

Communication, Emotional Intelligence and Employability: A Review of Economic Decision-Making in North East India

Dr. Ningombam Sanatombi Devi¹, Goshaimayum Chanu Sapna^{2*}, M.C. Fujica³

^{1,3}Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Manipur Technical University, Imphal (India) - 795 004

***Corresponding Author:** Email - goshaimayum_sapna@mtu.ac.in

ARTICLE INFO

Received: 03 Nov 2024

Revised: 18 Dec 2024

Accepted: 29 Dec 2024

ABSTRACT

This paper reviews the interconnected roles of communication skills, emotional intelligence, employability, economic security and economic decision-making among young people in North East India. Using an interdisciplinary systematic review approach, relevant international, Indian and regional literature is thematically synthesised across communication studies, psychology, education, management, economics and behavioural science. The review demonstrates that employability extends beyond academic qualifications and encompasses communication, teamwork, adaptability, problem-solving, interpersonal competence and emotional regulation. Communication competence, including but not limited to English proficiency, can facilitate professional interaction, networking and access to employment opportunities, while emotional intelligence may support career adaptability, interpersonal relationships and workplace functioning. However, these capabilities operate within broader socioeconomic conditions, including educational quality, gender, rural–urban location, digital access, socioeconomic status and labour-market opportunities. It identifies a significant gap in North East India, where communication, emotional intelligence, employability and economic decision-making have largely been examined as separate constructs. An integrated framework is therefore proposed in which human capabilities and psychological resources interact with employment conditions and economic security to shape decisions concerning career, saving, borrowing, consumption, investment and entrepreneurship. The paper highlights the need for context-sensitive educational and employment interventions and recommends longitudinal and mixed-method research to examine these relationships more systematically across the region.

Keywords: Communication Skills; Emotional Intelligence; Employability; Economic Security; North East India.

Introduction

North East India represents a distinctive socioeconomic and educational context within the broader Indian labour market, characterised by considerable ethnic, cultural, linguistic and geographical diversity. The region comprises Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim and Tripura, with substantial variation in language, social organisation, educational opportunities, employment structures and rural–urban conditions. In such a context, the

transition from education to employment increasingly depends not only on formal academic qualifications but also on transferable human capabilities. Communication, interpersonal competence, adaptability, problem-solving, emotional regulation and decision-making are important dimensions of employability in contemporary labour markets. These capabilities are particularly relevant for young people and graduates in North East India, where access to employment opportunities may vary according to educational background, location, occupational structure, language exposure and socioeconomic circumstances. Communication skills are especially significant because they facilitate participation in interviews, professional interactions, workplace coordination, networking and access to employment-related information. The paper therefore considers communication not merely as linguistic proficiency but as a multidimensional social, cognitive and occupational resource.

The multilingual character of North East India makes the relationship between language and employability particularly important. The region contains numerous indigenous and regional languages alongside Hindi and English, while English has an important role in higher education, administration, professional communication, business and formal employment. Consequently, English-language communication may provide occupational advantages in particular sectors, although its value should be understood within the institutional and occupational context rather than as an indicator of intelligence or individual competence. Differences in access to English-medium education, quality of schooling, digital resources and professional networks may contribute to unequal opportunities. Alongside communication, emotional intelligence provides another important dimension of employability and career development. The ability to perceive, understand and regulate emotions and manage interpersonal relationships can be relevant to career adaptability, workplace relationships, stress management and professional functioning. These issues have particular relevance in a region where young graduates may encounter changing employment conditions, geographical constraints, migration for education or work, and competition for limited formal-sector opportunities. Thus, communication skills and emotional intelligence can be viewed as interconnected human capabilities that potentially influence the capacity of individuals to negotiate educational, occupational and socioeconomic environments.

The economic dimension further strengthens the relevance of this framework for North East India. Employment instability, income constraints, financial pressure, borrowing requirements and limited economic opportunities can influence individuals' psychological and cognitive environments and consequently their economic decisions. Economic decision-making encompasses employment and career choices, saving, borrowing, consumption, investment, education, entrepreneurship and financial risk. Such decisions are shaped not only by conventional economic considerations but also by emotions, stress, cognitive limitations, social influences, financial literacy and institutional circumstances. The present paper consequently proposes an interdisciplinary perspective linking communication skills, emotional intelligence, employability, economic security and economic decision-making. Its central conceptual pathway considers how communication competence may facilitate employability and income opportunities, how emotional intelligence may support career adaptability and workplace functioning, and how economic insecurity may subsequently influence psychological processes and decision-making. At the same time, socioeconomic status, educational attainment, gender, rural–urban location, region, English-medium exposure, occupation, digital literacy and financial literacy may moderate these relationships. Such an integrated perspective is relevant to North East India because it recognises that individual capabilities operate within diverse social, linguistic, educational and economic structures rather than in isolation.

Literature Review

International literature has increasingly conceptualised employability as a multidimensional outcome that extends beyond formal educational qualifications. Yorke (2006) viewed employability as the capacity to obtain, retain and progress in employment through the combined influence of subject

knowledge, skills and personal attributes. Jackson (2013) further argued that graduate employability depends on the integration of disciplinary knowledge with workplace competencies, suggesting that academic learning becomes more valuable when students can apply it effectively in practical employment settings. Succi and Canovi (2020) identified communication, teamwork, problem-solving and adaptability as important competencies expected from graduates, while Succi et al. (2023) demonstrated that employers repeatedly value communication, critical thinking, leadership, analytical ability, willingness to learn and problem-solving. In the authors' view, these findings indicate that contemporary employability should be understood as a combination of cognitive, interpersonal and behavioural capabilities rather than as a direct outcome of academic achievement. Emotional intelligence (EI) provides an additional psychological dimension to this framework. Mayer, Salovey and Caruso (2004) conceptualised EI as an ability involving the perception, understanding and regulation of emotions, whereas Goleman (1998) emphasised its importance for interpersonal relationships and workplace performance. The subsequent literature suggests that individuals who understand and regulate their emotions may be better positioned to communicate, cooperate, adapt to changing circumstances and manage workplace relationships. Thus, EI can be viewed as a complementary capability through which academic knowledge and technical skills are translated into effective workplace behaviour.

Indian studies broadly support the international perspective but place particular emphasis on communication competence, English-language proficiency and practical workplace skills within the country's highly competitive graduate labour market. Clement and Murugavel (2015), in their study of engineering students, identified inadequate English communication and lack of confidence as significant concerns affecting students' preparedness for campus recruitment. Bharathi (2016), based on 618 undergraduate students, similarly reported deficiencies in language proficiency, presentation abilities and practical life skills and argued for greater attention to communication-oriented learning. Research by Blom and Saeki on Indian engineering graduates further demonstrated that employers value communication, teamwork, flexibility, empathy, problem-solving, creativity and English-language communication. From the authors' perspective, these studies reveal an important distinction between possessing a degree and being employment-ready: graduates require the ability to communicate knowledge, work with others, respond flexibly to problems and demonstrate confidence in professional situations. Agrawal and Rahul (2023), in their review of emotional intelligence and employability among higher-education students in India, further emphasised the relationship between psychological capabilities and employment-related competencies. Taken together, the Indian literature suggests that communication skills and EI should not be treated as isolated soft skills. Rather, they interact with academic preparation, confidence, interpersonal behaviour, adaptability and the capacity to respond to workplace demands. At the same time, the literature indicates that employability cannot be explained exclusively through English proficiency or individual capabilities, since socioeconomic circumstances, quality of education, institutional resources, field of study and access to employment opportunities also influence graduate outcomes.

Compared with the international and national literature, systematic research on employability, communication competence and emotional intelligence in North East India remains relatively limited. Banerjee (2021), in a doctoral study at North-Eastern Hill University, specifically examined employability skills and competencies among management graduates in North East India, reflecting the increasing recognition of the need to connect higher education with regional labour-market requirements. The *Youth of North-East India* survey conducted by the National Council of Applied Economic Research also highlighted the perceived value of English for employment, with considerable proportions of literate young people across the North Eastern states regarding English as useful for obtaining better employment opportunities. In relation to psychological capabilities, Nienglalchawi and Lokesh (2021) examined emotional intelligence among 144 young adults from North East India, while Haorei and Thavaraj (2023) investigated the validity and reliability of the Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale among management students in the region and reported

satisfactory reliability and a four-factor structure. In the authors' view, these regional studies establish the relevance of both employability competencies and emotional intelligence but also reveal a fragmented evidence base. Much of the existing research has examined employability skills, language competence or EI separately, with relatively limited attention to their combined relationship with broader socioeconomic outcomes. In particular, insufficient evidence exists on how communication competence and emotional intelligence jointly influence young people's employment preparedness, economic security and economic decision-making. The present study therefore seeks to extend the existing literature by bringing these dimensions together within the socioeconomic context of North East India, where educational opportunities, linguistic diversity, geographical conditions and labour-market structures may produce distinctive patterns of graduate employability.

Objectives

The present review paper aims to examine the interconnected roles of communication skills, emotional intelligence, employability and economic decision-making, with particular reference to the socioeconomic and multilingual context of North East India. The specific objectives are:

- i. To review international and Indian literature on communication skills and their relationship with employability and career outcomes.
- ii. To examine the role of emotional intelligence in career adaptability, workplace relationships, job performance and employment-related outcomes.
- iii. To analyse how economic insecurity, financial stress and related psychological processes may influence economic decision-making.
- iv. To explore the interrelationships among communication competence, emotional intelligence, employability and economic security in the context of North East India.
- v. To identify gaps in existing regional research and develop an integrated conceptual framework linking human capabilities, psychological resources and economic conditions.

Materials and Methods

The present paper adopts an interdisciplinary systematic/integrative review design to synthesise existing evidence concerning communication skills, emotional intelligence, employability, economic security and economic decision-making, with particular emphasis on the context of North East India. The review draws upon literature from linguistics, communication studies, psychology, education, management, economics and behavioural science. Relevant scholarly literature is identified from major academic databases, including Scopus, Web of Science Core Collection, ScienceDirect, SpringerLink, PsycINFO, ERIC and PubMed, where appropriate, with Google Scholar used for supplementary citation tracking. The search focuses on studies addressing communication competence, English-language proficiency, employability, emotional intelligence, career outcomes, economic insecurity, financial stress and economic decision-making. Particular attention is given to studies conducted in India and, wherever available, the eight North Eastern states. The review also considers theoretical and empirical studies that help establish relationships among the principal constructs. For synthesis, the identified literature is organised thematically according to the principal dimensions of the proposed conceptual framework: (i) communication skills and employability, (ii) emotional intelligence and career/workplace outcomes, (iii) economic insecurity and psychological processes, (iv) economic decision-making, and (v) the integrated relationships among these constructs. Findings are compared across international, national and North East Indian evidence to identify areas of convergence, contextual differences and research gaps. Particular consideration is given to socioeconomic status, educational attainment, gender, rural–urban location, region, English-medium exposure, occupation, digital literacy and financial literacy as potentially relevant moderating

factors. Because much of the existing literature is cross-sectional and uses different measurement approaches, especially for emotional intelligence and communication competence, the findings are interpreted primarily as associations rather than causal relationships. The review ultimately uses the synthesised evidence to develop an integrated conceptual framework applicable to North East India.

Research Gap

Existing literature has established the importance of communication skills, emotional intelligence and employability in shaping educational and occupational outcomes, while Indian studies have highlighted the significance of English communication and workplace competencies. However, research focusing specifically on North East India remains fragmented and largely construct-specific, with limited integration of communication competence, emotional intelligence, employability and economic security. Regional studies have primarily examined employability, language proficiency or emotional intelligence separately, while insufficient attention has been given to their potential interrelationships with economic decision-making, including employment, saving, borrowing, investment and financial risk. Moreover, variations in socioeconomic status, gender, educational attainment, rural–urban location, multilingual exposure, digital literacy and financial literacy are rarely incorporated into an integrated regional framework. Thus, a significant gap exists for a context-sensitive interdisciplinary synthesis linking human capabilities, psychological resources, employability and economic decision-making in North East India.

Analysis and Findings

The literature demonstrates that employability is a multidimensional outcome that extends substantially beyond formal academic qualifications. Contemporary employment requires a combination of communication competence, interpersonal effectiveness, teamwork, adaptability, problem-solving, critical thinking, leadership, creativity and willingness to learn. Communication emerges as a particularly important capability because it supports interviews, professional interaction, networking, workplace coordination and access to employment-related information. In the context of North East India, this dimension assumes additional importance because of the region's multilingual and culturally diverse environment. English occupies an important position in higher education, administration, business and formal employment, and effective English communication may therefore provide advantages in selected occupational settings. However, the evidence does not support treating English proficiency as an independent or sufficient determinant of employment. Educational quality, socioeconomic background, location, access to digital resources, professional networks and occupational opportunities can simultaneously shape communication competence and employment prospects. The findings consequently indicate that communication should be understood as a broader social, cognitive and occupational capability that interacts with other forms of human capital.

The present findings concern the interrelationship between communication competence, emotional intelligence and workplace functioning. The reviewed evidence indicates that emotional intelligence, particularly the capacity to recognise, understand and regulate emotions and manage interpersonal relationships, is relevant to career adaptability, workplace relationships, stress management, job satisfaction, commitment and performance. Communication and emotional intelligence therefore appear to be complementary rather than isolated employability attributes. Effective communication can facilitate interpersonal interaction and professional participation, while emotional regulation and awareness can strengthen the ability to respond constructively to workplace demands and changing employment conditions. Evidence from India and North East India indicates growing recognition of these capabilities among students and young adults, including their relevance to academic performance, placement preparedness and career development. At the same time, the literature shows methodological variation in the measurement of emotional intelligence and

communication competence, and many studies are cross-sectional. Consequently, the observed relationships should primarily be interpreted as associations rather than established causal effects. The findings also suggest that employability interventions should not be restricted to technical or academic preparation; they may need to incorporate communication, interpersonal competence, emotional awareness, adaptability and practical workplace skills within broader educational and career-development processes.

It also concerns the connection between employability, economic security and economic decision-making, which remains comparatively underdeveloped in the North East Indian literature. Existing regional research has generated useful evidence concerning employability, English-language usefulness, emotional intelligence and career preparedness, but these dimensions have generally been investigated separately. The synthesis therefore indicates a need to consider how human capabilities and psychological resources operate within wider economic circumstances. Employment instability, inadequate income, financial pressure, borrowing needs and limited occupational opportunities may affect psychological processes and consequently influence decisions relating to employment, saving, consumption, investment, education, entrepreneurship and financial risk. These relationships are unlikely to be uniform because socioeconomic status, gender, educational attainment, rural–urban location, multilingual exposure, English-medium education, occupation, digital literacy and financial literacy may alter the opportunities and constraints experienced by individuals. The evidence thus supports an integrated conceptual perspective in which communication competence may contribute to employability and employment opportunities, emotional intelligence may support adaptability and workplace functioning, and economic conditions may subsequently shape financial security and decision-making. However, the present literature does not yet provide sufficient evidence to establish the direction or strength of these relationships specifically for young people across North East India. The principal finding is therefore the need for context-sensitive, interdisciplinary research capable of examining these interconnected dimensions rather than treating them as independent constructs.

Discussion

The findings of the present review reinforce the argument that communication competence and emotional intelligence should be understood as complementary dimensions of employability rather than as isolated “soft skills.” Yorke (2006) and Jackson (2013) conceptualised employability as a multidimensional capability in which knowledge, skills, personal attributes and the ability to apply them effectively interact within workplace settings. Consistent with this perspective, Succi and Canovi (2020) and Succi et al. (2023) identified communication, teamwork, adaptability, problem-solving, critical thinking and related competencies as important requirements of contemporary employment. The Indian evidence of Clement and Murugavel (2015) and Bharathi (2016) similarly draws attention to deficiencies in English communication, confidence, presentation and practical skills among students, while the work of Blom and Saeki highlights communication, teamwork, flexibility, empathy, problem-solving, creativity and English-language communication as competencies valued by employers. The present authors consider these findings particularly relevant to North East India, where linguistic plurality, cultural diversity, geographical conditions and unequal educational opportunities can shape the manner in which young people acquire and use communication competencies. In this context, communication competence should not be equated with English proficiency alone. Although English can provide advantages in higher education, administration, business and some formal-sector occupations, its employment value is likely to depend on the quality of education, opportunities for English-medium exposure, digital access, professional networks and socioeconomic circumstances. The *Youth of North-East India* survey and Banerjee (2021) further indicate the perceived importance of English and employability competencies among young people in the region. In the authors’ view, these findings suggest that communication is best understood as a broader capacity involving clarity of expression, confidence, interpersonal interaction, listening,

presentation and contextual adaptation. Emotional intelligence provides an additional dimension to this process. Mayer, Salovey and Caruso (2004) conceptualised emotional intelligence through the abilities to perceive, understand and regulate emotions, while Goleman (1998) emphasised its relevance to interpersonal relationships and workplace functioning. The pre-2024 literature, including the meta-analytic evidence on emotional intelligence and career-related outcomes and the review by Agrawal and Rahul (2023), indicates meaningful associations between emotional capabilities and career-related outcomes. Regional studies by Nienglalchawi and Lokesh (2021) and Haorei and Thavaraj (2023) further demonstrate the relevance of emotional intelligence among young adults and management students in North East India. The present authors therefore argue that communication competence and emotional intelligence may operate in a mutually reinforcing manner by supporting interpersonal effectiveness, adaptability, confidence and participation in professional environments. Nevertheless, the existing evidence is predominantly observational or cross-sectional and uses varying conceptualisations and measurement instruments. Accordingly, the identified relationships should primarily be interpreted as associations rather than evidence of direct causal effects. The present research concerns the limited integration of employability with economic security and economic decision-making, particularly in the context of North East India. Existing studies have generated valuable evidence on employability competencies, English-language usefulness and emotional intelligence, but these dimensions have generally been investigated separately. The present authors regard this fragmentation as an important limitation because the transition from higher education to employment occurs within a broader socioeconomic environment characterised by variations in income opportunities, employment stability, financial pressures, access to credit, saving capacity and resource availability. From the authors' perspective, employability is therefore not solely an individual attribute; its practical consequences are conditioned by the economic and institutional environment in which young people live and work. Communication competence may facilitate access to employment information, interviews, professional networks and workplace participation, while emotional intelligence may assist individuals in managing interpersonal relationships, adapting to changing work environments and responding to occupational pressures. These capabilities, however, do not automatically translate into economic security because employment opportunities and economic outcomes are also influenced by educational attainment, gender, socioeconomic status, rural–urban location, occupation, digital literacy, financial literacy, family resources and regional labour-market conditions. The present authors further contend that economic security may itself influence the development and utilisation of employability capabilities, creating potentially reciprocal relationships rather than a simple one-directional pathway. For example, economically constrained young people may have fewer opportunities for quality education, professional training, digital exposure and networking, whereas greater economic security may provide resources that facilitate skill development and career exploration. Similarly, employment conditions may shape subsequent decisions relating to saving, borrowing, investment, education, entrepreneurship and consumption. However, the existing literature does not provide sufficient evidence to establish the direction, magnitude or causal structure of these relationships in North East India. The authors therefore consider that future research should adopt an integrated and context-sensitive framework linking communication competence, emotional intelligence, employability, economic security and economic decision-making. Such an approach would recognise the region's linguistic, cultural, educational and socioeconomic diversity and move beyond viewing employability exclusively as an individual characteristic. It could consequently provide a more comprehensive understanding of how personal capabilities interact with structural opportunities and constraints during the transition from education to employment and in shaping the subsequent economic behaviour of young people in North East India.

Conclusion and Implications

The present research establishes that communication competence, emotional intelligence and employability are interconnected dimensions of human capability that extend beyond formal academic qualifications. The literature indicates that effective communication, teamwork, adaptability, problem-solving and emotional regulation can contribute to career preparedness and workplace participation, while English-language competence may provide additional advantages in selected educational and occupational settings. However, the evidence also demonstrates that employability cannot be explained by individual skills alone. In North East India, linguistic diversity, socioeconomic conditions, educational quality, rural–urban differences, digital access, professional networks and regional labour-market structures may substantially influence the conversion of individual capabilities into employment opportunities and economic security. The review therefore supports a broader conceptualisation of employability in which communication and emotional intelligence function alongside academic knowledge, technical skills and contextual resources. Importantly, the available regional literature remains fragmented, with limited integrated evidence connecting these capabilities with economic security and economic decision-making.

The implication of the paper is the need for a context-sensitive and interdisciplinary approach to youth employability in North East India. Higher-education institutions may consider integrating communication training, interpersonal competence, emotional-awareness development, problem-solving, career guidance, digital literacy and practical workplace exposure into existing academic programmes. Policymakers and employment-support institutions may likewise need to recognise that improving employability requires not only individual skill development but also equitable access to quality education, digital resources, professional networks and appropriate employment opportunities. From an economic perspective, greater attention should be given to the possible relationships among employability, income security, financial stress and decisions concerning saving, borrowing, investment, entrepreneurship and career choice. Future empirical research should test these relationships using comparable measures and larger, geographically diverse samples across the eight North Eastern states, while examining socioeconomic status, gender, educational attainment, location, language exposure, digital literacy and financial literacy as potentially important moderating factors. Longitudinal and mixed-method studies would be particularly valuable for distinguishing association from causation. Thus, the review provides a conceptual foundation for understanding how human capabilities, psychological resources and socioeconomic structures jointly shape the transition from education to employment and subsequent economic behaviour among young people in North East India.

References

- [1] Agrawal, A., & Rahul, M. (2023). Theoretical frameworks for understanding employability skills and emotional intelligence. *Multidisciplinary Approach in Arts, Science & Commerce*, 4, 54.
- [2] Banerjee, A. K. (2021). A study on employability skill and competency of the management graduates in North East India [Doctoral dissertation, North-Eastern Hill University, Shillong]. Shodhganga/INFLIBNET.
- [3] Bharathi, A. V. (2016). Communication skills - Core of employability skills: Issues and concerns. *Higher Learning Research Communications*, 6(4).
- [4] Blom, A., & Saeki, H. (2011). Employability and skill set of newly graduated engineers in India (World Bank Policy Research Working Paper No. 5640). World Bank.
- [5] Clement, A., & Murugavel, T. (2015). English for employability: A case study of the English language training needs analysis for engineering students in India. *English Language Teaching*, 8(2), 116-125.
- [6] Goleman, D. (1998). *Working with emotional intelligence*. Bantam Books.

- [7] Haorei, W., & Thavaraj, S. H. (2023). Validation of emotional intelligence scale amid management studies students in the context of Northeast India. In Online Conference Proceedings (PRISM–2023): Reimagining the Future of Business: The Challenges of Leadership, Digitalization, and Sustainability (p. 159). Birla Institute of Management Technology (BIMTECH), Greater Noida, India. E-ISBN 978-81-935730-8-2.
- [8] Jackson, D. (2013). Business graduate employability - Where are we going wrong? Higher Education Research & Development, 32(5), 776-790.
- [9] Mayer, J. D., Salovey, P., & Caruso, D. R. (2004). Emotional intelligence: Theory, findings, and implications. Psychological Inquiry, 15(3), 197-215.
- [10] National Council of Applied Economic Research. (2012). Youth of North-East India. <https://ncaer.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/1380783944NBT-North-East-Youth-Readership-Survey-report-19112012-1.pdf>
- [11] Nienglalchawi, E., & Lokesh, L. (2021). Emotional intelligence and internet addiction among young adults from North-East India. International Journal of Indian Psychology, 9(3), 521-526.
- [12] Succi, C., & Canovi, M. (2020). Soft skills to enhance graduate employability: Comparing students' and employers' perceptions. Studies in Higher Education, 45(9), 1834-1847.
- [13] Succi, C., & Canovi, M. (2020). Soft skills to enhance graduate employability: Comparing students and employers' perceptions. Studies in Higher Education, 45(9), 1834-1847.
- [14] Yorke, M. (2006). Employability in higher education: What it is - What it is not (Learning and Employability Series 1). Higher Education Academy.