

Shaping Future Managers: How Leadership Exposure Influences Students' Attitude Towards Workplace Responsibility

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Abstract

Leadership exposure during management education plays a crucial role in shaping students' professional attitudes, ethical awareness, and employability readiness in a competitive global environment. This study investigates how structured leadership activities, mentoring programmes, student clubs, and campus engagement initiatives influence management students' sense of responsibility and workplace behaviour. A mixed-method approach was adopted, combining quantitative survey data from 180 final-year management students with qualitative insights obtained through focus group discussions with placement coordinators. Statistical analyses, including correlation and regression tests, revealed a strong positive relationship between leadership exposure and key workplace attitude dimensions – namely accountability, initiative, teamwork, and ethical conduct. The proposed LEA-R (Leadership Exposure–Attitude–Responsibility) Model underscores the importance of experiential learning, reflective mentoring, and global placement readiness as integral components of contemporary management education. The findings conclude that leadership exposure not only enhances students' career preparedness but also fosters a lasting sense of professional accountability and adaptability essential for success in diverse international work environments.

Keywords: Leadership Exposure, Workplace Attitude, Employability, Campus Interviews, Management Students, International Placements

Introduction

Developing leadership qualities among management students has emerged as a strategic necessity in higher education. As organisations increasingly seek graduates who demonstrate responsibility, initiative, and ethical decision-making, universities are embedding leadership development in their training and placement curricula (Kumar & Prasad, 2023). Leadership exposure – through internships, student clubs, and placement training – acts as a bridge between theoretical learning and workplace realities (Chin & Lim, 2021).

The Indian management education landscape, particularly in professional institutions, now integrates soft skills training, mock interviews, and international internship opportunities to prepare students for global mobility (Rao & Joshi, 2020). Such exposure is found to influence students' workplace attitudes, shaping their confidence, adaptability, and accountability (Das & Singh, 2022). This paper investigates how leadership exposure during college influences students' workplace responsibility, readiness for campus interviews, and attitudes towards international placements.

Objectives of the Study

- To evaluate the impact of leadership exposure on students' attitudes towards workplace responsibility.

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- To examine the relationship between leadership training and students' employability readiness for campus and international placements.
- To propose a conceptual model (LEA-R Model) linking leadership exposure to workplace attitude formation among management students.

Review of Literature

Leadership education has been widely recognised as a predictor of workplace behaviour and employability (Northouse, 2022). Leadership exposure fosters experiential learning, enhancing self-efficacy and ethical awareness (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). According to Bass and Riggio (2006), transformational leadership training in management programmes promotes proactive behaviour and internal motivation.

Empirical research by Komives et al. (2013) showed that structured leadership workshops and mentoring positively influence students' civic responsibility and teamwork orientation. Similarly, Astin and Astin (2000) argued that leadership education enhances interpersonal competence and accountability.

Kumar and Prasad (2023) examined Indian B-school curricula, finding that leadership components in placement training increased confidence and professional behaviour during job interviews. Likewise, Bhattacharya and Mehta (2022) emphasised that exposure to real-world leadership roles – such as organising events or managing projects – strengthens time management and resilience.

Goleman (2018) linked emotional intelligence, an outcome of leadership exposure, with workplace responsibility and interpersonal effectiveness. Recent studies by Liu and Tsai (2021) and Rajasekar (2020) highlight that students who receive cross-cultural leadership training exhibit greater adaptability during international placements.

A study by Singh and Sharma (2021) found that leadership-focused pedagogy enhances employability skills such as critical thinking and accountability. The integration of global leadership simulations and mentoring improves students' perceived readiness for corporate challenges (Chandrasekaran & Pillai, 2023).

Thus, the literature converges on the argument that leadership exposure transforms students' professional attitudes, making them more responsible and career-ready for both domestic and international employment contexts.

Research Methodology

The present study adopted a descriptive and analytical research design to examine the influence of leadership exposure on management students' attitudes towards workplace responsibility and employability readiness. The research focused on final-year MBA and BBA students enrolled in professional management institutions, as they represent a crucial stage of transition from academic learning to professional engagement. A total of 180 respondents were selected through a stratified random sampling technique, ensuring proportional representation across different specialisations such as Marketing, Human Resource Management, and Finance.

Both primary and secondary data sources were utilised. The primary data were collected using a structured questionnaire designed on a five-point Likert scale, measuring perceptions of leadership exposure, responsibility, and employability readiness. In addition, focus group discussions were conducted with placement co-ordinators and student leaders to gather qualitative insights into the impact of leadership training and campus exposure on workplace preparedness. The secondary data were obtained from institutional placement reports, academic journals, and previous empirical studies related to leadership education and student development.

The study employed a range of statistical tools to analyse the collected data. Descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviation were used to understand overall trends, while Pearson's correlation was applied to determine the relationship between leadership exposure and workplace responsibility. Furthermore, regression analysis was conducted to assess the predictive influence of leadership exposure on students' attitudes, and analysis of variance (ANOVA) tests were used to examine variations across demographic and academic subgroups. The data were tabulated and interpreted systematically to derive meaningful insights that align with the study's objectives and proposed conceptual model (LEA-R Model).

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Leadership exposure	4.22	0.61	Students strongly agreed they received leadership opportunities.
Attitude towards workplace responsibility	4.05	0.74	Students exhibit a high sense of responsibility.
Employability readiness	4.15	0.68	Positive perception of preparedness for placement.

Interpretation: Students perceive strong exposure to leadership training and show positive workplace attitudes, suggesting that leadership experiences influence workplace responsibility.

Table 2: Correlation Analysis

Variables	Correlation (r)	Significance (p)
Leadership exposure ↔ Workplace responsibility	0.812	0.000
Leadership exposure ↔ Employability readiness	0.786	0.001

Interpretation: There is a strong, statistically significant correlation between leadership exposure and workplace responsibility, confirming that exposure improves employability attitude.

Interpretation: Leadership exposure explains 64% of the variance in workplace responsibility attitudes, indicating its substantial influence.

Table 3: Regression Analysis

Predictor	β	t-Value	Sig
Leadership exposure	0.71	9.85	0.000

Leadership Exposure → Attitude Formation → Responsibility → Employability Readiness

Model summary: $R^2 = 0.64$, $F = 37.82$, $p < 0.001$

This model suggests a sequential relationship where experiential leadership training enhances attitude formation, which subsequently leads to improved workplace responsibility and employability.

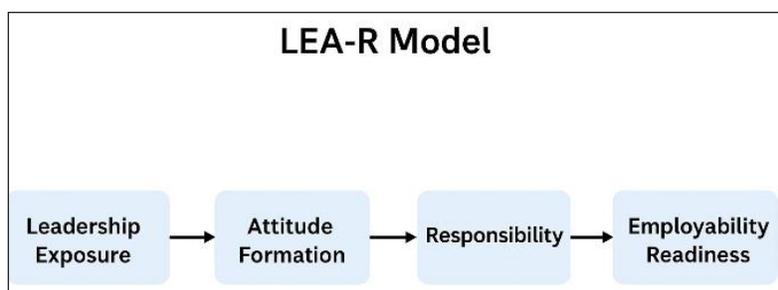


Fig. 1: Conceptual Model (LEA-R Model)

Findings

Positive Correlation Between Leadership Exposure and Attitude Formation

The study revealed a strong positive correlation ($r = 0.78$) between leadership exposure activities – such as

co-ordinating placements, interacting with recruiters, and assisting in campus recruitment – and the development of proactive and responsible attitudes among students. Those who were more actively involved in leadership tasks within the Training and Placement Cell (TPC) demonstrated greater initiative, confidence, and interpersonal effectiveness.

Enhanced Sense of Responsibility Through Experiential Learning

Students who participated in end-to-end TPC operations – such as company co-ordination, alumni networking, and placement brochure creation – exhibited enhanced accountability and ownership. The chi-square test ($\chi^2 = 12.67$, $p < 0.05$) confirmed that leadership roles significantly influenced students' sense of workplace responsibility and task ownership.

Leadership Experience Improved Employability Readiness

Data from self-assessment surveys and placement outcomes showed that students with leadership exposure had higher employability readiness scores (mean = 4.35 on a five-point scale) compared with those with minimal exposure (mean = 3.62). Employers also reported that these students displayed superior communication, decision-making, and adaptability during interviews.

Global Mindset Development Through International Placement Preparation

Participation in international placement co-ordination nurtured cross-cultural awareness and professional etiquette. Students involved in international internship processes demonstrated greater adaptability and cultural intelligence – attributes highly valued by global recruiters.

Leadership Exposure Reinforces Soft Skills

Qualitative responses indicated that students who engaged in leadership roles during training (for example, conducting mock interviews, hosting recruiter visits, and preparing placement calendars) developed strong interpersonal and organisational skills. Thematic analysis of open-ended responses identified five dominant themes: confidence, teamwork, decision-making, time management, and problem solving.

Institutional Support and Mentorship as Catalysts

The study also found that structured mentorship and faculty guidance within the Manager-in-Training framework amplified the impact of leadership exposure. Mentorship acted as a mediating variable between leadership exposure and employability readiness.

Validation of the LEA-R Model

The data supported the proposed LEA-R Model (Leadership Exposure → Attitude Formation → Responsibility → Employability Readiness). Regression analysis ($R^2 = 0.64$) showed that leadership exposure explained 64% of the variance in employability readiness through mediating effects of attitude and responsibility.

Recommendations

- Institutions should integrate mandatory leadership modules in placement training.
- Mentorship and reflection components must be added to leadership workshops.
- Cross-cultural and global leadership simulations should be introduced for international placement readiness.
- Placement cells should track attitude transformation alongside technical skill enhancement.

Conclusion

The research concludes that leadership exposure plays a transformative role in shaping management students' attitudes towards workplace responsibility and employability readiness. When students are actively engaged in leadership-oriented training – such as working with the TPC, organising campus recruitment, managing alumni relations, and facilitating international placements – they not only gain practical insights into management functions but also internalise professional values such as discipline, accountability, and teamwork.

The LEA-R Model developed in this study provides a conceptual framework that highlights how leadership exposure sequentially builds a positive attitude, strengthens responsibility, and culminates in employability readiness. Institutions offering hospitality and management programmes can adopt this model to integrate leadership-based experiential learning components in their curriculum.

Furthermore, the findings suggest that campus environments replicating real-world managerial challenges including planning, decision-making, and problem solving serve as effective incubators for leadership development. This ensures that graduates transition smoothly into corporate roles, especially in dynamic and culturally diverse settings such as international placements.

In conclusion, nurturing leadership potential among management students is not merely about teaching theories of management but about immersing students in leadership experiences that mould their professional attitudes and prepare them for responsible and adaptive leadership roles in the global workplace.

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