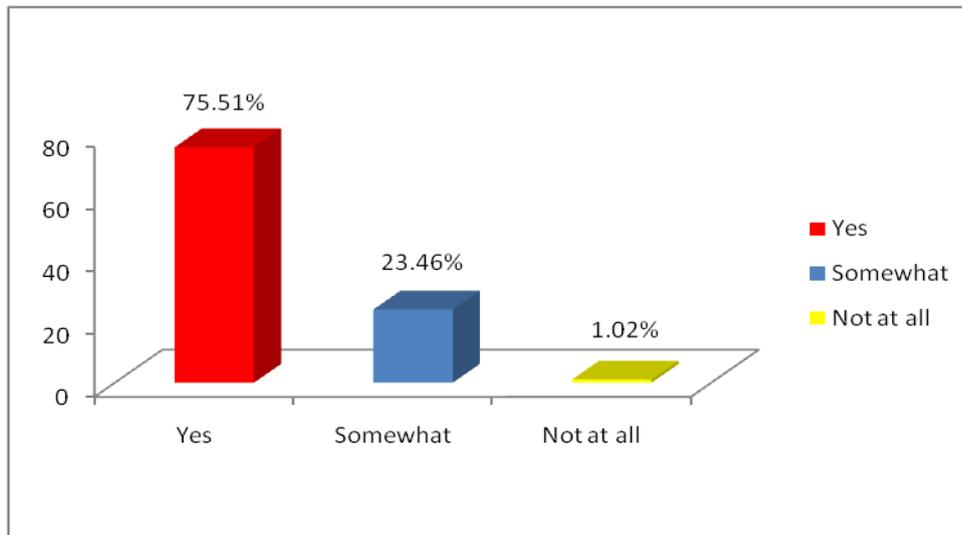
Figure 5:- Reveals that 45.66% of the candidates preferred to make their career in industry followed by government services 17.09% and few preferred to join academics 16.98%. And very few preferred to go for higher studies and start their own business as an

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.**

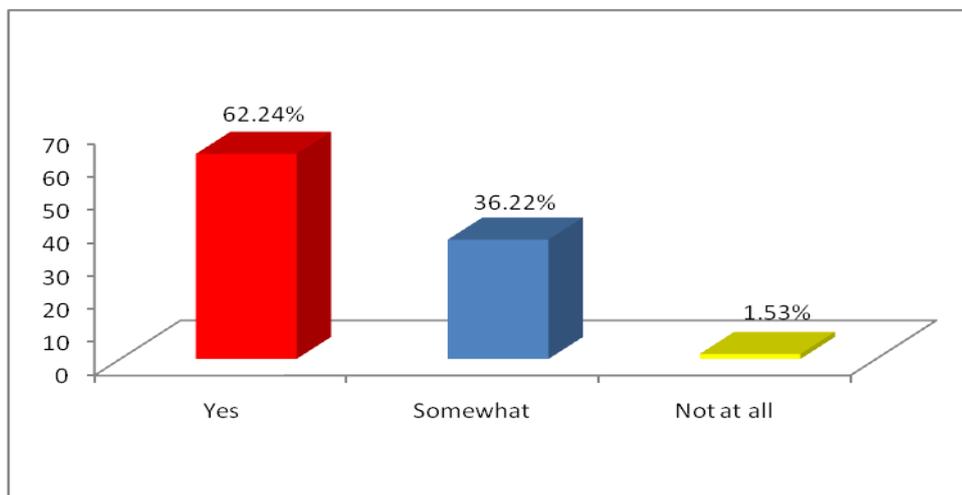
Figure 6:- Reveals that 50% of candidates strongly believe that only possessing a degree is not sufficient for securing good opportunity in the industry and believed that some additional skills are surely required along with the degree to convert a good opportunity into a job. But most of the candidates were not sure about the exact set of additional skills required for the same.



**Figure 7: Acquiring Additional Skills.**

Figure 7:- Depicts that around 75.51% respondents agreed to and tried to acquire such additional skills which they think is essential, whereas remaining 23.46%

tried something for skills and there is 1.02% are not at all seriously to acquire such additional skills.



**Figure 8: Awareness about Employability Skills.**

Figure 8 reveals that only 62.24% respondents were well aware about the employability skills whereas 36.22% were little aware and 1.53% were totally unaware about the concept of employability skills. But when they were

made aware about the concept of employability skills, more than 95% 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	Excellent (%)	Good (%)	Poor (%)
1	Communication Skills	46.60	54.84	2.55
2	Teamwork Skills	42.34	56.63	1.02
3	Problem Solving Skills	35.96	59.18	2.55
4	Initiative & Enterprise Skills	31.12	65.30	3.57
5	Planning & Organizing Skills	36.22	60.20	1.02
6	Learning Skills	39.79	53.06	2.29
7	Technology Skills	33.92	54.84	2.55
8	Self Management Skills	40.56	56.63	2.80
9	Personal Attribute skills	43.11	54.08	2.80

Table 1:- 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 analyze 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	71.42	28.57
2	Sought advice on how to write a CV	67.34	32.65
3	Found out what skills/qualities employers are looking for	76.53	23.46
4	Kept record of my personal development and achievements	77.04	22.95
5	Did some research on careers I am interested in	72.19	27.80
6	Visited a careers/job fairs	65.81	34.18
7	Undergone any careers module/course	70.66	29.33
8	Attended any Short term courses/ seminars/conference	75	25
9	Worked on enhancing communication skills	75	25
10	Tried to communicate with employers by sending resumes	59.69	40.30
11	Worked part time to get additional experience	58.92	41.07
12	Took advise of counselor	67.85	32.14
13	Used internet to get important information of the field	100	0

Table 2:- 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

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 examination we can along these lines presume that just specialized information (Degree) isn't adequate for verifying a great job, yet understudies should focus on increasing the value of their profile as some arrangement of aptitudes currently called as employability abilities required by the businesses in their field to make them progressively 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 investigation has featured the significance of employability abilities of the understudies for better business opportunity. It will likewise help in

distinguishing the difficulties that should be survived if more understudies are to grasp the potential advantages by securing these aptitudes.

So it could be recommended that students during their 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. Understudies likewise do some specialized extra course to improve their particular aptitudes sets.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I express my deep gratitude and indebtedness to Mr. Avinash M. Bhagwat (Project Guide and HOD of B. Pharmacy, YSPM's YTC Faculty of Pharmacy, Satara.) for his valuable guidance throughout the course of this project.

I wish my sincere thanks to Principals and staff of following colleges for their help and cooperation: YSPM's YTC Faculty of Pharmacy, Satara - Dr. Vivekkumar K. Redasani, Late Narayandas Bhawandas Chhabada Institute of Pharmacy, Raigaon - Mr. Z. K. Khan. & Mr. A. B. Velhal, Gourishankar Institute of Pharmaceutical Education & Research, Limb, Satara - Dr. A. V. Yadav, Satara College of Pharmacy, Degaon, Satara - Dr. N. H. Aloorkar & Dr. A.S. Kulkarni, Meruling Shikshan Sanstha's College of Pharmacy, Medha - Mr. V. T. Deshmukh, Sawkar Pharmacy College - Dr. P. J. Shirote.

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