



Factors Affecting Employability of Postgraduate Scholars Studying in Higher Agriculture Education

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ABSTRACT

The study was carried out selecting a random sample of 120 postgraduate scholars studying in first and second year M.Sc. (Agri.) at B.A. College of Agriculture, Anand Agricultural University, Anand. The study reveals that a great majority (89.17 per cent) of the postgraduate scholars studying in higher agriculture education had above average level of overall employability. The level of employability was observed significantly higher among those postgraduate scholars, who had better academic performance, highly educated father and mother, higher degree of library exposure and increased level of job preference.

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Introduction

Employability refers to a person's capability of gaining initial employment, maintaining employment, and obtaining new employment if required (Hillage and Pollard, 1998). Employability depends on the knowledge, skills and abilities possessed by the job seekers, the way they use those assets and present them to the employers and the context in which they seek work. The factors that help job seekers employable include the knowledge and abilities relating to a particular job, the ability to identify suitable job opportunities, self presentation on resumes and at interviews and external factors such as the job market and personal circumstances. Evers et al. (1998) reported that employers believe higher education is failing by not adequately developing the employability skills of graduates. Billing (2003) reported that skills such as solving problems, communicating effectively, working on a team, thinking critically, and possessing interpersonal skills are the employability skills most desired by employers. Auwal (2009) reported that graduates have perceived all items to be important to employability success in the teaching profession; they also felt that having experience and competence in the employability skills such as instruction, supervised agricultural experience, and computer skills was the influencing factor for their success.

Until early 1990s, number of graduates and postgraduates produced by the agricultural education system was not large. With maximum absorption of graduates and postgraduates in government jobs, problem of unemployment was hardly an issue. Public sector was absorbing more than 50 per cent of the total stock of graduates and postgraduates. This situation has changed dramatically with the development effects of liberalisation and opening up of the economy becoming clearer and clearer. Currently, unemployment among graduates and postgraduates is so rampant that it can hardly go unnoticed or remain unattended. Youth unemployability also has been at an increasing rate in India. Majority of the employment opportunities in India require vocational skills, but our college and school output has only bookish knowledge. As a result of this, majority of the youth are unemployed due to deficiency in necessary employable skills. This becomes critical, as majority

of jobs in India are still skill based, with the bulk of employment coming from farming, fisheries and other related work. Youth unemployability is a bigger crisis than unemployment as poor quality of skills or education show up in low incomes rather than unemployment. Considering above fact, there is an urgent need to evaluate existing level of employability to find out gap amongst the agricultural graduates in different State Agricultural Universities. Analyzing this, proper strategy and modification in curricula as well as educational system can be planned and thought out seriously to build and inculcate self confidence, professional soft skills and ability to make them able to be economic units of the family, state and country.

Methodology

The study was carried out in B. A. College of Agriculture of Anand Agricultural University, Anand, one of the leading agriculture colleges of India established in 1947 to meet the growing demand of agricultural graduates. The selection of the respondents was randomly made from the all the postgraduate research scholars studying in any subject of the agriculture faculty. From the total 211 postgraduate scholars studying in first and second year M.Sc. (Agri.), a random sample of 120 was taken. Ex-post-facto research design was used for the study. The data were collected through the personal interview. The statistical tools such as frequency and percentage, mean and co efficient of correlation were employed to analyze the data.

Results and Discussion

The employability status of postgraduate scholars studying in higher agriculture education was measured by selecting eleven indicators viz. fundamental employability aptitude, general knowledge about agriculture, knowledge about current issues, knowledge about Government policies on agriculture, communication skills, information communication technology skills, ability to face interviews, self confidence, competition orientation, habit of information collection and attitude towards agriculture education. Overall Employability Index was worked out for all the respondents and they were categorised into five category using arbitrary method of classification viz.

Table 1. Postgraduate scholars according to their overall employability

Sr. No.	Overall Employability	Number	Per cent
1.	Poor	0	00.00
2.	Below average	0	00.00
3.	Average	12	10.00
4.	Above average	107	89.17
5.	High	1	00.83
Total		120	100.00

Table 2. Relationship between profile of postgraduate scholars studying in higher agriculture education and their overall employability

Sr. No.	Independent variables	Correlation Coefficient (r)	
A.	Personal variables		
1.	Academic performance	0.217	*
2.	Medium of instruction at school level	0.163	NS
B.	Socio-economic variables		
3.	Native of the scholar	0.142	NS
4.	Annual family income	0.152	NS
5.	Father's education	0.207	*
6.	Mother's education	0.230	*
C.	Situation-communication variables		
7.	Involvement in extracurricular activities	0.174	NS
8.	Library exposure	0.262	**
9.	Computer exposure	0.058	NS
10.	Internet exposure	0.060	NS
D.	Psychological variables		
11.	Job preference	0.279	**
12.	Achievement motivation	0.084	NS

low (0 to 20 score), below average (21 to 40 score), average (41 to 60 score), above average (61 to 80 score) and high (81 to 100 score) degree of overall employability. The results regarding this are presented in Table 1 and Table 2.

Employability of postgraduate scholars studying in higher agriculture education

Employability refers to a person's capability of gaining initial employment, maintaining employment, and obtaining new employment if required. The result from Table 2 reveals that a great majority (89.17 per cent) of the postgraduate scholars studying in higher agriculture education had above average level of overall employability, followed by 10.00 per cent of them had average level of overall employability and the rest of the 00.83 per cent had high level of overall employability. It was interesting to note that none of the postgraduate scholars studying in higher agriculture education had below average or poor level of overall employability. Thus it can be concluded that a vast majority (90.00 per cent) of the postgraduate scholars associated with employability had above average to high level of overall employability.

The result indicates that the postgraduate scholars have taken enough efforts to inculcate superior level of employability. The syllabuses of bachelor and master degrees in agriculture discipline have been developed in such a way that any agricultural graduates can work effectively in various fields. Exposure of various subjects during bachelor degree, practical exposure during Rural Agricultural Work (RAWE) Programme, during last year might have developed good employability among the students and helped in developing communication skills among students using extension teaching methods in transfer of technology. Thus, activeness from the side of scholar, nature of syllabus and motivating academic, infrastructural facility, regional international level library facility, ICT availability and other favourable atmosphere created by authority, altogether might have played role for having above average to high level of overall employability among majority

(90.00 per cent) of the postgraduate scholars studying in higher agriculture education.

Relationship between profile of postgraduate scholars studying in higher agriculture education and their overall employability

To ascertain the relationship between personal, socio-economic, situation-communication and psychological variables of the postgraduate scholars studying in higher agriculture education and their overall employability, correlation coefficient was worked out and the results are presented in Table 2.

The results from Table 2 furnished that level of employability was observed significantly higher among those postgraduate scholars, who had better academic performance, highly educated father and mother, higher degree of library exposure and increased level of job preference. It was also observed that level of employability was observed almost similar among those postgraduate scholars who had irrespective level of medium of instruction at school level, native, annual family income, involvement in extracurricular activities, computer exposure, internet exposure and achievement motivation.

It is natural that a person having high level of academic background will have better perception to develop ability to get employment as well as maintain it. This might be the reason for positive and significant relationship between academic performance and overall employability of postgraduate scholars. The result also shows that level of employability of those scholars was better; whose fathers' education level was higher. The reason for this might be that educated fathers might have understood the need of developing employability among their children and motivated them to gain and maintain successful careers. It was emphasized that postgraduate scholars with educated mothers showed better level of employability. Understanding the importance of developing employability skills in this competitive era, the educated mothers might have motivated the children to think and act positively towards employability.

The postgraduate scholars might have utilized the library facilities not only for academics and research purposes but also for job preparations and developing their employability skills. The regional library with volumes of journals, magazines, books, literature and online availability of literature at AAU library through internet might have played significant role in developing employability among the scholars. The positively highly significant relationship between job preference and level of employability discloses that level of employability was higher among postgraduate scholars with diversified interest to be part of academic, research, administration and extension related jobs. It is natural that the person with high degree of interest of diversified job preference will always try to make them vigorous and capable developing employable capabilities and soft skills to get various jobs to grab higher job opportunities.

Conclusion

The study exposed that great majority of the postgraduate scholars studying in higher agriculture education had above average level of overall employability. It was also revealed that level of employability was observed significantly higher among those postgraduate scholars, who had better academic performance, highly educated father and mother, higher degree of library exposure and increased level of job preference. Thus, it is suggested that to improve employability among the agriculture students there is a need to improve their academic performance, library exposure and diversified interest towards

various jobs for career development. The involvement of parents to motivate students to improve employability is also advocated. This will inculcate self confidence, professional soft skills and develop employability among the postgraduate scholars studying in higher agriculture education to make them productive economic units of the society.

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