

Research Paper

Perceived Employability and Its Determinants Among Generation Z Students in Tripura: A Quantitative Study

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the perceived employability of Generation Z students in Tripura, focusing on the influence of individual, institutional, and environmental factors. A quantitative research design was employed, involving 300 undergraduate students born between 1997 and 2012. Data were collected using the Perceived Employability Scale standardized by K. P. Naachimuthu. Descriptive statistics (mean, median, standard deviation, percentages) and inferential techniques (chi-square test, t-test) were used for analysis and hypothesis testing. The findings revealed that most students exhibited high perceived employability, reflecting an optimistic outlook on career readiness. Socio-economic status emerged as the most significant determinant, followed by institution type and residential location. Gender differences were observed, with females reporting slightly higher perceived employability than males. However, family background did not significantly impact perceptions. Notably, students from government institutions and rural areas demonstrated higher perceived employability compared to those from private institutions and urban settings. These findings highlight the pivotal role of socio-economic and institutional factors in shaping students' employability confidence. They underscore the need for targeted career support services, particularly for students from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds, private institutions, and urban areas. This study contributes to the literature on employability perceptions by offering insights from an underrepresented region. It provides actionable implications for policymakers and educational institutions to enhance career readiness and address disparities among Generation Z students in Tripura.

Keywords: *Perceived Employability, Generation Z, Socio-economic Status, Career Readiness, Tripura*

The evolving global job market underscores the importance of employability for young graduates. For Generation Z (born between 1997 and 2012), entering higher education institutions with skills aligned to workforce demands is paramount. Beyond technical expertise, competencies such as adaptability, problem-solving, and communication are critical for career readiness. In India, particularly in states like Tripura, where socio-

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Perceived Employability and Its Determinants Among Generation Z Students in Tripura: A Quantitative Study

economic conditions and educational opportunities vary significantly between urban and rural areas, understanding the factors shaping employability perceptions is crucial.

Employability, defined as the possession of skills, knowledge, and attributes required for employment, is influenced by a range of individual and institutional factors. While previous research has highlighted the role of formal education and career support services, in states like Tripura, family background, parents' education, socio-economic status, type of institution, and geographical location significantly shape perceived employability. Perceived employability reflects students' confidence in their readiness to enter the labor market and secure jobs.

This study addresses gaps in the literature by examining employability perceptions among Generation Z students in higher education institutions in Tripura. It focuses on individual and institutional determinants, such as family background, parents' education level, type of institution, and geographical location, to understand their influence on students' self-perceived career readiness. The findings aim to provide actionable insights for educators, policy-makers, and higher education institutions to enhance employability prospects for students in Tripura.

Given the rapid changes in Tripura's educational infrastructure and labor market, understanding the drivers of perceived employability is vital. This research adopts a quantitative approach, utilizing statistical analysis to examine how various individual and institutional factors shape employability perceptions. By contributing to the discourse on employability and higher education in India, this study offers practical recommendations to improve career readiness among Generation Z students.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Employability is a multifaceted concept, explored through various theoretical frameworks. Human capital theory (Álvarez-González et al., 2017; Wittekind et al., 2010) emphasizes skills and education, while social capital theory (Ngoma & Ntale, 2016) focuses on networks. Hillage and Pollard (1998) defined employability as a combination of personal assets, individual circumstances, and labour market conditions.

Niu et al. (2024) found that gender significantly impacts perceived employability among international students, with males in engineering or with work experience exhibiting higher confidence, highlighting the intersectionality of gender and disciplines. In India, Agnihotri et al. (2020) validated a model for media students, integrating academic performance, self-confidence, university support, and labour market conditions, emphasizing higher education institutions' role. Similarly, Bennett et al. (2022) observed a decline in career confidence among Australian business students, indicating gaps in curriculum design and career support. Mahayosnand and Sabra (2024) linked Generation Z's employability to serious leisure activities, which enhanced productivity and self-perceived employability, while excessive casual leisure was associated with stress, suggesting the importance of institutional support for leisure initiatives. Integrating leisure studies into employability research emphasizes the potential of serious leisure activities to enhance mental well-being and productivity (Nimmi et al., 2023; Leitão et al., 2021). These findings support incorporating leisure into higher education and career development programs (Mouratidou et al., 2024; Ma et al., 2024). Despite valuable insights, gaps remain, including the lack of empirical validation for many theoretical frameworks and underdeveloped diagnostic tools for measuring employability.

Perceived Employability and Its Determinants Among Generation Z Students in Tripura: A Quantitative Study

Contextual factors, such as regional disparities and generational characteristics, are often overlooked. While Niu et al. (2024) and Agnihotri et al. (2020) explored specific contexts, their findings may not be broadly generalizable.

Generation Z's unique attributes, including technological adeptness and mental health challenges, require tailored research approaches. Integrating serious leisure into employability frameworks, as suggested by Mahayosnand and Sabra (2024), holds promise but lacks empirical support. Bennett et al. (2022) identified gaps in career development for business students, but further research is needed to extend these findings to other disciplines. This study addresses these gaps by examining perceived employability among Generation Z students in Tripura, India. It integrates individual, demographic, and institutional factors, aiming to provide a comprehensive understanding of employability. This research offers actionable insights for educators, policymakers, and employers, bridging theoretical frameworks and practical applications.

Objectives of the study

The objectives of the present study are given as under:

1. To assess the level of perceived employability among Generation Z students in Tripura.
2. To analyse the influence of individual factors (e.g., family background, parents' education level, socioeconomic status) on perceived employability.
3. To evaluate the impact of institutional factors (e.g., type of institution—government or private) on perceived employability.
4. To compare the perceived employability of Generation Z students based on their study stream, and residential location.

Hypotheses

- **H_{01a} (Gender):** There is no significant influence of gender on perceived employability among Generation Z students.
- **H_{01b} (Family Background):** There is no significant influence of family background on perceived employability among Generation Z students.
- **H_{01c} (Socio-Economic Status):** There is no significant influence of socio-economic status on perceived employability among Generation Z students.
- **H₀₂:** There is no significant impact of institutional factors (e.g., type of institution—government or private) on perceived employability among Generation Z students.
- **H_{03a} (Study Stream):** There is no significant difference in perceived employability among Generation Z students based on their study stream.
- **H_{03b} (Residential Location):** There is no significant difference in perceived employability among Generation Z students based on their residential location.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a quantitative research design to explore the perceived employability and its determinants among Generation Z students in higher education institutions in Tripura. The survey method was chosen due to its ability to collect data from a large sample and enable statistical analysis of variables.

Perceived Employability and Its Determinants Among Generation Z Students in Tripura: A Quantitative Study

Research design and approach

The study adopts a cross-sectional survey design, collecting data at a single point in time to assess the influence of individual and institutional factors on perceived employability among students. A quantitative approach was selected to measure students' perceptions systematically, allowing for generalizability to the broader student population in Tripura.

Population and sample

The population consists of Generation Z students (born between 1997 and 2012) enrolled in undergraduate programs at higher education institutions in Tripura. A random sampling method was employed to select 300 students from both government and private colleges, ensuring representation from diverse backgrounds. This sample size was chosen to ensure statistical power and reliable results.

Instruments

The primary data collection tool was the Perceived Employability Scale developed by K. P. Naachimuthu, which measures self-assessed employability across three dimensions: (i) Value of Pursuing Course, (ii) Insecurity and Stress, and (iii) Skills and Knowledge. The scale uses a five-point Likert scale (Strongly Agree, Agree, Undecided, Disagree, Strongly Disagree) and demonstrates high reliability and validity, with a split-half reliability of 0.90 and a test-retest reliability of 0.74, ensuring its consistency and stability for assessing perceived employability.

Data collection procedure

Data collection was conducted in collaboration with higher education institutions in Tripura. After obtaining institutional permissions, participants were provided with an informed consent form that explained the study's purpose, voluntary participation, and confidentiality of responses. The survey was administered using paper-and-pencil methods to accommodate students with limited internet access. Each session took about 15–25 minutes.

Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis was conducted using descriptive and inferential statistics to test the study's hypotheses and examine the relationship between perceived employability and various factors. Descriptive statistics (e.g., mean, standard deviation) summarized perceived employability and its dimensions. Ordinal Logistic Regression assessed the relationship between individual factors (e.g., family background, parents' education, socioeconomic status) and perceived employability. The Chi-Square test evaluated the impact of institutional factors (e.g., type of institution), and an independent samples t-test compared perceived employability across fields of study.

RESULTS

Demographics

As is evidenced in Table 1, the sample consisted of slightly more female students (52.3%) compared to males (47.7%), indicating a nearly balanced gender representation with a marginally higher participation of females. A significant portion of the students (60.0%) belonged to nuclear families, while the remaining 40.0% came from joint families, reflecting a shift toward nuclear family structures. In terms of parents' education levels, the majority (83.0%) had only attained school-level education, while a smaller proportion had completed graduation (13.3%) or post-graduation (3.7%), suggesting relatively low parental educational attainment. Regarding socio-economic status, most students came from medium-income

Perceived Employability and Its Determinants Among Generation Z Students in Tripura: A Quantitative Study

households (63.3%), followed by high-income (22.0%) and low-income groups (14.0%). The data also highlighted that a large majority of students (74.7%) were enrolled in government institutions, with only 25.3% attending private institutions, which indicated a greater reliance on government-supported education. The residential distribution showed an almost equal split between rural (51.7%) and urban (48.3%) students, ensuring a diverse representation.

Table 1: Demographic Information of Respondents

Demographic Variable	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender		
- Female	157	52.3
- Male	143	47.7
Family Type		
- Joint	120	40.0
- Nuclear	180	60.0
Parents' Education Level		
- School	249	83.0
- Graduation	40	13.3
- Post Graduation	11	3.7
Socio-Economic Status		
- High	66	22.0
- Medium	190	63.3
- Low	42	14.0
Institution Type		
- Government	224	74.7
- Private	76	25.3
Residential Location		
- Rural	155	51.7
- Urban	145	48.3
Academic Stream		
- Science	102	34
- Arts	198	66

Furthermore, the analysis of academic stream preferences revealed that the majority of students (66%) were pursuing Arts, followed by 34% in science, indicating that Arts was the most preferred stream among the participants.

Level of perceived employability

The analysis, summarized in Table 2, revealed that the majority of students (82.3%) demonstrated a high level of perceived employability, with 133 females and 114 males scoring above the designated threshold. This indicates that most students were confident in their employability skills and job preparedness. A smaller proportion of the sample, comprising 10.7% (16 females and 16 males), exhibited an average level of perceived employability, suggesting moderate confidence in their abilities. Lastly, a minimal portion of participants (5.3% females and 9.1% males) fell under the low perceived employability category, with 8 females and 13 males scoring below the average range.

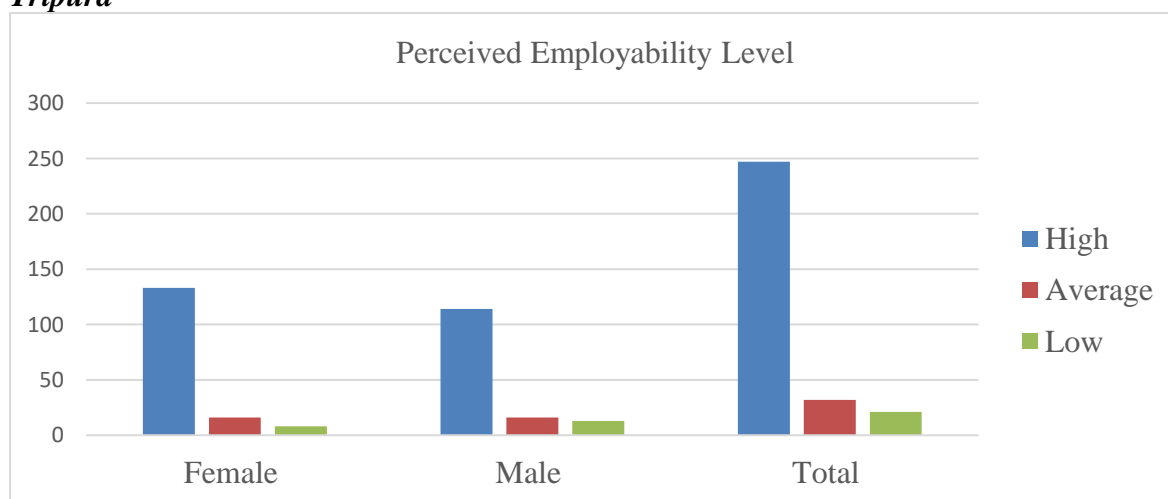
Perceived Employability and Its Determinants Among Generation Z Students in Tripura: A Quantitative Study

Table 2: Levels of Perceived Employability among Generation Z students in Tripura

Level of Perceived Employability	Female (n=157)	Male (n=143)	Total (n=300)
High	133 (84.71%)	114 (79.72%)	247 (82.33%)
Average	16 (10.19%)	16 (11.19%)	32 (10.67%)
Low	8 (5.10%)	13 (9.09%)	21 (7.00%)

These findings highlighted a generally optimistic outlook on employability while emphasizing the importance of addressing challenges faced by students with lower levels of perceived employability. The results were visually represented in Figure 1 to enhance comprehension.

Figure 1: Gender wise Levels of Perceived Employability among Generation Z students in Tripura



Influence of individual factors (e.g., family background, parents' education level, socioeconomic status) on perceived employability among Generation Z students

The Ordinal Logistic Regression analysis, as shown in table 3, examined the influence of gender, family background, and socio-economic status on perceived employability among Generation Z students. The findings are presented here aligned with the hypotheses.

H_{01a} (Gender): There is no significant influence of gender on perceived employability among Generation Z students.

The analysis showed that gender significantly influenced employability perceptions ($\beta = 0.34$, $SE = 0.14$, $Wald \chi^2 = 5.67$, $p = 0.017$). Males were found to be 41% more likely to perceive themselves as employable than females ($OR = 1.41$). Therefore, the null hypothesis (H_{01a}) was rejected, indicating a significant gender disparity in employability perceptions.

H_{01b} (Family Background): There is no significant influence of family background on perceived employability among Generation Z students.

The analysis revealed a marginal influence of family background on employability perceptions ($\beta = 0.22$, $SE = 0.12$, $Wald \chi^2 = 3.14$, $p = 0.076$). Individuals from nuclear families were 25% more likely to perceive higher employability compared to those from joint families ($OR = 1.25$). However, as the p-value exceeded 0.05, the null hypothesis (H_{01b})

Perceived Employability and Its Determinants Among Generation Z Students in Tripura: A Quantitative Study

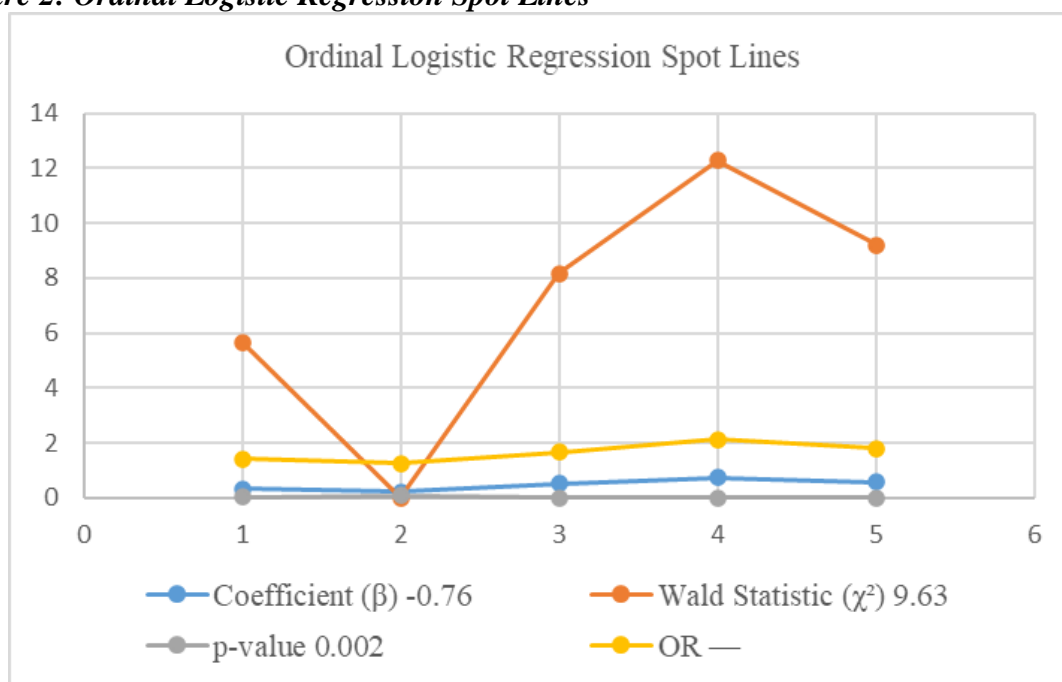
could not be rejected, suggesting that family background did not have a statistically significant impact.

Table 3: Ordinal Logistic Regression Table

Variable	Coefficient (β)	Wald Statistic (χ^2)	p-value	OR
Intercept	-0.76	9.63	0.002	—
Gender (Male, Female)	0.34	5.67	0.017	1.41
Family Background (Nuclear, Joint)	0.22	3.14	0.076	1.25
SES (Medium, Low)	0.51	8.18	0.004	1.66
SES (High, Low)	0.75	12.29	0.000	2.12
SES (High, Medium)	0.58	9.21	0.002	1.79

Note: SE- Standard Error, OR-Odds Ratio, SES- Socio-Economic Status

Figure 2: Ordinal Logistic Regression Spot Lines



H_{01c} (Socio-Economic Status): There is no significant influence of socio-economic status on perceived employability among Generation Z students.

Socio-economic status was a significant predictor of employability perceptions. Individuals from high socio-economic backgrounds were 112% more likely to perceive themselves as employable compared to those from low socio-economic backgrounds ($\beta = 0.75$, $SE = 0.21$, $Wald \chi^2 = 12.29$, $p = 0.000$). Those from medium socio-economic backgrounds were 66% more likely to perceive employability than those from low backgrounds ($\beta = 0.51$, $SE = 0.18$, $Wald \chi^2 = 8.18$, $p = 0.004$). High socio-economic status students were 79% more likely to perceive employability compared to medium socio-economic status students ($\beta = 0.58$, $SE = 0.19$, $Wald \chi^2 = 10.42$, $p = 0.002$). The null hypothesis (H_{01c}) was rejected, indicating a significant influence. Results are further illustrated with a Spot Line graph in Figure 2.

Perceived Employability and Its Determinants Among Generation Z Students in Tripura: A Quantitative Study

Impact of institutional factors (e.g., type of institution—government or private) on perceived employability among Generation Z students

- **H₀₂**: There is no significant impact of institutional factors (e.g., type of institution—government or private) on perceived employability among Generation Z students.

The Chi-square test was conducted to examine the relationship between institution type and perceived employability among Generation Z students in Tripura. The results revealed a statistically significant relationship between institution type and perceived employability among Generation Z students ($\chi^2 = 33.03$, $p < 0.001$). This result led to the rejection of the null hypothesis (H₀₂), indicating that the type of institution has a significant influence on students' perceived employability. A closer examination of the data showed that students from government institutions were more likely to report higher perceived employability, with 45.09% categorizing their employability as "High" and 40.62% as "Average." In contrast, students from private institutions were predominantly concentrated in the "Low" employability category, with 46.05% of the respondents falling into this group. These findings indicate a distinct disparity in the perceived employability between students from government and private institutions, with government institution students generally perceiving their employability more favorably.

Difference in perceived employability among Generation Z students based on their study stream

- **H_{03a} (Study Stream)**: There is no significant difference in perceived employability among Generation Z students based on their study stream.

The results of the analysis revealed a statistically significant difference in perceived employability based on the study stream, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis (H_{03a}). The two-tailed P value was found to be $p < 0.0001$, indicating that the difference was extremely statistically significant. The mean difference between the Science and Arts streams was 25.19, with a 95% confidence interval ranging from 17.22 to 33.17. The t-value was 6.22, with 298 degrees of freedom, and the standard error of the difference was 4.05. In terms of group comparisons, the Science stream had a mean perceived employability score of 135.40 (SD = 19.98), while the Arts stream had a mean score of 110.21 (SD = 38.32). These findings suggest that students from the Science stream had significantly higher perceived employability compared to those from the Arts stream.

Difference in perceived employability among Generation Z students based on their residential location

- **H_{03b} (Residential Location)**: There is no significant difference in perceived employability among Generation Z students based on their residential location.

A t-test was conducted to examine the difference in perceived employability between rural and urban Generation Z students revealed a statistically significant result. The two-tailed P value was less than 0.0001 ($p < 0.0001$), indicating an extremely significant difference. The mean difference between rural (M = 126.90, SD = 23.36) and urban (M = 108.03, SD = 40.18) students was 18.86, with a 95% confidence interval ranging from 11.45 to 26.27. The t-statistic was 5.0094 with 298 degrees of freedom, and the standard error of the difference was 3.765. Based on these results, the null hypothesis (H_{03b}) was rejected, confirming a significant difference in perceived employability between students from rural and urban areas.

DISCUSSION

This study explored perceived employability among Generation Z students in Tripura, focusing on how individual, institutional, and environmental factors influence their perceptions. The findings provided significant insights into employability perceptions, informing educational policies and practices. The analysis revealed that 82.3% of students exhibited high perceived employability, consistent with prior research suggesting optimism about career prospects (McArdle et al., 2007). However, the smaller proportions reporting average (10.7%) and low (5.3%) employability underscore the need to address challenges faced by less confident students. These results align with Rothwell et al. (2008), who noted the importance of self-perceived employability in motivating students to engage in career preparation activities. Gender differences indicated that females reported higher perceived employability than males, supporting studies like Bennett et al. (2022), which attribute this to stronger self-efficacy among females, possibly due to greater access to career support (Rudman & Glick, 2001). However, gender was less influential than socio-economic status, suggesting its limited role compared to broader determinants. Socio-economic status emerged as the most significant factor influencing employability, echoing findings by Jyothi & Kumar (2022) and Green et al. (2019). Students from higher socio-economic backgrounds benefit from better resources, counselling, and networking opportunities, enhancing employability perceptions. These results highlight the need for equitable career support services to address socio-economic disparities.

Contrary to expectations, family background did not significantly influence employability perceptions. This aligns with the growing independence of Generation Z in career decision-making, often guided by personal and institutional resources rather than familial influence (Sweeney et al., 2020). Access to digital platforms may further reduce the reliance on family in shaping career perceptions. Institution type also significantly influenced employability perceptions, with students from government institutions reporting higher levels of confidence. This supports findings by Monteiro et al. (2024), which attribute this to stronger career services, industry connections, and robust alumni networks in government institutions.

Despite these contributions, the study has limitations. The cross-sectional design limits causal inferences, and the focus on Tripura may restrict generalizability to other regions. Future research should consider broader samples and incorporate objective measures like employer feedback or job placement rates to complement self-reported data and enhance validity.

CONCLUSION

This study offers valuable insights into the perceived employability of Generation Z students in Tripura, showing that most students exhibit high confidence in their employability, with fewer reporting average or low levels. Socio-economic status emerged as the most influential factor, followed by institution type and residential location, emphasizing the importance of socio-economic support and institutional factors in shaping career confidence. Gender played a minor role, with females showing slightly higher perceived employability, while family background had no significant impact. Differences between government and private institutions, as well as between rural and urban students, highlighted disparities in institutional and regional support affecting career outlooks. These findings call for targeted career services for students from lower socio-economic backgrounds, private institutions, and urban areas to enhance employability outcomes. By focusing on students in Tripura—a region often overlooked in research—this study contributes to the growing literature on employability perceptions.

**Perceived Employability and Its Determinants Among Generation Z Students in Tripura: A
Quantitative Study**

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**Perceived Employability and Its Determinants Among Generation Z Students in Tripura: A
Quantitative Study**

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Conflict of Interest

The author declared no conflict of interest.

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