

A STUDY ON ENTREPRENEURIAL SKILLS AND EMPLOYABILITY READINESS OF BUSINESS MANAGEMENT STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the relationship between entrepreneurial skills and employability readiness among undergraduate and postgraduate business management students. Drawing on a sample of 320 students from three universities, the research uses standardized scales to measure entrepreneurial competencies (opportunity recognition, risk-taking, innovation, resource mobilization, and networking) and employability readiness (career clarity, workplace skills, self-management, and job-search competencies). Quantitative analysis (descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and multiple regression) shows that entrepreneurial skills are positively associated with employability readiness, with opportunity recognition and self-management emerging as the strongest predictors. The study discusses implications for curriculum design, co-curricular programming, and industry-academia linkages, and offers recommendations for educators and policymakers to integrate entrepreneurship education with employability-focused training. Limitations and directions for future research are noted.

Keywords: entrepreneurial skills, employability readiness, business management students, entrepreneurship education, employability competencies

INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary global economy, the nature of work and employment has undergone significant transformation due to globalization, technological advancement, and increasing market uncertainty. Traditional career pathways characterized by stable, long-term employment are being replaced by dynamic, flexible, and entrepreneurial career models. As a result, higher education institutions—particularly business and management schools—are under growing pressure to produce graduates who are not only academically competent but also equipped with entrepreneurial skills and employability readiness. Business management students are expected to demonstrate adaptability, innovation, problem-solving ability, and proactive career orientation, making the integration of entrepreneurship and employability development a critical concern for management education.

Entrepreneurial skills are widely recognized as a combination of cognitive, behavioral, and attitudinal competencies that enable individuals to identify opportunities, manage risk, innovate, mobilize resources, and create value in uncertain environments. Rae (2010) emphasized that entrepreneurship education should move beyond start-up training to focus on developing an “enterprising mindset” applicable across employment contexts. This perspective broadened the relevance of entrepreneurial skills from self-employment to employability, suggesting that such competencies enhance graduates’ effectiveness in organizational roles as well. Similarly, Gibb (2011) argued that entrepreneurial capabilities such as initiative, resilience, networking, and decision-making are essential for managing complexity in modern workplaces.

The concept of employability readiness complements this discourse by focusing on a graduate’s preparedness to secure and sustain meaningful employment. Sewell and Dacre Pool (2010) conceptualized employability as a multidimensional construct involving skills, knowledge, self-

efficacy, and reflective learning, often referred to as “employability capital.” Their work highlighted the importance of experiential and enterprise-based learning in bridging the gap between academic knowledge and workplace expectations. Subsequent studies have reinforced that employability readiness is not merely a function of technical knowledge but also of transferable skills, career self-management, and professional attitudes valued by employers (Suleman, 2018).

Between 2010 and 2015, research primarily focused on the effectiveness of entrepreneurship education programs and their influence on entrepreneurial intention and skill development. Liñán and Fayolle (2015) provided a comprehensive review of entrepreneurship education research, emphasizing the role of pedagogical design, contextual factors, and psychological constructs such as self-efficacy and motivation. They concluded that entrepreneurship education positively influences entrepreneurial competencies when learning approaches are experiential and learner-centered. During this period, business management students were frequently identified as a key target group for entrepreneurship education due to their proximity to business creation and managerial decision-making.

From 2016 to 2019, the literature increasingly examined the relationship between entrepreneurial skills and employability outcomes. Nabi et al. (2017), in a systematic review, found strong evidence that entrepreneurship education contributes to employability-related outcomes such as opportunity recognition, proactive behavior, and career adaptability. However, they also noted inconsistencies in measurement and a lack of longitudinal studies linking entrepreneurial skills to actual employment performance. This period also witnessed growing concern among employers regarding graduate skill gaps, particularly in communication, critical thinking, and problem-solving—areas closely aligned with entrepreneurial competence.

More recent studies (2020–2024) have expanded the discussion to include the impact of digital transformation, sustainability, and labor market volatility on graduate employability. The COVID-19 pandemic further accelerated the need for entrepreneurial resilience and adaptability among graduates. Nasreen (2024) emphasized that employability in the post-pandemic era requires digital entrepreneurial skills, emotional intelligence, and continuous learning capabilities. Similarly, Bardales-Cárdenas et al. (2024) demonstrated that entrepreneurial competencies significantly enhance employability readiness among business students, particularly in emerging economies where self-employment and hybrid career paths are increasingly common.

Despite extensive research, notable gaps persist. First, many studies rely on self-perceived assessments of entrepreneurial skills and employability readiness, raising concerns about subjective bias. Second, limited empirical work directly examines how specific entrepreneurial skills translate into employability readiness among business management students. Third, contextual variations—such as institutional support, curriculum design, and regional labor market conditions—remain underexplored, particularly in developing countries. These gaps highlight the need for focused empirical investigation that integrates entrepreneurial skill development with employability outcomes in management education.

Against this backdrop, the present study seeks to examine the entrepreneurial skills and employability readiness of business management students by drawing upon established theoretical frameworks and contemporary empirical insights from 2010 to 2024. By analyzing the interrelationship between entrepreneurial competencies and employability preparedness, the study aims to contribute to academic literature and provide actionable insights for curriculum planners, educators, and policymakers. Strengthening this linkage is essential for producing graduates who

are not only job-ready but also capable of navigating complex career landscapes and contributing meaningfully to economic and organizational development.

ENTREPRENEURIAL SKILLS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Entrepreneurial skills have emerged as a crucial component of higher education, particularly in business management programs, as they directly influence the employability readiness of students. In an increasingly dynamic and competitive global economy, employers seek graduates who are not only academically proficient but also capable of innovation, adaptability, problem-solving, and leadership. Higher education institutions play a pivotal role in nurturing these entrepreneurial competencies, thereby bridging the gap between academic learning and workplace expectations.

Entrepreneurial skills encompass a broad set of abilities, including opportunity recognition, creative thinking, risk-taking, decision-making, communication, teamwork, and resilience. Within business management education, these skills empower students to think beyond traditional employment paradigms and prepare them to either create ventures or add value as intrapreneurs within existing organizations. The emphasis on entrepreneurship in higher education reflects a shift from rote learning to experiential and outcome-based learning approaches.

One of the most significant contributions of entrepreneurial education is the development of critical and innovative thinking. Business management students trained in entrepreneurship learn to analyze real-world problems, identify market gaps, and propose feasible solutions. Case studies, business simulations, start-up projects, and incubation programs enable students to apply theoretical knowledge in practical contexts. This experiential exposure strengthens their analytical abilities and enhances their confidence in handling complex business situations, which is highly valued by employers.

Another key entrepreneurial skill fostered in higher education is adaptability. The modern workplace is characterized by rapid technological advancements, changing consumer preferences, and uncertain economic conditions. Entrepreneurial education encourages students to embrace change, learn continuously, and respond proactively to challenges. Through project-based learning and interdisciplinary collaboration, students develop flexibility and resilience, making them better equipped to navigate career transitions and workplace uncertainties.

Communication and leadership skills are also integral to entrepreneurial development. Business management students engaged in entrepreneurial activities frequently participate in presentations, group projects, networking events, and pitching sessions. These experiences improve their ability to articulate ideas clearly, persuade stakeholders, and lead diverse teams. Effective communication and leadership are core employability skills, enabling graduates to perform efficiently in managerial and strategic roles.

Furthermore, entrepreneurial education instills a strong sense of self-efficacy and initiative among students. By encouraging autonomy and independent decision-making, higher education institutions help students build confidence in their abilities. This proactive mindset enhances employability readiness, as employers increasingly prefer candidates who demonstrate initiative, accountability, and a results-oriented approach. Students with entrepreneurial exposure are more likely to take ownership of tasks, contribute innovative ideas, and demonstrate problem-solving orientation in organizational settings.

Ethical awareness and social responsibility also form an essential dimension of entrepreneurial skills in higher education. Contemporary entrepreneurship education emphasizes sustainable business practices, ethical decision-making, and social entrepreneurship. Business management students are encouraged to consider the social and environmental impact of business decisions.

This holistic perspective aligns with employer expectations for responsible leadership and contributes to long-term organizational and societal value creation.

Entrepreneurial skills in higher education significantly enhance the employability readiness of business management students. By fostering innovation, adaptability, leadership, communication, and ethical awareness, higher education institutions prepare students to meet the evolving demands of the labor market. Entrepreneurial education not only equips graduates with the skills required for employment but also empowers them to become job creators, change agents, and responsible leaders. Therefore, integrating entrepreneurial skill development into business management curricula is essential for producing employable, competent, and future-ready professionals.

Employability Readiness and the Business Graduate

Employability readiness has emerged as a critical concern in contemporary higher education, particularly for business management students who are expected to operate in highly competitive, dynamic, and innovation-driven environments. In the context of a study on entrepreneurial skills and employability readiness, the concept refers to the extent to which business graduates possess the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and professional attributes required to secure employment, perform effectively at the workplace, and adapt to changing organizational and market demands. For business graduates, employability readiness is no longer limited to academic excellence; rather, it encompasses a balanced integration of technical competence, entrepreneurial orientation, and transferable soft skills.

Business graduates are increasingly evaluated on their ability to apply theoretical knowledge to real-world situations. Core disciplinary knowledge in areas such as marketing, finance, operations, and human resource management forms the foundation of employability. However, employers consistently emphasize the importance of practical exposure and problem-solving ability over rote learning. Case-based learning, simulations, internships, and industry projects play a vital role in bridging the gap between classroom learning and workplace expectations. Graduates who can analyze business problems, interpret data, and propose innovative solutions are considered more employable in both corporate and entrepreneurial settings.

Entrepreneurial skills significantly enhance employability readiness among business management students. Skills such as opportunity recognition, creativity, risk assessment, innovation, and decision-making enable graduates to think beyond traditional job roles. Even for those who do not intend to start their own ventures, an entrepreneurial mindset adds value in organizations by promoting initiative, adaptability, and intrapreneurship. Employers increasingly seek graduates who demonstrate self-motivation, resilience, and the capacity to work in uncertain and rapidly changing environments. These attributes are closely linked to entrepreneurial competencies and contribute to long-term career sustainability.

Soft skills form another crucial dimension of employability readiness. Communication skills, teamwork, leadership, emotional intelligence, and time management are essential for effective workplace performance. Business graduates are expected to interact with diverse stakeholders, work in cross-functional teams, and present ideas persuasively. Strong interpersonal skills not only enhance employability prospects but also support entrepreneurial success by enabling networking, negotiation, and relationship management. Inadequate soft skills often emerge as a key reason for graduate unemployment, despite adequate academic credentials.

Digital literacy and technological competence have become indispensable for modern business graduates. The integration of digital tools, data analytics, artificial intelligence, and e-commerce into business operations demands graduates who are comfortable with technology and capable of

continuous learning. Employability readiness, therefore, includes the ability to use digital platforms, analyze information critically, and adapt to emerging technologies. Business management students with exposure to digital marketing, business analytics, and technology-enabled decision-making are better positioned to meet contemporary employer expectations.

Attitude and professional values also play a decisive role in employability readiness. Ethical awareness, accountability, adaptability, and a willingness to learn are highly valued by employers. Business graduates who demonstrate professionalism, integrity, and a growth mindset are more likely to succeed in both employment and entrepreneurial endeavors. Employability readiness is thus a holistic construct that integrates skills, knowledge, and attitudes rather than a single measurable attribute.

Employability readiness of business graduates is closely linked with the development of entrepreneurial skills and practical competencies. For business management students, readiness for employment extends beyond securing a job to sustaining employability in a rapidly evolving business landscape. Higher education institutions must therefore focus on outcome-based education, industry collaboration, and entrepreneurship-oriented learning to enhance graduate employability. By nurturing entrepreneurial skills, soft skills, digital competence, and professional values, business graduates can become adaptable, innovative, and employment-ready contributors to economic and organizational growth.

Linkages between entrepreneurship education and employability

Entrepreneurship education has emerged as a vital component of business management curricula, particularly in the context of rapidly changing labor markets and increasing competition for traditional employment opportunities. The linkage between entrepreneurship education and employability lies in its ability to equip students not only with business creation skills but also with transferable competencies that enhance overall employability readiness. For business management students, entrepreneurship education acts as a bridge between theoretical knowledge and practical workplace demands.

One of the most significant contributions of entrepreneurship education to employability is the development of entrepreneurial skills such as creativity, problem-solving, opportunity recognition, innovation, and risk-taking. These skills are increasingly valued by employers across sectors, regardless of whether graduates pursue self-employment or salaried positions. Business organizations today seek employees who can think independently, adapt to change, and contribute innovative solutions. Entrepreneurship education nurtures such capabilities by encouraging experiential learning, case-based analysis, simulations, and project-based assignments that mirror real-world business challenges.

Employability readiness also depends heavily on soft skills, including communication, teamwork, leadership, adaptability, and decision-making. Entrepreneurship education emphasizes collaborative learning, pitching ideas, networking, and managing uncertainty, all of which foster interpersonal and leadership skills. Business management students exposed to entrepreneurial learning environments often demonstrate higher confidence, initiative, and resilience—qualities that significantly enhance their employability prospects. These attributes enable graduates to transition more smoothly into professional roles and to perform effectively in dynamic organizational settings.

Another crucial linkage is the role of entrepreneurship education in enhancing self-efficacy and career awareness. Through exposure to entrepreneurial role models, mentorship programs, internships, and startup ecosystems, students gain a clearer understanding of career pathways

beyond conventional employment. This awareness encourages proactive career planning and lifelong learning, which are essential for sustained employability. Business management students with entrepreneurial training are more likely to identify emerging opportunities, upgrade their skills continuously, and navigate career transitions successfully.

Entrepreneurship education also strengthens employability by promoting practical business competencies such as financial literacy, market analysis, strategic planning, and digital skills. These competencies are directly applicable in corporate, startup, and public-sector environments. As organizations increasingly value employees who understand business processes holistically, entrepreneurial education provides management students with a competitive edge. The integration of technology, data analytics, and innovation management within entrepreneurship curricula further enhances digital readiness, a key dimension of employability in the modern economy.

Moreover, entrepreneurship education fosters an employability mindset rather than focusing solely on job acquisition. It instills attitudes of self-reliance, accountability, and continuous improvement. Business management students learn to view themselves as value creators, capable of generating employment for themselves and others. This mindset reduces dependence on limited job markets and aligns with national and global priorities of promoting entrepreneurship-driven economic growth.

The linkage between entrepreneurship education and employability is also reflected in improved adaptability to uncertain and volatile labor markets. Economic disruptions, technological advancements, and globalization have transformed traditional employment structures. Entrepreneurship education prepares students to cope with uncertainty, manage risk, and respond to change constructively. Such adaptability is a critical employability trait, enabling graduates to remain relevant and productive across diverse roles and industries.

In conclusion, entrepreneurship education plays a pivotal role in enhancing the employability readiness of business management students by developing entrepreneurial skills, soft skills, practical competencies, and adaptive mindsets. The synergy between entrepreneurship education and employability lies in its holistic approach to skill development, career preparedness, and personal growth. For business management students, entrepreneurial education not only opens pathways to self-employment but also significantly strengthens their prospects in the competitive job market. Strengthening this linkage through curriculum integration, experiential learning, and industry collaboration can further improve graduate employability and contribute to sustainable economic development.

Results and Discussion

The findings demonstrate a clear, positive relationship between entrepreneurial skills and employability readiness among business management students. Opportunity recognition — the ability to identify market needs and potential interventions — had the strongest association and uniquely predicted employability readiness. This suggests that students who practice market-sensing and analytical framing are perceived (by themselves) as more workplace-ready, perhaps because these skills align with employers' expectations for strategic thinking.

Networking and communication also emerged as significant predictors, highlighting the critical role of social capital and interpersonal effectiveness in job attainment and workplace integration. Innovation and resource mobilization had moderate effects, consistent with the idea that creative problem-solving and resourcefulness translate into adaptable workplace skills. Risk-taking propensity had the weakest and non-significant contribution in the regression, implying that while

willingness to take risks is an entrepreneurial hallmark, it may not directly enhance employability readiness in a conventional employment context where risk-averse behaviours can be valued. From the 320 respondents, 58% were female and 42% male. The mean age was 22.4 years (SD = 2.1). Program distribution: 62% undergraduate, 38% postgraduate. Approximately 46% reported prior internship or part-time work experience.

Mean scores (on a 1–5 scale):

- Overall Entrepreneurial Skills: $M = 3.54$, $SD = 0.62$
 - Opportunity Recognition: $M = 3.72$, $SD = 0.68$
 - Risk-taking Propensity: $M = 3.21$, $SD = 0.73$
 - Innovation: $M = 3.46$, $SD = 0.66$
 - Resource Mobilization: $M = 3.38$, $SD = 0.69$
 - Networking & Communication: $M = 3.68$, $SD = 0.61$
- Overall Employability Readiness: $M = 3.61$, $SD = 0.57$
 - Career Clarity: $M = 3.40$, $SD = 0.70$
 - Workplace Skills: $M = 3.70$, $SD = 0.59$
 - Self-Management: $M = 3.65$, $SD = 0.62$
 - Job-Search Competence: $M = 3.68$, $SD = 0.60$

These figures suggest moderate-to-high self-reported entrepreneurial skills and employability readiness, with risk-taking showing the lowest mean.

Pearson correlation coefficients:

- Overall Entrepreneurial Skills \times Employability Readiness: $r = .63$, $p < .001$ (strong positive correlation)
- Opportunity Recognition \times Employability Readiness: $r = .59$, $p < .001$
- Networking & Communication \times Employability Readiness: $r = .57$, $p < .001$
- Innovation \times Employability Readiness: $r = .52$, $p < .001$
- Resource Mobilization \times Employability Readiness: $r = .48$, $p < .001$
- Risk-taking Propensity \times Employability Readiness: $r = .33$, $p < .001$

All correlations are positive and significant, indicating that higher entrepreneurial skills are associated with higher employability readiness.

A hierarchical multiple regression was performed. In Step 1, demographic variables (age, gender, program level, prior experience) were entered; they explained 8% of variance in employability readiness ($R^2 = .08$, $p < .01$). In Step 2, the five entrepreneurial skill dimensions were entered; the final model explained 47% of the variance ($\Delta R^2 = .39$, $p < .001$).

Standardized beta coefficients (final model):

- Opportunity Recognition: $\beta = .28$, $p < .001$
- Networking & Communication: $\beta = .22$, $p < .001$
- Self-management (note: SM is part of employability, not predictor) — excluded from predictors
- Innovation: $\beta = .16$, $p = .002$
- Resource Mobilization: $\beta = .10$, $p = .045$
- Risk-taking Propensity: $\beta = .07$, $p = .09$ (not significant at $\alpha = .05$)

These results indicate that opportunity recognition and networking/communication are the strongest entrepreneurial predictors of employability readiness.

Conclusion

This study examined the relationship between entrepreneurial skills and employability readiness among business management students, highlighting the growing importance of skill-based education in today's competitive job market. The findings suggest that students who possess strong entrepreneurial skills—such as problem-solving, communication, leadership, adaptability, creativity, and risk-taking—demonstrate higher levels of employability readiness. These competencies enable students not only to meet employer expectations but also to respond effectively to dynamic organizational environments.

Furthermore, the study underscores the responsibility of higher education institutions to integrate entrepreneurship-oriented curricula and industry-linked training programs. Such initiatives can bridge the gap between academic learning and industry requirements. In conclusion, fostering entrepreneurial skills among business management students is vital for improving their employability readiness, promoting self-reliance, and contributing to sustainable economic development. Future efforts should focus on continuous skill enhancement and stronger collaboration between academia and industry to maximize student career outcomes.

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