

## STUDENT'S PERCEPTION ABOUT EMPLOYABILITY COURSES LED BY CORPORATE PRACTITIONERS: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY

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### ABSTRACT

*With the dynamics of changing business world, the concept of employability came into existence which introduced the present study to measure the willingness of higher education institution students to participate in the employability courses. The study makes use of primary data for finding the answers to the required objectives. For this purpose, a structured questionnaire was floated amongst the students of Delhi NCR and in total 189 responses were recorded for the empirical investigation. The results of which indicate that the majority of the students are willing to participate in the industry led employability courses to enhance their current skills and knowledge. Moreover, the results indicate the students are also willing to pay the premium for such employability courses of industry professionals. The findings of this study have implications for the corporate houses and the academic institutions for designing the optimal courses which can help in enhancing the skill sets required for attaining employability by students in the current market.*

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**KEYWORDS:** *Employability, Perception, Higher Education Institution, Students, Corporate Practitioners.*

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The concept of employability of the students has emerged as an important area of discussion among the higher education institution and the global business world. The dynamics of the current business environment reflects the importance of education in employability of the higher education institution students (Gandhi et al., 2021). The soft skills deficiency among such institution students like communication, teamwork, problem solving skills and increase in the supply of such unskilled higher education institution students may lead to increase in the competition of graduate jobs in the market (Newton, 2015; Pitan and Adedjei, 2012). Therefore, it is mandatory to enhance the employability skills of the higher education institution students along with their academic skills so as to cope up with the challenges of current business world and to gain the competitive advantage of graduate employment within the context of knowledge economy, globalization and competitive pressure. Considering employability as one of their central objectives, higher education institutions are supposed to train and develop their students so as to cater the demand of the current workforce in the market (Harvey, 2003). In this view, Hossain et al. (2021) has confirmed that technological mastery, reading, comprehension and numeracy indexes had a significant influence on the performance of the students. Also, the authors have revealed that the cultural awareness has an impact on employability of the institution students. So, employability can be considered as a most essential aspect of modern higher education system, which enforces them to work on the soft skills and other than the academic skills of the higher education institution students to meet the current demand of the workforce in the global business world.

According to the latest reports, an undergrad in engineering and technology has the highest employability percentage with 47 percent followed by Masters of Business Administration (MBA) with 46.59 percent. On the contrary, graduates in computer applications have the lowest employability rate with 22.42 percent (Statista Research Development, 2021). The primary reason cited for the low employability percent amongst the Indian graduates are lack of clear perspective, no practical application, and basic experience and communication skills. However, India's education sector is expected to reach US \$35.03 billion by 2025. Also, India was ranked 34 among the 100 in the English proficiency index 2019. Moreover, in 2020-21, there were 9700 total AICTE approved institutions, who were making India the largest network of higher education institutions in the world (IBEF, 2021).

So, in order to meet the above expectations in real world, it is required to measure the willingness of the students towards participation in the skill enhancement courses. Therefore, taking this view point into consideration, the present study is an attempt to measure the willingness of the higher education institution students to participate in employability generation short-term courses of the corporate practitioners. And, the findings of the present study will have practical implications for the institutions in designing the curriculum that will make their students job ready. Also, it will be of immense use for corporate houses for hiring and recruiting the best candidate as per their needs.

So, the objective of this study is:

- To measure the willingness of higher education institution students to participate in the corporate led short-term courses for employability.

Considering the above objective this study is organized into five sections; Section 2 illustrates the previous studies on the subject and Section 3 provides the research methodology adopted in the study. Section 4 presents the data analysis, findings and discussion, which is followed by the conclusion and research implications in Section 5.

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The below table gives a summarize view of the past related studies and researches of the area of employability, which reflects the importance of skills development of graduate university students for their employment and how much it is essential to meet the current business workforce demand.

<b>S.No.</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Authors</b>	<b>Objectives</b>	<b>Data &amp; Research Methodology</b>	<b>Major Findings</b>
1	2009	White and Barraclough	To understand the impact of employability with integrating real world experience in the curriculum.	Exploratory Research and questionnaire	Students get motivated in the subjects where they are getting the real-world experience so that they can indulge themselves in such activities that can help to enhance the employability development skills of the students. The finding of the research shows that the real-world experience of students affects the behaviour of students towards learning. Hence the learning environment helps in engaging students towards

					developing their skills and increasing knowledge which will impact the employability of students effectively.
2	2012	Andrews and Russell	To understand the impact of employability skills development on staff perception	Survey Method is used to collect data from staff	Formation of relevant strategies to understand the effectiveness of the employability skills on staff perception came up as the challenge in the study. Therefore, author suggested that critical focus should be given to the implementation of strategies effectively in-order to improve the perception of staff. The shaping up of strategies effectively will lead to development of skills efficaciously in staff perception.

3	2014	Wilton	To identify the key aspects of student's employability for recruiters.	Exploratory Research including expert interview method	There should be proper match between candidate's attributes and recruiter's demand (i.e., potential organisational role). Individual's personal attributes and organisational fit plays a key role during selection decision.
4	2014	Qenani et al.	To measure the expectations of the students on employability development.	Qualitative and Quantitative Research applying regression	Self-awareness comes as the key aspect which helps in gaining the knowledge. University arranging programs for students helps in increasing the knowledge base of students and development of skills. Authors found the need of boosting self-perceived employability and therefore proper training sessions were managed for students.
5	2016	Ishengomaand Vaaland	To point out the activities that can increase employability of students by creating linkage between University and Industry.	Primary survey of 404 respondents included faculties, students and employees of petroleum industry.	Internships, industrial projects and the involvement of an industry expert in making an academic curriculum are the three activities that can significantly increase the employability of students.

6	2016	Oluyomi Susan Pitan	To study the role of student's involvement in Employability Development Opportunities	Exploratory factor analysis including primary research using structured questionnaire method on a sample of 600 respondents.	Employability Development Opportunities (EOD) can significantly enhance student's employability in a positive manner. Practical know-how about industrial scenario, work experience, career oriented education, etc. also have a significant impact on student's employability. Whereas, extracurricular activities don't have a significant impact on student's employability.
7	2017	Graham	To know the importance of attaching employability with academic courses for preparing students in their corporate transition.	Review of existing literature for 5year period.	Most recruiters prefer candidates having good academic grades because majority of students (seventy-five per cent) placed were having above first-class scores. IT skills, Communication skills and Team management skills were three most significant skills in employability of students. These skills are very significant for organisations, universities and students as well.

8	2017	Alvarez et al.	To develop a model that can be utilised to study student's employability across various domains of higher education (i.e., Arts and Humanities, Science, Social and Legal Science, Engineering and Architecture, and Health Science)	A survey method was applied to estimate a model based on the perceived employability of students.	Personal factors of individual (i.e., generic skills, academic performance, personal circumstances and Contacts) can play a significant role in building self-confidence among the candidate. In addition to this, self-confidence is one of the most significant variables that can enhance perceived employability of a student.
9	2018	Gedye and Beaumont	To explore the employability of students pursuing higher education and to examine the student's knowledge about employability.	Mixed method survey on 63 students of Marine sports sciences.	Vocational skills, work management skills and career management skills are the three most intrinsic skills to the candidate. On the other hand, extrinsic aspects include market conditions and employer requirements/demand from the candidate. The study further states that the student's perception of their potential employability got clearer with time as they proceed into senior classes. For instance, a first-year student uses to analyse himself by the question "how employable I am to an employer" while the final year students believe that learning new skills and relevant experience are most important to fulfil their career aspirations.

10	2018	Donald et al.	To understand the student's perceptions regarding cost and benefits of pursuing higher education in context to their employability.	Qualitative method including semi-structured interview of 387 university students.	Most students feel that higher education is financially beneficial for their employability. Students feel positive about their employability from personal perspective. However, they feel slightly less positive with the conditions of market regarding demand for jobs.
11	2019	Pouratashiand Zamani	To develop skilled graduates for labour market by improving their employability skills.	Both qualitative as well as quantitative methods are applied in the study.	The study grouped employability skills of students into three categories (i.e. basic, intermediate and advance). The study further mentioned five activities that can support the development of employability of students and these activities are - support, cultural, Informing, research and educational activities.
12	2019	Pitanandand Muller	To analyse the self-perceptions of students regarding the labour market of graduates (also considering the influence of gender).	Questionnaire method to collect data from 402 respondents (i.e., university students) out of which 166 were males and 236 were females.	Male respondents have high level of self-perceived employability. Final year students were also feeling more confident about their employability as they have more industry relevant skills than their juniors. The study also states that Self-perceived Employability (SPE) is highly influenced by Experiential learning activities (ELA). In addition, the University Reputation (UR) also plays a key role in the development of ELA.



13	2019	Gilbert and Wingrove	To analyse student's perception regarding their employability.	Quantitative approach of conducting research.	The students who experienced practical corporate situations in academic projects perceive themselves as highly employable. These students also have a higher score on Work Readiness Scale (WRS) which means they have developed stronger work-ready skills to handle larger projects. The study further states that 46 per cent of students believe that capstone course plays a key role in improving their WR skills.
14	2019	Belderbos	To understand the employability of international branch campus graduates	Amalgamation of survey method and interview method	Authors observed that the students found soft-skills and personal attributes as the most important factors for effective employability. Authors noticed that the development of training given to students for soft skills and personal attributes enhances the relevance of education in abroad.

15	2019	Nicolescu and Nicolescu	To develop a model of employability confidence for students	The model was developed using structural equation modelling	Authors observed four attributes of skills that have significant influence on employability of graduate students i.e. personal skills, professional qualities, transferable social skills and job seeking talent. Authors found these variables as the factors to enhance employability confidence whereas other factors such as individual transferable skills and corporate skills do not impact on employability confidence of students.
16	2020	Hossain et al.	To understand the marks of employability assets that affects students' employability	Blend of survey and secondary data analysis	Authors came up with three attributes that affects student's employability i.e., reading and comprehension, technological mastery and numeracy marks.
17	2020	Okolie et al.	To understand the functioning of career training programs to encourage student's development and employability	Qualitative research with help of interviews.	CTM i.e., Career training with mentoring helps in clarification of student's plans, ambitions, and interest. Programs were conducted to provide career guidance to students but were not that effective in case of graduates.
18	2020	Pitan Muller and	To understand student's perspective on employability development	Collection of primary data with sample size of 402 students	Students ranked the factors of employability development as first preference given to curriculum, then personal development planning followed by career development learning and work experience.

19	2020	Aliu and Aigbavaboa	To understand the impact of university and construction industry collaboration in developing employability	Through survey method with help of questionnaire of 204 respondents	University and construction industry program act as an affective programme to examine and mentor the students. Such program even helps in developing the skills in students before their bachelor degree. Authors found UIC activities i.e. University and construction industry collaborations activities as the reason for improvement of employability among graduate students.
20	2020	Rajput and Oswal	To explore the factors of workplace spirituality in academic institutions in Delhi(NCR).	Through survey method with help of questionnaire of 396 respondents	The empirical findings of the study reveal that the organizational commitment, job satisfaction, and work performance as important factors affecting workplace spirituality.
21	2021	Barkas et al.	To analyse the role of social capital and meta skills on employability	Conceptual research including illustrative primary data	There is significant impact of etiquettes, social capital and meta skills on employability of marketing students. The employability perception is varying according to the students' capabilities in UK university because every student has unique characteristics to attain the skills and grasp the knowledge according to their potential.

The above listed studies depict the importance of skills development of university students for the employability and the impact of such employability courses on university graduate students but none of the studies have been talked about the willingness of those university graduates about the learning of the university led short-term courses of employability. So, the present study

aims to fill this gap by measuring the willingness of university students to participate in the corporate practitioner led short-term courses for employability.

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The present study is descriptive in nature and follows the methodology for quantitative results and findings of this study in the form of primary data collection method and descriptive analysis with the help of SPSS and MS Excel software. The questionnaire was made and circulated among the college students of BBA and PGDM courses. The simple random sampling method was used for sampling and considered sample size of this survey was of 200 respondents, but researchers were able to collect only 189 responses. The results and findings of the collected responses are presented with the help of charts, graphs and tables in the following section.

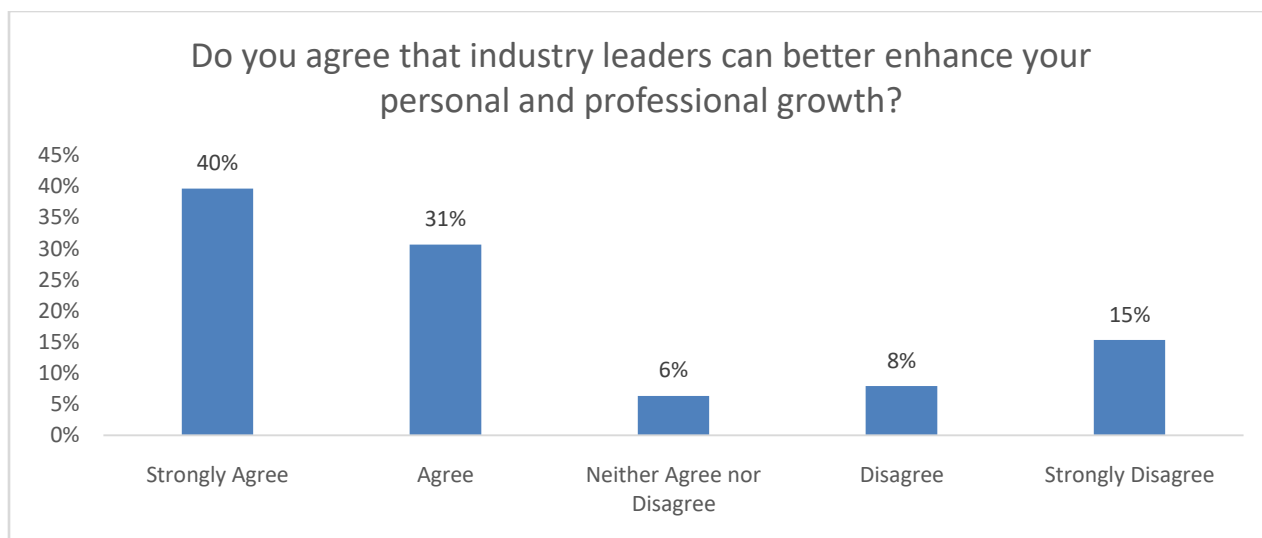
### **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

This section discusses the empirical findings of the present study which enforces the following aspects of the questionnaire. Graphical and Tabular representation has been done to have a better understanding of results of the study. Below figure 1 is revealing the percentage of students who states about the value addition of learnings through corporate practitioners.



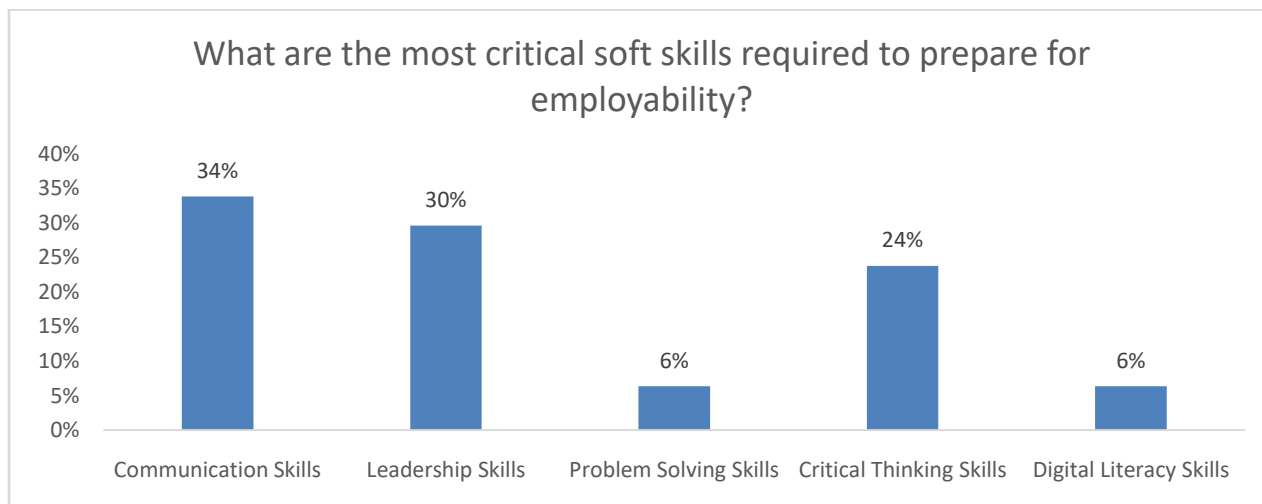
**Figure 1**

Figure 1 depicts that 87 percent of the respondents believe or feel that learning from corporate practitioners will add value in their learning outcomes. However, 13 percent of the respondents feel that corporate practitioners will not add any value to their learning outcome. Based on the empirical results, the authors recommend to provide corporate practitioners to add value to the learning outcomes of the students.



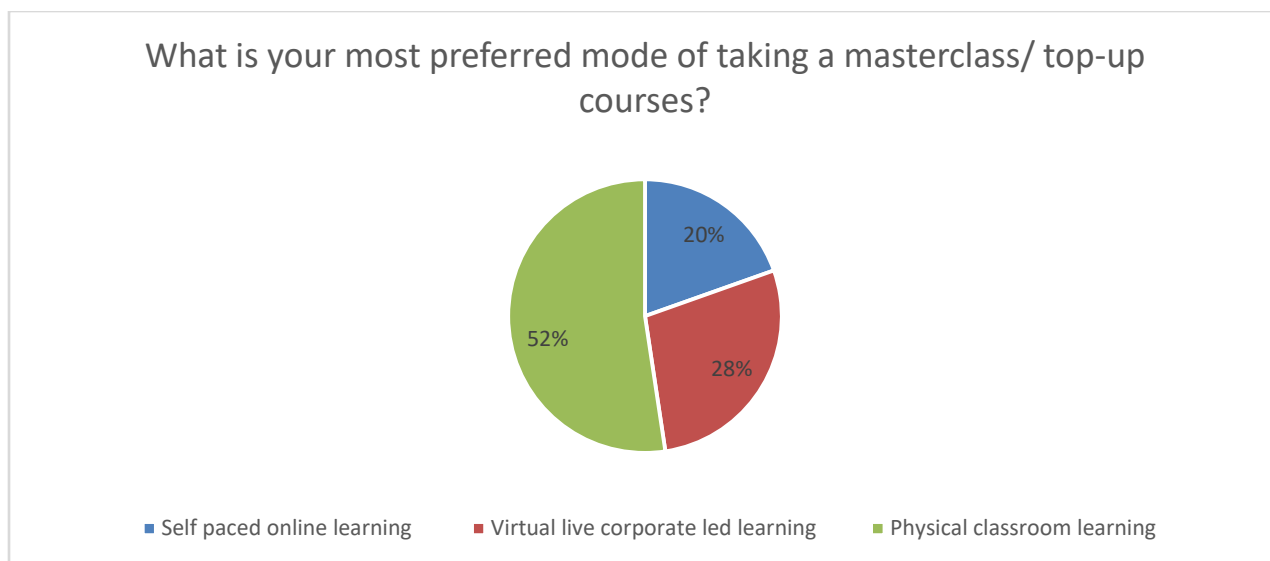
**Figure 2**

Figure 2 depicts that whether the respondents agree that the corporate practitioners can better enhance your personal and professional growth. The findings reveal that 40 percent of the respondents strongly agree that the corporate practitioners can help better to enhancing personal and professional growth. On the contrary, 15 percent of the respondents believe industry people cannot help in better enhancement of their personal and professional growth. However, 6 percent neither agree nor disagree.



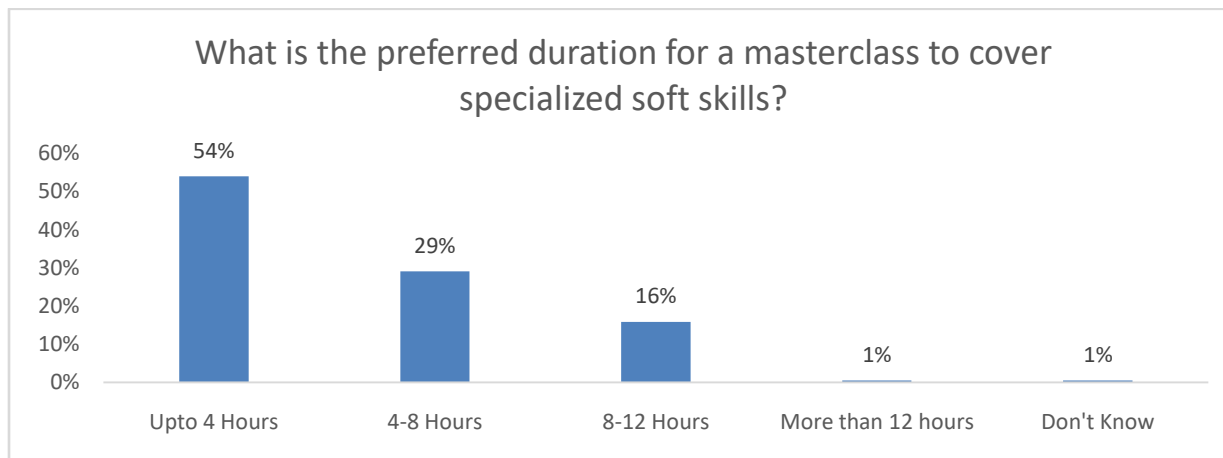
**Figure 3**

Figure 3 represents the most critical soft skills required for employability. The results reveal that 34 percent of the respondents say that communication is the most critical soft skill for attaining the employability. However, 30 percent of the respondents believe that leadership is the most critical soft skill. Furthermore, the results reveal that 6, 24 and 6 percent of the respondents believe that problem solving, critical thinking and digital literacy are the most critical skills for employability.



**Figure 4**

Figure 4 represents the preference of respondents for taking the class. Out of total 189 respondents, 52 percent of the respondents say that physical classroom learning is the best mode of learning. On the contrary, 28 percent of the respondents prefer to take class in a virtual live mode. Also, 20 percent of the respondents believe that self-paced online learning is the best mode.



**Figure 5**

Figure 5 depicts the preferred duration of course to cover the specialized soft skills. The results reveal that 54 percent of the respondents prefer to take a course of duration up to 4 hours. On the contrary, 29 percent of the respondents prefer to take a course of duration between 4-8 hours. Similarly, 16 percent prefer to take up a course between 8-12 hours. Therefore, the authors recommend to deliver a course of duration up to 4 hours.

**Table 1**

What should be the preferred time span of a compelling short course (typical 4-12 hours course)?					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Spread Over 1 week	61	32.3	32.3	32.3
	Spread Over 2-3 Weeks	94	49.7	49.7	82.0
	Don't Know	32	16.9	16.9	98.9
	Sat-Sun	1	.5	.5	99.5
	They Don't Realize	1	.5	.5	100.0
	Total	189	100.0	100.0	

Table 1 shows that the preferred time span for a short course should be spread over 2-3 weeks as 49.7 % of the respondents say the ideal time for completing a short course (typical 4-12 hours) should be spread over 2-3 weeks. However, 0.5 % of the respondents say that the course should be spread over 1 week. Also, out of total 11 % percent of the respondents didn't know the time of short-term course.

**Table 2**

How 2 are you willing to pay a premium for a corporate practitioner led master class?					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Very Likely	12	6.3	6.3	6.3
	Likely	80	42.3	42.3	48.7
	Don't Know	42	22.2	22.2	70.9
	Not Likely	55	29.1	29.1	100.0
	Total	189	100.0	100.0	

Table 2 shows that 42.3 % of the respondents are likely to pay the premium for a corporate trainer. Also, 6.3 % percent of the total respondents are very likely to pay the premium. However, 29.1 % respondents are not ready the premium for a corporate trainer.

## CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATION

The present study measures the willingness of the respondents to participate or enrol themselves in the courses led by corporate practitioners for attaining the employability. For this purpose, primary data was collected using a questionnaire which was circulated amongst the university students of Delhi NCR and a total of 189 respondents were collected for the empirical investigation. The findings of the study reveal that majority of the students are willing to take corporate led courses for their personal and professional growth. However, the respondents also believe that the ideal time or duration of course should be 4 hours and must be based on enhancing the communication, critical thinking and leadership skills for attaining the employability. Moreover, 40 percent of the respondents strongly believe that the corporate led courses can help them in scaling up. Also, approximately 42 percent of the respondents are willing to pay a premium for corporate trainer. The findings of this study have implications for the industry leaders, academicians in designing the optimal strategy for the students. The corporate practitioners will also have insights whether the students are willing to premium for the corporate led courses or not. Moreover, this study will help the students in finding a relevant course for personal and professional growth.

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