BODHIVRUKSHA JOURNAL OF DIVERSE DISCIPLINE (BJDD)
An Open-Access, Peer-Reviewed, Multidisciplinary Scholarly Journal | Bi-Monthly | Multilingual | Academic Research
Vol 2, Issue 6 (November-December 2026) (Special Issue 2) | ISSN: 3139-1486 (Online) | ISSN: 3139-9819 (Print)

Employment, Labour Market and Skill Development: Assessing Employability and Future-Ready Skills among Commerce Students in Vidarbha, Maharashtra

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Abstract

This paper examines how commerce students in Vidarbha view their preparation for employment and the capabilities they believe they will need as workplaces change. A degree provides subject knowledge in areas such as accounting, finance, economics and management, but employers may also expect graduates to use digital tools, communicate clearly, interpret information and solve practical problems. The paper analyses the survey figures reported for 100 students, covering labour-market awareness, participation in skills training, digital and industry-related skills, practical exposure and perceived employability. The reported methods include percentage analysis, cross-tabulation, chi-square tests and Pearson correlation. In the dataset, 62% had taken part in at least one skill-development activity, while 60% reported no internship or similar practical experience. Digital competence was the most frequently selected future skill (82%), and practical experience was the most commonly reported gap (68%). The reported statistical tests indicate associations between training participation and perceived employability, industry-related skills and perceived employment opportunities, practical exposure and preparedness, and future-ready skills and labour-market readiness. The sample is small and uses purposive/convenience sampling; therefore, the findings describe the reported respondents and should not be treated as representative of all commerce students in Vidarbha.

Keywords: employability, labour market, skill development, commerce students, digital competence, Vidarbha

1. Introduction

Commerce students study subjects such as accounting, finance, economics, taxation, marketing and management with the expectation that these subjects will help them enter professional work. However, the transition from college to a job can involve more than understanding theories and passing examinations. Employers may expect a new graduate to prepare a spreadsheet, use accounting software, explain a set of figures, work with digital platforms or respond to an unfamiliar business problem. These expectations make employability a concern for students and the institutions that prepare them.

The labour market brings together employers looking for workers and individuals seeking employment. When a job seeker's skills fit a role, the move from education to work may be smoother. A mismatch can

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leave a graduate struggling to demonstrate the abilities an employer needs, even when the graduate holds a relevant qualification. In commerce-related roles, such gaps may involve advanced Excel, accounting packages, data analysis, digital banking, financial technology, enterprise systems or the responsible use of AI tools. Communication, analytical thinking, teamwork and adaptability are also important because technical knowledge has to be applied and explained in real situations.

India's Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) provides indicators such as the Labour Force Participation Rate, Worker Population Ratio and Unemployment Rate. The source paper refers to changes in the PLFS reporting approach from January 2025 (Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation [MoSPI], 2026). National indicators help describe the broader employment environment, but they cannot tell us by themselves how prepared a particular group of students feels or which skills those students think they need to improve. Surveys of students can provide a more focused view of these questions.

Maharashtra has state-level arrangements intended to connect people with skill development, employment and entrepreneurship. The Mahaswayam portal and the Maharashtra State Skill Development Society are part of this setting (Government of Maharashtra, n.d.). Colleges can help students use such resources by sharing reliable information, inviting employers to discuss entry-level roles and showing how training opportunities relate to actual work. This support may be especially useful for students who have limited access to professional networks or internships.

Vidarbha covers districts with varied urban, semi-urban and rural conditions, including Nagpur, Amravati, Akola, Wardha, Buldhana, Yavatmal, Washim, Chandrapur, Bhandara and Gondia. Students may not have equal access to employers, professional mentoring, digital facilities or workplace placements. Looking at students' awareness, training participation and practical experience can therefore help colleges identify where support may be needed. This study considers those issues through the reported responses of commerce students in the region.

The findings must be read with the design in mind. The supplied paper describes 100 respondents selected through purposive/convenience sampling. Such a sample can reveal patterns among those who took part, but it cannot automatically represent every commerce student in Vidarbha. In addition, students' own ratings of readiness are not the same as independently tested skills or confirmed job outcomes.

2. Objectives of the Study

- To assess students' awareness of changing labour-market requirements.
- To examine participation in skill-development activities and its association with perceived employability.
- To study the relationship between digital/industry-related skills and perceived employment opportunities.
- To examine how practical exposure and future-ready skills relate to employment preparedness.

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3. Hypotheses of the Study

- H01: There is no significant association between participation in skill-development activities and perceived employability.
- H02: There is no significant relationship between digital/industry-related skills and perceived employment opportunities.
- H03: There is no significant association between practical exposure/internship experience and employment preparedness.
- H04: There is no significant association between future-ready skills and perceived readiness for a changing labour market.

The corresponding alternative hypotheses (H11, H12, H13 and H14) propose that the respective relationships are statistically significant.

4. Methodology

4.1 Design and sample

The study uses a descriptive and analytical design and focuses on selected colleges or educational institutions in Vidarbha, Maharashtra. The supplied paper reports a survey of 100 commerce students selected through purposive/convenience sampling. Since selection was not random, the results are useful for exploring the responses collected but should not be treated as regional estimates.

4.2 Questionnaire and measures

The questionnaire is described as covering respondent background, labour-market awareness, participation in skill-development activities, digital and industry-related skills, practical exposure, perceived employability and future readiness. The complete questionnaire, details of score construction and reliability results were not included in the supplied report. These should be documented if the study is to be replicated.

4.3 Analysis and verification

The reported analysis uses frequencies, percentages, cross-tabulations, chi-square tests and Pearson correlation, with a 5% significance level. The numerical results in this document have been retained from the supplied report; they have not been recalculated from individual responses because the raw dataset was not provided. Before publication, the author should confirm the status of the data, rerun the tests from the original spreadsheet, check p-values and degrees of freedom, and document consent and any required institutional approval. The source report describes some figures as illustrative, so their status should be made clear rather than presented as independently verified evidence.

5. Conceptual Framework

The study considers a possible pathway from commerce education to skills training, then to digital and industry-related abilities, practical exposure, perceived employability and readiness for future work. The process is not necessarily linear: access to technology, local job availability, language confidence, family resources and other circumstances may also influence a student's opportunities.

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Table 1. Respondent profile

Variable	Category	Respondents	Percentage
Gender	Male	46	46%
Gender	Female	54	54%
Age	18–20 years	48	48%
Age	21–23 years	42	42%
Age	Above 23 years	10	10%
Programme	B.Com	62	62%
Programme	M.Com	28	28%
Programme	Other commerce-related programme	10	10%
Employment	Not currently employed	68	68%
Employment	Part-time	12	12%
Employment	Internship/trainee	15	15%
Employment	Full-time	5	5%

6. Results and Discussion

6.1 Labour-market awareness and training

Twenty-four respondents reported high awareness of changing labour-market requirements, 51 reported moderate awareness and 25 reported low awareness. Although 75% fell into the moderate or high categories, fewer than one-quarter selected high awareness. Students may know that work is changing without having a clear picture of the skills required for particular roles, recruitment processes or entry-level expectations. Colleges could address this through career sessions, alumni discussions and conversations with employers.

Table 2. Awareness and skills-development participation

Measure	Response	Respondents	Percentage
Labour-market awareness	High	24	24%
Labour-market awareness	Moderate	51	51%
Labour-market awareness	Low	25	25%
Skills-development participation	Participated	62	62%
Skills-development participation	Not participated	38	38%

Sixty-two students reported taking part in at least one skill-development activity, while 38 had not. Participation is a useful starting point, but the number does not tell us how much practice students received or whether they can use a skill independently. Short practical assessments, portfolios and demonstrations could help colleges judge the value of training more clearly.

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6.2 Digital and industry-related skills

Digital or computer skills were reported by 70 respondents. Communication was selected by 58, accounting software by 52, data analysis by 42, entrepreneurship by 31 and AI-related skills by 28. Multiple responses were permitted, so the percentages do not add up to 100%. The pattern suggests that computer skills were more commonly reported than data analysis or AI-related skills. Commerce teaching can connect these areas with practical work—for example, analysing a sales spreadsheet, recording transactions in accounting software or explaining a financial trend.

Table 3. Skills reported (multiple responses allowed)

Skill area	Respondents	Percentage
Digital/computer skills	70	70%
Communication	58	58%
Accounting software	52	52%
Data analysis	42	42%
Entrepreneurship	31	31%
AI-related skills	28	28%

Table 4. Reported proficiency

Measure	Level	Respondents	Percentage
Digital skills	High	40	40%
Digital skills	Moderate	50	50%
Digital skills	Low	10	10%
Industry-related skills	High	30	30%
Industry-related skills	Moderate	52	52%
Industry-related skills	Low	18	18%

Half the respondents rated their digital skills as moderate, while 40% rated them high. For industry-related skills, 52% selected moderate and 30% high. These are self-assessments, not independent skills tests. Even so, they suggest that more opportunities to practise job-specific tasks and receive feedback may be useful.

6.3 Practical exposure and perceived employability

Forty respondents reported internship or practical exposure; 60 reported none. This is a notable gap because practical assignments give students a chance to apply what they have studied and become familiar with instructions, deadlines and teamwork. Where formal internships are hard to arrange, supervised projects with local organisations, accounting simulations, case studies and short employer-led assignments may provide alternative ways to practise.

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Table 5. Practical exposure and perceived employability

Measure	Category	Respondents	Percentage
Practical exposure/internship	Yes	40	40%
Practical exposure/internship	No	60	60%
Perceived employability	High	45	45%
Perceived employability	Moderate	35	35%
Perceived employability	Low	20	20%

Perceived employability was rated high by 45 respondents, moderate by 35 and low by 20. These answers describe students' views of their prospects; they are not placement rates. Further work could compare students' perceptions with practical assessments, internship feedback, interview performance and later employment outcomes.

6.4 Skills for future employment and perceived gaps

Digital competence was selected as important for future employment by 82% of respondents. Communication followed at 76%, analytical thinking at 71%, problem-solving at 69%, adaptability at 66% and AI awareness at 61%. Students therefore appear to recognise both technical and broader workplace capabilities. The ability to explain ideas, assess information and adjust to new tasks remains relevant alongside digital competence.

Table 6. Future-ready skills

Skill	Respondents	Percentage
Digital competence	82	82%
Communication	76	76%
Analytical thinking	71	71%
Problem-solving	69	69%
Adaptability	66	66%
AI awareness	61	61%

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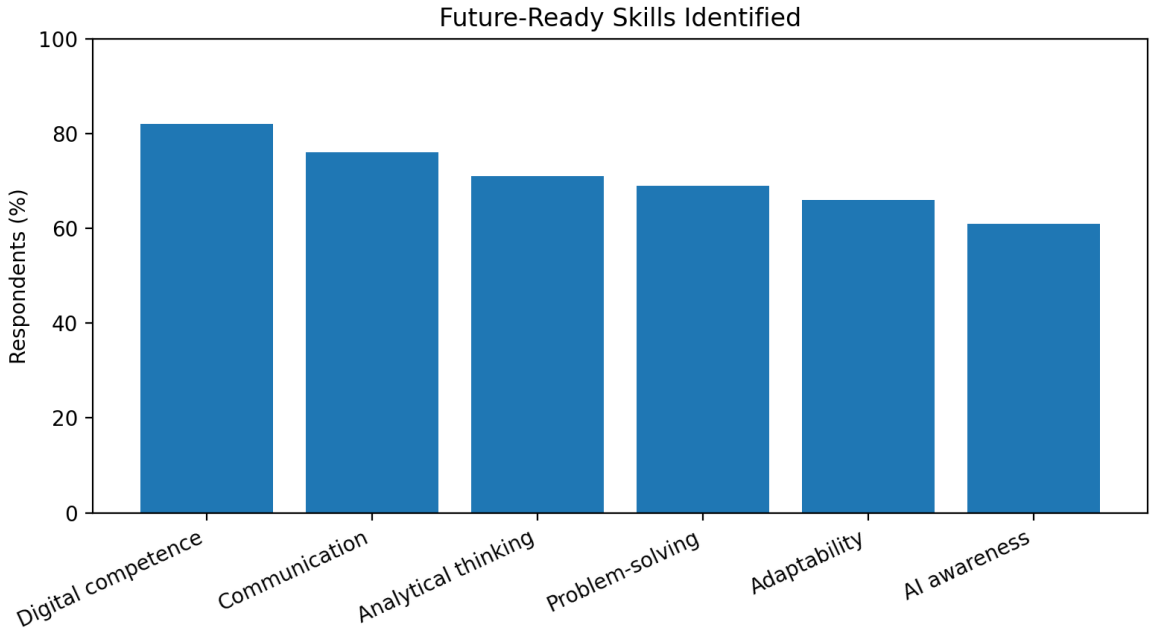


Figure 1. Future-ready skills identified by respondents.

Practical experience was the most frequently selected skills gap (68%), followed by advanced Excel/data analysis (63%). Communication was selected by 54%, AI/digital tools by 49%, industry knowledge by 45% and interview skills by 40%. The fact that communication appears both as an important skill and a perceived gap is understandable: students can value a capability while believing that their own performance needs improvement.

Table 7. Perceived skills gaps

Skill gap	Respondents	Percentage
Practical experience	68	68%
Advanced Excel/data analysis	63	63%
Communication	54	54%
AI/digital tools	49	49%
Industry knowledge	45	45%
Interview skills	40	40%

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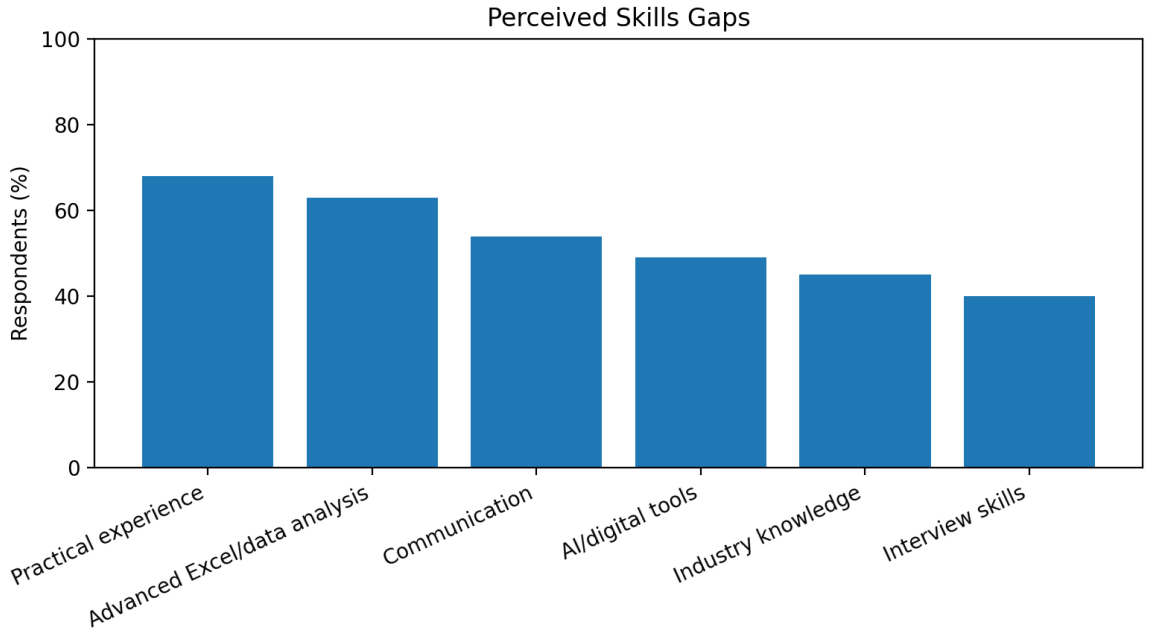


Figure 2. Skills gaps reported by respondents.

6.5 Sources of career information

College or teachers were identified as a source of career information by 72% of respondents, and internet or social platforms by 68%. Friends or peers were selected by 45%, job portals by 43%, career counselling by 29% and government employment/skill portals by 22%. Colleges have a useful position in this information network. They can help students check the reliability of online vacancy notices and understand how to use official employment and training services.

Table 8. Career-information sources (multiple responses allowed)

Source	Respondents	Percentage
College/teachers	72	72%
Internet/social platforms	68	68%
Friends/peers	45	45%
Job portals	43	43%
Career counselling	29	29%
Government employment/skill portals	22	22%

7. Hypothesis Testing

The first cross-tabulation compares participation in skill development with perceived employability. Among the 62 participants, 32 reported high, 20 moderate and 10 low employability. Among the 38 who had not participated, the respective counts were 8, 15 and 15. The supplied report gives $\chi^2 = 10.99$, df = 2

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and p = .004. As the reported p-value is below .05, H01 is rejected. The pattern indicates an association in this sample, but it does not show that training alone caused the difference.

Table 9. Training participation and perceived employability

Participation	High	Moderate	Low	Total
Participated	32	20	10	62
Not participated	8	15	15	38
Total	40	35	25	100

For industry-related skills and perceived employment opportunities, the report gives mean scores of 3.42 (SD = 0.78) and 3.31 (SD = 0.82). Pearson's correlation is reported as r = +.61, p < .001. This suggests that students with higher industry-related skill scores tended to report more positive employment-opportunity perceptions. H02 is rejected on the reported result, although the original scoring method and dataset should be checked before publication.

Table 10. Scores used in the correlation analysis

Variable	Mean	Standard deviation
Industry-related skill score	3.42	0.78
Perceived employment-opportunity score	3.31	0.82

Among the 40 students with practical exposure, 28 reported high preparedness, 10 moderate and 2 low. Among the 60 without exposure, the respective counts were 12, 28 and 20. The report gives $\chi^2 = 26.72$, df = 2 and p < .001. H03 is rejected at the stated significance level. This is a strong difference within the reported sample, though other factors may also influence preparedness.

Table 11. Practical exposure and preparedness

Practical exposure	High	Moderate	Low	Total
Yes	28	10	2	40
No	12	28	20	60
Total	40	38	22	100

For future-ready skills and labour-market readiness, the report states that 30 of the 40 students in the high-skills group also reported high readiness. In the moderate-skills group, 13 reported high readiness, 26 moderate and 11 low. In the low-skills group, the counts were 2, 3 and 5. The reported result is $\chi^2 = 27.80$, df = 4 and p < .001, so H04 is rejected. The original output should be checked because the source summary contains an inconsistency in the p-value presentation.

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Table 12. Future-ready skills and labour-market readiness

Skills level	High readiness	Moderate readiness	Low readiness	Total
High	30	9	1	40
Moderate	13	26	11	50
Low	2	3	5	10
Total	45	38	17	100

Table 13. Summary of reported hypothesis tests

Hypothesis	Test	Reported result	Decision
H01: Training and employability	Chi-square	$\chi^2 = 10.99$, $p = .004$	Reject H01
H02: Industry skills and opportunities	Pearson correlation	$r = .61$, $p < .001$	Reject H02
H03: Practical exposure and preparedness	Chi-square	$\chi^2 = 26.72$, $p < .001$	Reject H03
H04: Future skills and readiness	Chi-square	$\chi^2 = 27.80$, $p < .001$	Reject H04

8. Main Findings

- 75% reported moderate or high awareness of labour-market requirements, while 24% reported high awareness.
- 62% had taken part in at least one skills-development activity.
- Digital/computer skills were reported by 70%; AI-related skills by 28%.
- 60% reported no internship or comparable practical exposure.
- 45% rated their perceived employability as high; this is not a verified placement rate.
- Digital competence (82%), communication (76%) and analytical thinking (71%) were the leading future-ready skills.
- Practical experience (68%) and advanced Excel/data analysis (63%) were the most commonly reported gaps.
- College/teachers were the leading career-information source (72%); government employment/skill portals were selected by 22%.
- The reported tests indicate associations between the four skill-related factors and their corresponding employability or readiness measures.

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9. Recommendations

- Include more applied work in commerce subjects. Spreadsheet analysis, accounting software exercises and short business reports can help students demonstrate skills, not just recall concepts.
- Offer several routes to practical exposure. Internships can be complemented by supervised projects, local business case studies, alumni mentoring and employer-led assignments.
- Build communication practice into regular coursework through presentations, business writing, group discussion, teamwork and mock interviews.
- Make career guidance easier to access. Sessions can cover job roles, recruitment processes, reliable job portals and official training schemes, with a clear contact person for student queries.
- Teach AI and digital tools alongside verification, privacy and professional judgement, especially for accounting and financial information.
- Evaluate training through practical tasks, portfolios and feedback rather than course completion alone.
- Develop links among colleges, local employers, professional bodies and skills agencies to identify relevant projects and emerging skill needs.
- Future research should include more institutions and districts, explain the sampling process, provide the questionnaire and analyse anonymised respondent-level data.

10. Conclusion

The figures presented in this paper suggest that commerce students recognise the importance of digital competence, communication, analytical thinking and problem-solving for future work. They also identify practical areas where more support may be needed. Six in ten respondents reported no internship or comparable exposure, and practical experience was the most frequently selected skills gap. Advanced Excel and data analysis were also prominent. These results make a case for connecting classroom learning with tasks that students may encounter in employment.

The reported statistical tests indicate associations between skills-development participation, industry-related skills, practical exposure and future-ready skills, and the corresponding measures of employability or readiness. Because the study is cross-sectional and uses a non-probability sample, these relationships should not be treated as proof of cause and effect. The findings concern perceived readiness rather than confirmed employment outcomes. Colleges in Vidarbha can use the patterns as a starting point for reviewing practical assignments, internships, digital training and career support. Broader conclusions would require a larger and more representative study.

11. Limitations

- The reported sample contains 100 respondents and may not represent commerce students across Vidarbha.
- Purposive/convenience sampling may introduce selection bias.

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- Cross-sectional analysis can identify associations but cannot establish causality.
- Several measures are self-reported, and independent skills assessments or verified employment outcomes are not presented.
- Raw responses and the full questionnaire were not supplied for independent recalculation.

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