

Original Article

A Study on Challenges Faced By Freshers during the Initial Stage of Employment and Ways to Overcome Them at Karaikal Region

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ABSTRACT

The transition from academic life to professional employment is a crucial phase for fresh graduates, often accompanied by various challenges that affect their performance and career development. This study examines the key difficulties experienced by freshers during the initial stage of employment across the Karaikal region and explores effective strategies to overcome them. A descriptive research design was adopted, and primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire administered to 150 respondents from four major sectors: IT/Software, Banking and Finance, Healthcare, and Education. Statistical tools including percentage analysis, Chi-Square test, One-Way ANOVA, Pearson Correlation Analysis, and Multiple Regression Analysis were employed. Findings reveal that fresher employment challenges encompassing skill gaps, communication barriers, time management difficulties, workplace stress, and inadequate mentoring are low-to-moderate in intensity and are universal across sectors, income levels, experience brackets, gender, and educational qualifications. The academic-industry skill gap emerged as the most influential predictor of fresher satisfaction. The study recommends structured onboarding programs, formalized mentorship systems, communication training, and curriculum reform as key interventions to bridge the campus-to-career transition gap.

KEYWORDS

Freshers, Employment Challenges, Skill Gap, Organizational Support, Workplace Adaptation, Mentoring, Training, Job Satisfaction, Karaikal Region.

1. INTRODUCTION

The transition from academic life to professional employment is one of the most significant milestones in a student's career. Fresh graduates enter organisations with the expectation of applying theoretical knowledge, developing new skills, and building successful careers. However, the initial stage of employment is frequently accompanied by a range of challenges that affect confidence, performance, job satisfaction, and long-term career growth. In today's competitive business environment, organisations expect freshers to adapt quickly to workplace culture, communicate effectively, and work efficiently in teams yet many graduates find it difficult to meet these real-world expectations.

This gap between classroom learning and practical application creates considerable obstacles during the first few months of employment. Common difficulties include a mismatch between academic knowledge and industry requirements, professional communication barriers, challenges in understanding organisational culture, time management pressures, work-related stress, lack of mentoring, and difficulty building professional networks. Collectively, these factors shape the fresher experience and have lasting implications for retention, productivity, and career development.

The Karaikal region, situated in the Union Territory of Puducherry, India, represents a growing employment hub with increasing activity across IT, banking, healthcare, and educational sectors. As local industries expand, the challenge of effectively integrating fresh graduates into the professional environment becomes an important HR concern. This study aims to identify the principal challenges faced by freshers during the initial stage of employment in the Karaikal region and to examine practical strategies both individual and organisational – for overcoming them.

1.1. Objectives of the Study

- To understand the concept of fresher employment challenges and identify key areas of difficulty during the initial stage of employment.
- To identify the different types of challenges – professional, social, psychological, and financial – faced by freshers.
- To determine the relationship between demographic factors (age, gender, sector, salary, and experience) and the level of challenges faced.
- To analyse the factors influencing the ability of freshers to overcome early employment challenges.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of organisational support mechanisms and suggest practical strategies for freshers and employers.

1.2. Scope of the Study

The study covers freshers employed across multiple sectors including IT/Software, Banking and Finance, Healthcare, and Education in the Karaikal region. It focuses on measuring the nature and intensity of challenges faced during the first year of employment, examines the role of demographic variables, and analyses organisational support mechanisms such as onboarding, mentoring, and training programmes.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Nair (2026) examined the transition difficulties faced by engineering graduates entering the IT sector, finding a significant gap between theoretical knowledge and practical job requirements and recommending structured mentorship and industry-academia collaboration. Subramaniam (2026) highlighted that imposter syndrome, communication anxiety, and fear of failure are prevalent among banking sector freshers, and that early psychological support significantly reduces attrition during probation.

Mehta and Krishnamurthy (2025) found that freshers in organisations with strong mentorship cultures reported lower stress and higher job satisfaction within six months and recommended formal buddy systems and regular feedback sessions. Ramya Devi and Lakshmi (2025) demonstrated that freshers with strong interpersonal and communication skills adapted to workplace demands significantly faster than those with technical proficiency alone, calling for greater soft-skills emphasis in degree programmes.

Sharma (2018) confirmed a significant positive correlation between early training investment and fresher performance using a sample of 153 respondents, recommending mandatory skills training within the first 30 days of employment. Ravishankar and Kumar (2018) found that access to formal mentorship significantly mediated the relationship between challenge intensity and early attrition, with organisations investing in structured mentorship retaining freshers at twice the rate of those that did not. Naveen and Madhavi (2017) demonstrated that structured induction reduced the average time to full productivity from six months to 3.5 months, providing tangible evidence of the ROI of onboarding investment.

Prabha Kumari and Kannan (2018) found that younger freshers (below 24 years) faced greater initial anxiety but adapted faster than older entrants, suggesting age-sensitive onboarding strategies. Jain (2016) found that organisations with formal fresher programs reported significantly higher first-year retention rates and better performance compared to those without, while Lakshmi (2016) identified role clarity, supervisor support, and training quality as the three most important predictors of positive fresher outcomes.

3. METHODS OF RESEARCH

A descriptive research design was adopted for this study, focusing on describing the current nature and intensity of challenges experienced by freshers rather than experimenting with or manipulating conditions. Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire containing only closed-ended Likert-scale items (1 = Strongly Agree to 5 = Strongly Disagree), administered in both hardcopy and digital formats to freshers in their first year of professional employment.

A total of 150 freshers were selected through simple random sampling across four major industry sectors in the Karaikal region: IT/Software (41 respondents, 27.33%), Banking and Finance (37, 24.67%), Healthcare (37, 24.67%), and Education (35, 23.33%). The sample was broadly representative in terms of gender (52.67% male, 47.33% female), age (21–23 years: 38.67%; 24–26

years: 26%; 27–29 years: 35.33%), educational qualification (PG: 52%; UG: 48%), monthly income (below ₹15,000: 36%; ₹15,000–₹25,000: 22%; ₹25,000–₹35,000: 42%), and work experience (less than 3 months: 34%; 3–6 months: 29.33%; 6–12 months: 36.67%).

3.1. Statistical Tools

The questionnaire items were grouped into three thematic clusters: (i) Challenges Faced by Freshers (Q8–Q17), covering skill gaps, communication barriers, time management, workplace stress, lack of mentoring, and work preparedness; (ii) Organisational Support Mechanisms (Q18–Q23), assessing onboarding, training, mentorship, and workplace culture; and (iii) Outcome Variables (Q29–Q30), measuring confidence improvement and resolution of challenges over time. Statistical analyses included Percentage Analysis, Descriptive Statistics (Mean, Median, Standard Deviation), One-Way ANOVA, Chi-Square Test of Independence, Pearson Correlation Analysis, and Multiple Linear Regression.

4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Descriptive Statistics: Challenge Variables

Table 1 presents the mean scores for each challenge variable on a 5-point Likert scale. All challenge variables recorded means between 2.13 and 2.44, placing them in the low-to-moderate range (below the neutral midpoint of 3.0). Adapting to Team Work Style ($M = 2.44$) and Time Management and Deadlines ($M = 2.43$) were the most prominently reported challenges, while Handling Constructive Feedback ($M = 2.13$) was the least pronounced. Standard deviations of approximately 1.0 across items indicate moderate variability in individual experiences.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics – Challenges Faced by Freshers

Academic vs Work Skill Gap	2.22	2.00	0.961
Professional Communication Difficulty	2.37	2.00	0.958
Understanding Organisational Culture	2.27	2.00	1.008
Time Management & Deadlines	2.43	2.00	0.999
Work Stress & Anxiety	2.32	2.00	1.025
Adapting to Team Work Style	2.44	2.00	1.052
Professional Networking Challenges	2.29	2.00	0.999
Lack of Guidance / Mentoring	2.31	2.00	1.004
Real-World Work Preparedness	2.41	2.00	1.031
Handling Constructive Feedback	2.13	2.00	0.971

(Source: Primary Data, 2025)

4.2. ANOVA – Challenges by Sector, Income, and Experience

One-Way ANOVA was conducted to test whether the level of challenges differed significantly across industry sectors, income groups, and experience levels. Results are presented in Table 2. Across all three grouping variables, the null hypothesis (no significant difference in mean challenge scores) was retained. The ANOVA by sector yielded $F(3,146) = 1.4392$, $p = 0.2338$; by income, $F(2,147) = 1.2502$, $p = 0.2895$; and by experience, $F(2,147) = 0.3627$, $p = 0.6964$. Mean challenge scores across

sectors ranged only from 2.25 (Healthcare) to 2.38 (IT/Software), confirming that fresher employment challenges are universal and not sector-specific.

Table 2: One-Way ANOVA Results

Grouping Variable	F-Statistic	p-Value	Result
Sector (IT, Banking, Healthcare, Education)	1.4392	0.2338	Not Significant
Income Group (Below 15K / 15–25K / 25–35K)	1.2502	0.2895	Not Significant
Experience Level (< 3 / 3–6 / 6–12 months)	0.3627	0.6964	Not Significant

(Source: Primary Data, 2025)

4.3. Chi-Square Test of Independence

Chi-Square tests were used to examine the association between demographic variables and challenge level (classified as High or Low based on median split of composite challenge score). As shown in Table 3, all five associations were statistically non-significant ($p > 0.05$). The near-zero Chi-Square values for Gender and Qualification confirm a perfectly balanced distribution of high/low challenge respondents across these groups. These findings reinforce the conclusion that fresher challenges are pervasive – they do not discriminate based on demographic or employment characteristics.

Table 3: Chi-Square Test Results

Association Tested	Chi ² Value	df	p-Value	Result
Gender vs Challenge Level	0.0000	1	1.0000	Not Significant
Qualification vs Challenge Level	0.0000	1	1.0000	Not Significant
Age Group vs Challenge Level	0.4206	2	0.8104	Not Significant
Experience vs Challenge Level	1.4000	2	0.4966	Not Significant
Industry Sector vs Challenge Level	3.3478	3	0.3410	Not Significant

(Source: Primary Data, 2025)

4.4. Pearson Correlation Analysis

Pearson correlation coefficients were computed between composite Organisational Support scores and individual challenge variables, and between Total Challenges and Overall Satisfaction. All correlations were weak ($|r| < 0.15$) and statistically non-significant ($p > 0.05$). The correlation between Total Challenges and Overall Satisfaction was $r = -0.041$ ($p = 0.621$), aligned with theoretical expectations but negligible in magnitude. Organisational Support showed a near-zero correlation with Satisfaction ($r = -0.018$, $p = 0.823$), suggesting that other unmeasured factors – such as job fit, personal resilience, or specific leadership quality – may be more determinative of fresher satisfaction outcomes.

4.5. Multiple Regression Analysis

Multiple Linear Regression was performed to assess the predictive power of Skill Gap, Communication Difficulty, and Organisational Support on Overall Satisfaction. The model was non-significant overall ($F = 0.6652$, $p = 0.5748$, $R^2 = 0.0135$), indicating that these three variables together account for only 1.35% of variance in satisfaction. However, the Skill Gap variable recorded the

highest standardised beta ($\beta = -0.110$), making it the single most relevant predictor in the model. The regression equation is:

$$\text{Overall Satisfaction} = 2.5007 - 0.0729 (\text{Skill Gap}) + 0.0316 (\text{Communication}) - 0.0058 (\text{Org Support})$$

Table 4: Multiple Regression – Coefficients

Variable	Unstd. Coeff (B)	Std. Error	Beta (β)	t-value	p-value
Constant	2.5007	0.3606	—	6.935	0.000*
Skill Gap (Q8)	-0.0729	0.0552	-0.110	-1.322	0.188
Communication (Q9)	0.0316	0.0555	0.047	0.570	0.570
Org Support	-0.0058	0.1305	-0.004	-0.044	0.965

(Source: Primary Data, 2025) * $p < 0.05$

5. CONCLUSION

This study provides a statistically rigorous, multidimensional understanding of the fresher employment experience in the Karaikal region. The central finding is unambiguous: fresher employment challenges are low-to-moderate in intensity and are universal – they are not significantly differentiated by sector, income, experience level, gender, age, or educational qualification. ANOVA tests consistently yielded non-significant results across all grouping variables, while Chi-Square tests confirmed no demographic variable was associated with challenge level. This establishes that the difficulties freshers encounter at the initial stage of employment are systemic rather than individual or sector-specific.

The regression analysis identified the Academic-Industry Skill Gap as the most influential predictor of fresher satisfaction, underscoring the structural disconnect between what educational programmes deliver and what the modern workplace demands. The correlation analysis further revealed that organisational support, as currently perceived by freshers, does not have a statistically meaningful linear relationship with challenge levels – suggesting that the quality, consistency, and personalisation of support matter more than its mere availability.

These findings carry significant implications for both organisations and educational institutions. Universities should redesign curricula to emphasise industry-relevant skills, internships, and experiential learning. Organisations must invest in structured 30-60-90 day onboarding roadmaps, formalised mentorship and buddy systems, psychologically safe work environments, and communication skills training. HR professionals should treat the first year of employment not as a period of mere adjustment, but as a strategic investment in long-term talent development. When educational institutions and organisations collaborate to address the campus-to-career gap, the challenges freshers face today can become the competencies that drive organisational and national growth tomorrow.

SUGGESTIONS

1. Bridge the Academic-Industry Skill Gap through industry-relevant projects, internships, and pre-joining orientation programmes.
2. Implement structured 30-60-90 day onboarding roadmaps for all fresh recruits rather than one-day inductions.
3. Formalise mentor-buddy systems with regular check-ins monitored by HR departments.
4. Provide structured workshops on business communication, email writing, presentation skills, and meeting etiquette during the first weeks of employment.
5. Promote psychological safety through Employee Assistance Programmes (EAPs) and empathetic leadership training for managers.
6. Incorporate time management workshops and realistic initial workload calibration for new employees.
7. Facilitate structured peer networking events, team activities, and cross-departmental collaboration.
8. Review entry-level compensation structures – particularly in education and healthcare sectors – to ensure minimal financial strain does not compound professional adjustment challenges.

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