

# The Effect of Soft Skills Training in Changing the Leadership Dimension of the Undergraduate Students in the Globalised World

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## Abstract:

The challenging working environment in the globalised context has impacted various human activities including the field of higher education. The raising demands of the employers in this situation expects greater leadership skills and qualities from the graduates in the employment process with soft skills. The graduates with soft skills are preferred over the others in the job selection process as the soft skills provides newer dimensions to the leadership qualities of the undergraduate students. This study, included 80 students who were selected under simple random selection for experimental design with two independent groups. Pre-test was conducted on both the groups simultaneously to find out the awareness level of leadership dimension enhancing soft skills questionnaire with 30 questions with three dimensions related to each of the 10 soft skills. Following the pre-test analysis of both the groups, only one group (experimental group) was exposed to the soft skill training program, while the another group (control group) attending the regular classes. The research findings, of the study with independent samples t-test, indicated a positive statistically significant difference between the mean scores of experimental group and control group. This paper, focusing on the significance of soft skills knowledge proposes strongly the leadership enhancing soft skills training to undergraduate students enabling them for better future perspective.

**Keywords:** Leadership skills, challenging environment, higher education.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

The impact of globalisation in various fields of human activities for development has been challenging the higher education institutions to raise the quality level of education to meet the demands of the present corporate world. The graduate students endowed with communication skills with others, presenting creativity, decision making skills, teamwork skills, interpersonal skills, goal setting, human resource management skill, crisis management skill, emotional intelligence skill,

digital skills, work ethics, problem solving skill add more value to their technical qualification. The meaning and implications of leadership requires to be modified to meet the present scenario of competitive global world job market. The undergraduates are to be keen contributors and assets to the society with their graduation qualifications endowed with soft skills education to change their dimension of leadership. The soft skills training at the graduation level empowers the undergraduates to develop their inherent soft skills related to their thinking level, social level and core

level. The modern day IT industries, Multinational firms are based on the leadership qualities of employees at various stages. The undergraduates as future employees in these kind of establishments expected to work with team spirit, with well-defined goals, motivating one another as team leaders communicating, sharing the expertise, solving unexpected problems, crisis with professional ethics. These various roles in a team requires the future employees to interact and gel with each other striving towards the common goals as team leaders at horizontal and vertical levels. Therefore the raising demands of the employers expect leadership enhancing soft skills awareness along with the academic and technical qualifications of the undergraduate students.

## II. Review of Literature

The study of Richa Talwar (2014), explains the impact of globalisation under four areas such as knowledge, business, government and society, influencing leadership, while Maiti Moinak (2015), study examines the major reasons for unemployment in India and also mentions about the gap between curriculum and what is required by firms. The study of Khandakar Akhter Hossain (2015), analysing the theories of leadership and the factors features of 21<sup>st</sup> century leaders elaborately, proposes that the persons with qualities such as honesty, simplicity, vision, dedication, inspiration, delegation, communication, courage, commitment, kindness, open mindedness, fairness, forwardness, competence, experience, knowledge can become great leaders in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The conceptual study of Rudolph. P. T. Muteswara (2016), based on the literature review explains the qualities of good leaders in leading the employees with motivation and required persuasion to achieve the established goals of the organisation. Jose R. Perez (2017), paper points out the impact of globalisation on all aspects of human activities including, the leadership qualities required in the global environment, for an effective leadership. Victor E. Dike<sup>1</sup>, Ken Odiwe & Donatus M. Ehujor (2015), explains the

need for effective leadership in this fast changing present circumstances of 21<sup>st</sup> century, the leadership qualities with passion, values, decision making and problem solving in relation to the followers and performance. MT Sanchez-Nunez, J Patti, A Holzer (2015), study suggest adding social and emotional intelligence in preparing effective leaders.

Grubb, W. L., III., & Schwager, P. H. (2018), analyse the undergraduate college students leadership development program issue in a comprehensive manner by developing a comprehensive leadership and professional development program for all the students within the range of undergraduates of American university, including soft skills like communication skills, decision making skills, presentation skills and so on. All these various models of leadership development all over the world, gave exposure to soft skills. Aslam, Mohammad (2018), research exposed the perception of leadership and skill development. Lucy Chilvers and Joseph Waghorne (2018), analysing the effect of Peer Assisted Study Sessions (PASS) in improving the skills related to personal quality, professional ability, employability, suggest to use PASS leadership module to raise the leadership qualities of undergraduates. Ruben, Brent D. et. (2018), study created, the Rutgers Leadership Academy (RLA) to address this urgent needs within the higher education to provide a broad, integrated array of leadership education and development.

In recent decades, the employers demand leadership qualities from the graduates. This trend advanced various leadership development models and programs to enhance the leadership qualities of undergraduate students. Sousa M.J., Rocha Á. (2017), research study, analysing impact of the Game-based learning (GBL) suggested use this leadership development module to improve the soft skills related to personal and professional levels. Kiersch, Christa; Peters, Janet (2017), explores the determination of developing authentic leaders who can serve and contribute to future employers and the society, as Leadership skills and leadership

development programs with soft skills. Greenleaf, Justin P.; Klaus, Kaley; Arensdorf, Jill (2017), describing a student cohort program with a competitive application process called as The Voss Advanced Undergraduate Leadership Experience (VALUE) for cultivating leadership development of undergraduate with soft skills. Alessandra Sax, Stefanos Gialamas (2017), deal with students as future leaders with soft skills required for the 21<sup>st</sup> century job market. Bauermeister Maria, C., et.al. (2016), study invented Red Winged Leadership (RWL) exercise to develop the leadership qualities of undergraduate students with soft skills. While, Jennifer Hill, Helen Walkington & Derek France (2016), analyses career competencies along with their successful studies including soft skills.

### Significance and Purpose of the study

Globalisation has changed the concept and dimensions of leadership with soft skills. The academic and technical skill shows deficiency in assuring employment in the current working environment as the demands of the employers expects soft skills along with academic/technical skills qualifications. The review of literature of recent years exhibits the need for soft skills training to be included in the undergraduate course to develop new dimension of leadership suitable to the present working environment. In this context this paper aims to find out the effect of soft skills training in changing the leadership dimension of the undergraduate students, enabling them to be more competitive in the globalised job market.

### III. Objectives of the Study

1. To prepare and administer the leadership oriented soft skills training program for enhancing the leadership dimensions of the undergraduate students of experimental group and to study its effect on the leadership dimension of undergraduate students.
2. To find out the impact level of soft skills perception of experimental group through

post-test scores following the intervention of soft skills training program.

3. To suggest leadership enhancing prominent soft skills training to the undergraduates along with the regular curriculum.

### IV. Hypothesis of the Study

**H<sub>0</sub> 1:** There are no statistically significant differences between mean scores of experimental group from the mean scores of the control group relating to the perception of leadership dimension enhancing soft skills

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### V. Research Design

This research study adopted 'Independent samples t-test' experimental design with one control group and one experimental group. The research study selected 80 students through simple random selection and divided them equally into two groups – control group and experimental group. The Likert scale questionnaire included the awareness level of soft skills such as presentation, motivation, creativity, teamwork, goal setting, crisis management, decision making, professional ethics, emotional intelligence, flexibility, time management, innovation, interpersonal, communication, multicultural. The intervention of soft skills training was provided only to the experimental group while the control group had only regular academic class. The study included the students who were homogenous with regard to certain demographic dimensions such as age, gender, educational qualification, economic background.

### VI. Research Methodology

### 6.1 Population and Sample

The study had 80 students from two different college students selected randomly for the study, segregating them as control group and experimental group, using simple random sampling method.

### 6.2 Data Collection tool

Soft skills awareness level of undergraduate students was measured utilising soft skills awareness level scale, prepared with the consultation of the experts. The soft skills awareness measurement level scale had five points on 30 questions with three dimensions on each of the 10 soft skills, having the Croanbach's Alpha (.992) reliability statistics.

## VII. Leadership oriented Soft Skills Training

The leadership oriented soft skills training program enhances leadership dimensions of undergraduate students with the important skills such as communication skills with others, presenting creativity, decision making skills, teamwork skills, interpersonal skills, goal setting, human resource management skill, crisis management skill, emotional intelligence skill, digital skills, work ethics, problem solving skill. The research of Binsaeed, Rima & Syeda, Taj & Javed, Lubna (2017), describes the necessity of Soft Skills due the effects of privatisation policy and globalised approach of the economy. The plight of graduates from various educational institutions lack soft skills required in the modern job market. The paper suggests integration of soft skills training into the regular curriculum of the graduates. The soft skills also known as peoples skills exists and exhibits inherent qualities and capabilities of every individual in a nominal level. The conceptual paper of Mathur A K (2017), mentions concerning the significant soft skills deficiency of the graduates from technical institutions. These inherent capabilities are to be developed through a systematic training program in order to increase the awareness level by removing

the hurdles in developing the innate soft skills of undergraduates.

The aim of various soft skills training program improves the level of soft skills awareness making them more competent in the competitive globalised job market. The soft skills once developed through soft skills training adds more value to the academic/technical skills, providing success to the future career of the undergraduate students. The soft skills training program had five major factors such as conceptual meaning, significance, features, advantages and personality development. The training program of 15 sessions, utilized methods of brainstorming, group discussion, role play and multimedia, with the intention of brining and raising the awareness level of undergraduate students on leadership enhancing soft skills.

## VIII. Analysis Plan

This study clearly assumes that control group students and experimental group students had homogeneity at the time of selection and any positive significant differences found in the experimental group in comparison to the control group related to soft skills awareness or perception is credited to the intervention of the impact of the leadership oriented soft skills training programme. This significance of differences and the impact of the soft skills training program will be analysed using independent samples t-test using SPSS 26 application. The findings of the analysis will be proving or disproving the hypothesis no.01. The data were collected simultaneously from both the groups, to avoid the influence of any extraneous variables such as special training sessions of job placements.

## IX. Result

Researcher collecting the data conducted an independent samples t-test to compare soft skill awareness level mean scores of Control group (without soft skills training program) and

experimental group (with soft skills training program). The mean values of soft skills perception level was inferred separately for the control group and the experiment group.

### X. Descriptive Analysis

#### Comparison of the perception of soft skills scores of control group and experimental group

	Independent Sample Groups	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Post-Test Scores	1 Control Group	40	62.63	7.228	1.143
	2 Experimental Group	40	133.60	5.569	.881

#### Significant at 0.05

In this statistical analysis (Table 1), between the control group and experimental group, the mean score value of 133.60 of the experimental group students, is higher than, the mean score value of 62.63 of the control group students. Even though the control group has the awareness and perception of soft skills, the level of soft skills awareness of the experimental group is much higher due to the intervention of soft skills training program related to the leadership dimension of the undergraduate students.

### XI. Differential Analysis

#### Significant Difference between the Scores of Control group students and Experimental group students

**H<sub>0</sub> 1:** There are no statistically significant differences between mean scores of experimental group from the mean scores of the control group relating to the perception of leadership dimension enhancing soft skills.

This research analysis study conducted independent *t* - *test* to determine and find out if there is any statistically significant difference existed between the mean scores of control group and experimental group. The main objective of the research study was to find out the impact level of the soft skills training program on the undergraduate students of the experimental group. In this process, the level of impact of the soft skills training program was analysed using the impact score, calculated as the difference between the post-test scores found separately for the control group and the experimental group. The independent t- test was used to find out the possible statistically significant difference between the post-test scores of control group and the experimental group.

		Levens Test for Equality of variances		t-test for Equality of Means					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig	t	df	P value Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Post-Test Score	Equal variances Assumed	2.55	0.114	-49.196	78	0	-70.975	1.443	-73.843	-68.103
	Equal Variances Not assumed			-49.196	73.24	0	-70.975	1.443	-73.843	-68.103

**\*Significant at 0.05 level**

The independent samples test details, show that there was a significant difference in the scores of control group (Mean = 62.63, SD = 7.228) and experimental group (Mean = 133.60, SD = 5.569),  $t(78) = -49.196$ ,  $p = .000$  (Table 2).

The comparison mean scores of the control group students and experimental group students were analysed using an Independent sample t-test. In the statistical analysis there was a significant difference in the scores of control group ( Mean =

62.63, SD = 7.228) and Experimental group (Mean = 133.60, SD = 5.569). The  $t(78)$  value with  $-49.196$ , has the  $p = .000$ , having significant value less than  $.05$  ( $p < 0.05$ ).

The overall analysis of the result highlights the effect and impact of the leadership oriented soft skills training program on the improvement of soft skills awareness and perception of the undergraduate students enhancing their leadership dimension, and rejecting the null hypothesis.

**Table 3** Independent samples test showing improvement in awareness level of each soft skills.

Soft Skills	Independent sample groups	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	t	P-value Sig.Level (2-tailed).
1. Professional Communication	Control Group	40	5.925	1.22762	0.1941	-30.008	0
	Exp. Group	40	13.475	1.01242	0.16008	-30.008	0
2. Time Management	Control Group	40	6.575	1.08338	0.1713	-32.442	0
	Exp. Group	40	13.425	0.78078	0.12345	-32.442	0
3. Creativity	Control Group	40	6.2	1.28502	0.20318	-26.404	0
	Exp. Group	40	13.3	1.11401	0.17614	-26.404	0
4. Problem Solving	Control Group	40	6.05	1.50128	0.23737	-25.251	0
	Exp. Group	40	13.375	1.0546	0.16675	-25.251	0
5. Motivation	Control Group	40	6.45	1.28002	0.20239	-27.519	0
	Exp. Group	40	13.4	0.95542	0.15106	-27.519	0
6. Team work	Control Group	40	6.3	1.06699	0.16871	-32.09	0
	Exp. Group	40	13.575	0.95776	0.15144	-32.09	0
7. Goal Setting	Control Group	40	6	1.37747	0.2178	-25.561	0
	Exp. Group	40	13.25	1.14914	0.18169	-25.561	0
8. Flexibility & adaptability	Control Group	40	6.375	1.12518	0.17791	-26.515	0
	Exp. Group	40	13.25	1.19293	0.18862	-26.515	0
9. Decision making	Control Group	40	6.425	1.29867	0.20534	-29.216	0
	Exp. Group	40	13.425	0.78078	0.12345	-29.216	0
10. Emotional Intelligence	Control Group	40	6.325	1.3085	0.20689	-25.029	0
	Exp. Group	40	13.125	1.11373	0.1761	-25.029	0

## XII. Discussion

The inference from this research study positively affirms the effect and impact of that the soft skills training program on the enhanced soft skills perception of the undergraduate students. The soft skills training program enhances the leadership dimension of the undergraduates, helping them to improve their employability to a higher level as required in the context of globalisation. The study of Pereira and Costa (2017), addresses the need and

importance of Soft skills required to adapt to the changing demands of the labour market that also equips the graduates with more integration in various aspects of life, while Mahesh Kumar; Santhosh Kumar (2015) finds that majority of the students accepted that acquisition of Soft skills plays an important role in today's job context. The purpose of the study of Anju Shukla and Gopika Kumar (2017), spells out clearly the importance soft skills that the employers are looking for in their employees. This would help the employees know

what they should equip themselves before approaching for a job in the corporate world. Ibrahim, Rosli & Boerhannoeddin, Ali & Kazeem Kayode, Bakare (2017), study makes a research study on the effects of soft skill and its training methodology to make the employee more effective and productive. The result of the research study show that there is statistically significant difference between mean scores of experimental group from the mean scores of the control group relating to the perception of leadership dimension enhancing soft skills. Therefore based on the result the null hypothesis is rejected.

The research study also suggests the leadership oriented soft skills training to the undergraduate students.

*\* Significant at 0.05 level*

The **Table (no.03)** above, evidently displays that undergraduate students in experimental group were found to be significantly higher with respect to Professional Communication, Time Management, Creativity, Problem Solving, Motivating, Team work, Goal Setting, Flexibility and adaptability, Decision making, Emotional Intelligence, in all the three dimensions. The significant difference between the control group students and experimental group students in relation to these soft skills items were found to be at 0.05 levels. Since there was homogeneity of students belonging to control group and experimental group with respect to the extraneous factors, the results showing significant difference, can be attributed only to the leadership oriented soft skills training intervention undergone by the experimental group. This research study, clearly show that the soft skills training program can bring forth significant improvements in the undergraduate students with regard to all the important soft skills items, and developing their leadership dimensions assuring employable opportunities in the globalised job market scenario.

### **XIII. Major Findings**

- i. The defining increase in the in post-test scores of the experimental group students in comparison to the control group students is proved through the effective intervention of soft skills training program.
- ii. The significant difference between the post-test mean scores of control group students and experimental group students in respect to the awareness level of soft skills perception due to soft skills training program for the development of leadership dimensions of the undergraduate student.
- iii. The comparison and significant difference in relation to the post-test scores of control group and experimental group attributes the positive improvements in the awareness level of soft skills perception of the undergraduate students of experimental group indicating the significant effect of the soft skills training program.

The major findings, suggest and recommends soft skills training program for the undergraduate students along with their regular curriculum so that their leadership qualities will be enhanced enabling them to be more competitive and eligible in the globalised job market.

### **XIV. Educational Implications and conclusion of the study**

The increasing demands of the employers in the globalised scenario are expecting the undergraduate students from different various streams, to blend their academic/technical skills with leadership enhancing soft skills. The awareness level of soft skills perception of the undergraduate students can be refined and improved with proper soft skills training program provided along with the regular curriculum. Since the soft skills are changing and increasing with the changing world scenario the higher educational institutions should organise

regularly workshops, seminars, conferences to the undergraduate students at the institution level. The undergraduate students exposed to the soft skills training programs will have greater edge over others in relation to employability opportunities as well as in their personality development, empowered to face the challenges of job interviews, placements and career performance throughout their lives.

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