

CHAPTER 3

DEVELOPMENT OF CONCEPTUAL MODEL

Contents

3.1.	Introduction	61
3.2.	Importance of Developing a Conceptual Model	61
3.3.	Brief Outline of the Chapter Contents	63
3.4.	Theoretical Framework	64
3.4.1.	Explanation of Theoretical Models Related to MBA Placements.....	64
3.4.2.	Review of Relevant Literature on Factors Affecting MBA Placements	77
3.4.3.	Identification of Key Theoretical Constructs:	78
3.5.	Conceptual Model Development.....	80
3.5.1.	Justification for Developing a New Conceptual Model	80
3.5.2.	Steps Involved in Developing the Conceptual Model.....	81
3.6.	Variables and Constructs.....	84
3.6.1.	Detailed Explanation of Variables and Constructs.....	84
3.6.2.	Operational Definitions and Measurement Criteria for Each Variable	88
3.7.	Relationships Hypothesized	90
3.7.1.	Presentation of Hypotheses Based on the Conceptual Model.....	91
3.7.2.	Explanation of Expected Relationships Between Variables	92
3.8.	Visual Representation of the Conceptual Model	96
3.8.1.	Diagrammatic Representation of the Conceptual Model	96
3.8.2.	Explanation of Components and Pathways Within the Model.....	98
3.8.3.	Pathways Within the Conceptual Model.....	99
3.8.4.	Explanation of Pathways.....	100
3.9.	Discussion	101
3.9.1.	Critical Analysis of the Developed Conceptual Model.....	101
3.9.2.	Comparison with Existing Models in the Literature	101
3.9.3.	Strengths and Limitations of the Proposed Model	102
3.9.4.	Significance of the Conceptual Model in the Context of MBA Placements .	102
3.10.	Overview of the Chapter	103

DEVELOPMENT OF CONCEPTUAL MODEL

3.1. Introduction

This chapter describes the process of developing a conceptual model that will serve as the foundation for examining the placement factors of MBA graduates in Coastal Karnataka. The chapter is structured to guide readers through the theoretical underpinnings, the identification of relevant constructs and variables, the relationships among these constructs, and the final representation of the conceptual model. This model is crucial as it encapsulates the theoretical and empirical understanding of the factors influencing MBA placements, facilitating a coherent and structured approach to the subsequent analysis and interpretation of data.

The chapter initially explores the theoretical framework, drawing upon existing literature to identify and define key constructs and variables pertinent to MBA placements. Doing so ensures that the conceptual model is grounded in established theories and previous empirical findings. Following this, the chapter details the development process of the conceptual model, illustrating how these constructs are interrelated and the hypothesized relationships that will be tested in the study.

The chapter details the variables and constructs, providing operational definitions and measurement criteria to ensure clarity and consistency in the empirical analysis. This is followed by discussing the hypothesized relationships among the variables, supported by theoretical and empirical justifications. A visual representation of the conceptual model is provided, offering a clear and concise depiction of the proposed relationships and pathways.

Finally, the chapter concludes with a critical discussion of the developed conceptual model, comparing it with existing models in the literature and highlighting its strengths and limitations. This sets the stage for the subsequent chapters, where the empirical validation of the model will be undertaken.

3.2. Importance of Developing a Conceptual Model

Developing a conceptual model is a pivotal step in academic research, particularly in empirical studies such as this one, which investigates complex phenomena involving multiple interrelated factors. A well-defined conceptual model serves several critical purposes:

- 3.2.1. **Clarifies Research Focus and Scope:** The conceptual model delineates the specific constructs and variables relevant to the study, narrowing down the research focus and

scope. This is especially important in studies involving multifaceted issues like MBA placements, where numerous factors could potentially be at play.

- 3.2.2. **Guides Hypothesis Formulation:** The conceptual model provides a basis for formulating hypotheses by outlining the expected relationships among variables. These hypotheses are essential for empirical testing and validation, enabling researchers to draw meaningful conclusions from their data.
- 3.2.3. **Integrates Theoretical and Empirical Insights:** The conceptual model bridges the gap between theory and empirical research. It integrates insights from existing literature with the study's specific context, ensuring that the research is theoretically grounded while also being tailored to the unique characteristics of the research setting.
- 3.2.4. **Enhances Research Rigor and Validity:** A clearly defined conceptual model enhances the rigour and validity of the research. It ensures that the study is systematically structured, with well-defined constructs and hypotheses, thereby minimizing the risk of bias and enhancing the reliability of the findings.
- 3.2.5. **Facilitates Data Analysis and Interpretation:** The conceptual model provides a structured data analysis and interpretation framework. It guides the selection of appropriate analytical techniques and helps interpret the results coherently and meaningfully aligned with the theoretical framework.
- 3.2.6. **Communicates Research Findings Effectively:** A visual representation of the conceptual model facilitates effective communication of the research findings. It provides a clear and concise depiction of the relationships and pathways being investigated, making it easier for readers to understand and interpret the study.

In the context of this thesis, developing a conceptual model is particularly important for several reasons. Firstly, many factors influence MBA graduates' placement, including individual characteristics, institutional attributes, and external market conditions. A conceptual model helps systematically identify and examine these factors, ensuring a comprehensive analysis. Secondly, the study is conducted in Coastal Karnataka, a region with unique socio-economic and cultural dynamics. The conceptual model allows for integrating these contextual factors, ensuring that the study is relevant and tailored to the specific setting. Finally, by providing a

structured framework for hypothesis testing, the conceptual model enhances the credibility and validity of the research findings, contributing to the academic discourse on MBA placements.

3.3. Brief Outline of the Chapter Contents

The section is structured into several key subsections, each focusing on a specific aspect of the conceptual model development. The contents are organized as follows:

Theoretical Framework: This section reviews the relevant literature on MBA placements, identifying key theoretical constructs and variables. It provides a comprehensive overview of existing theories and models, laying the foundation for developing the conceptual model. Key constructs such as employability skills, academic performance, institutional reputation, and market conditions are identified and defined.

Conceptual Model Development: This section outlines the steps in developing the conceptual model. It begins with identifying relevant variables and constructs, followed by conceptualising relationships among these variables. The integration of theoretical foundations is detailed, ensuring the model is grounded in established theories. The section also describes the validation and refinement process, ensuring the model is robust and reliable.

Variables and Constructs: This section explains the variables and constructs used in the model. Each variable is operationally defined, with clear measurement criteria provided to ensure consistency and clarity in the empirical analysis. Constructs such as employability skills, academic performance, and market conditions are discussed in detail, with their relevance to MBA placements highlighted.

Relationships Hypothesized: This section presents the hypotheses based on the conceptual model. It details the expected relationships among the variables, supported by theoretical and empirical justifications. Each hypothesis is explained in detail, referencing relevant literature to support the proposed relationships.

Visual Representation of the Conceptual Model: This section provides a diagrammatic representation of the conceptual model, illustrating the proposed relationships and pathways. The visual representation offers a clear and concise depiction of the model, facilitating understanding and interpretation.

Discussion and Conclusion: This section critically analyses the developed conceptual model, comparing it with existing models in the literature. The strengths and limitations of the

proposed model are discussed, highlighting its unique contributions and areas for further research.

This section also summarizes the chapter, highlighting the key points discussed and the significance of the conceptual model. It provides a transition to the next chapter, where the empirical validation of the model will be undertaken.

To sum up, Chapter 3 provides a comprehensive and systematic approach to developing a conceptual model for examining the factors associated with the placement of MBA graduates in Coastal Karnataka. The chapter integrates theoretical and empirical insights, providing a robust framework for hypothesis testing and data analysis. By clearly defining the constructs and hypothesized relationships, the conceptual model enhances the rigour and validity of the research, contributing to the academic discourse on MBA placements.

3.4. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework forms the backbone of any research study by providing a coherent structure that guides the investigation of complex phenomena. In this section, we explore the theoretical models relevant to MBA placements, review the existing literature on factors influencing MBA placements, and identify the key theoretical constructs that will underpin the conceptual model for this study. This comprehensive approach ensures that our research is grounded in established theories and provides a robust basis for the following empirical analysis.

3.4.1. Explanation of Theoretical Models Related to MBA Placements

Multiple theoretical perspectives influence the placement of MBA graduates, each offering unique insights into the factors that contribute to successful placements. Three prominent theoretical models particularly relevant to this study are Human Capital Theory, Signaling Theory, and Social Capital Theory.

3.4.1.1. Human Capital Theory

Human Capital Theory, initially proposed by Becker, (2009b), posits that individuals' investments in education and training enhance their productivity and, consequently, their employability and earning potential. In the context of MBA placements, this theory suggests that the skills, knowledge, and competencies acquired during an MBA program increase graduates' marketability to potential employers. Key elements of human capital in this context include:

Academic Performance: High academic performance reflects mastery of business concepts and analytical skills, making graduates more attractive to employers.

Practical Skills and Internships: Practical experiences, such as internships and project work, provide hands-on learning opportunities, enhancing graduates' job readiness.

Continuous Learning and Certifications: Additional certifications and participation in workshops or seminars enhance graduates' skill sets, signalling their commitment to constant improvement.

Core Concepts of Human Capital Theory

- **Investment in Education and Training:** Education and training are investments that enhance an individual's productivity and future earnings. This investment includes formal education, on-the-job training, and other skill development activities.
- **Returns on Investment:** Similar to investments in physical capital, investments in human capital yield returns. These returns are reflected in higher wages, improved employment prospects, and increased productivity.
- **Cost-Benefit Analysis:** Individuals and firms weigh education and training costs against the expected benefits. Costs include tuition, time, and foregone earnings, while benefits are higher earnings and better job opportunities that result from improved skills.
- **General Human Capital:** Skills and knowledge transferable across different jobs and industries.
- **Specific Human Capital:** Skills and knowledge specific to a particular job or firm.
- **Impact on Earnings and Employment:** Higher levels of human capital led to higher earnings and better employment outcomes. This is because more educated and skilled workers are more productive and, thus, more valuable to employers.

Application of Human Capital Theory

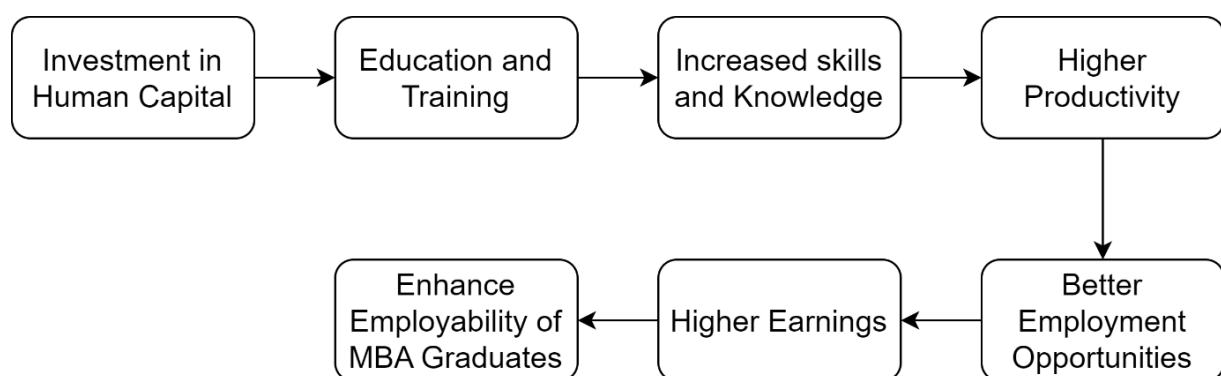
Human Capital Theory is widely used in various contexts to explain and predict economic outcomes related to education, training, and workforce development. Below are some key applications:

- **Educational Policy and Planning:** Governments and academic institutions use Human Capital Theory to design and implement policies that promote investment in education

and training. By understanding the long-term economic benefits of education, policymakers can justify funding for schools, scholarships, and vocational training programs.

- **Corporate Training and Development:** Companies apply Human Capital Theory to their training and development strategies. By investing in employee training, companies enhance the skills and productivity of their workforce, leading to improved performance and competitive advantage. This investment also increases employee loyalty and reduces turnover.
- **Career Planning and Counseling:** Career counsellors use Human Capital Theory to advise individuals on the benefits of further education and skill development. By highlighting the potential earnings increase and employment opportunities, counsellors can guide individuals to make informed decisions about their educational and career paths.
- **Labour Market Analysis:** Economists and researchers use Human Capital Theory to analyze labour market trends. By examining the relationship between education levels and employment outcomes, researchers can identify skills gaps and workforce development needs, informing policies and programs to address these gaps.

Figure 3.1 Human Capital Theory applied in the context of enhancing MBA graduates' employability



(Source: Author)

Becker's Human Capital Theory provides a powerful framework for understanding the economic benefits of education and training. By applying this theory, individuals, companies, and policymakers can make informed decisions that enhance skills, productivity, and economic outcomes. For MBA graduates, investing in human capital through advanced education and

training leads to better job prospects, higher earnings, and greater career success. Figure 3.1 illustrates the Human Capital Theory applied in the context of enhancing MBA graduates' employability with the following components:

Investment in Human Capital: Individuals and firms invest in education and training programs. This investment can include formal education (e.g., MBA programs), on-the-job training, and other professional development activities.

Education and Training: The investment leads to participation in educational and training programs. For MBA graduates, this might involve specialized courses, internships, and practical projects.

Increased Skills and Knowledge: Individuals acquire new skills through education and training. MBA programs, for instance, provide expertise in management, finance, marketing, and leadership.

Higher Productivity: The enhanced skills and knowledge increase an individual's productivity. MBA graduates become more effective in their roles, contributing to organizational success.

Better Employment Opportunities: Higher productivity makes individuals more attractive to employers. MBA graduates can access better job opportunities, including higher-level positions and roles with greater responsibility.

Higher Earnings: With better employment opportunities, individuals can command higher wages. MBA graduates often see significant salary increases compared to their pre-MBA earnings.

Enhanced Employability of MBA Graduates: The culmination of these benefits leads to enhanced employability. MBA graduates are more competitive in the job market and are better equipped for career advancement.

3.4.1.2. Signalling Theory

Signalling Theory developed by Spence, (1978), asserts that individuals can convey their ability and quality to employers through various signals, such as educational qualifications and other achievements. In the context of MBA placements, the following signals are crucial:

Institutional Reputation: Graduates from prestigious institutions are perceived as high-quality candidates due to the rigorous selection and training processes of these institutions.

Grade Point Average (GPA): A high GPA signals a graduate's academic ability, discipline, and work ethic.

Extracurricular Activities: Participation in extracurricular activities and leadership roles signals well-roundedness and soft skills such as teamwork, communication, and leadership.

Core Concepts of Signaling Theory

- **Information Asymmetry:** In many markets, one party (e.g., employers) has less information about the quality or ability of another party (e.g., job candidates). This asymmetry creates uncertainty and risk for the less-informed party.
- **Signals:** Individuals send signals to communicate their unobservable qualities or abilities. Signals in the job market include educational degrees, professional certifications, work experience, and other credentials.
- **Costly Signals:** For a signal to be credible, it must be costly or difficult to obtain. The costliness ensures that only those with the actual qualities or abilities can afford to send the signal. For instance, earning an MBA requires significant time, effort, and financial resources, making it a reliable signal of a candidate's competence and commitment.
- **Screening:** The receiving party (e.g., employers) uses signals to screen candidates and make decisions. Employers rely on signals to infer job candidates' potential productivity and fit.

Application of Signaling Theory

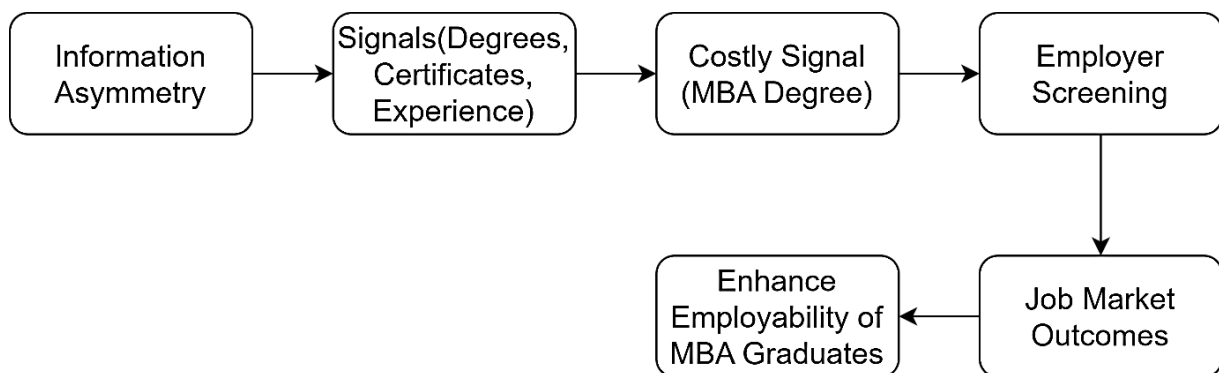
Signaling Theory is widely applied in various contexts, particularly in the job market, education, and corporate settings. Below are some key applications:

- **Job Market Signaling:** Job candidates use educational degrees, certifications, and professional achievements to signal their abilities to potential employers. Employers interpret these signals to assess the candidates' suitability for the job.
- **Educational Signaling:** Educational institutions use degrees and academic performance to signal students' abilities and potential. Higher education institutions

signal their quality through accreditation, faculty credentials, and research output, attracting students and funding.

- **Corporate Signaling:** Companies use corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities, sustainability practices, and certifications (e.g., ISO standards) to communicate their commitment to ethical practices and quality to consumers, investors, and other stakeholders.
- **Consumer Signaling:** Consumers use brands and product certifications (e.g., organic labels) to signal their preferences and values to others. Similarly, product warranties and endorsements signal product quality and reliability.

Figure 3.2 Signaling Theory applied in the context of MBA graduates signaling their employability to potential employers



(Source: Author)

Figure 3.2 visualizes how Signaling Theory can be applied to MBA graduates, signalling their employability to potential employers through the following components.

- **Information Asymmetry:**
 - There is a gap in information between job candidates and employers. Employers cannot directly observe the abilities and competencies of candidates.
- **Signals:**
 - Job candidates send signals to bridge the information gap. These signals include degrees, certifications, work experience, and other achievements.

- **Costly Signals:**
 - For a signal to be credible, it must be costly. An MBA degree, for example, requires significant investment in time, effort, and money. This costliness ensures that the signal is reliable.
- **Employer Screening:**
 - Employers use the signals to screen candidates. They interpret the presence of an MBA degree and other credentials as indicators of the candidate's abilities and potential fit for the job.
- **Job Market Outcomes:**
 - Based on the signals, employers make hiring decisions. Candidates with strong signals are more likely to receive job offers and better employment opportunities.
- **Enhanced Employability of MBA Graduates:**
 - The effective use of signals results in enhanced employability for MBA graduates. They are better positioned in the job market, with improved job prospects and career advancement opportunities.

Signalling Theory provides a valuable framework for understanding how individuals and organizations communicate their qualities and intentions in the presence of information asymmetry. By applying this theory, job candidates can strategically use signals to enhance their employability, while employers can make more informed hiring decisions. For MBA graduates, earning an MBA degree and other relevant credentials are powerful signals of their capabilities, leading to better job market outcomes and career success.

3.4.1.3. Social Capital Theory

Social Capital Theory, as in Bhandari & Yasunobu, (2009), emphasizes the value of social networks and relationships in enhancing individuals' opportunities and outcomes. In the context of MBA placements, social capital can play a significant role in the following ways:

Networking Opportunities: Access to professional networks through alumni associations, industry connections, and networking events can facilitate job placements.

Mentorship: Guidance from mentors, such as faculty members or industry professionals, can provide valuable career advice and job referrals.

Peer Support: Collaboration and peer support during the MBA program can lead to sharing job leads and opportunities.

Core Concepts of Social Capital Theory

- **Social Networks:** The connections and relationships individuals have within their social circles, including family, friends, colleagues, and acquaintances.
- **Trust and Reciprocity:** Trust and mutual exchange are fundamental to social capital. Trustworthy relationships facilitate cooperation and resource sharing.
- **Norms and Values:** Shared norms and values within a community strengthen social cohesion and support collective action.
- **Resources and Benefits:** Social capital provides access to valuable resources such as information, support, and opportunities. These resources can lead to improved economic, social, and psychological outcomes.
- **Types of Social Capital:**
 - **Bonding Social Capital:** Strong ties within a close-knit group, such as family and close friends, provide emotional support and security.
 - **Bridging Social Capital:** Weaker ties that connect individuals across different social groups, providing access to new information and opportunities.
 - **Linking Social Capital:** Vertical connections with institutions and individuals in positions of power, providing access to resources and influence.

Application of Social Capital Theory

Social Capital Theory is applied across various fields, including sociology, economics, education, and organizational behaviour, to explain and improve social and economic outcomes. Below are some key applications:

- **Community Development:** Communities with high social capital are more likely to engage in collective action and achieve better socioeconomic outcomes. Social capital fosters community engagement, civic participation, and the effective implementation of development projects.
- **Education:** In educational settings, social capital among students, teachers, and parents enhances academic performance and school effectiveness. Strong social networks within educational institutions facilitate the sharing of resources and support.
- **Workplace and Organizational Behavior:** In organizations, social capital improves collaboration, innovation, and job satisfaction. Networks within and across organizations enable the exchange of knowledge and best practices, fostering a productive work environment.
- **Job Market and Career Advancement:** Social capital is crucial in job search and career advancement. Professional networks provide access to job opportunities, mentorship, and career advice. Social connections can significantly influence hiring decisions and career progression.

Figure 3.3 Social Capital Theory can be applied in the context of enhancing MBA graduates' employability

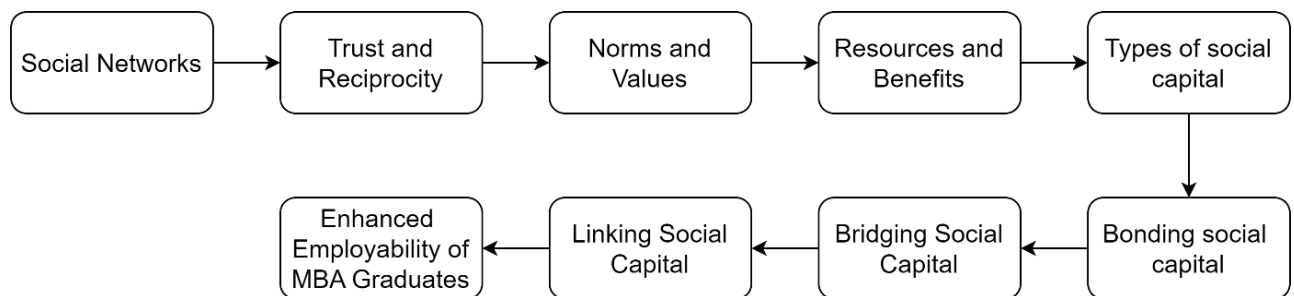


Figure 3.3 visualizes how Social Capital Theory can be applied in the context of enhancing MBA graduates' employability through social networks and relationships with the following components:

- **Social Networks:**
 - Social networks comprise individuals' relationships with family, friends, colleagues, and acquaintances. These connections form the foundation of social capital.

- **Trust and Reciprocity:**
 - Trust and mutual exchange of support and resources within social networks strengthen social capital. Trustworthy relationships encourage cooperation and resource sharing.
- **Norms and Values:**
 - Shared norms and values within a community or group enhance social cohesion and facilitate collective action. They underpin the trust and reciprocity within social networks.
- **Resources and Benefits:**
 - Social capital provides access to various resources and benefits, such as information, support, and job opportunities. These resources contribute to better socioeconomic outcomes.
- **Types of Social Capital:**
 - Social capital is categorized into bonding, bridging, and linking social capital, each providing different types of resources and benefits.
- **Bonding Social Capital:**
 - Strong ties within close-knit groups, such as family and close friends, offer emotional support, security, and access to immediate resources.
- **Bridging Social Capital:**
 - Weaker ties that connect individuals across different social groups provide access to new information, diverse perspectives, and broader opportunities.
- **Linking Social Capital”**
 - Vertical connections with institutions and individuals in positions of power provide access to valuable resources, influence, and opportunities.
- **Enhanced Employability of MBA Graduates:**
 - The combination of resources and benefits from various types of social capital enhances MBA graduates' employability. Social networks provide job opportunities, mentorship, career advice, and other resources crucial for career advancement.

Social Capital Theory offers a comprehensive framework for understanding the value of social networks and relationships in achieving individual and collective benefits. By applying this theory, individuals, organizations, and communities can leverage social connections to enhance socioeconomic outcomes. Building and maintaining strong social networks for MBA graduates can significantly improve their employability, providing access to job opportunities, mentorship, and career resources. This enhanced social capital leads to better job market outcomes and career success.

3.4.1.4. Theory Level of Skills by Sarvesh Gulati

In the evolving employment landscape, particularly for MBA graduates, understanding the various dimensions of skills is crucial. Gulat's (2012) theoretical framework categorizes skills into three primary levels: soft skills, employability skills, and corporate skills. This framework is instrumental in assessing how these skills impact the placement and overall success of MBA graduates. Below is an exploration of each category, providing a comprehensive view of their significance and implications in placement and career development.

Soft Skills

Soft skills, often termed interpersonal or people skills, encompass various non-technical abilities that facilitate effective interaction and communication. These skills are essential for professional success and are critical in creating a positive work environment and fostering teamwork.

Key Components:

- **Communication Skills:** Effective verbal and written communication is vital. This includes the ability to articulate ideas clearly, listen actively, and convey information in an understandable and engaging manner.
- **Emotional Intelligence:** The ability to understand and manage one's own emotions, as well as recognize and influence the emotions of others, is fundamental. This includes empathy, self-regulation, and social skills.
- **Teamwork and Collaboration:** Working well within a team, respecting diverse viewpoints, and contributing to group objectives are crucial. Team dynamics and the ability to navigate interpersonal relationships effectively enhance productivity and harmony.

- **Problem-Solving and Critical Thinking:** These skills involve the capacity to analyze situations, identify problems, and develop solutions creatively and efficiently. They also include the ability to think critically and make informed decisions based on available information.

Impact on Placement: Soft skills are often the differentiators in the recruitment process. Employers increasingly value these skills as they directly influence the candidate's ability to integrate well into the company culture, collaborate effectively, and handle workplace challenges. MBA graduates with strong, soft skills are better positioned to secure job placements and excel in their roles.

Employability Skills

Employability skills blend knowledge, skills, and personal attributes that make an individual attractive to employers. These skills are directly linked to job performance and career advancement and are critical for securing and maintaining employment.

Key Components:

- **Technical Proficiency:** Technical skills relevant to the job role are essential depending on the industry. For MBA graduates, this includes financial analysis, strategic planning, marketing, and project management.
- **Adaptability and Flexibility:** The ability to adjust to new conditions, learn new skills, and manage change effectively is crucial in today's dynamic work environment. Employers seek candidates who can thrive amidst uncertainty and adapt to evolving job requirements.
- **Professionalism and Work Ethic:** Demonstrating a strong work ethic, punctuality, responsibility, and integrity is fundamental. Professionalism encompasses a commitment to quality, adherence to workplace norms, and a proactive attitude toward career development.
- **Networking and Relationship Building:** Building and maintaining professional relationships and networks can significantly enhance career prospects. Networking skills involve connecting with industry professionals, mentors, and peers to create opportunities for career growth and development.

Impact on Placement: Employability skills are directly correlated with the employability of MBA graduates. Graduates with robust employability skills are more likely to meet job requirements effectively and are favoured by employers during the recruitment process. These skills enhance the candidate's marketability and potential for career progression.

Corporate Skills

Corporate skills are specific competencies that align with the requirements and expectations of corporate environments. These skills are essential for performing effectively within organizational structures and contribute to achieving business objectives.

Key Components:

- **Leadership and Management:** The ability to lead teams, manage projects, and drive organizational success is crucial. This includes skills such as strategic vision, decision-making, delegation, and motivational techniques.
- **Negotiation and Persuasion:** Corporate roles often involve negotiating with clients, vendors, and colleagues. Negotiation and persuasion skills are essential for achieving favourable outcomes and building mutually beneficial relationships.
- **Financial and Strategic Acumen:** Understanding financial principles, budgeting, and strategic planning are critical for roles in management and leadership. This includes analysing financial statements, developing strategies, and making data-driven decisions.
- **Project Management:** Effective project management skills involve planning, executing, and overseeing projects to achieve specific goals within defined constraints. This includes skills in resource management, risk assessment, and timeline management.

Impact on Placement: Corporate skills are highly valued in the corporate world as they directly contribute to organizational success and efficiency. MBA graduates who demonstrate strong corporate skills can handle complex business challenges, assume leadership roles, and drive strategic initiatives. These skills significantly enhance the likelihood of securing desirable positions and advancing in their careers.

Sarvesh Gulati's theoretical framework on skills—soft skills, employability skills, and corporate skills—provides a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted nature of competencies required for MBA graduates. Each skill level plays a distinct yet interrelated role in shaping a graduate's career trajectory. Soft skills facilitate effective interpersonal interactions, employability skills enhance job performance and marketability, and corporate skills align with organizational needs and leadership capabilities. Mastery of these skills is essential for MBA graduates seeking to navigate the competitive job market and achieve long-term career success.

3.4.2. Review of Relevant Literature on Factors Affecting MBA Placements

The literature on MBA placements highlights various factors that influence the employability and placement outcomes of MBA graduates. This review synthesizes findings from recent studies to identify the key determinants of successful MBA placements.

3.4.2.1. Individual Attributes: Numerous studies have identified attributes as critical determinants of MBA placements. These attributes include academic performance, work experience, and personal skills.

Academic Performance: Studies by Dreher & Ryan, (2000); Gault et al. (2010) have consistently shown that academic performance positively correlates with job placement outcomes. Employers often use GPA as a proxy for cognitive ability and work ethic.

Work Experience: Prior work experience enhances employability, particularly in relevant industries, by providing practical skills and industry knowledge. Research by Gault et al., (2010) indicates that internships and prior job experiences significantly improve placement prospects.

Soft Skills: Soft skills, such as communication, leadership, and teamwork, are increasingly valued by employers. Lavilles Jr & Robles, (2017) highlight the importance of these skills in differentiating candidates in the job market.

3.4.2.2. Institutional Factors: Institutional factors, such as the reputation of the MBA program and the resources available to students, also play a crucial role in placement outcomes.

Reputation of the Institution: Studies by Montgomery & Ramus, (2011); Soares, (2021) suggest that graduates from highly reputed institutions enjoy better placement opportunities due to the perceived quality of education and the strength of the alumni network.

Career Services: The availability and quality of career services, including job placement assistance, resume workshops, and interview preparation, are significant contributors to successful placements. Research by Dey & Cruzvergara, (2014) demonstrates the positive impact of robust career services on placement rates.

3.4.2.3. External Market Conditions: The broader economic environment and labour market conditions influence MBA placements.

Economic Climate: The overall economic climate, including economic growth, industry demand, and unemployment rates, affects job availability and hiring practices. For instance, studies by Kahn, (2010); Oyer & Schaefer, (2016) indicate that MBA graduates entering the job market during economic downturns face more significant challenges in securing placements.

Industry Trends: Changes in industry trends and demand for specific skills can impact placement outcomes. For example, the growing demand for digital and analytical skills has led to higher placement rates for graduates with expertise in these areas (Bharadwaj et al., 2013).

3.4.3. Identification of Key Theoretical Constructs:

Based on the review of theoretical models and relevant literature, several key constructs emerge as critical to understanding MBA placements. These constructs form the foundation of the conceptual model developed in this study.

3.4.3.1. Academic Performance: Academic performance, typically measured by GPA, reflects the cognitive abilities and discipline of MBA graduates. It serves as an indicator of a candidate's ability to grasp complex concepts and perform under pressure. The construct encompasses the following dimensions:

GPA: Overall grade point average achieved during the MBA program.

Academic Awards: Recognition of academic excellence, such as scholarships and honours.

3.4.3.2. Practical Experience: Practical experience gained through internships, project work, and prior job experience is essential for developing job-ready skills. This construct includes:

Internships: Participation in internships during the MBA program.

Prior Work Experience: Professional experience before enrolling in the MBA program.

3.4.3.3. Institutional Reputation: The reputation of the MBA institution significantly influences placement outcomes. This construct includes:

Ranking: Position of the institution in national and international MBA program rankings.

Alumni Network: Strength and influence of the institution's alumni network.

3.4.3.4. Career Services: The institution's career services office's support facilitates placements. This construct encompasses:

Placement Assistance: Job fairs, resume workshops, and interview preparation.

Employer Connections: Relationships with potential employers and industry connections.

3.4.3.5. Soft Skills: Soft skills are non-technical skills that enhance employability. This construct includes:

Communication Skills: Ability to effectively convey ideas and information.

Leadership Skills: Ability to lead and manage teams.

Teamwork: Ability to work collaboratively with others.

3.4.3.6. Social Capital: Social capital refers to the networks and relationships that provide support and opportunities. This construct includes:

Networking: Participation in networking events and activities.

Mentorship: Access to mentors and career advisors.

3.4.3.7. Economic and Industry Conditions: External factors such as the economic climate and industry trends also impact MBA placements. This construct includes:

Economic Growth: Overall economic growth and job market conditions.

Industry Demand: Demand for specific skills and roles in various industries.

In summary, the theoretical framework for this study is grounded in well-established theories and empirical findings. The key constructs identified —academic performance, practical experience, institutional reputation, career services, soft skills, social capital, and economic and industry conditions—form the basis of the conceptual model. This model will guide the

empirical analysis, enabling a comprehensive examination of the factors influencing MBA placements in Coastal Karnataka.

3.5. Conceptual Model Development

A conceptual model is a theoretical framework that represents the key variables and their relationships within a specific domain of study. It serves as a blueprint for empirical research by outlining the constructs and hypotheses that will be tested. In the context of our study on MBA graduate employability, the conceptual model helps to systematically analyze the factors that influence job placement outcomes, providing a structured approach to understanding the interplay between various determinants such as demographic factors, educational background, soft skills, and institutional influences.

The primary purpose of developing a conceptual model is to:

- **Clarify Relationships:** Clearly define and depict the relationships between different variables.
- **Guide Research:** Provide a theoretical foundation that guides data collection, analysis, and interpretation.
- **Predict Outcomes:** Offer predictive insights into how different factors impact employability.
- **Inform Interventions:** Help design targeted interventions to enhance the employability of MBA graduates.

3.5.1. Justification for Developing a New Conceptual Model

Developing a new conceptual model for the employability of MBA graduates in Coastal Karnataka is justified for several reasons:

- **Context-Specific Factors:** Existing models may not fully capture the unique socio-economic and cultural factors affecting employability in this region.
- **Updated Constructs:** The employment landscape and educational dynamics have evolved, necessitating the inclusion of contemporary constructs such as soft skills and self-esteem.

- **Comprehensive Analysis:** A new model allows for a more holistic analysis by integrating multiple factors—demographic, educational, co-curricular, and institutional—that collectively influence employability.
- **Policy Relevance:** The findings derived from this model can directly inform local educational policies and institutional practices to better align with market demands.

3.5.2. Steps Involved in Developing the Conceptual Model

Step 1: Identification of Variables and Constructs

The first step in developing the conceptual model is identifying the key variables and constructs relevant to the study. Based on our research objectives and the literature review, the following variables and constructs have been identified:

Demographic Factors:

- Gender
- Age
- Location of residence
- Parental income
- Parental education

Educational Background:

- Name of MBA institution
- NAAC grade
- Overall percentage score
- Specialization
- English language ability
- Medium of instruction till 10th class
- Internship completion
- Impact of internship

Employment Status:

- Employment status within one year
- First drawn salary

Co-curricular and Extracurricular Activities:

- Participation in extracurricular activities

Soft Skills:

- Proficiency in soft skills

- Receipt of soft skill training

Self-Esteem:

- Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale

Factors Influencing Job Placement:

- Factors contributing to successful job placement
- Suggestions for institutional improvements

Step 2: Conceptualization of Relationships Between Variables

In this step, we conceptualize the relationships between the identified variables. This involves hypothesizing how each variable influences employability and the interconnections among them. The relationships are conceptualized based on theoretical insights and empirical evidence from previous studies.

Hypothesized Relationships:

- **Demographic Factors and Employability:** Demographic factors such as gender, age, and location of residence are expected to influence employability through their impact on educational opportunities and socio-economic status.
- **Educational Background and Employability:** Higher NAAC grades, better overall percentage scores, and relevant specializations are hypothesized to affect employability positively.
- **Soft Skills and Employability:** Proficiency in communication, teamwork, leadership, problem-solving, and self-esteem are expected to enhance employability.
- **Internship and Employability:** Completion of internships and their positive impact on job security are expected to be significant predictors of employability.
- **Extracurricular Activities and Employability:** Participation in extracurricular activities is hypothesized to develop soft skills and leadership qualities, thereby improving employability.
- **Institutional Factors and Employability:** The reputation of the MBA institution, as reflected by NAAC grades, and the support for soft skill training are expected to enhance job placement outcomes.

Step 3: Integration of Theoretical Foundations

To ensure the robustness of the conceptual model, theoretical foundations from relevant fields are integrated. This involves drawing on educational, psychological, and management theories to underpin the hypothesized relationships.

Key Theoretical Foundations:

- **Human Capital Theory:** Emphasizes the role of education and skills in enhancing employability.
- **Social Capital Theory:** Highlights the importance of networks and institutional support in job placement.
- **Self-Determination Theory:** Explains how intrinsic motivation and self-esteem influence career outcomes.
- **Experiential Learning Theory:** Supports the inclusion of internships and extracurricular activities as crucial for skill development.

Step 4: Validation and Refinement Process

The final step involves validating and refining the conceptual model through empirical testing and expert feedback. This ensures that the model accurately represents the factors influencing employability and their relationships.

Validation Methods:

- **Empirical Testing:** The model is tested using the data collected through the structured questionnaire. Statistical techniques such as regression analysis and structural equation modelling examine the relationships between variables.
- **Expert Feedback:** Insights from academic and industry experts are sought to validate the relevance and completeness of the model.
- **Refinement:** The model is refined to address inconsistencies or gaps based on empirical findings and expert feedback. This iterative process enhances the model's accuracy and applicability.

Developing a conceptual model for understanding the employability of MBA graduates in Coastal Karnataka is a comprehensive process that involves identifying relevant variables, conceptualizing their relationships, integrating theoretical foundations, and validating the

model through empirical testing. This structured approach ensures that the model provides valuable insights into the factors influencing employability and serves as a practical guide for enhancing the career prospects of MBA graduates. Through this model, educational institutions can better align their programs with market demands, and policymakers can design targeted interventions to support the employability of graduates.

3.6. Variables and Constructs

In this section, we will explore the detailed explanation of the variables and constructs used in our conceptual model to understand the factors influencing the employability of MBA graduates in Coastal Karnataka. Each variable and construct will be operationally defined, and the measurement criteria will be elaborated to ensure clarity and precision in the research methodology.

3.6.1. Detailed Explanation of Variables and Constructs

1. Demographic Factors:

- **Gender:**
 - **Definition:** The biological sex of the MBA graduates.
 - **Measurement:** A categorical variable with two possible values: Male (1) and Female (2).
 - **Survey Item:** "Gender"
- **Age:**
 - **Definition:** The chronological age of the MBA graduates at the time of the survey.
 - **Measurement:** A continuous variable measured in years.
 - **Survey Item:** "Age"
- **Location of Residence:**
 - **Definition:** The geographical area where the MBA graduates reside.
 - **Measurement:** A categorical variable with values representing different regions (e.g., Urban, Rural, Semi-Urban).
 - **Survey Item:** "Location of residence"

- **Parental Income:**

- **Definition:** The annual income of the graduates' parents.
- **Measurement:** A continuous variable measured in monetary units (e.g., INR per year).
- **Survey Item:** "Parent(s) annual income"

- **Parental Education:**

- **Definition:** The education level of the graduates' parents.
- **Measurement:**
 - Father's Education: A categorical variable with values representing different education levels (e.g., No formal education, Primary, Secondary, Higher Education).
 - Mother's Education: Similar categorization as Father's Education.
- **Survey Items:** "Father's level of education" and "Mother's level of education"

2. Educational Background:

- **Name of MBA Institution:**

- **Definition:** The name of the institution where the MBA degree was obtained.
- **Measurement:** A categorical variable representing different institutions.
- **Survey Item:** "Name of the MBA institution."

- **NAAC Grade:**

- **Definition:** The National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) awarded the grade to the institution.
- **Measurement:** A categorical variable representing different NAAC grades (e.g., A, B, C).
- **Survey Item:** "NAAC Grade of the MBA institution."

- **Overall Percentage Score:**

- **Definition:** The overall academic performance of the MBA graduates is represented as a percentage.

- **Measurement:** A continuous variable measured as a percentage score obtained in their MBA program.
- **Survey Item:** "Overall percentage score in the MBA program."
- **Specialization:**
 - **Definition:** The area of focus within the MBA program (e.g., Finance, Marketing, Human Resources).
 - **Measurement:** A categorical variable with values representing different specializations.
 - **Survey Item:** "Specialization in the MBA program"
- **English Language Ability:**
 - **Definition:** The proficiency of MBA graduates in the English language.
 - **Measurement:** A continuous variable measured through self-reported proficiency levels.
 - **Survey Item:** "Rating of English language ability"
- **Medium of Instruction till 10th Class:**
 - **Definition:** The language of instruction used till the 10th grade.
 - **Measurement:** A categorical variable representing different languages of instruction.
 - **Survey Item:** "Medium of instruction till 10th Class"
- **Internship Completion:**
 - **Definition:** Whether the graduate completed an internship during the MBA program.
 - **Measurement:** A binary variable (Yes = 1, No = 0).
 - **Survey Item:** "Internship completion during the MBA program"
- **Impact of Internship:**
 - **Definition:** The perceived impact of the internship on job security.
 - **Measurement:** A continuous variable measured through self-reported impact on job security.

- **Survey Item:** "Impact of internship on job security"

3. Employment Status:

- **Employment Status within One Year:**

- **Definition:** Whether the graduate secured employment within one year of completing the MBA degree.
- **Measurement:** A binary variable (Employed = 1, Unemployed = 0).
- **Survey Item:** "Employment status within one year of completing the MBA degree"

- **First Drawn Salary:**

- **Definition:** The first salary received after securing employment post-MBA.
- **Measurement:** A continuous variable measured in monetary units (e.g., INR per month).
- **Survey Item:** "First drawn salary"

4. Co-curricular and Extracurricular Activities:

- **Participation in Extracurricular Activities:**

- **Definition:** Involvement in extracurricular activities during the MBA program.
- **Measurement:** A binary variable (Yes = 1, No = 0) or a continuous variable indicating the frequency of participation.
- **Survey Item:** "Participation in extracurricular activities during the MBA program".

5. Soft Skills:

- **Proficiency in Soft Skills:**

- **Definition:** The ability of MBA graduates to develop various soft skills such as communication, teamwork, leadership, problem-solving, and self-esteem.
- **Measurement:** A continuous variable measured through self-assessment scales, rated on a scale of 1 to 5.
- **Survey Item:** "Proficiency in various soft skills (rated on a scale of 1 to 5)"

- **Receipt of Soft Skill Training:**

- **Definition:** Whether the graduate received training in soft skills during the MBA program.
- **Measurement:** A binary variable (Yes = 1, No = 0).
- **Survey Item:** "Receipt of soft skill training during the MBA program"

6. Self-Esteem:

- **Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale:**

- **Definition:** A widely used self-esteem measure consisting of 10 items.
- **Measurement:** A continuous variable measured through the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale.
- **Survey Item:** "Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale"

7. Factors Contributing to Successful Job Placement:

- **Definition:** Various factors graduates identify as contributing to their successful job placement.
- **Measurement:** A qualitative variable was collected through open-ended responses.
- **Survey Item:** "Factors contributing to successful job placement"

8. Suggestions for Institutional Improvements:

- **Definition:** Recommendations provided by graduates for improving institutional support for job market preparation.
- **Measurement:** A qualitative variable was collected through open-ended responses.
- **Survey Item:** "Suggestions for institutional improvements for job market preparation"

3.6.2. Operational Definitions and Measurement Criteria for Each Variable

To ensure the accuracy and consistency of the research, each variable in the conceptual model needs to be precisely defined and measured. The operational definitions clearly describe how each variable will be quantified.

Demographic Factors:

- **Gender:** Coded as 1 for Male and 2 for Female based on self-report.
- **Age:** Measured in years based on self-report.
- **Location of Residence:** Coded as Urban, Rural, or Semi-Urban based on self-report.
- **Parental Income:** Reported in INR per year based on self-report.
- **Parental Education:** Coded as No formal education, Primary, Secondary, Higher Education based on self-report.

Educational Background:

- **Name of MBA Institution:** Reported as the name of the institution where the MBA degree was obtained.
- **NAAC Grade:** Reported as the grade awarded by NAAC.
- **Overall Percentage Score:** Reported as the percentage of marks obtained in the MBA program.
- **Specialization:** Reported as the area of specialization within the MBA program.
- **English Language Ability:** Measured through self-reported proficiency levels on a scale of 1 to 5.
- **Medium of Instruction till 10th Class:** Reported as the language of instruction used till the 10th grade.
- **Internship Completion:** Reported as Yes (1) or No (0) based on self-report.
- **Impact of Internship:** Measured through self-reported impact on job security, rated on a scale of 1 to 5.

Employment Status:

- **Employment Status within One Year:** Reported as Employed (1) or Unemployed (0) based on self-report.
- **First Drawn Salary:** Reported in INR per month based on self-report.

Co-curricular and Extracurricular Activities:

- **Participation in Extracurricular Activities:** Reported as Yes (1) or No (0) or as the frequency of participation based on self-report.

Soft Skills:

- **Proficiency in Soft Skills:** Measured through self-assessment scales, rated on a scale of 1 to 5.
- **Receipt of Soft Skill Training:** Reported as Yes (1) or No (0) based on self-report.

Self-Esteem:

- **Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale:** Measured through the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, with each item rated on a scale of 1 to 4.

Factors Contributing to Successful Job Placement:

- **Collected through open-ended responses:** Graduates provide qualitative data on the factors they believe contributed to their successful job placement.

Suggestions for Institutional Improvements:

- **Collected through open-ended responses:** Graduates provide qualitative data on their recommendations for improving institutional support for job market preparation.

This detailed explanation and operationalization of variables and constructs form the foundation for the empirical analysis in our study. By defining and measuring each variable precisely, we can ensure the reliability and validity of our research findings, ultimately providing valuable insights into the factors affecting the employability of MBA graduates in Coastal Karnataka. The use of a structured questionnaire allows for systematic data collection and analysis, facilitating the development of targeted interventions to enhance the employability of future MBA graduates.

3.7. Relationships Hypothesized

This section presents the hypotheses developed based on the conceptual model. Each hypothesis represents a predicted relationship between the identified variables, grounded in theoretical foundations and empirical evidence from the literature. These hypotheses will be tested to validate the conceptual model and provide insights into the factors influencing the employability of MBA graduates in Coastal Karnataka.

3.7.1. Presentation of Hypotheses Based on the Conceptual Model

Hypothesis 1: Demographic Factors

- **H1a:** Gender significantly influences the employability of MBA graduates.
- **H1b:** Age significantly influences the employability of MBA graduates.
- **H1c:** Location of residence significantly influences the employability of MBA graduates.
- **H1d:** Parental income significantly influences the employability of MBA graduates.
- **H1e:** Parental education significantly influences the employability of MBA graduates.

Hypothesis 2: Educational Background

- **H2a:** The NAAC grade of the MBA institution significantly influences the employability of MBA graduates.
- **H2b:** The overall percentage score in the MBA program significantly influences the employability of MBA graduates.
- **H2c:** The specialization in the MBA program significantly influences the employability of MBA graduates.
- **H2d:** The proficiency in the English language significantly influences the employability of MBA graduates.
- **H2e:** The medium of instruction till 10th class significantly influences the employability of MBA graduates.
- **H2f:** Internship completion during the MBA program significantly influences the employability of MBA graduates.
- **H2g:** The impact of the internship on job security significantly influences the employability of MBA graduates.

Hypothesis 3: Employment Status

- **H3a:** Employment status within one year of completing the MBA degree significantly influences the employability of MBA graduates.
- **H3b:** The first drawn salary significantly influences the employability of MBA graduates.

Hypothesis 4: Co-curricular and Extracurricular Activities

- **H4:** Participation in extracurricular activities during the MBA program significantly influences the employability of MBA graduates.

Hypothesis 5: Soft Skills

- **H5a:** Proficiency in communication significantly influences the employability of MBA graduates.
- **H5b:** Proficiency in teamwork significantly influences the employability of MBA graduates.
- **H5c:** Proficiency in leadership significantly influences the employability of MBA graduates.
- **H5d:** Proficiency in problem-solving significantly influences the employability of MBA graduates.
- **H5e:** Self-esteem significantly influences the employability of MBA graduates.
- **H5f:** Receipt of soft skill training during the MBA program significantly influences the employability of MBA graduates.

Hypothesis 6: Institutional Factors

- **H6:** Institutional factors such as NAAC grading, reputation, and alumni network significantly influence the employability of MBA graduates.

3.7.2. Explanation of Expected Relationships Between Variables

H1a: Gender and Employability

- **Explanation:** Gender is expected to influence employability due to potential biases and societal norms affecting job opportunities for males and females differently.
- **Justification:** Literature indicates gender disparities in the labour market, with women often facing more barriers to employment than men (Nguyen, C. P., 2021).

H1b: Age and Employability

- **Explanation:** Age may impact employability, with younger graduates possibly being more adaptable and perceived as more energetic compared to older graduates.

- **Justification:** Research shows that younger graduates are often favoured for entry-level positions due to their perceived flexibility and willingness to learn (Guthrie, H. et al, 2011).

H1c: Location of Residence and Employability

- **Explanation:** Graduates from urban areas may have better access to job opportunities and networks than those from rural areas.
- **Justification:** Studies have shown that geographical location can significantly impact job prospects, with urban residents often enjoying better employment outcomes (Arulampalam, 2001).

H1d: Parental Income and Employability

- **Explanation:** Higher parental income may provide better educational resources and opportunities, positively influencing employability.
- **Justification:** Economic background has been linked to educational attainment and subsequent job opportunities (Blanden, J., 2006).

H1e: Parental Education and Employability

- **Explanation:** Higher parental education levels may correlate with greater emphasis on children's academic achievement and career aspirations.
- **Justification:** Parental education has been shown to influence children's educational and career outcomes (Haveman, R., and Wolfe, B., 1995).

H2a: NAAC Grade and Employability

- **Explanation:** Graduates from higher-graded institutions may have better job prospects due to the perceived quality of education.
- **Justification:** Institutional reputation significantly affects employability, with employers often preferring graduates from reputed institutions (Rao, N. J., 2020).

H2b: Overall Percentage Score and Employability

- **Explanation:** Higher academic performance may indicate competence and diligence, making graduates more attractive to employers.
- **Justification:** Academic achievement predicts employability, as higher grades often reflect better knowledge and skills [104].

H2c: Specialization and Employability

- **Explanation:** Certain specializations may be in higher demand, affecting employability based on the job market's needs.
- **Justification:** Specialization in fields such as Finance or IT may offer better job prospects due to market demand (Roth, P. L., and Clarke, R. L., 1998).

H2d: English Language Ability and Employability

- **Explanation:** Proficiency in English, often the business language, can enhance job prospects in multinational and domestic firms.
- **Justification:** English language proficiency is crucial for employability, particularly in globalized job markets (Negash, N., 2011).

H2e: Medium of Instruction till 10th Class and Employability

- **Explanation:** Early education in English medium may enhance language skills, indirectly influencing employability.
- **Justification:** The medium of instruction during formative years impacts language proficiency and cognitive development, affecting employability (Cummins, 1999).

H2f: Internship Completion and Employability

- **Explanation:** Completing internships provides practical experience, making graduates more employable.
- **Justification:** Internships bridge the gap between academic learning and professional work, enhancing employability (Kapareliotis et al., 2019).

H2g: Impact of Internship and Employability

- **Explanation:** Positive internship experiences can boost confidence and job security, improving employability.
- **Justification:** Empirical evidence suggests that internships significantly improve job placement outcomes (Silva et al., 2016).

H3a: Employment Status Within One Year and Employability

- **Explanation:** Securing employment soon after graduation is a critical indicator of employability.

- **Justification:** Early employment often predicts long-term career success (Oreopoulos et al., 2012).

H3b: First Drawn Salary and Employability

- **Explanation:** Higher initial salaries may reflect better job placements and employability.
- **Justification:** Initial salary levels indicate the value placed on a graduate by employers, reflecting employability (Thomas, 2000).

H4: Participation in Extracurricular Activities and Employability

- **Explanation:** Engagement in extracurricular activities develops skills such as teamwork and leadership, enhancing employability.
- **Justification:** Extracurricular activities positively correlate with skill development and employability (Tchibozo, 2007).

H5a-f: Soft Skills and Employability

- **Explanation:** Proficiency in soft skills such as communication, teamwork, leadership, problem-solving, and self-esteem is crucial for job success.
- **Justification:** Employers increasingly value soft skills complementing technical skills (Andrews & Higson, 2008).

H6: Institutional Factors and Employability

- **Explanation:** Institutional support, such as reputation and alumni network, significantly enhances employability.
- **Justification:** Strong institutional support systems improve job placement outcomes (Waldinger, 1995).

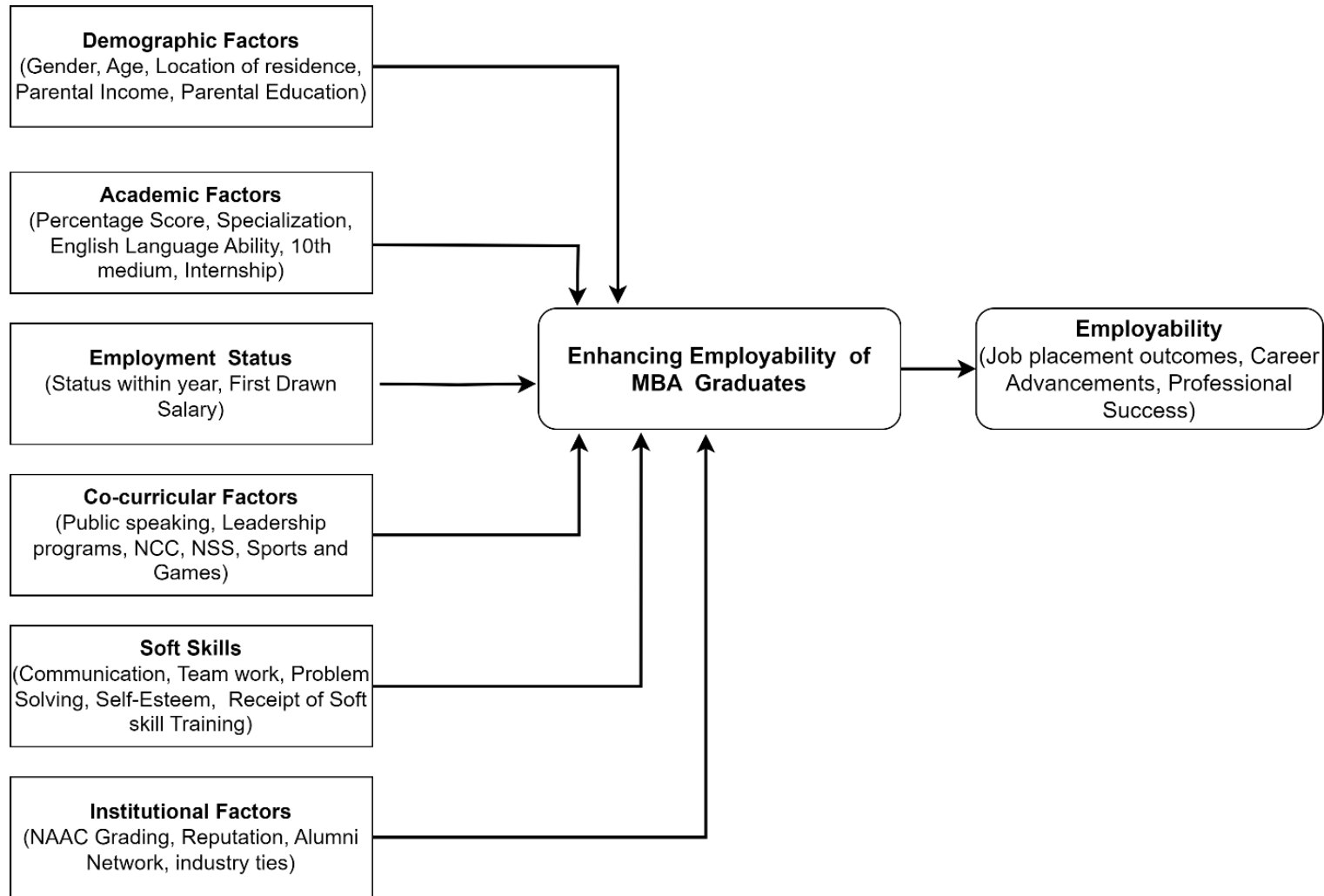
The hypotheses outlined above provide a comprehensive framework for examining the relationships between various factors and the employability of MBA graduates in Coastal Karnataka. Each hypothesis is grounded in theoretical foundations and supported by empirical evidence from the literature, ensuring a robust basis for testing and validation. This section sets the stage for the following empirical analysis, where these hypothesized relationships will be rigorously tested to derive meaningful insights and implications for enhancing MBA graduate employability.

3.8. Visual Representation of the Conceptual Model

3.8.1. Diagrammatic Representation of the Conceptual Model

The visual representation of the conceptual model is crucial for understanding the interrelationships among the variables and constructs that influence the employability of MBA graduates in Coastal Karnataka. Figure 3.4 below provides a clear, organized depiction of these relationships.

Figure 3.4 Proposed Conceptual Model



3.8.2. Explanation of Components and Pathways Within the Model

The conceptual model comprises several key components and pathways representing the hypothesized relationships between different variables. Each component and pathway is integral to understanding how various factors interact to affect employability.

Components of the Conceptual Model:

1. Demographic Factors:

- **Gender:** Reflects the potential impact of gender on employability due to societal norms and biases.
- **Age:** Considers how the age of graduates might influence their job prospects.
- **Location of Residence:** Examines the effect of geographical location on access to job opportunities.
- **Parental Income:** Looks at how the economic background of parents influences employability.
- **Parental Education:** Considers the educational background of parents as a factor in shaping employability.

2. Educational Background:

- **NAAC Grade:** Represents the institutional quality and its influence on employability.
- **Overall Percentage Score:** Reflects the academic performance of the graduate.
- **Specialization:** Examines the role of MBA specialization in employability.
- **English Language Ability:** Considers the proficiency in English as a factor in job readiness.
- **Medium of Instruction till 10th Class:** Looks at the long-term impact of the medium of instruction on employability.
- **Internship Completion:** Reflects the role of practical experience through internships.
- **Impact of Internship:** Considers how beneficial the internship was in securing employment.

3. **Employment Status:**

- **Employment Status within One Year:** Measures the immediate employability of graduates post-MBA.
- **First Drawn Salary:** Reflects the initial job market value of the graduate.

4. **Co-curricular and Extracurricular Activities:**

- **Participation in Extracurricular Activities:** Looks at how involvement in activities beyond academics influences employability.

5. **Soft Skills:**

- **Communication:** Assesses the impact of communication skills on employability.
- **Teamwork:** Considers the role of teamwork skills in job performance.
- **Leadership:** Looks at the influence of leadership skills on employability.
- **Problem-Solving:** Reflects the importance of problem-solving abilities.
- **Self-Esteem:** Measures the impact of self-esteem on job market success.
- **Receipt of Soft Skill Training:** Considers the formal training received in soft skills during the MBA program.

6. **Institutional Factors:**

- **NAAC Grading, Reputation, Alumni Network:** This represents the support provided by the institution, which can enhance job placement outcomes.

3.8.3. **Pathways Within the Conceptual Model**

1. **Demographic Factors to Employability:**

- Gender, age, location of residence, parental income, and parental education are hypothesized to influence employability both directly and indirectly through their impact on educational opportunities and socio-economic status.

2. **Educational Background to Employability:**

- The NAAC grade of the institution, overall percentage score, specialization, English language ability, medium of instruction till 10th class, internship completion, and the impact of the internship are all expected to directly influence

employability by contributing to the graduate's qualifications and readiness for the job market.

3. Employment Status to Employability:

- Employment status within one year and the first drawn salary are direct indicators of employability, reflecting the immediate success of graduates in securing employment.

4. Co-curricular and Extracurricular Activities to Employability:

- Participation in extracurricular activities is expected to enhance employability indirectly by developing soft skills and leadership qualities.

5. Soft Skills to Employability:

- Proficiency in communication, teamwork, leadership, problem-solving, self-esteem, and the receipt of soft skill training are hypothesized to directly enhance employability by improving job performance and adaptability.

6. Institutional Factors to Employability:

- Institutional support through NAAC grading, reputation, and alumni network is expected to directly and indirectly influence employability by providing better educational resources, networking opportunities, and job placement assistance.

3.8.4. Explanation of Pathways

- **Direct Pathways:** These are represented by arrows directly connecting variables such as educational background factors (e.g., NAAC grade, overall percentage score) to employability outcomes. For instance, a higher NAAC grade directly contributes to better job prospects by enhancing the perceived quality of education.
- **Indirect Pathways:** These are represented by arrows connecting variables through intermediate factors. For example, parental income may indirectly influence employability through its impact on the quality of education and extracurricular opportunities available to the graduate.
- **Moderating and Mediating Relationships:** Certain variables may act as moderators or mediators. For example, soft skills might mediate the relationship between educational background and employability, indicating that educational achievements translate into better job prospects primarily through enhanced soft skills.

The diagrammatic representation and detailed explanation of the conceptual model provide a comprehensive overview of the hypothesized relationships between various factors influencing

the employability of MBA graduates in Coastal Karnataka. This model serves as a foundation for empirical testing and validation, guiding the research process and offering insights into the complex interplay of demographic, educational, co-curricular, and institutional factors in shaping employability outcomes. Through this visual and theoretical framework, we aim to identify key leverage points for enhancing the career prospects of MBA graduates and informing educational policy and practice.

3.9. Discussion

3.9.1. Critical Analysis of the Developed Conceptual Model

The conceptual model presented in this study aims to enhance the employability of MBA graduates through a comprehensive framework encompassing various critical factors. The model identifies key dimensions such as Demographic Factors, Academic Factors, Co-curricular Factors, Soft Skills, and Institutional Factors, all converging towards Employability as the central outcome. Each factor is carefully delineated to elucidate its impact on employability, providing a structured approach to understanding the complex interplay between individual attributes and career success in the MBA domain.

The model emphasizes the interconnectedness of these factors, illustrating how they collectively contribute to shaping graduates' career trajectories. For instance, Academic Factors encompassing percentage scores and internship experiences directly influence job placement outcomes, while Soft Skills such as communication and leadership enhance professional success. By integrating these dimensions into a cohesive framework, the model facilitates a holistic view of employability enhancement strategies tailored to MBA graduates.

3.9.2. Comparison with Existing Models in the Literature

Compared with existing models in the literature, our conceptual framework offers several distinct advantages. Unlike traditional models that often focus narrowly on academic achievements or employability outcomes in isolation, our model adopts a comprehensive approach. It incorporates a broader spectrum of factors—from demographic diversity to institutional reputation—acknowledging their collective impact on career advancement. This holistic perspective aligns with recent trends in educational research, which advocate for multifaceted models capable of addressing the dynamic demands of today's job market.

Moreover, our model underscores the role of soft skills and co-curricular activities, areas often underemphasized in conventional frameworks. By highlighting these dimensions, our approach responds to the evolving needs of employers seeking well-rounded professionals capable of adapting to diverse workplace environments. This comparative analysis positions our conceptual model as a robust tool for guiding educational institutions and policymakers in fostering MBA graduates' employability through targeted interventions and curriculum enhancements.

3.9.3. Strengths and Limitations of the Proposed Model

The strengths of our proposed model lie in its integrative nature and practical applicability. The model offers a systematic approach to enhancing employability outcomes by synthesising diverse factors into a unified framework. It provides stakeholders with a clear roadmap for designing educational interventions and career development programs tailored to individual and institutional contexts.

However, the model also presents several limitations. Firstly, its comprehensive scope may pose challenges in implementation, requiring careful adaptation to specific institutional settings and student demographics. Secondly, while the model addresses many factors, the dynamic nature of job markets necessitates ongoing refinement and validation to ensure relevance and efficacy over time. Finally, the reliance on self-reported data and theoretical constructs may introduce biases, warranting further empirical validation through longitudinal studies and comparative analyses across diverse MBA programs. While our conceptual model represents a significant advancement in understanding and promoting MBA graduates' employability, ongoing research and stakeholder engagement are essential to refine its theoretical underpinnings and practical utility in real-world contexts.

3.9.4. Significance of the Conceptual Model in the Context of MBA Placements

The conceptual model holds significant implications for MBA placements in contemporary educational landscapes. It addresses the multifaceted nature of employability, emphasizing academic achievements and the importance of soft skills, co-curricular activities, and institutional reputation. This holistic approach is crucial for preparing graduates to meet the evolving demands of global markets, equipping them with the necessary competencies to navigate diverse career pathways effectively. Moreover, the model is a valuable resource for educational institutions, employers, and policymakers seeking to optimize MBA programs and

enhance graduates' readiness for professional roles. By integrating empirical insights with theoretical frameworks, the model offers actionable insights into curriculum design, career counselling, and industry partnerships, fostering a symbiotic relationship between academia and industry.

3.10. Overview of the Chapter

In this chapter, we developed a comprehensive conceptual model to understand and enhance MBA graduates' employability in Coastal Karnataka. The model integrates various factors, including Demographic Factors, Educational Background, Employment Status, Co-curricular and Extracurricular Activities, Soft Skills, and Institutional Factors, positioning them as key determinants of employability. By delineating the hypothesized relationships between these factors, the model provides a structured framework for analyzing how individual attributes and institutional support converge to impact career success. This approach highlights the interconnectedness of various dimensions, offering a holistic perspective on strategies for improving MBA graduate employability.

The chapter also compared our conceptual model with existing frameworks in the literature, demonstrating its unique contributions to the field. Unlike traditional models that focus predominantly on academic achievements, our model incorporates a broader spectrum of factors, including soft skills and co-curricular activities, which are increasingly recognized as critical for career advancement. While the model's integrative nature provides significant strengths, such as practical applicability and a comprehensive view of employability, it also faces limitations related to implementation challenges and the need for ongoing validation. Despite these challenges, the model's emphasis on a multifaceted approach to employability offers valuable insights for educational institutions, employers, and policymakers, aiming to enhance the preparedness and success of MBA graduates in a dynamic job market.