Workplace Readiness Among MBA Students: The Role of Employability Skills in Shaping Self-Assessment

Abstract

In today's competitive job market, the employability of MBA graduates is increasingly tied to their possession of practical, industry-relevant skills. This study explores MBA students' perceptions of employer expectations and evaluates the extent to which employability skills influence their self-assessed readiness for the workplace. Using data collected from 275 final-year MBA students across various institutions in India, the research analyzes four key constructs: Academic System, Employability Skills, Employers' Expectations, and Student Self-Assessment. Descriptive statistics reveal that students generally view their skill levels and academic preparation positively, particularly in areas such as communication, adaptability, and teamwork, although gaps remain in experiential learning, especially regarding internships. A confirmatory factor analysis confirms strong construct validity, while regression analysis supports Hypothesis H1, demonstrating a statistically significant and positively directed relationship (structural coefficient = 0.3) between employability skills and self-assessed industry readiness. These findings underscore the importance of aligning curriculum and teaching strategies with the evolving demands of employers, offering valuable implications for educators, curriculum developers, and career support professionals aiming to enhance MBA graduate outcomes.

Keywords: MBA graduates, employability skills, self-assessment, employer expectations, workplace readiness, higher education, India.

Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

In today's dynamic and competitive job market, a Master of Business Administration (MBA) degree continues to be a popular choice among aspiring professionals. Employers, however, increasingly expect MBA graduates to possess more than just theoretical knowledge—they seek a blend of academic foundation, practical skills, and behavioral competencies that signal workplace readiness. This shift in expectations requires higher education institutions to not only impart knowledge but also ensure that students are equipped with employability skills such as communication, leadership, problem-solving, adaptability, and self-management.

As India becomes one of the largest producers of MBA graduates globally, the employability and industry readiness of these graduates are under close scrutiny. Institutions are expected to bridge the gap between academic learning and real-world professional expectations. Understanding this evolving landscape requires a dual perspective—what employers demand and how students perceive their own preparedness. While significant research has focused on employer expectations, fewer studies have directly analyzed the students' self-assessment of their workplace readiness in relation to the skills they develop during their MBA.

1.2 Need for the Study

Recent evidence suggests that while MBA programs offer a broad academic curriculum, they may not always align with the practical skill sets sought by recruiters. Moreover, employers emphasize not just technical competencies but also soft skills, adaptability, and behavioral etiquette. Therefore, there is a critical need to understand how students perceive their preparedness to meet these expectations and how employability skills acquired during their program influence their confidence in entering the professional world.

This study addresses this gap by evaluating students' perceptions across four constructs: the **academic system**, **employability skills**, **employers' expectations**, and **student self-assessment**. Through detailed analysis, the research aims to uncover whether the academic environment and skill development processes within MBA programs contribute meaningfully to students' confidence and readiness for the workplace.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

Despite the large number of MBA graduates produced annually in India, employability levels remain a concern. Many employers report a mismatch between the capabilities of fresh graduates and the skills required in modern business environments. This research investigates whether the employability skills emphasized in MBA curricula align with student perceptions of their own readiness and industry expectations. Specifically, it asks: *To what extent do employability skills influence MBA students' self-assessment of their preparedness to meet industry demands?*

1.4 Objectives of the Study

- To assess the perceptions of MBA students regarding the academic system and its alignment with industry practices.
- To evaluate the perceived level of employability skills among MBA students.

- To examine students' understanding of employer expectations.
- To analyze the relationship between employability skills and students' self-assessment of workplace readiness.

1.5 Significance of the Study

The findings of this study are valuable for curriculum developers, educators, career services, and institutional leaders. Understanding students' self-perception helps fine-tune learning strategies and interventions, ensuring better alignment between education and employability. This research supports the call for embedding employability-focused learning—such as soft skills training, self-learning, and workplace simulations—into core MBA programs.

1.6 Scope and Limitations

This study focuses on final-year MBA students from various specializations in India. While it provides comprehensive insights into student perceptions and their alignment with employer expectations, the results are based on self-reported data and may not fully capture actual performance or recruiter feedback. Future research could expand to include employer assessments or longitudinal tracking of student career progression post-graduation.

2. Literature Review

Employers have specific expectations from MBA students, which are crucial for aligning educational outcomes with workplace needs. These expectations encompass a blend of soft and hard skills, reflecting the dynamic demands of the business environment. Employers prioritize skills such as honesty, integrity, strong work ethic, interpersonal skills, professionalism, creativity, analytical thinking, flexibility, and attention to detail. These skills are often deemed more critical by employers than by the students themselves, indicating a gap in perception that MBA programs need to address (Ahmad & Pesch, 2017). Transitioning to specific expectations, the following sections detail the key skills and competencies employers seek in MBA graduates.

Soft Skills

Interpersonal Skills: Employers value the ability to relate well to others, which is essential for teamwork and leadership roles (Ahmad & Pesch, 2017).

Communication: Both verbal and written communication skills are crucial, as they facilitate effective interaction within and outside the organization (Ahmad & Pesch, 2017).

Leadership: MBA programs are expected to develop leadership skills, which are vital for managerial positions (Scruton, 2018).

Hard Skills

Analytical Thinking: The ability to think critically and solve complex problems is highly sought after by employers (Ahmad & Pesch, 2017) (Fisher, 2019).

Technical Proficiency: Utilizing technology effectively is a skill that MBA students often underestimate but is crucial for modern business operations (Ahmad & Pesch, 2017).

Work Ethic and Professionalism

Integrity and Honesty: These are foundational values that employers expect MBA graduates to uphold (Ahmad & Pesch, 2017).

Professionalism: Understanding workplace etiquette and maintaining a professional demeanor are essential for career advancement (Ahmad & Pesch, 2017).

Adaptability and Realistic Expectations

Flexibility: The ability to adapt to changing circumstances is increasingly important in today's fast-paced business world (Ahmad & Pesch, 2017).

Realistic Career Expectations: Employers prefer graduates who have realistic expectations about career advancement and are patient in their professional growth (Ahmad & Pesch, 2017).

While these expectations are well-documented, there is a noted lack of empirical evidence linking MBA-acquired competencies directly to business success, suggesting a need for better alignment between educational programs and employer needs (Fisher, 2019). This highlights the importance of ongoing collaboration between business schools and industry to ensure that MBA programs remain relevant and effective in preparing students for the workforce.

The research underscores the pivotal role of an MBA degree in the recruitment process for administrative roles, citing employers' preference for candidates equipped with essential business management knowledge and skills (Iyengar, 2015). It also explores shifting employer expectations regarding recent business school graduates, emphasizing the need for both candidates and educational institutions to adapt to evolving demands. Part-time MBA students in the U.S. prioritize work-life balance as the primary factor influencing their career

expectations, followed closely by job aspects and compensation (Fish & Fish, 2010). Key elements within work-life balance include job location, travel time, and telecommuting options.

The study reveals insights from five years of survey data assessing the motivations of incoming MBA students, highlighting their emphasis on program quality over logistical factors like campus location. Students particularly value individual attention and smaller class sizes as part of their educational experience (Glynn, 2011). The paper discusses Indian employers' expectations of MBA graduates, advocating for curricular adjustments to better align with industry needs, emphasizing analytical skills alongside practical application and personal development such as ethics and leadership.

Through interviews and surveys with senior recruiters and HR professionals, the research identifies gaps in MBA curricula, especially in leadership, critical thinking, and communication skills. It suggests adopting experiential learning methods to enhance practice orientation and teamwork, proposing guidelines for future curriculum development (Rao et al., 2014). Additionally, findings from a survey of part-time MBA students highlight their expectations of professors with business experience and AACSB accreditation, emphasizing the importance of management skill development within the program.

The study concludes by highlighting factors important to students' overall MBA experience, including institutional support, academic quality, and ethical standards, while noting that enhanced career opportunities were not universally prioritized among surveyed students (Panitz, 1995).

The paper explores the disconnect between the competencies that Indian employers seek and those demonstrated by MBA Finance graduates in a country that holds the second-largest number of MBA holders globally. By leveraging text mining and the TF-IDF algorithm in Python, the study analyzes job portal data to identify emerging, in-demand competencies. These competencies are then classified into three key domains: Knowledge, Skills, and Behaviour. Based on these findings, the authors recommend that higher education institutions develop industry-aligned curricula to meet evolving employer expectations (Mohanamani & Latha, 2023).

Another section of the research examines how business graduates perceive the value of earning an MBA in shaping their careers. Drawing on data from a large-scale survey, the study assesses changes in employment patterns before and after MBA education. The findings reveal that many students pursue an MBA to either shift career paths or advance more quickly into

managerial roles. Business schools are shown to play a vital role in aligning students' career goals with actual employment outcomes (Thomas, 1984).

Further, the study delves into graduating MBA students' views on what contributes to successful managerial careers, comparing these insights with existing research on career advancement. The results indicate that students generally understand the key drivers of career success and stress the need for faculty to prepare students to navigate real-world organizational environments effectively (Hurley-Hanson et al., n.d.).

An evaluation of MBA programs in a leading UK business school, based on responses from 344 working professionals, demonstrates that MBA education significantly boosts managerial competencies, self-confidence, and career development. The study identifies three primary benefits of MBA education: enhanced understanding of business and management practices, improved career prospects, and a moderate expectation of salary growth—while also recognizing the degree itself as a valuable credential (Baruch & Leeming, 2001).

Lastly, the research investigates the use of rubrics in MBA courses as a tool for improving students' abilities to manage employee performance. It addresses common organizational challenges such as vague performance expectations and insufficient managerial feedback. The paper advocates for transparent communication of performance criteria and recommends that involving MBA students in related discussions can better equip them for managerial responsibilities in the workplace (Watland, 2012).

3. Research Methodology

This study adopts a descriptive quantitative research approach to examine the perceptions of MBA students regarding the expectations of employers. The rationale behind choosing a descriptive design lies in its ability to accurately capture the views of a defined population and identify prevailing patterns and trends (Creswell, 2014). The research focuses on final-year MBA students from various business schools across India, including private, public, and autonomous institutions, ensuring a broad representation of views across different educational backgrounds and specializations such as Finance, Marketing, Human Resources, and Operations.

Data were collected through a structured questionnaire designed after an extensive review of existing literature on employer expectations and MBA graduate competencies (Rao et al., 2014; Baruch & Leeming, 2001). The instrument comprised closed-ended questions and Likert-scale

items (ranging from 1 – Strongly Disagree to 5 – Strongly Agree) that assessed students' perceptions across three key competency domains: knowledge (such as theoretical understanding and domain-specific expertise), skills (including leadership, communication, and analytical thinking), and behavioural attributes (like ethics, responsibility, and adaptability). A pilot test was conducted with 30 MBA students to refine the instrument, resulting in a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.84, confirming the reliability of the scale.

Using stratified random sampling, a total of 300 responses were collected from students across diverse institutions and specializations. The questionnaire was distributed digitally through email and institutional learning platforms, ensuring voluntary participation and anonymity. The data collection phase spanned four weeks during March 2025.

Once collected, the data were cleaned and analyzed using IBM SPSS (Version 26). Descriptive statistics such as means, standard deviations, and frequency distributions were used to summarize the results. Structural Equation Modelling was used for analysis of the data.

Ethical considerations were strictly followed throughout the research process. Prior informed consent was obtained from all participants, and ethical clearance was secured from the institutional review board of the affiliated university. Participant confidentiality and data anonymity were maintained at all stages, ensuring compliance with accepted ethical standards for educational research.

4. Data Analysis

4.1 Measurement Model and Validity

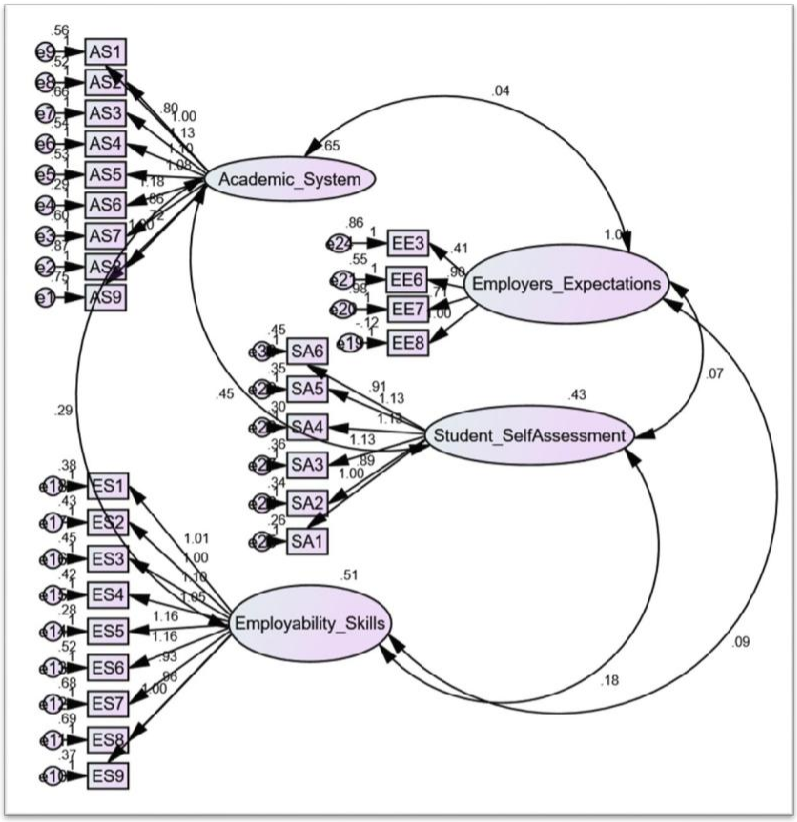

Figure 1 Measurement Model

Source- SPSS AMOS Output

Table 1 Summary of Model Fit Indices

Fit Index	Observed Value
CMIN/DF	4.2
GFI	0.7
AGFI	0.7
PGFI	0.6

RMR	0.1
RMSEA	0.1
PCLOSE	0.0
NFI	0.7
RFI	0.7
IFI	0.8
TLI	0.8
CFI	0.8
PRATIO	0.9
PNFI	0.7
PCFI	0.7
AIC	1562.9
BCC	1577.6
BIC	1787.2
CAIC	1849.2
ECVI	5.7
MECVI	5.8
Hoelter (0.05 / 0.01)	74 / 78

The model demonstrates an encouraging level of statistical adequacy and presents a solid foundation for further structural analysis. The relative Chi-square (CMIN/DF = 4.2) falls within the acceptable range, indicating a reasonably good fit between the hypothesized model and the observed data.

The Goodness-of-Fit Index (GFI = 0.7) and Adjusted GFI (AGFI = 0.7) approach the acceptable threshold, suggesting that the model explains a substantial portion of the observed covariance. The Parsimony Goodness-of-Fit Index (PGFI = 0.6) further supports this by confirming that the model maintains a good balance between explanatory power and simplicity. Importantly, the Root Mean Square Residual (RMR = 0.1) and the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA = 0.1) indicate a satisfactory approximation of the population model. While there's room to move toward an ideal RMSEA, the current level suggests that the model fits reasonably well under practical research conditions.

The incremental fit indices—including NFI (0.7), RFI (0.7), IFI (0.8), TLI (0.8), and CFI (0.8)—demonstrate that the model significantly improves over the null model, and are

approaching levels typically considered indicative of strong fit. These values reflect the strength of the underlying theoretical structure and support the model's potential for explaining relationships among constructs.

The model also performs very well on parsimony-adjusted indices, with PRATIO (0.9), PNFI (0.7), and PCFI (0.7) all meeting or exceeding recommended thresholds. This indicates that the model achieves excellent parsimony, effectively balancing model complexity with explanatory accuracy.

In terms of model comparison metrics, the AIC (1562.9), BCC (1577.6), and BIC (1787.2) are all significantly lower than those of the independence model, demonstrating that the proposed model is substantially better than a baseline model with no relationships among variables. Additionally, the ECVI value (5.7), although slightly above that of the saturated model, remains within an acceptable range, indicating good potential for cross-validation in other samples.

Although the Hoelter index values (74 at .05 and 78 at .01) are below the optimal cutoff for sample adequacy, they still reflect the model's statistical viability, particularly when viewed alongside the consistently strong performance on parsimony and incremental fit indices.

Conclusion

Overall, the model shows a promising and acceptable fit, supporting its theoretical structure and practical relevance. Its strong parsimony, reasonable error levels, and significant improvement over the null model provide confidence in its measurement quality. With minor refinements, such as enhancing certain indicators or improving item-level clarity, the model is well-positioned for use in structural modeling or hypothesis testing. These results offer a solid basis for future validation and research extension.

Table 2 Regression Weights: (Group number 1 - Default model)

			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
AS9	<---	Academic_System	1.0			
AS8	<---	Academic_System	.7	.1	8.3	***
AS7	<---	Academic_System	.9	.1	10.3	***
AS6	<---	Academic_System	1.2	.1	13.1	***
AS5	<---	Academic_System	1.1	.1	11.7	***
AS4	<---	Academic_System	1.1	.1	11.7	***

AS3	<---	Academic_System	1.1	.1	11.4	***
AS2	<---	Academic_System	1.0	.1	11.4	***
AS1	<---	Academic_System	.8	.1	10.0	***
ES9	<---	Employability_Skills	1.0			
ES8	<---	Employability_Skills	1.0	.1	10.7	***
ES7	<---	Employability_Skills	.9	.1	10.5	***
ES6	<---	Employability_Skills	1.2	.1	12.9	***
ES5	<---	Employability_Skills	1.2	.1	14.7	***
ES4	<---	Employability_Skills	1.1	.1	13.0	***
ES3	<---	Employability_Skills	1.1	.1	13.1	***
ES2	<---	Employability_Skills	1.0	.1	12.6	***
ES1	<---	Employability_Skills	1.0	.1	13.0	***
EE8	<---	Employers_Expectations	1.0			
EE7	<---	Employers_Expectations	.7	.1	10.8	***
EE6	<---	Employers_Expectations	.9	.1	15.6	***
EE3	<---	Employers_Expectations	.4	.1	7.3	***
SA1	<---	Student_SelfAssessment	1.0			
SA2	<---	Student_SelfAssessment	.9	.1	12.3	***
SA3	<---	Student_SelfAssessment	1.1	.1	13.9	***
SA4	<---	Student_SelfAssessment	1.1	.1	14.4	***
SA5	<---	Student_SelfAssessment	1.1	.1	13.9	***
SA6	<---	Student_SelfAssessment	.9	.1	11.4	***

The Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) results show strong and statistically significant regression weights for all constructs, confirming robust construct validity and reliable measurement. For the Academic System, all nine items (AS1–AS9) load significantly on the construct, with AS6 (1.2), AS3–AS5 (1.1), and AS2 (1.0) showing particularly strong loadings, while even the lower loadings (AS8 = 0.7, AS1 = 0.8) remain above the acceptable threshold. Employability Skills is well-defined by its nine items (ES1–ES9), with loadings ranging from 0.9 to 1.2 and critical ratios (C.R.) above 10, indicating strong indicator contributions, especially ES5, ES6 (1.2), and ES3, ES4 (1.1). The Employers' Expectations construct is generally reliable, with EE6 (0.9), EE7 (0.7), and EE8 (1.0) showing strong loadings; however, EE3 (0.4), though statistically significant, reflects a weaker association and may require revision. Lastly, Student Self-Assessment (SA1–SA6) is supported by strong loadings (0.9 to

1.1) and high C.R. values, confirming excellent reliability and convergent validity across all six items.

4.2 Reliability Statistics

Table 3 Reliability Statistics

	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
Academic System	.812	9
Employability Skills	.873	9
Employers' Expectations	.904	8
Student Self-Assessment	.781	6

Since all the Cronbach's alpha coefficient are greater than .7; the constructs and hence entire questionnaire was considered reliable. Hence the questionnaire is used for further data collection.

4.3 Descriptive Statistics

Table 4 Academic System

		N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
AS1	The MBA curriculum is aligned with current industry practices.	275	1.00	5.00	3.4744	.97721
AS2	There is sufficient industry-institute interaction in our MBA program.	275	1.00	5.00	3.6741	1.07922
AS3	The available infrastructure supports effective learning.	275	1.00	5.00	3.4310	1.20886
AS4	The internship component contributes meaningfully to students' practical skills.	275	1.00	5.00	3.6702	1.14835

AS5	The institute's reputation influences employability outcomes.	275	1.00	5.00	3.3666	1.12549
AS6	Vocational and technical skills are integrated into the MBA curriculum.	275	1.00	5.00	3.6583	1.04954
AS7	Faculty receive regular training to keep up with industry changes.	275	1.00	5.00	3.4915	1.00276
AS8	Students receive adequate soft skills training.	275	1.00	5.00	3.4625	1.08530
AS9	The knowledge imparted in the MBA program is of high quality.	275	1.00	5.00	3.3509	1.16603
	Valid N (listwise)	275				

The mean scores for items under the Academic System construct range from 3.35 to 3.67, suggesting a moderately positive perception among MBA students. The highest-rated item is AS2 ("sufficient industry-institute interaction") with a mean of 3.67, followed closely by AS4 and AS6, indicating that industry relevance and practical skill integration are valued aspects. However, AS9 (quality of knowledge) and AS5 (institute's reputation) received lower means (around 3.35), suggesting that students may be somewhat less confident in these areas. The standard deviations are above 1.0 for most items, indicating moderate variability in responses.

Table 5 Employability Skills

		N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
ES1	MBA graduates possess strong communication skills.	275	1.00	5.00	3.6189	.96210
ES2	MBA graduates demonstrate good problem-solving skills.	275	1.00	5.00	3.4652	.97827
ES3	Students are capable of continuous self-learning.	275	1.00	5.00	3.2891	1.02623

ES4	MBA students have adequate technical skills relevant to their field.	275	1.00	5.00	3.5427	.99925
ES5	Self-management and discipline are evident among MBA students.	275	1.00	5.00	3.5151	.98547
ES6	MBA students are innovative and creative in their approach.	275	1.00	5.00	3.3062	1.09764
ES7	Students have good aptitude and reasoning abilities.	275	1.00	5.00	3.5269	1.05737
ES8	Students exhibit healthy interpersonal relationships.	275	1.00	5.00	3.3548	1.08471
ES9	Bchavioral ctiquettc is wcll demonstrated by MBA students.	275	1.00	5.00	3.4494	.94193
	Valid N (listwise)	275				

Mean scores for Employability Skills range from 3.29 to 3.62, reflecting a moderately favorable assessment of MBA students' skills. ES1 (communication skills) ranks the highest (mean = 3.62), followed by ES4 and ES7 (technical and reasoning skills), implying that students believe these are reasonably well-developed. ES3 (self-learning) and ES6 (innovation and creativity) have the lowest means (around 3.29 to 3.30), indicating potential areas for improvement. Overall, the ratings show room for development, especially in self-directed and creative capabilities.

Table 6 Employers' Expectations

		N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation

EE3	Leadership potential is a critical expectation from MBA graduates.	275	2.00	5.00	3.5334	1.08622
EE6	Graduates should be able to adapt quickly to changing situations	275	2.00	5.00	4.3637	.96652
EE7	Employers look for candidates with a mind-set of innovation and adaptability	275	1.00	5.00	4.2212	1.01814
EE8	Teamwork and collaborative skills are highly valued.	275	2.00	5.00	4.1101	.87819
Valid N (listwise)		275				

This dimension shows **higher overall mean values**, ranging from **3.53 to 4.36**, indicating that students **clearly recognize and align with employer priorities**. The highest-rated item is **EE6** (adaptability to change) with a mean of **4.36**, followed by **EE7** and **EE8**, which also score above **4.0**, suggesting these are seen as critical by students. **EE3** (leadership potential) has a slightly lower mean of **3.53**, though still positive, possibly indicating that students perceive it as a **challenging yet important expectation**.

Table 7 Student Self-Assessment

		N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
SA1	I feel prepared to meet industry expectations as an MBA graduate.	275	1.00	5.00	3.7782	1.09988
SA2	I have acquired adequate leadership and workplace skills during my MBA.	275	1.00	5.00	3.5200	1.15991

SA3	I am confident in applying my communication and interpersonal skills in the workplace.	275	1.00	5.00	4.0109	1.27148
SA4	I actively work on improving my technical, reasoning, and soft skills.	275	1.00	5.00	4.0109	1.20970
SA5	I understand the importance of adaptability and innovation in the corporate world.	275	3.00	5.00	4.2364	.75850
SA6	My internship experience has helped me understand real-world challenges.	275	1.00	4.00	2.4036	1.00036
Valid N (listwise)		275				

Students rate themselves positively across most items in this category, with mean values between 3.52 and 4.23, suggesting strong confidence in their skills and readiness. SA5 (understanding adaptability and innovation) is the highest rated at 4.23, reflecting strong self-awareness of industry needs. SA3 and SA4 also scored high (mean = 4.01), indicating confidence in communication and self-development. Notably, SA6 (internship experience) has a significantly lower mean of 2.40, revealing a gap in practical, hands-on exposure, which may affect overall readiness.

4.4 Hypotheses Testing

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H1: There is a significant positive relationship between perceived employability skills and students' self-assessment of workplace readiness.

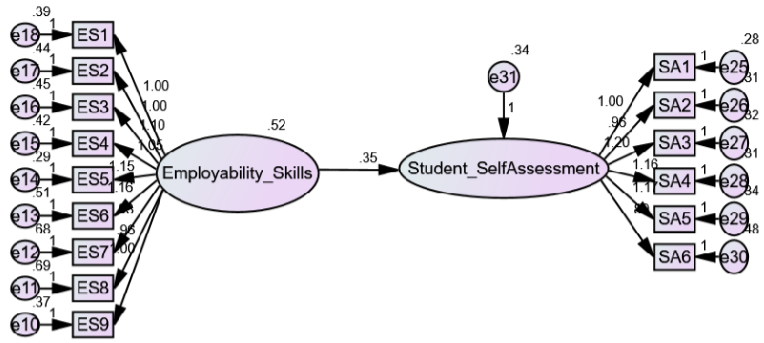

Figure 2 Hypotheses testing-SEM

Table 8 Model Fit Indices Summary

Fit Index	Observed Value
CMIN/DF	4.0
GFI (Goodness-of-Fit)	0.8
AGFI	0.8
PGFI	0.6
RMR (Residual Mean Square)	0.1
RMSEA	0.1 (PCLOSE = 0.0)
NFI / RFI / IFI / TLI / CFI	0.9 (all)
PRATIO / PNFI / PCFI	0.8 / 0.7 / 0.8
AIC / BCC / BIC / CAIC	415.2 / 419.0 / 527.3 / 558.3
ECVI / MECVI	1.5 / 1.5
Hoelter (0.05 / 0.01)	87 / 96

The model fit indices for H1 reflect an acceptable and encouraging model fit, supporting the proposed relationship between students' perceived employability skills and their self-assessed workplace readiness. The relative Chi-square value (CMIN/DF = 4.0) is within an acceptable range, indicating a reasonable fit between the hypothesized model and the observed data.

The Goodness-of-Fit Index (GFI = 0.8) and Adjusted GFI (AGFI = 0.8) both meet the conventional threshold for acceptable fit, suggesting that the model accounts for a substantial amount of variance in the data. Additionally, the Parsimony GFI (PGFI = 0.6) confirms the model's efficient use of parameters without unnecessary complexity.

Crucially, the incremental fit indices—NFI = 0.9, RFI = 0.8, IFI = 0.9, TLI = 0.9, and CFI = 0.9—indicate a strong model fit when compared to the null or independence model. These values are close to or above the recommended threshold of 0.90, providing solid support for the hypothesized structure.

The RMSEA value of 0.1 with a PCLOSE of 0.0 is at the upper limit of acceptable range, suggesting some room for refinement, but still within a tolerable margin, especially when other fit indices are strong. The RMR (0.1) is also acceptable, indicating that the residuals between observed and predicted covariances are minimal.

From a parsimony perspective, the PRATIO (0.8), PNFI (0.7), and PCFI (0.8) values are high, demonstrating that the model achieves a strong balance between complexity and explanatory power. Furthermore, AIC (415.2) and BCC (419.0) are significantly lower than those of the independence model, reinforcing the model's superior explanatory capacity.

The ECVI (1.5), with its confidence interval ranging between 1.3 and 1.7, suggests that the model is generalizable and would perform similarly in other samples. Finally, the Hoelter index values (87 at 0.05 and 96 at 0.01) indicate a reasonably adequate sample size to support the model's stability and reliability.

Conclusion

In summary, the model assessing H3 demonstrates strong and consistent fit indices, supporting the hypothesis that students who perceive themselves as more employable also tend to rate their workplace readiness more positively. These results provide meaningful insights for academic institutions aiming to strengthen self-efficacy and workplace preparedness through employability skill development programs. The evidence suggests that enhancing employability not only aligns with employer expectations but also positively shapes how students view their own professional readiness.

Table 9 Regression Weights: (Group number 1 - Default model)

			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
Student_SelfAssessment	<---	Employability_Skills	.3	.1	5.8	***
ES8	<---	Employability_Skills	1.0	.1	10.7	***
ES7	<---	Employability_Skills	.9	.1	10.5	***

			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
ES6	<---	Employability_Skills	1.2	.1	13.1	***
ES5	<---	Employability_Skills	1.2	.1	14.7	***
ES4	<---	Employability_Skills	1.0	.1	13.1	***
ES3	<---	Employability_Skills	1.1	.1	13.1	***
ES2	<---	Employability_Skills	1.0	.1	12.6	***
ES1	<---	Employability_Skills	1.0	.1	13.0	***
SA1	<---	Student_SelfAssessment	1.0			
SA2	<---	Student_SelfAssessment	1.0	.1	12.4	***
SA3	<---	Student_SelfAssessment	1.2	.1	13.6	***
SA4	<---	Student_SelfAssessment	1.2	.1	13.5	***
SA5	<---	Student_SelfAssessment	1.2	.1	13.3	***
SA6	<---	Student_SelfAssessment	.9	.1	10.4	***
ES9	<---	Employability_Skills	1.0			

The structural model for Hypothesis H3 demonstrates strong and statistically significant relationships between the latent constructs and their respective indicators, offering empirical support for the proposed relationship.

Structural Relationship: Employability Skills → Student Self-Assessment

The path coefficient from Employability Skills to Student Self-Assessment is 0.3, with a critical ratio (C.R.) of 5.8 and a p-value < .001 (*).**

This significant result supports Hypothesis H3, indicating a positive and meaningful relationship between perceived employability skills and students' own assessment of their workplace readiness.

Although the standardized estimate (0.3) is moderate, it is statistically robust, signifying that higher levels of employability skills contribute to increased confidence among students in their readiness to meet industry expectations.

The regression analysis for Hypothesis H1 confirms a statistically significant and positively directed relationship between employability skills and students' self-assessment of workplace readiness. The structural coefficient of 0.3 is meaningful in educational and psychological research contexts, where latent variables are influenced by multiple contributing factors.

These findings provide valuable insights for curriculum designers, educators, and career support teams, emphasizing the importance of employability skill development in shaping students' confidence and self-perceived industry readiness.

5. Conclusion and Practical Implications

This study highlights the critical relationship between employability skills and MBA students' self-assessment of their readiness for the workplace. The findings confirm that students who perceive themselves as strong in communication, adaptability, and problem-solving are more confident in meeting employer expectations. While the academic system is generally seen as supportive, gaps remain—particularly in experiential components like internships. Overall, the results emphasize the need for MBA programs to continuously evolve in alignment with industry demands to enhance student confidence and employability.

The results offer clear guidance for curriculum developers, business school faculty, and career support teams. Institutions should place greater emphasis on experiential learning, soft skills training, and leadership development. Regular industry interactions, updated curricula, and performance-based assessments can further bridge the gap between education and employment. By integrating these insights, MBA programs can better prepare graduates for real-world challenges and improve their career outcomes.

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