

# Soft Skills: Unlocking the Potential of Management Graduates

Dr. Subhash Sharma<sup>1</sup>, Dr Pallavi Mehta<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1 & 2</sup> Associate Professor, Faculty of Management, Pacific University, Udaipur

Email - drpmehta2008@gmail.com

**Abstract:** We live in the 21<sup>st</sup> century but still people today even do not know the importance of Soft Skills which can help students' grabbing opportunity and place in the corporate world easily. Because of the ignorance factors of soft skills they are unable to reach to the destination for which they started and hardly get their potential they have with them. Here in the paper the researchers try to focus on the need & importance of Soft Skills that may help unlock the potential of students and can easily place in the industry.

Soft Skill is a unique concept of enhancing the overall personality of oneself. It is designed to help students to improve their proficiency in English, develop their confidence, attitude and discipline them, so that they can cope with the requirement of the corporate world.

The basic idea behind developing Soft Skills in the higher education is to provide current, highly motivational and interesting material for the students to groom them according to the industry requirements. The use of soft skills methodology compels sustained attention and offers a satisfying aesthetic experience, the methodology of dividing the whole group in smaller segment and then giving individual attention helps the students to feel positive about language acquisition experience. The global meltdown is putting the credibility of Management Institutions in the difficult position of cutting back the placement packages that students have come to expect in recent times. The Management Institutions faced with rising costs & increasing Fees in the recent years. And as a result, Management research shows Satisfaction scores reversing the upward trend of the past few years.

The present paper is an attempt to share various issues, experiences, facts presenting the insights of selected CEO's/ Top Management from Banking, Hotel, Financial, Retail and Travel sector regarding the Soft Skills in context with presentation skills, communication skills, behavioral skills etc. They shared with us about the real demand of the time and how the management institutions can become a bridge between the institutes and the industry to provide them the right candidates who can take up the challenges from the very first day of their joining and become a helping hand to them.

Against this backdrop an attempt has been made in the present paper to meet the following objective

- To enhance and develop employability skills
- To enhance communication skills to express effectively.
- To develop intra & interpersonal skills, and leadership skills.

**Key Words:** Soft Skills, Management Graduates, Personal grooming, Employability, communication

## 1. INTRODUCTION:

Soft skills refer to a broad set of skills, competencies, behaviors, attitudes, and personal qualities that enable the person to interact and present effectively, work well with others, perform well, and achieve their goals. These skills are broadly applicable and essential as these complement other skills such as technical, vocational and academic skills.

## 2. BENEFITS OF THE SOFT SKILLS:

In today's era soft skills plays major role for the organizational growth and sustainability, without these the organization is unable to move and develop. The individuals having the tact of handling the situations with a good communication and capability can lead to the development of whole enterprises. When an employer is self motivated and is able to understand the problems of the employees than he can easily make them satisfied and relax apart from the various disturbances. People will prefer the one who is pleasant enough and is willing to listen to you and is able to answer firmly without impatience and anger. Ethics, emotional intelligence and positive attitude keep a person intact & help in moving ahead on the path of career. Individuals and organizations must be smart enough to develop and utilize new soft skills by providing training in order to maintain the competitive level.

Having a proper balance of hard and soft skills is one way to compete and attain the best against hundreds of others applicants in a tedious job market. Therefore, one must focus on the soft skills properly as now a days there is extreme need of the soft skills along with the hard skills as one can be expert in the hard skills but it is essential for him to understand the things calmly and act maturely.

### 3. COMPONENTS OF SOFT SKILL:

Soft skills are required at each and every step of the life for betterment and success. It is essential for an MBA student to learn to work in groups, cooperate with the others, in order to withstand and resolve conflict; one must be able to interact with the people of diverse culture and intellectual. Sense of belongingness is needed to work in a dynamic environment without any fear or anxiety, patience is must to compete with the various situations. Human resource manager of six companies were invited to interview MBA students of selected colleges. The opinions of HR managers regarding the following variables of soft skills of students were recorded with the help of a questionnaire. The same students were again interviewed after 3 months intensive soft skills training.

### 4. REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

Laura H. Lippman, Renee Ryberg, Rachel Carney & Kristin A. Moore (2015) reviewed more than 380 resources from around the world across the fields, including rigorous empirical studies, employer studies, and findings of international consensus projects. These resources examined the relationship between soft skills and key workforce outcomes, including employment, performance on the job, wages, and entrepreneurial success. A set of key skills was identified as being important elements of all aspects of workforce success, are applicable across sectors and diverse world regions. These are social skills, communication skills, problem solving skills, critical thinking skills, decision-making skills, self-control skills and positive self-concept skills.

R Venkatesan Iyenger (2015) Employers when they recruit people for administrative positions usually look for candidates with an MBA degree, which has come to be seen as the leading postgraduate business degree. MBA degree holder is expected to possess the necessary knowledge and skills to manage business.

MBA professionals are recruited for positions in such diverse fields as consulting, finance, accounting, healthcare, pharmaceuticals, technology, manufacturing, products and services, and education. It was observed that companies expect a number of skills from the MBAs like Oral communication, Listening skills Written communication Presentation skills Adaptability etc.

Revathi Turaga (2015) emphasized that in order to attain the success at workplace a manager has to observe & follow the below mentioned points-

Listen to the other person's point of view and show empathy.

Learn where to accommodate and where to collaborate and when to compromise.

Sharma S., Mehta P. (2016) in their research paper "Hire for Skills, Prepare for Attitude," put emphasis on positive attitude among the students and strongly suggested the B schools to prepare students to have positive attitude in all circumstances at the work place. The authors also discussed the lacunas, the fresher have and how can they work that they may reach to the destination successfully.

Sharma S., Mehta P., (2016) in their research paper "Efficacy of Soft Skills Training in Building Positive Attitude and Overall Personality Development of Management Graduates" discussed the changing pattern of recruitment and training. The authors laid emphasis on the way the students are taught in the B schools and suggested to design a separate syllabus for enhancing employability through which the recruiters can be satisfied and create a positive image in front of them.

R Venkatesan Iyenger (2015) Employers when they recruit people for administrative positions usually look for candidates with an MBA degree, which has come to be seen as the leading postgraduate business degree. MBA degree holder is expected to possess the necessary knowledge and skills to manage business like Oral communication, Listening skills, Presentation Skills, Adaptability, Innovation, Self driven, ability to follow leader, Negotiation skills etc. These skills can be set in the institute itself when the students are into studies and be able to get the importance also of all the skills.

Sharma S. (2014) in his paper "Nail the Talent, Hammer with Soft Skills, focused on the skills required to justify the role of an employee in the hospital industry. And how a management institute should instill the same while pursuing the course, so that the students may feel energetic, confidence while working in the industry.

Baum Tom spoke in his research that the Social construction of skills required focused behavior skills to satisfy the guests coming from all parts of the globe. The author stated that cultural, emotional and aesthetic factors help in determining the skills demands of work in the sector. Behavior is the only factor that is key to success and help to attract tourist.

Martins Flavio (2013) of the opinion that the fresher those are joining hospitality sector should equip with numerous skills like taking responsibility, accuracy, efficiency, communication skills, moderate in tone, flexible etc. that create a healthy environment at the work place and the tourist may feel happy to interact with. This can be possible when we impart the same education prior to join the industry. Here the role of faculty members and the

management institution come in force, they need to sit with the industry people and design syllabus accordingly, so that they can supply what is desirous in the market.

#### 5. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

- To know the overall level of soft skills among management students from employers perspective.
- To know the effectiveness of training in developing selected soft skills among management graduates.
- To know about various components of soft skills required for leadership development in MBA graduates.

#### 6. HYPOTHESIS OF THE STUDY:

- H01. Overall level of soft skills is not good among management graduates from employers' perspective.
- H02. Effect of training in developing different soft skills among management students is not significant.
- H03 There is no significant relationship between soft skills training and development of leadership skills among management students.

#### 7. SAMPLE OF THE STUDY:

250 management graduates were selected from colleges of Southern Rajasthan.

#### 8. METHOD OF DATA COLLECTION IN STUDY:

The impact of soft skill training on the management graduates was studied by interviewing them before and after rigorous training sessions of soft skills wherein they were exposed to various training methods to enhance and develop employability skills by intensifying intra & interpersonal skills, business etiquettes, confidence level, team spirit, leadership skills and communication skills to express effectively

The opinion of panel members regarding different soft skills was recorded with the help of a questionnaire before and after 3 month's intensive soft skills training. For the purpose of analysis following scores were assigned to each option:

Option	Level of soft skill
Excellent	4
Good	3
Average	2
Poor	1
Very Poor	0

#### 9. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION:

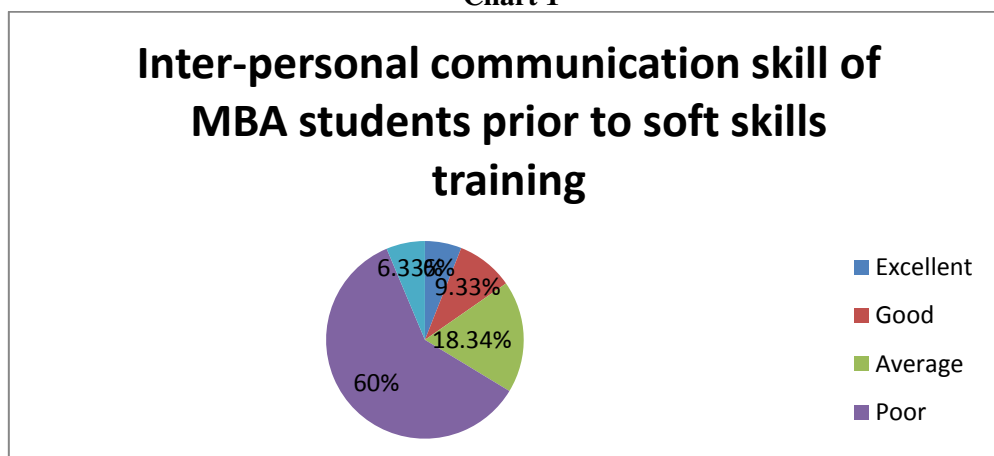
Inter-Personal Communication Skill:

Data relating to Inter-personal communication skill of 250 MBA students were collected and tabulated as below-

**Table 1: Inter-personal communication skill among MBA students prior to soft skills training**

Soft Skill	Excellent	Good	Average	Poor	Very Poor	Total
Inter-personal communication skill	90	140	275	900	95	1500
Points	4	3	2	1	0	
Scores	360	420	550	900	0	2230

**Chart 1**



Analysis of above table and chart shows that majority of MBA graduates i.e. 60% were poor at Inter-personal communication. Merely 15.33% MBA graduates were between the ranges of good to excellent. Human resource managers of all the six companies were quite disappointed with the students’ inability to interact effectively. They were not confident, fluent and precise. They were quite hesitant even in speaking about their area of specialization. After three months intensive training of soft skills having good number of sessions on Inter-personal communication improvement the following data relating to Inter-personal communication skill of same 250 MBA graduates was collected & tabulated as below-

**Table 2 :Inter-personal communication skill among MBA students after soft skills training**

Soft Skill	Excellent	Good	Average	Poor	Very Poor	Total
Inter-personal communication skill	198	426	387	414	75	1500
Points	4	3	2	1	0	
Scores	792	1278	774	414	0	3258

**Chart 2**

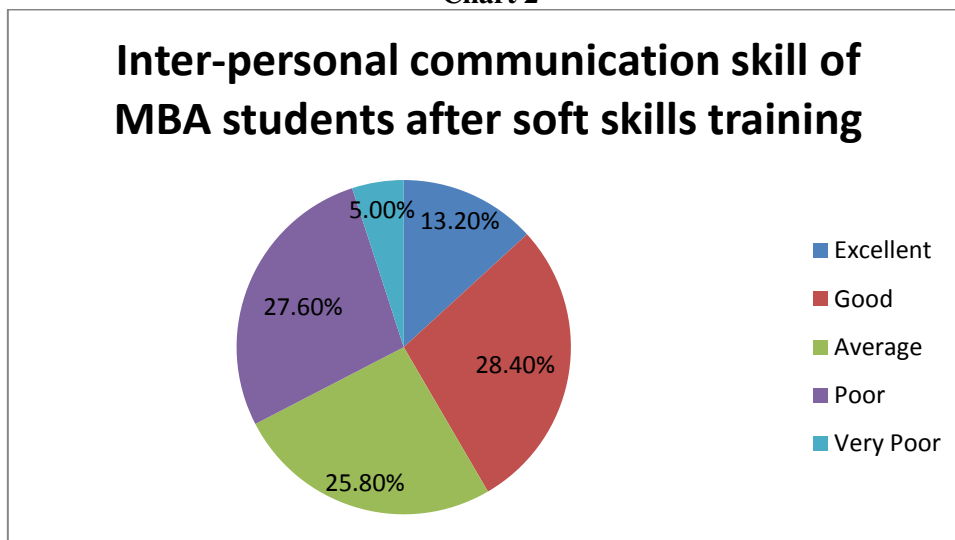
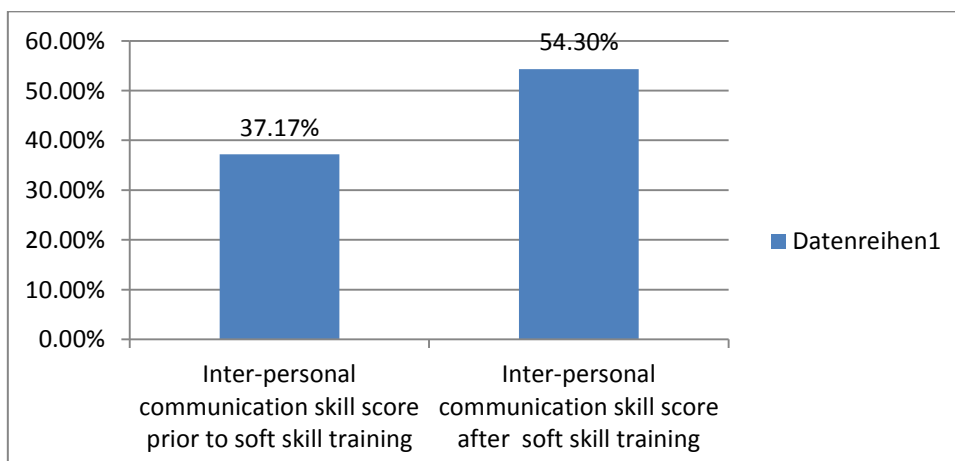


Table 2 and chart 2 reveals that just 32.60% MBA students were poor or very poor in inter personal communication after 3 months intensive soft skills training. 41.60% MBA students were between the range of good to excellent. This assessment was done by the same human resource managers who interviewed these 250 MBA students earlier. HR managers were not all that dissatisfied after interviewing the same students again. They were little more confident, fluent and precise. They spoke quite confidently about their area of specialization. Chart 3 clearly shows that inter personal communication scores of MBA students which were 37.17% (total marks 2230) prior to soft skills training improved and reached upto 54.30% (total marks 3258) after three months intensive soft skills training. It clearly indicates that level of inter personal communication is low among MBA students and it can be improved by intensive soft skills training.

**Chart 3: Comparative scores of inter personal communication of MBA students prior to & after soft skills training**



To ascertain whether the improvement achieved in level of inter personal communication of MBA students through intensive soft skills training is significant or not; Z test was conducted.

$$|Z| = \frac{P_1 - P_2}{\sqrt{P_0q_0\left(\frac{1}{n_1} + \frac{1}{n_2}\right)}}$$

$$|Z| = \frac{.543 - .3717}{\sqrt{.45735 \times .54265 \left(\frac{1}{250} + \frac{1}{250}\right)}}$$

$$|Z| = 3.85$$

Since the computed value of Z= 3.85 is higher than critical value of Z = 1.96. It does not lie in acceptance region at 5% level of significance. Thus we can say that there is significant difference between level of inter personal communication prior to soft skills training & after soft skills training. It improves significantly after intensive soft skills training.

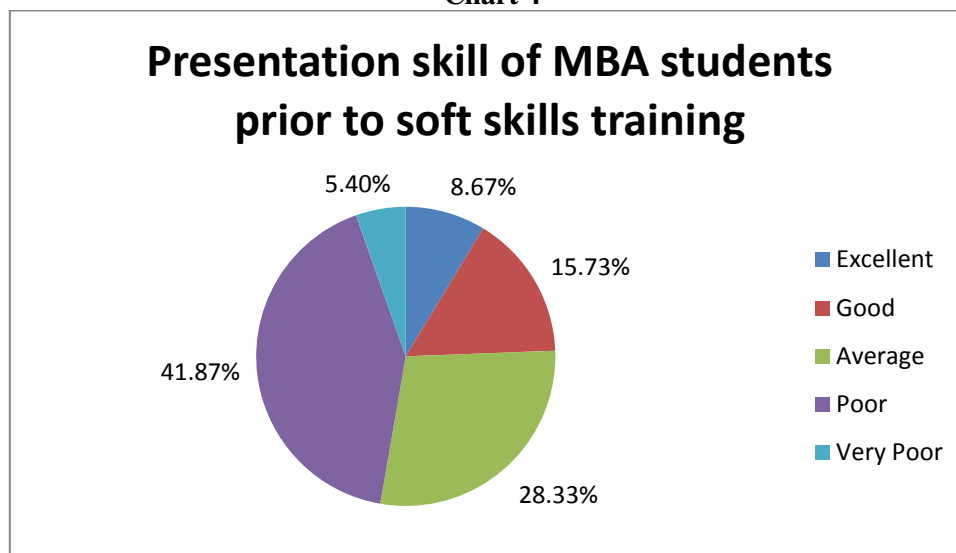
### Presentation Skills

Data relating to Presentation skills of 250 MBA students were collected from the human resource managers of 6 companies and tabulated as below-

**Table 3: Presentation skill among MBA students prior to soft skills training**

Soft Skill	Excellent	Good	Average	Poor	Very Poor	Total
Presentation skill	130	236	425	628	81	1500
Points	4	3	2	1	0	
Scores	520	708	850	628	0	2706

**Chart 4**



Analysis of table 3 and chart 4 shows that majority of MBA students i.e. 42% were poor at presentation skill. Merely 24.40% MBA students were between the ranges of good to excellent. Human resource managers of all the six companies were quite disappointed with the students' inability to give the presentations. They were not confident, were having stage fear, shy and language barrier. They were quite hesitant and thus, were not able to express their views. Lack of knowledge was also one of the reasons.

After three months of intensive training of soft skills having good number of sessions on presentation skills, improvement was found and the following data relating to presentation skill of same 250 MBA students were collected from the same human resource managers of 6 companies and tabulated as below-

**Table 4: Presentation skill among MBA students after soft skills training**

Soft Skill	Excellent	Good	Average	Poor	Very Poor	Total
Presentation skill	157	488	531	270	54	1500
Points	4	3	2	1	0	
Scores	628	1464	1062	270	0	3424

Chart 5

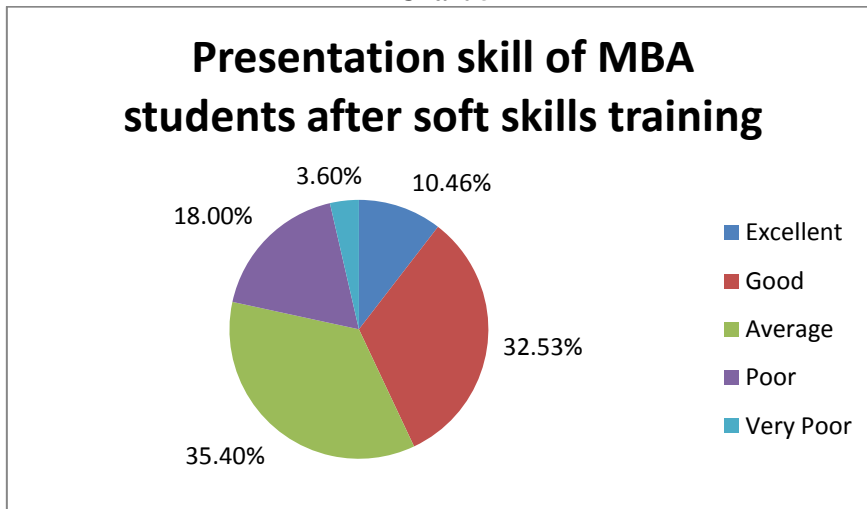
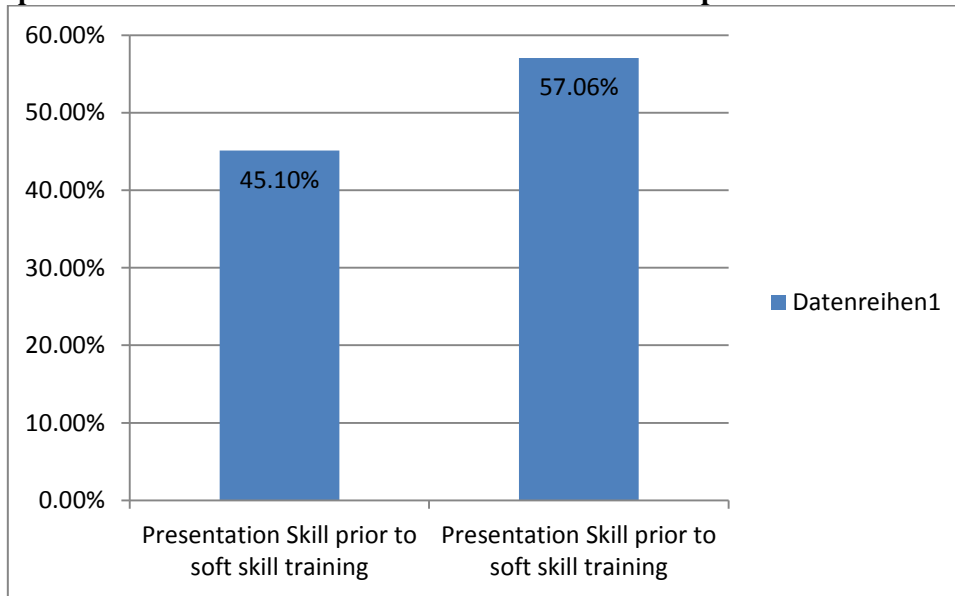


Table 4 and chart 5 reveals that only 21% of the MBA students were found poor or very poor regarding the presentation skill after 3 months of intensive soft skills training. Around 43% MBA students were between the range of good to excellent. This assessment was done by the same human resource managers who interviewed these 250 MBA students earlier. Thus, it was found that HR managers were not all that dissatisfied after interviewing the same students again. Students were little more confident, fluent and precise. They spoke more confidently regarding the matter.

Chart 6 clearly shows that presentation skill scores of MBA students which were 45.10% (total marks 2706) prior to soft skills training improved and reached up to 57.06% (total marks 3424) after three months intensive soft skills training. It clearly indicates that level of presentation skill was low among MBA students and it can be improved by intensive soft skills training.

Chart6: Comparative scores of Presentation skills of MBA students prior to & after soft skills training



To ascertain whether the improvement achieved in level of presentation skill of MBA students through intensive soft skills training is significant or not; Z test was conducted.

$$|Z| = \frac{P1 - P2}{\sqrt{P0q0(\frac{1}{n1} + \frac{1}{n2})}}$$

$$|Z| = \frac{.5706 - .4510}{\sqrt{.5108 \times .4892 (\frac{1}{250} + \frac{1}{250})}}$$

$$|Z| = 2.68$$

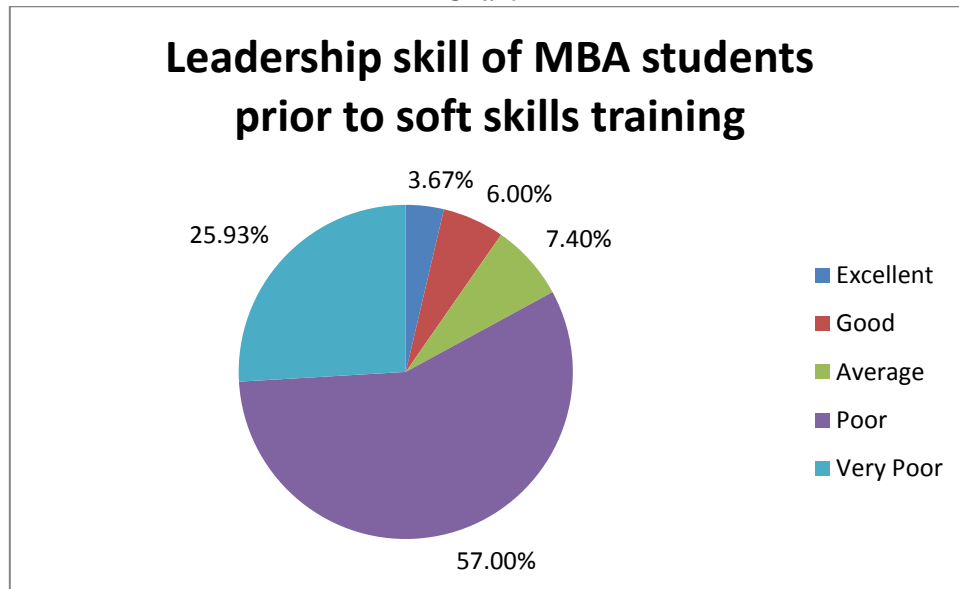
Since the computed value of Z= 2.68 is higher than critical value of Z = 1.96. It does not lie in acceptance region at 5% level of significance. Thus we can say that there is significant difference between level of presentation prior to soft skills training & after soft skills training. It improves significantly after intensive soft skills training.

**Leadership skill:**

Data relating to leadership skill of 250 MBA students were collected and tabulated as below-

**Table 5 Leadership skill among MBA students prior to soft skills training**

Soft Skill	Excellent	Good	Average	Poor	Very Poor	Total
Leadership skill	55	90	111	855	389	1500
Points	4	3	2	1	0	
Scores	220	270	222	855	0	1567

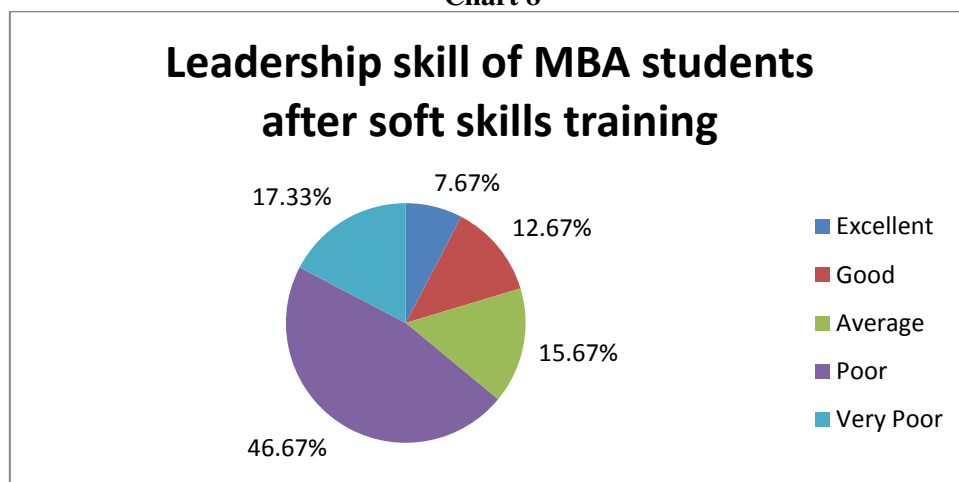
**Chart 7**

Analysis of table 5 and chart 7 shows that majority of MBA students i.e. 82.93% were poor to very poor at leadership skill. Merely 10% MBA students were between the range of good to excellent. Human resource managers of all the six companies were quite disappointed with the students' inability to handle and manage the situations given to them. They were not confident, appropriate regarding their decision level and were quite confused. They were quite hesitant and were lacking the zeal of taking the decisions while acting as a leader.

After three months intensive training of soft skills having good number of sessions on leadership skill improvement the following data relating to leadership skill of same 250 MBA students were collected from the same human resource managers of 6 companies and tabulated as below-

**Table 6 Leadership skill among MBA students after soft skills training**

Soft Skill	Excellent	Good	Average	Poor	Very Poor	Total
Leadership skill	115	190	235	700	260	1500
Points	4	3	2	1	0	
Scores	460	570	470	700	0	2200

**Chart 8**

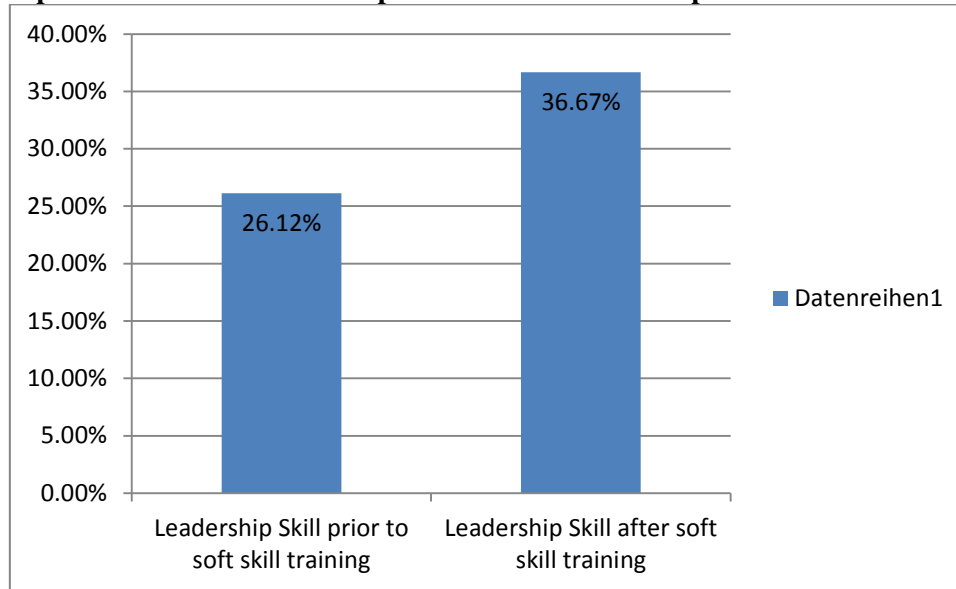
Above table 6 and chart 8 reveals that 64% MBA students were still poor or very poor in leadership after 3 months intensive soft skills training. Near about 21% MBA students were between the range of good to excellent. This

assessment was done by the same human resource managers who interviewed these 250 MBA students earlier. HR managers were not all that dissatisfied after interviewing the same students again.

They were little more confident, were having better performance while taking decisions. They were able to handle and manage the situations well.

It clearly shows that leadership scores of MBA students which were 26.12% (total marks 1567) prior to soft skills training improved and reached upto 36.67% (total marks 2200) after three months intensive soft skills training. It clearly indicates that level of leadership is low among MBA students and it can be improved by intensive soft skills training.

**Chart 9. Comparative scores of leadership skills of MBA students prior to & after soft skills training**



To ascertain whether the improvement achieved in level of leadership skill of MBA students through intensive soft skills training is significant or not; Z test was conducted.

$$|Z| = \frac{P_1 - P_2}{\sqrt{P_0 q_0 \left( \frac{1}{n_1} + \frac{1}{n_2} \right)}}$$

$$|Z| = \frac{.3667 - .2612}{\sqrt{.31395 \times .68605 \left( \frac{1}{250} + \frac{1}{250} \right)}}$$

$$|Z| = 2.54$$

Since the computed value of  $Z = 2.54$  is higher than critical value of  $Z = 1.96$ . It does not lie in acceptance region at 5% level of significance. Thus we can say that there is significant difference between level of leadership skill prior to soft skills training & after soft skills training. It improves significantly after intensive soft skills training.

## 10. FINDINGS:

- Inter personal communication skill scores of MBA students were 37.17% prior to soft skills training. It improved and reached upto 54.30% after three months intensive soft skills training. Z value is 3.85 which imply there is significant & meaningful improvement in inter personal communication skill of MBA students by soft skill training.
- Presentation skill scores of MBA students were 45.10% prior to soft skills training. It improved and reached upto 57.06% after three months intensive soft skills training. Z value is 2.68 which imply there is significant & meaningful improvement in presentation skill of MBA students by soft skill training.

## 11. CONCLUSION:

Based on the study the researchers reached to the conclusion that soft skills training to students at the institute level can groom and develop as per the demand of the industry.

Based on the research, the researchers suggest that -

- Focus should be given on Communication skills.
- Students' abilities to be refined in terms of fluency in language so as to provoke qualitative thought process in problem solving, critical reflective ability, flexibility, and adaptability, willingness to learn and to continue to learn.
- Newest technology is introduced in the institute to make the students techno savvy.



- More focus should be given on drafting messages and notices to convey a good and sensible message in the organization.
- Industry need people with a jack of traits therefore, students be prepared accordingly, means more focus be given on practical aspects of business.
- Students are taught with proper grammar, accent to present themselves better.
- Discipline be discussed at large that helps industry to absorb students.

With these points the researchers conclude that the employability quotient be taken care at the institute level to make the students more employable and placeable in the market.

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