

Proximal and Distal Influences on Fresh Management Graduate's Employability: A Review of Literature and Orientations

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Abstract

The paper explores the factors that affect proximal and distal employability behavior within the employer satisfaction perspective a vis recruitment of the fresh management graduates. The study undertakes a comprehensive review of the literature and categories the literature as divided across three broad streams: individual preparedness, institutional support mechanisms and organization support to career enhancement. The 'determinants' of employer satisfaction in recruiting the fresh management post graduates and their effective operationalization is indeed challenging. The paper attempts to explore and bring together the divergent pieces of literature under the proximal and distal perspectives as shaping 'employability' prospects.

Keywords

Literature and Orientations, Distal Influences, Employability Prospects.

Proximal and Distal Dimensions

The studies (Collis, 2003) on proximal and distal determinants (dimensions) of operationalizing 'employer sense of satisfaction or dissatisfaction' from recruiting management graduates remain non convergent and adequate classification is still a miss. In literal terms, the proximal determinants often involve the individual as an agency himself as well as the environment in which skilling is being undertaken. The distal

correlates identify as the distinct work place uncertainties that shape up the opinion making and perception development with regard to recruiting fresh management graduates. The proximal correlates (DiBenedetto, 2016) in turn represent the neighboring as well as the core genetic influences whereas the distal influences categorize as the distant and contextual influences that collectively impact the prospects for employability and employer's sense making tendency.

'Employer satisfaction' is and will never ever be a stand-alone phenomenon. The construct (DiBenedetto, 2020) foresees a long history of being operationalized as a multi-dimensional perspective and may involve the aspects of individual sense making, awareness about the changing skill inventory, pressures on student cognitions to adhere by new verbology, education industry especially the mindsets across business schools, government policies and attitude towards business education, fiscal support to vocational education promotion, employer requirements and human talent based sensitivity; count as some of the prominent aspects. The classical ecological model of perception development (Bridgstock, 2009) concentrates on the processes between an individual and diverse levels of environment as defining the interactions across subsystems and resultant outcomes in form of individual embedment and prospective transformation in outlook.

The psychological literature conceives 'fresh management graduate's' employability underlines 'skills acquisition' dimension as only one side of the picture. This needs to be complemented by state and society based efforts and business initiatives. Individual's employability is not the sole responsibility of concerned individual yet the employer, current labor market conditions, general economic conditions, extent of uncertainty in business environment, government based policy support to promoting vocational education; all shapes employability in one or another aspect. The institutional arrangements in form of formal business education institutions and informal learning opportunities across social-economic endeavors cannot be sidelined altogether. The industry and its inclination to 'co-work' with existing formal institutional arrangements in nurturing the generic skills in young mindsets; also seems to matter. The modern literary discourse visualizes the fresh management graduate's 'employability' as the central idea that brings the prospective employee and employer together.

The earlier notions of 'employability' as essential attribute to function rapidly in ever evolving economies are gradually giving way to new notions; that call for 'competencies' and 'expertise' as central to employability and employer ability to sustain competitiveness. The evolving frameworks for composite analysis of fresh management graduate's 'employability' and 'employability generated satisfaction behavior' hence

compulsorily include a host of internal, individual specific, external, contextual, institutional and environment driven factors, labor market dynamics as well as the possible tensions across agents in system and structural loopholes.

The bitter truth is that no single approach wholesomely explains the ‘employability’ and that no two approaches ever converge at single generalizable view point altogether. Employability of fresh management graduates in India can also be interpreted as possible stock of opportunities for upward career mobility of individual in formal and institutionalized manner yet the approach also suffers from the stigma of more focus on individual. The HR perspective recognizes the need for enhancing organizational competitiveness and flexibility with talent pipeline yet the employer satisfaction would always remain uncertain and dynamic as economic exchange and pattern of profitability are changing faster than skill based acquisition.

The possible ‘determinants’ shaping management graduate’s ‘employability’ and respective ‘employer’s satisfaction’ from employing fresh management graduates is widely an outcome of the interactions that occur between the individual (management graduate) and the various levels of work related contextual actors and forces. The studies (Insa, 2016) however converge on these prominent aspects: bio psychological attributes (individualistic) of fresh management graduates, proximal processes, ecological contexts, temporal dimensions and socio-demographic differences.

The ‘bio-psychological individualistic’ attributes have been interpreted as the individual driven dispositions to develop themselves, to adapt to changes, sense of self awareness, resource harnessing potential and social capital. The possible ‘proximal processes’ enveloping the ‘management graduates’ have been identified as the individual based activities to acquire, or to maintain or enhance the current level of personal attributes that matter *visa vis* career mobility. The ‘contexts’ and their definition *visa vis* conceptualization of ‘employability’ in organizational perspective could possibly involve individual’s home, individual’s work place, organizational aspects, institutional learning as well as business school based supports and prevailing labor market conditions. The core determinants are hence summarized across three broader heads of individual determinants, institutional determinants and organizational determinants as under.

Table Exploring the proximal and distal determinants and their dimensions

Nature of determinants	Dimensions as classified
Individual determinants	Employability skills (Alsop, 2015), Emotional competencies (Bridgstock, 2009), Skill dexterity (Denham, 1997), Skill nature (Dutta, 2010), Ability to work with others (Cappelli, 2019), Skill interoperability (Bengtsson, 2011), management skills and excellence (Jackson D. , 2016), Employability and skills of fresh graduates in India (Blom, 2011), Employability and skills of management graduates in India (Dhar, 2012), Self-engagement in acquisition activities (Blom, 2011), Career competencies (Kovalenko, 2016), Individual driven interest in being career ready (Tominson, 2017), Academic skills and resource based view to skilling (Hitch, 2012), Self-motivation to learn from contextual sources (Insa, 2016), Self-interest to gain expertise from informal sources (Pham, 2018), Skill applicability (Romgens, 2019), skilling with real practical inclination (Taubman, 1974), Resources and human capital (Wright, 1993), motivation to learn from failures (Schomburg, 2006), Fresh graduate's dynamic capabilities (Malhotra, 2019), Individual capability (Baryniene, 2013),
Institutional determinants	Business school governance (Harackiewicz, 2016), Structures and guiding mechanisms (Koivisto, 2011), Industry interfaces (Kraiger, 2002), Pro business orientation (Pitan, 2017), industry driven curriculum (Cheng, 2007), industry practices incorporation (Greco, 2020), industry based exposure to change management (Sheppard, 2020), Emotional resources and employability (Beukes, 2009), Business management
Organizational determinants	Work place ability to support talent (Malhotra, 2019), Work place ethics (Oliver, 2015), Employer based assignment of anchors (Nair, 2018), Employer based investment in career orientation development (Maxwell, 2009), career anchors and career trajectory (Aydogmus, 2018), New employee's access to resources (Maxwell, 2009), Supervisor's mentoring (Bartlett, 1995), Climate for transfer of learning (Work Place environment for transfer of skills) (Dabke, 2014), Stimulus in environment for applying learning (Lockhart, 2016), Fair environment and opportunity (Kidd, 2004), Procedural justice in promotion (Nghia, 2020), Extent of incentives for knowledge sharing (Wright, 1993), Post joining incentives for knowledge usage (Coetzee S. , 2008), Promotion chances as realized (Cai, 2013), Employee on boarding success (Lee B. , 2003), Education policy (Coetzee M. , 2006), Biases from learning patterns, style, program conduct, socio-demographics (Coetzee S. , 2008)

Individual Determinants

The individual determinants comprise the graduate's own competencies in form of possession of a passion for management, effective clarity with regard to career goal, possession of employability skill sets and functional proficiency with regard to emotional intelligence. The 'internal motivations' for self-learning and self-indulgence in acquiring these personal competencies in form of 'employability skills' and 'emotional intelligence'; point towards self-stimulated execution. In this regard it is worthwhile to mention that external motivations for pursuing management skilling may lead to degree yet proficiency may be missing.

The construct 'graduate self-engagement in skill acquisition' and 'skill acquisition behavior' has been worked in multiple ways and means. The graduate preference for skills (management, technical and communication) has also been interpreted in multiple ways and means. The construct 'graduate self-engagement in skill acquisition' and 'skill acquisition behavior' finds an exclusive and consistent mention across prominent literature on subject matter. The graduate's self-driven preference for skills (management,

technical and communication) has also been interpreted in multiple ways and means. The individual's own propensity to acquire the worthwhile skills, enhance occupational expertise, aiming at developing vocational proficiency, work related dexterity.

The literature however is unanimous in interpreting this behavior as a proactive and self-driven inclination or intent to engage in actions, activities and processes that impart the ability and competency to compete and become more work ready than others. The review of literature calls for graduate inclination for 'skilling' as a dynamic process involving incorporation of multiple co-existing behavioral cognitions to inculcate professionalism and workplace required skills. The individual determinants identify as prominent proximal causes that influence the psyche and the cognitions of the fresh management graduates and equally influence the assimilation ability with regard to acquisition of employability skills

Institutional Determinants

'Institutional supports' act as potential influence on career clarity development is being hypothesized from graduate's institutional association in terms of supports being provided by incumbent business school, industry interface, curriculum and skilling being undertaken. The bioecological model (Insa, 2016) on employability pointed towards the prevalence of direct and lateral implications of business school determined 'curriculum', 'faculty exposure' and 'industry orientation' on student based development of 'skills' and 'norms' across management pass outs. The 'business school' as an institutional component seems to bear a crucial responsibility for the role that this plays in transforming the student's (fresh management graduate's) career trajectory.

The bioecological ideologies recognize the student driven and faculty driven bi-directional influences on assimilation of skills, practices and the traits that are desired across modern work places. The institutional aspects often figure as the distal correlates of the employability development at graduate level. The pattern and scope of institutional scope matters as this has widely been observed as shaping the impetus for shaping the behaviors, attitudes and intentions to engrain the talent and assimilate the expertise across institutional forums. The often cited aspects like the 'curriculum', 'faculty exposure' and 'industry orientation' reported as wider history of influencing the student based development of 'skills' and 'norms' across management pass outs. The structural competency at institutional levels often casts its impact on the student based assimilation of curriculum, absorption of industry validated practices, industry desired patterns of thinking and exposure to modern working attributes.

Organizational Determinants

‘Contextual influences’ on career clarity and employer satisfaction are being hypothesized from ‘employer’s assignment of career anchors’, patterns of ‘new comer socialization’, ‘workplace characteristics’, ‘environment’ being provided to new employee and perceived ease of ‘transferring the skills’ in the employer interfaces. The ‘organizational aspects’ (Bridgstock, 2009) classify as the distal determinants as these influences from across environment laterally and indirectly shapes the propensity to seek employment, engage in work place learning and shaping the employer satisfaction. Organizational Determinants are the ones that have their origins in the dynamics of workplace and the respective ability of work places to accommodate fresh management graduate’s career aspirations. The distal determinants hence emphasize the possible impact of ‘environment as provided’ in supporting fresh talent (Malhotra, 2019), work place mechanism and ethics (Oliver, 2015), employer based assignment of expert career anchors (Nair, 2018), probable employer based investment in career orientation development (Maxwell, 2009).

The distal determinants of employability in case of fresh management graduates hence revolve around the employer based provision of suitable career anchors and tangible investment in individual employee’s career trajectory (Aydogmus, 2018). This could also translate into new employee’s access to resources (Maxwell, 2009) and supervisor’s mentoring (Bartlett, 1995). A large section of reviewed literature calls for consideration of climate for transfer of learning (work place environment for transfer of skills) (Dabke, 2014) and the possible stimulus in existing work environment for applying learning (Lockhart, 2016). As such distal determinants of employability could also involve employer based provision of fair environment and justified job opportunity (Kidd, 2004) as well subjective procedural justice in promotion (Nghia, 2020).

Another section of literature calls for consideration of distal influences from incentives for knowledge sharing (Wright, 1993) and post joining incentives for knowledge usage (Coetzee S. , 2008); as shaping career graphs and employer satisfaction from recruiting fresh management graduates. The promotion chances as realized (Cai, 2013) by fresh management graduate, employee on boarding success (Lee B. , 2003), education policy (Coetzee M. , 2006), biases from learning patterns, style, program conduct, socio-demographics (Coetzee S. , 2008); also figures prominently as key distal influences that lead to subjective variations in perceptions visa vis employability sand fresh employee’s performance in new work conditions. The conceptualization in this prospect identifies diverse dimensions (individual-student driven, institutional- business school driven, systematic and contextual) that are contributing to the phenomenon in question. The

illustration below summarizes the diverse factors (proximal and distal) as identified from review of literature.

Table Possible factors as identified

Possible Factors capturing proximal and distal influences on employer satisfaction with regard to fresh management graduates	Literature review	Brainstorming	Research Reports	Focus Group	Student Interaction	Employer Interaction
Individual capability	*	*	*		*	*
Graduate's skills	*	*	*	*	*	*
Emotional state	*	*	*	*	*	*
Fresh graduate's dynamic capabilities	*				*	*
Skill sets-management, communication, technical	*	*	*	*	*	*
Business Schools' governance mechanisms	*			*	*	*
Business Schools' structures	*	*	*	*	*	*
Business Schools' industry exposure	*	*	*		*	*
Curriculum	*		*	*		*
On-job training as part of skilling	*	*	*	*	*	*
Emotional stability	*	*		*	*	
Work place attributes	*	*	*	*	*	*
Career anchor and onsite mentoring	*	*	*		*	*
Career goal clarity	*	*	*	*		*
New employee's access to resources	*	*	*	*	*	
Perceived organizational investment in developing fresh graduate's skills	*	*		*	*	*
Supervisor's mentoring	*	*	*	*	*	*
Climate for transfer of learning(Work Place environment for transfer of skills)	*	*	*	*	*	*
Stimulus in environment for applying learning	*	*	*	*		
Fair environment and opportunity	*	*	*			*
Procedural justice in promotion	*	*			*	*
Extent of incentives for knowledge sharing	*		*	*	*	*
Post joining incentives for knowledge usage	*	*	*	*	*	*
Promotion chances as realized	*	*	*	*	*	*
Employee on boarding success	*		*	*		*
Education policy	*				*	*
Biases from learning patterns, style, program conduct, socio-demographics	*				*	

In order to summarize, one can conclude that 'proximal' and 'distal' employability behavior within the employer satisfaction perspective Vis a Vis recruitment of the fresh management graduates; matters extensively. The proportion of these causes however may vary as per the regional, cultural and ethical perspectives and differences.

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