



Adaptability skills amongst Post-Graduate Management students in Bangalore city

Dr.B.Janakiraman,

Dean (Research- PG Programmes), GIBS-B School, Lord Sri Krishna
International Educational Trust, ITI Colony Bangalore.560085 India

Abstract: A significant feature of managerial work is that it involves novelty, change, and uncertainty on a regular basis. Being able to respond successfully to this variance is known as adaptability. In this article, we discuss the importance of adaptability for managers and management students for their efficient and effective functioning in the place of work. We have assessed the adaptability levels and illustrate several important implications for practice and research that are relevant to the development of managers' adaptability and furthering knowledge in this important area.

Keywords: adaptability skills, management students, workplace outcomes, effective managing

Introduction:

Adaptability skill in the workplace denotes being flexible and talented to change in order to turn out to be successful. Adaptability skill is a soft skill that employers look for while hiring applicants. Employees in a managerial and leadership role frequently have to handle unusual situations where there are no precise instructions. One having adaptability skill knows how to rest upon his/her own judgment and will have the poise to make challenging decisions.

If an employee learns things quickly, it is because he/she knows how to adapt. One can further nurture his/her adaptability skills by attempting novel things and challenging his/her ability to problem solve in a variety of circumstances.

Rapid shifts tend to leave a trail of both triumphs and failures- triumphs usually when professionals adapt to the changes quickly and failures generally when the professionals are unable to adapt at all or quickly enough, there by potentially leading to their career stagnation and sometimes even more serious consequences such as job loss.

When Charles Darwin, the 19th century naturalist who is best known for his contributions to evolutionary biology, realized the importance of adaptability among species, the 21st century technology sector undoubtedly non-existent however, some of his statements about survival skills are valid even today, when we consider the critical skills that today technology professionals will want to last and prosper in current times. Major technology shifts, which normally used to happen over five to ten years, earlier, are currently occurring in just over a couple of years and occasionally, even in a few months.

Importance of Adaptability skill:

Being adaptable in the workplace is significant for a variety of reasons. Primarily, employers appreciate employees who have the ability to manage changes successfully in the workplace. Besides, the higher adaptable one is, the more productive he/she will be overall. This is imperative because being able to manage change with ease opens up the time one might have usually consumed being stressed out once a new challenge showed itself. Being adaptable is also important because it displays one's ability to be resourceful, displays his/her leadership skills, determination, analytical skills etc. These are all precious qualities that an employer expects from an employee.

Variety of benefits is there to employees if they are adaptable in the workplace.

Benefits of workplace adaptability:

1.The Person will be a more valuable employee

No matter the type of the industry the person is working, it's common for there to be changes in the way your job is performed and the overall workplace environment, as the business environment itself is uncertain, volatile, complex and ambiguous. Due to this, employers want to employ people who have the aptitude to adapt to these on-going changes. Being adaptable displays the employer that the person is capable of handling new changes and challenges with ease.

2. The person will be a better leader

The more adaptable a person is, the more leadership qualities he/she will possess. This may contain qualities like focus, motivation and open-mindedness. When others see one person embracing change, it'll inspire others to do the same. Being adaptable will also help him/her earn the respect of his/ her co-workers. The better one is able to manage change, the better he/she will be able to lead the organisation at large.

Types of Adaptability skills for a Manager:

The Managers need to perform three elements of adaptability: cognitive flexibility, emotional flexibility and dispositional flexibility or active flexibility.

Cognitive Adaptability

This flexibility enables the manager to use totally different thinking methods and mental frameworks. Managers who have cognitive flexibility are able to incorporate totally different thinking methods and mental frameworks into their coming up with, decision-making, and management of day-after-day work. They will at the same time hold multiple eventualities in mind and might see once to shift and inject an amendment. Cognitive flexibility paves avenues for developing new approaches, the flexibility to check and leverage new connections, and also the propensity to figure well across the organization. These managers promptly learn from expertise and acknowledge the advantages and limitations of recent approaches.

Behavioural Adaptability

Behavioural Adaptability relates to the way a manager manages their Behavioural Styles. It is the manager's willingness and ability to adjust their style or approach to meet the needs of other people and the situation at hand. It's an adjustment required in attitudes, patterns, or habits of relating of managers. Adapting means that you adjust one's behaviour to make other people feel more at ease with the manager and the situation. The strategic behavioural adjustments that each manager needs to make will vary by the situation and the people involved. Each manager is personally responsible for making the decision to employ adaptability techniques, and those decisions need to be made on a case to case basis. Managers may choose to be adaptable with some people, and less so with others, or the decision to be adaptable or not, may apply on one day, and not the next. For some managers, the awareness for the need to adapt comes naturally and somewhat intuitively; just by observing and honouring the priorities of the employees interacting with him/her.

Affective adaptability

Affective adaptability is reflected in relation to "emotional response-tendencies that may be modulated" (Gross, 1998, p. 3; see also Pekrun, 2012) to respond to environmental ambiguity and uniqueness. As the ability to handle one's feelings flexibly is a vital trait of everyday life and interpersonal exchanges (e.g., Pessoa, 2008), latest work has begun to differentiate between purely cognitive flexibility and affective flexibility, i.e., the flexible engagement and disengagement from emotionally pertinent knowledge and occasions. Affective flexibility has been examined with untried new paradigms including instructed switches amid affective and affectively neutral materials and/or duty chores. (Genet et al., 2013; Genet & Siemer, 2011; Malooly et al., 2013; Reeck & Egner, 2015).

Adaptability as a critical managerial skill:

At least once in a week a report emerges from a business school, management consultancy, think-tank of the government telling us that the future of work is changing which are termed megatrends — the underlying forces shaping the future world and it requires adaptive response from people managing it. Responding to these megatrends as a starting point, this study focuses on the presence of adaptability skill in the budding managers – namely the postgraduate management students.

Whilst adaptability skill is one from which everyone will get pleasure from in an exceedingly dynamic world; it's notably important for managers as they have to make right responses. As managers scale up the hierarchy from being a supervisor to a middle manager and eventually onto c-suite senior positions, they have to adapt their vogue. Managerial roles increase in complexities as you progress through the hierarchy, vocation for additional refined influencing and persuading skills. And, as a manager's seniority will increase, they have to develop skills and ways to empower, delegate, form strategic alliances and unlearning a number of skills that enabled them to perform effectively in earlier managerial roles.

So, not solely do managers got to adapt as they move between roles in their career, they additionally got to flex perpetually among any given role, as they lead their individuals and organisation in an exceedingly dynamic business world.

Some of the greatest achievements by humans have predominantly relied on qualities such as creativity, inquisitiveness and empathy.

Many of these attributes are entrenched in what scientists call "cognitive adaptability" – a skill that facilitates us to switch between different concepts, or to adapt behaviour to achieve objectives in a novel or dynamic environment. It is fundamentally about learning to learn and being competent to be flexible about the way you learn. This includes changing strategies for optimal decision-making. In our on-going research, we are trying to work out how people can best boost their cognitive adaptability.

Cognitive adaptability provides us with the ability to see that what we are doing is not leading to success and to make the appropriate changes to achieve it. If you normally take the same route to work, but there are now road works on your usual route, what do you do? Some people continue to be firm and continue the original plan, in spite of the delay. More flexible people adjust to the unforeseen event and problem-solve to locate a solution.

Review of literature:

In recent years, studies have paid considerable attention to the construct of adaptability, almost anticipating the new situations triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic (Chen et al. 2020b). For management post graduate students facing the changeover stage, so as to enter work, acquiring the skill to adapt in a dynamic setting is acknowledged as one of the most critical skills and one of the principal factors related to job success (Rudolph et al. 2017; Spurk et al. 2013) in job search methods (Koen et al. 2010), employability (Spurk et al. 2016) and performance (Zacher 2015).

As Tolentino and colleagues (Tolentino et al. 2014), and Ginevra and colleagues (2018) propose, adaptability permits individuals to face unforeseen glitches that are not easy to crack, facilitating them to realise a functional balance with the situation in which they are placed. In a latest literature review, Chen and colleagues (Chen et al. 2020b) discovered that this exact field of study basically covers five main clusters (described in their study by the high frequency keyword grouping characteristics): boundaryless mindset, job adaptability scale, career construction, proactive upbeat personality, and life blueprint.

Data collection

The data was collected by means of a survey that was designed explicitly for this research. These surveys were conducted amongst the Post Graduate students of management programme. The questionnaire constituted three components measured against a Likert-type scale of five points (1: Strongly Disagree, 2: Disagree, 3: Neutral, 4: Agree, and 5: Strongly Agree). The three components are as follows: Cognitive adaptability, Behavioural adaptability and Affective adaptability. Primary data was collected from 100 students and the mean scores were calculated for analysis purpose.

Reliability Statistics:

Adaptability scale questionnaire which is multi-dimensional was having ten items in the form of statements with a built-in 5 point scale for the respondent to choose the appropriate answer that is most agreeable to him: Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree and Strongly Agree.

The questionnaire measures three dimensions of adaptability. The score obtained under each dimension represent the level of adaptability in that particular dimension.

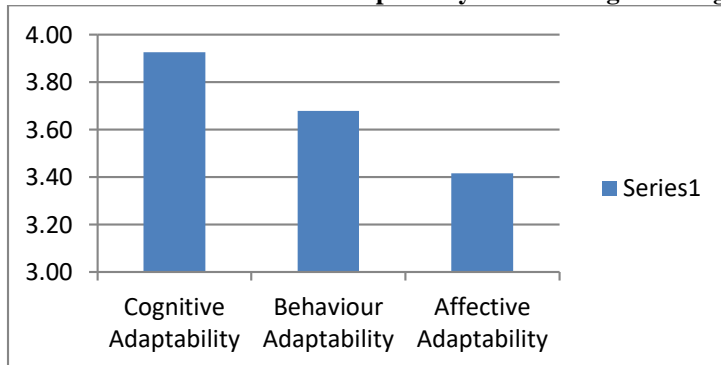
Cronbach's alpha was used to determine the reliability for the adaptability skills questionnaire. Table No.1 shows the reliability statistics and proves the data could support 79.5 percentage reliable to do this analysis. The questionnaire has undergone Cronbach Alpha testing for finding out its reliability and the value is given below:

Table No.1 Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.795	10

Data Analysis and Interpretation:**Table No.2 Overall level of Adaptability skills amongst Management students**

Dimension	Mean scores
Cognitive Adaptability	3.93
Behaviour Adaptability	3.68
Affective Adaptability	3.42

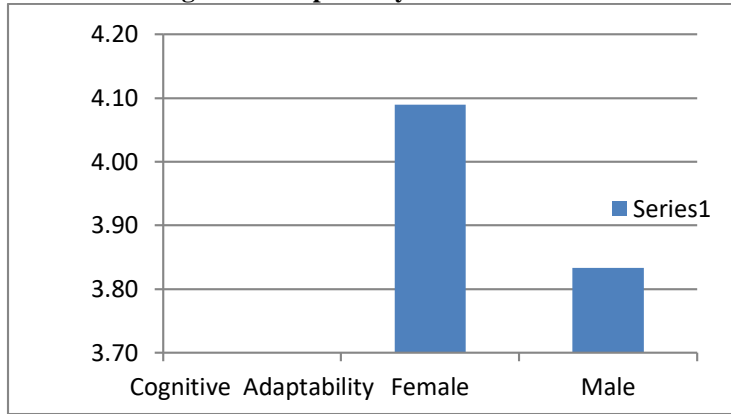
Chart No.1. Overall level of Adaptability skills amongst Management students

Amongst the students cognitive adaptability is slightly higher compared to Behavioural and affective skills. When they become managers manifested adaptability is also important like cognitive adaptability. Amongst the three components Affective adaptability is the lowest.

Table No.3 Cognitive Adaptability Skills

Gender	Mean Scores
Female	4.09
Male	3.83

Chart No.2 Cognitive Adaptability Skills



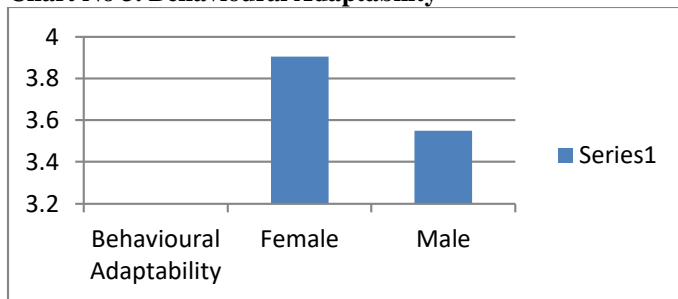
Amongst male students the cognitive adaptability skills are less compared to female students.

The way of bringing up, preferential treatment etc., might have affected their flexibility.

Table No 4. Behavioural Adaptability

Gender	Mean Scores
Female	3.90
Male	3.55

Chart No 3. Behavioural Adaptability



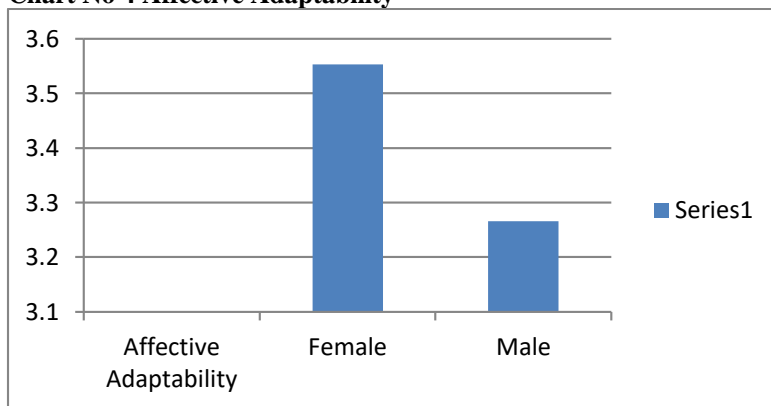
Amongst male students the behavioural adaptability skills are less compared to female students.

Factors like Socio-environmental factors , Socio-Economic Status and Socio-Cultural Level of both the parents of the student influences the way of bringing up and the student’s behaviour in society with less behavioural flexibility.

Table No 5 Affective Adaptability

Affective Adaptability	
Gender	Mean Scores
Female	3.55
Male	3.27

Chart No 4 Affective Adaptability



Amongst male students the behavioural adaptability skills are less compared to female students.

The self-reported ability to adapt successfully to emotional events and situations is known as affective adaptability. Also known as Trait resilience and that is considered to be a stable personality characteristic. Personality factors like anxiety and worry influences the affective adaptability inversely.

Hypothesis testing:

Null Hypothesis: There is no significant difference between the selected independent variable gender and the dependent variable adaptability skills.

H1: There is significant difference between the selected independent variable gender and the dependent variable adaptability skills.

Table 6 Analysis of Variance:**ANOVA**

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	3.176	1	3.176	9.077	.003
Within Groups	34.293	98	.350		
Total	37.470	99			

It is observed from the above analysis there is a significant difference between the gender and the measured dependent variable of adaptability skills. The gender of the respondents is highly influencing the adaptability skills of the postgraduate management students. When the gender varies in the Post graduate management students the adaptability skills also varies and hence the null hypothesis is rejected as the significant value is < 0.05 .

Limitations of the study

This study has some limitations. First, the research sample was a group of post graduate management students and has not included working people. Hence the findings can be generalised only to the same type and size. Second, our data was collected from the same place viz., Bangalore, which might result in common method variance. A third limitation of this study lies in its small sample size. However, there exists the potential for studying these factors for a wider population and in other cities of India.

Directions for further research

Future research on adaptability could focus on the influences and features of diverse sub-dimensions of adaptability, examining different factors that impact each sub-dimension. Future research could also study the growth trajectory of adaptability. Adaptability may change with the changing environment. It might be stimulating to see how managerial adaptability develops, as well as how such development shapes adaptation outcomes. In addition, future research could further examine the impact of adaptability on other aspects of individual way of managing especially at the workplace.

Ways to develop adaptability skills**Learning from different people**

As adaptability correlates to being free and accessible to new experiences, it can be really advantageous to surround yourself with a varied range of persons with diverse perspectives. Realizing about how they look at life or confront and solve problems can change your own viewpoint and make you more inquisitive about the world.

Reframing the thoughts

It is suggested that the aptitude to reframe or think differently about obstacles is a key part of developing our resilience tool kit. This is connected to our adaptability, as it means we involve and understand the issues we're faced with, rather than allowing them get in the way.

One way to reframe your thoughts could be attempting the design thinking method. This may be described as:

- An information collecting process where you converse with lots of different people
- Adding different perspectives to your own
- Developing empathy – feeling the same thing by putting yourself in other's shoes.
- Thinking openly about different ways of reframing a problem.

Accepting challenges

It's impossible to be flexible if you don't put yourself in challenging situations with barriers to overcome. If you never come out of your comfort zone, you're more likely to become habitual to doing things in one way, and you won't be open-minded to various people, perspectives, and opportunities. Instead seeking out challenges may facilitate developing adaptability skills.

Embracing mistakes

If you're scared of making mistakes, you'll struggle to form a truly adaptive mind-set. Instead, look at mistakes as learning experiences that improve your openness, adaptability, willpower and grit. Mistakes are a basic part of life, so you ought not to shun something because you're fearful of making them.

Conclusion

Present day organisations represent the digital transformation of modern-day organizations to meet the organization goals and objectives using advances in technology like IoT, cloud computing and Big Data. Modern day organisation is a socio-technical phenomenon and hence the role of employees displaying successful adaptability skill of Industry is pivotal. This study through a systematic literature review explored the three dimensions on which the managers must possess adaptability skills for the successful running of the organisation. Certain initiatives like dealing with crises and unforeseen circumstances, creative problem-solving, continuous learning, training, and education, managing stress may result in developing adaptability for managerial success when the students graduate.

References:

1. Bell, B. S., & Kozlowski, S. W. J. (1999). The effects of cognitive, behavioral, and affective guidance on basic, strategic, and adaptive performance. (Final Report 3.1; Contract No. N61339-96-K-0005). Orlando, FL: Naval Air Warfare Center Training Systems Division.
2. Besser, A., Flett, G. L., & Zeigler-Hill, V. (2020). Adaptability to a sudden transition to online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic: Understanding the challenges for students. In *Scholarship of Teaching and Learning in Psychology. Development of a taxonomy of adaptive performance*. In *Journal of applied psychology*, 85(4), 612.
3. Cullen, K. L., Edwards, B. D., Casper, W. C. & Gue, K. R. (2014). Employees' Adaptability and Perceptions of Change-Related Uncertainty: Implications for Perceived Organizational Support, Job Satisfaction and Performance. *Journal of Business and Psychology* 29, 269–280.
4. Green, Crystal; Mynhier, Laurelyn; Banfill, Jonathan; Edwards, Phillip; Kim, Jungwon; Desjardins, Richard (2021). Preparing education for the crises of tomorrow: A framework for adaptability. In *International review of education. Internationale Zeitschrift für Erziehungswissenschaft. Revue internationale de pedagogie*, pp. 1–23.
5. Griffin, B., & Hesketh, B. (2003). Adaptable behaviours for successful work and career adjustment. In *Australian Journal of Psychology*, 55(2), 65-73.
6. Haynie, J.M. & Shepherd, D.A. (2009). A measure of cognitive adaptability for entrepreneurship research. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, 33(3), 695–714.
7. Haynie, J.M., Shepherd, D.A., Mosakowski, E., & Earley, C. (2009). Cognitive adaptability: The theoretical origins of the entrepreneurial mindset. *Journal of Business Venturing*, 25(2), 217–229
8. Kozlowski et al. Developing Adaptability 30 Brown, K. G., & Kozlowski, S. W. J. (1997, April). Self-evaluation and training outcomes: Training strategy and goal orientation effects. Paper presented at the 12th Annual Conference of the Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology,
9. Kozlowski, S. W. J. (1998). Training and developing adaptive teams: Theory, principles, and research. In J. A. Cannon-Bowers & E. Salas (Eds.), *Decision making under stress: Implications for training and simulation* (pp. 115-153). Washington, DC: APA Books.
10. Kozlowski, S. W. J., & DeShon, R. P. A network-based approach to team situational awareness, coordination, and adaptive performance. Air Force Office of Scientific Research (F49620-98-1-0363). April 1998 to December 2000
11. Kozlowski, S. W. J., Gully, S. M., Nason, E. R., & Smith, E. M. (1999). Developing adaptive teams: A theory of compilation and performance across levels and time. In D. R. Ilgen & E. D. Pulakos (Eds.), *The changing nature of work performance: Implications for staffing, personnel actions, and development* (pp. 240-292). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
12. LePine, J., Colquitt, J., & Erez, A. (2000). Adaptability to changing task contexts: Effects of general cognitive ability, conscientiousness, and openness to experience. *Personnel Psychology*, 53, 563–593
13. Liem, G. A. D., & Martin, A. J. (2015). Young people's responses to environmental issues: Exploring the roles of adaptability and personality. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 79, 91-97.
14. Martin, A. J., Nejad, H. G., Colmar, S., & Liem, G. A. D. (2013). Adaptability: How students' responses to uncertainty and novelty predict their academic and non-academic outcomes. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 105(3), 728–746.
15. Martin, A.J., Nejad, H., Colmar, S., & Liem, G. A. D. (2012). Adaptability: Conceptual and empirical perspectives on responses to change, novelty and uncertainty. *Australian Journal of Guidance and Counselling*, 22, 58-81.
16. Mirdrikvand F, Ghadampour E, Kavarizadeh M. The Effect of Life Skills Training on Psychological Capital and Adaptability of Adolescent Girls with Irresponsible Parents. *Quarterly Journal of Social Work*. 2016;5(3):23-30
17. O'Connell, D. J., McNeely, E., & Hall, D. T., (2007). Unpacking Personal Adaptability at Work. *Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies* 14(3) 248-259.
18. Ployhart, R.; Bliese, P. (2006). Individual Adaptability (I-ADAPT) Theory: Conceptualizing the Antecedents, Consequences, and Measurement of Individual Differences in Adaptability. In C. Shawn Burke (Ed.): *Understanding adaptability. A prerequisite for effective performance within complex environments*, vol. 6. 1. ed. Amsterdam: Elsevier JAI (*Advances in human performance and cognitive engineering research*, 6), pp. 3–39.
19. Pulakos, E. D., Arad, S., Donovan, M. A., & Plamondon, K. E. (2000). Adaptability in the workplace: Development of taxonomy of adaptive performance. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 85(4).
20. Rasch, Björn; Born, Jan (2013). About sleep's role in memory. In *Physiological reviews* 93 (2), pp. 681–766.
21. Smith, E. M., Ford, J. K., & Kozlowski, S. W. J. (1997). Building adaptive expertise: Implications for training design. In M. A. Quinones & A. Dudda (Eds.), *Training for a rapidly changing workplace: Applications of psychological research* (pp.89-118). Washington, DC: APA Books
22. Sony, M., & Mekoth, N. (2015). Fleadapt scale: A new tool to measure frontline employee adaptability in power sector. *International Journal of Energy Sector Management*, 9(4), 496–522.
23. Tariq, M. R., Anwar, M. S., Aslam, M. (2011). Impact of Employee Adaptability to Change towards Organizational Competitive Advantage. *Global Journal of Management and Business Research*, 11(7).
24. Tennyson, R. D. (1981). Use of adaptive information for advisement in learning concepts and rules using computer assisted instruction. *American Educational Research Journal*, 18, 425-438
25. van Dam, K. (2011). "Cognitive resources of individual adaptability,". Paper for the 15th European Congress of Work and Organizational Psychology, Maastricht, Netherlands.
26. van Dam, K. (2013). Employee adaptability to change at work: A multidimensional, resource-based framework. In *The psychology of change: Viewing change from the employee's perspective*, 123-142.