



International Journal of Commerce, Economics and Management Research (IJCEMR)

(An International Peer-Reviewed (Refereed) Journal)

Volume no. 1, Issue no 2, Page No. 77-92

Online ISSN: 3139-9320; Print ISSN: 3139-826X

Perceived Importance of Work Experience for Decision-Making, Career Growth and Salary: An Exploratory Primary Survey of Workers in India

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Received: 14 August 2026, Revised: 15 September 2026, Accepted: 29 September 2026, Available Online: 30 September, 2026

<https://doi.org/10.68219/9fjmj08>

Abstract

In this exploratory study, we have explored workers' perceptions about the value of experience in decision-making, career development and salary growth, as well as how these perceptions differ by age, education and working hours. We surveyed 127 workers in Berhampore, West Bengal for a snowball sampling study and also quantified it with a cross-sectional approach. We found a lot of support for work experience and they think it is necessary to make decisions effectively, to advance career and to raise salary. Experience from reputed brands was also seen as helpful and this was very common across age groups, education levels and work hours. In addition, all respondents reported that education and experience are complementary, so that work experience is not seen as a substitute for formal education. In general, the study indicates the role of work experience in professional development and career progression and the non-random sample of the individuals is limited in the validity of the findings.

Keywords: *work experience, career growth, salary, regression, Fisher's exact test, human capital*

1. Introduction

Work experience is regarded as an important factor in jobs and work-related experiences for recruitment, workplace learning, and career development. In fact, a lot of employers are using previous experience to find job candidates, reduce training costs, and reduce the risk of an incorrect hiring decision (Indeed Hiring Lab, 2024, as cited by HR Dive, 2024). Staff also report more on the job knowledge they gain from working and not from the classroom (NIIT, 2026). Previous studies have also shown a positive relationship between workplace experience and job performance (Quiñones et al., 1995). Work experience is also associated with wages and human capital growth and development over a lifetime (Mincer, 1974; Topel, 1991). Even

so, with experience crucial to employment and professional development, the majority of the literature tends to focus on its economic benefits in terms of wages and employment and recruiters' practices. Less attention has been paid to how workers themselves think about experience in their working lives. This gap presents a crucial research question: although experience is considered to be valuable (and is in general the best way to make decisions for people to learn and grow professionally and pay more), it is not clear whether workers consistently view experience as beneficial for decision-making, career advancement, or salary growth (as well as whether that perception varies in the professional development of the people working with them). Age, education level, and day-to-day work hours can affect how we value experience. Younger and older workers may have different exposure to learning at work, and employees with different education levels may not necessarily assess experience the same way. And just as the time spent at work can affect employees in terms of learning and applying job knowledge, so as well. However, we still do not know whether these characteristics are related to how workers' perception of experience is linked to them. Another important point to note is the value of experience gained from a respected brand, as working with a well-known organization could be perceived differently from experience acquired elsewhere. And whether workers believe experience is more important than education or that both are complementary can provide evidence of professional development. Experience is still at the forefront of job recruitment in the workplace and career development, and we may also see more and more people learning skills-based hiring. As companies have increasingly focused on skills as opposed to conventional credentials, recruitment practices have not always matched these aims (Burning Glass Institute and Harvard Business School, as reported by HR Dive, 2024). In this context, one should be looking at workers' own perceptions because experience can influence how they think of career opportunities, workplace education, and salary growth. Rather than looking at experience in terms of wages, productivity, or employer preferences, the aim of this research is to explore how individuals perceive the value of experience in real time and in their professional lives. Drawing on survey data from workers in Berhampore, West Bengal, the research first looks at how valuable experience is to them. It also looks at the different age, educational level, and working hours of people who are in the position to experience the value of work as well and whether these characteristics are associated with the overall support for experience in general. It also questions respondents on the value of experience derived from a well-known brand in relation to how much of it is valued by them and what they think of the value of education and experience in relation to it. This study is of importance in three aspects to the existing literature. Firstly, it gives a worker-centred view of the value of experience and is complementary to research that primarily looks at wages, job performance, and employer recruitment. Second, it assesses the different perceptions of experience among different groups of people by age and work status and gives preliminary data on the differences in the views of different groups of people as workers and their working habits. Third, it extends the question of experience beyond that from experience itself to the perceived value of it for a brand and the relationship of formal education and work experience with professional development. In answering those questions, the study provides evidence of how workers understand the role of experience in professional development and career progression. Since we are using a non-

random sample from a single location, the results are interpreted within the context of the surveyed workers and not as representative of the general workforce.

2. Background and Literature Review

Human capital theory sees education and work experience as investments that enhance people's productivity and economic gain (Becker, 1964; Mincer, 1974). In addition, signalling theory posits that observable characteristics such as education as well as employer reputation might impact how employers evaluate people when their productivity is less certain (Spence, 1973; Pandey et al., 2026a). These perspectives are the theoretical basis for understanding what people think about work experience as it relates to job, career advancement, and workplace decision-making. But experience may be of value depending on its nature and relevance for the organisation.

2.1. Work Experience, Human Capital, and Career Outcomes

Human capital theory emphasizes the key role of experience in wages and career progression. Mincer (1974) included experience in wage determination and Topel (1991) suggested that job seniority was associated with wage growth because skills in firms were established and developed. Jovanovic (1979) added that continued work is a reflection of learning about the quality of the employer–employee match, and a better match is likely to persist. These studies form a theoretical basis for seeing experience as a driver of productivity and economic development. But as we know, the research on the relationship between experience and career trajectory does not suggest how workers themselves value experience. The literature also distinguishes objective career outcomes from subjective perceptions of career success. Ng, Eby, Sorensen and Feldman (2005) found that human capital variables are more strongly associated with objective outcomes (e.g., salary and promotion) than subjective career success, although relationships involving perceptual measures may be affected by common method bias. Indian labour market evidence has also found that returns to experience are positive but not necessarily linear. Palakeel and Aryan (2026) showed that experience was negatively correlated with wages in the India Human Development Survey, which suggests that returns to experience are diminishing as experience is accumulated. Chen and Kanjilal-Bhaduri (2022) introduced returns to education with the Periodic Labour Force Survey (2018-19) for India to make their estimates of returns to education (see references therein). All of this evidence highlights the economic significance of education and experience and leaves open the question of how workers perceive their relative contributions.

2.2. Work Experience and Job Performance

Research on the relationship between experience and job performance is not always positive. Quiñones, Ford and Teachout (1995), based on 44 samples, found a positive relation between work experience and performance (task-specific experience and work volume). Ng and Feldman (2009) found a positive relationship between educational accomplishment and core task performance, creativity, and citizenship behaviour. McDaniel, Schmidt and Hunter (1988) also mentioned that training and experience assessment are still a part of hiring decisions. These findings help to explain why experience remains a core factor in job selection. But experience

does not always translate to better performance. Dokko, Wilk and Rothbard (2009) found that previous experience can transfer bad routines to a new organisation. Van Iddekinge et al. (2019) also conducted 81 independent trials and found that pre-hire experience measures were less related to job performance, training performance, and turnover. Tesluk and Jacobs (1998) also argued that experience is a mixture of quantitative and qualitative aspects and has some limitations in terms of its definition as well as measurement. So the value of experience is not only about accumulation but also about relevance, application, and context. The difference is that this study examines workers' perception of their experiences and not their productivity or performance.

2.3. Employer Preferences and the Changing Nature of Hiring

Employers often use experience to weed out potential applicants, reduce training costs, and minimize job risk (Indeed Hiring Lab, 2024, as cited by HR Dive, 2024). As recruitment practices are evolving, however, US job postings in terms of years of experience have declined from 2022 to 2024, SHRM (2024) reported. However, the application of skills-based hiring is still in its early stages, with almost half of the companies announcing it not changing the actual recruitment practices (Burning Glass Institute & Harvard Business School, 2024). Industry evidence from India also supports the relevance of experience (Pramahender et al., 2021). The India Skills Gap Report 2026 found there was demand for experienced professionals as well as early-career workers, and more on-the-job experience was considered better in terms of job performance than job performance (NIIT, 2026). Reports by BW Businessworld (2026) and Mercer (2025) also show that employers are interested in existing skills and transferable skills, such as critical thinking, communication, and learning agility. There is also job portal evidence on the demand for experienced professionals in specialist fields and freshers (Info Edge, 2026). On the other hand, PTI (2019) found that freshers made up a large part of HDFC Bank's total hiring and experience is not a requirement. This suggests the labour market value of experience is not universal with regard to each occupation or job market field. More importantly, employer preferences cannot be assumed to reflect workers' own beliefs about the benefits of experience.

2.4. Employer Reputation and the Signalling Value of Experience

Signalling theory is a useful way to look at whether experience gained from a reputed organisation is particularly valuable. Spence (1973) posited that employers look for visible signs of employees in their evaluation of workers' qualities. And so, previous employment with the recognised organisation may be viewed as evidence of a person's capacity or experience with the workplace standards. Cable and Turban (2003) showed that organisational reputation is a factor of employer attractiveness from the job seeker's perspective, which supports the general importance of reputation in job market evaluations. But organisational attractiveness and the signalling value of previous employment are different things. It is not clear from the evidence that reputation affects job candidates and that experience gained at a reputed organisation will ultimately improve job performance (employability, productivity, and remuneration), so one can say that the value of reputed brand experience remains an empirical question. Analyzing workers' views on this question goes beyond general assessments of work

experience to consider the value of reputed organisational reputation for building up human capital.

2.5. Experience and Workplace Decision-Making

The potential impact of experience is not just on earnings and career growth but also on workplace decision making. Klein (1998) proposed the recognition-primed decision model, which states that experienced people recognise what they know and their experiences and are able to make decisions without systematically evaluating all possible alternatives (Srivastava et al., 2025). Kahneman & Klein (2009) further observed that intuition is more reliable when people are in a situation with sufficient frequency and reliable feedback. Experience can also help in good decision making when people can draw on knowledge and the repetition of learning but that is not the only reason why experienced people make easy decisions (Kahneman & Klein, 2009). These are the reasons that could be given for why workers might consider experience helpful in their decision making and not useful despite it being a positive or not, so that they see experience as useful and it is different from what you say is the quality of the decision making process, and how good it is actually with experience and how is a good decision.

2.6. Research Gap and Contribution

The literature has shown how work experience can improve earnings, job performance, organisational learning, and decision making but also how it varies with the nature of the experience and the context in which it is applied (Quiñones et al., 1995; Dokko et al., 2009; Van Iddekinge et al., 2019; Kahneman & Klein, 2009). Most research has focused on objective outcomes, employer selection practices and the economic returns to human capital. In contrast, workers' perceptions of experience are much less explored in all aspects of professional life, including decision-making, career growth, and salary growth. This research fills this gap by examining workers' views of experience and how this is influenced by age, educational status and working hours. It also examines how much you value experience from a well-known brand and whether education and experience are competing or complementary to professional development. By focusing on workers in Berhampore, West Bengal, this study is an exploratory way to assess these perceptions in a particular local context. Its contribution is to ask workers about the extent to which they believe in something rather than to know if experience matters in employment outcomes. The non-random sampling design also means that the results need to be interpreted as evidence of the workers who were surveyed and not generalised to the entire workforce.

2.10 Hypotheses Development

Based on human capital theory, signalling theory and previous empirical evidence, we study four hypotheses regarding workers' perceptions of work experience. Human capital theory suggests that work experience contributes to skill development, productivity and career advancement (Becker, 1964; Mincer, 1974). Evidence that experience is associated with job performance (Quiñones et al., 1995), still relevant in recruitment (HR Dive, 2024) and could be relevant for decision making (Klein, 1998) could provide a basis to believe that workers in

general value experience. Thus, the first hypothesis is how much workers believe that experience is important and beneficial.

H1: The majority of workers say work experience is relevant and helpful for decision-making, career growth, and salary growth, with support exceeding both 50% and the exploratory 90% benchmark.

Workers' perceptions may also vary on the basis of demographic and employment characteristics. Age and longer working hours may provide greater exposure to workplace learning and the benefits of experience (Quiñones et al., 1995; Palakeel & Aryan, 2026). Educational attainment may influence these views because formal qualifications and practical experience are different indicators of abilities (Spence, 1973; Ng & Feldman, 2009; Rani et al., 2026). This makes age, education and working hours important to consider (Pandey et al., 2026b).

H2: At different age, education level and work hours, workers' perception of value in work experience varies.

Apart from individual comparisons, these characteristics may also help explain similar differences in workers' overall support for experience. If there are demographic and employment-related differences related to perceptions, these can explain differences in the Experience Support Index as well.

H3: Age, educational attainment and daily working hours jointly predict workers' overall support for work experience.

Finally, signalling theory suggests that experience gained from a reputed organisation may communicate valued attributes to prospective employers (Spence, 1973). Research which has shown that organisational reputation affects job seekers' perceptions supports the evaluation of the perceived value of such experience (Cable & Turban, 2003).

H4: A large majority of workers see experience gained from a brand as valuable.

2.11 Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 brings the theory and the hypotheses together. Human capital theory (Becker, 1964; Mincer, 1974) leads to the expectation that workers see experience as helping decisions, career growth and pay (H1). Signalling theory (Spence, 1973) leads to the expectation that workers value experience at a reputed brand (H4). Worker characteristics (age, education and daily working hours) are expected to relate to how strongly workers hold these views (H2 and H3). The framework covers perceptions only; it does not test whether experience actually raises pay or improves decisions.

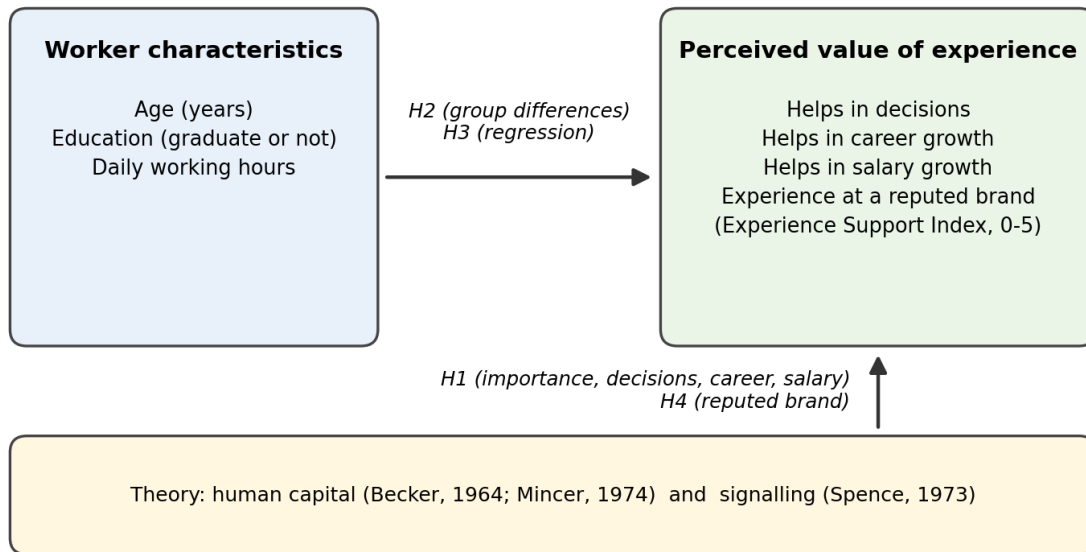


Figure 1. Conceptual framework of the study

3. Methodology

3.1 Design and sample

The data were collected through structured interviews with 127 working adults in Berhampore, West Bengal, India, over a two-month period, August to September 2026. The researcher used snowball (chain-referral) sampling: the first respondents were approached directly and asked to introduce the researcher to other workers, who in turn named further workers. The age, education (Class 10, Class 12 or graduate) and daily working hours of each respondent were noted, and each respondent was then asked five yes/no questions about experience (importance, decision-making, career growth, salary growth and value of good-brand experience) and one question asking what matters more: experience, education or both. Snowball sampling relies on personal contacts and may not be representative of the population, because respondents come from linked networks (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981).

3.2 Variables

The outcome measures were the five yes/no items and the Experience Support Index, which was the number of “yes” answers on the five items (range 0 to 5). The Index is not a validated psychometric scale and there is no reliability coefficient reported for it. Predictors were age (years), graduate status (1 = graduate, 0 = otherwise) and daily working hours. In comparing groups, age was dichotomized at 30 years (30 or less, and over 30), education into “graduate” versus “non-graduate” and hours into “10 hours” versus “9 hours or less.” The good-brand item is based on the concept that worker quality is signaled by employer reputation (Spence, 1973), with experience being the key factor in determining the performance link tested by Quiñones et al. (1995).

3.3 Empirical strategy and statistical analysis

In this study, the approach is empirical, quantitative, cross-sectional and exploratory. It uses interval estimation, non-parametric (distribution-free) hypothesis testing, rank-based correlation and regression modelling. The techniques are described below:

Descriptive statistics including means, standard deviations, counts and percentages.

Proportions: 95% Wilson score confidence intervals (Wilson, 1927) and one-sample exact binomial tests (Clopper & Pearson, 1934) against 50% (H_0 : no majority) and strict 90% benchmark. The 90 percent is not a "theoretically" set value, but rather one that the author has fixed and explored as being quite challenging. Fisher's exact test (Fisher, 1935) for the yes/no items (appropriate for small cell counts); Mann-Whitney U test (Mann & Whitney, 1947) for the Index between two groups; Kruskal-Wallis test (Kruskal & Wallis, 1952) for the Index across four age bands such as 21–25, 26–30, 31–35, 36+). A Spearman rank correlation (Spearman, 1904) was used to determine the association between the Index and age and working hours. Multiple linear regression (OLS) was used to regress the Index on age, graduate status and working hours and for an exploratory logistic regression on the good-brand item.

All tests were run at the 5% level, except the test against the 90% benchmark, which was one-sided. Free-text education responses were standardised into three categories (Class 10, Class 12, graduate) before analysis. Participation was voluntary. No written consent forms were used; the objectives of the study were explained and verbal informed consent was obtained from each respondent before the interview. Names and telephone numbers were not used in the analysis and responses were anonymous. Interviews were conducted in all the language(s), e.g. Bengali/Hindi/English], *Self-reported survey opinions can suffer from common method bias, including a tendency to agree with statements* (Podsakoff et al., 2003).

4. Results

4.1 Descriptive statistics

Table 1. Sample characteristics

Variable	Mean (SD) or n (%)	Range
Age (years)	31.3 (4.8)	21-46
Daily working hours	9.26 (0.82)	7-10
Graduates	18 (14.2%)	-
Class 12	106 (83.5%)	-
Class 10	3 (2.4%)	-

4.2 Support for experience ($H1$ and $H4$)

The percentage of "yes" responses, confidence intervals and test results are provided in Table 2. All values were much greater than 50% ($p < .001$). Importance, career growth, salary growth and decision-making (all $p < .001$) and good-brand value ($p = .025$, one-

sided) were all significantly above the 90% benchmark. The good-brand result is borderline: its two-sided p-value is about .053. So H1 and H4 are supported. Figure 2 plots the intervals. This high support is consistent with employers' preference for experience because of screening and training-cost considerations (Indeed Hiring Lab, 2024, via HR Dive) and with a link between experience and performance (McDaniel et al., 1988; Quiñones et al., 1995).

Table 2. Proportion answering "yes" (95% Wilson CI) and exact binomial tests

Item	%	95% CI	p vs 50%	p vs 90%
Experience is important	100.0	97.1-100	< .001	< .001
Helps in decisions	97.6	93.3-99.2	< .001	< .001
Helps in career growth	100.0	97.1-100	< .001	< .001
Helps in salary growth	100.0	97.1-100	< .001	< .001
Good-brand experience adds value	95.3	90.1-97.8	< .001	.025

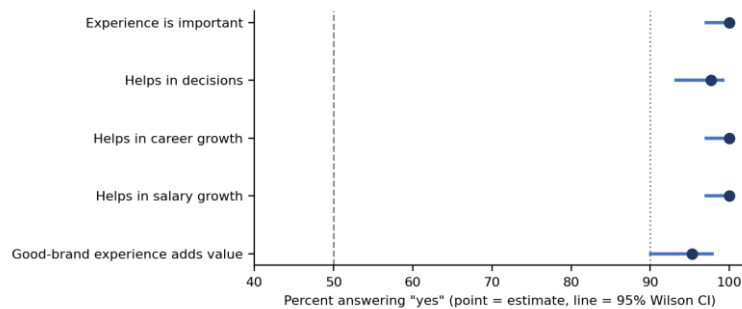


Figure 2. Percent "yes" with 95% CIs (dashed line = 50%, dotted line = 90%)

The Index averaged 4.93 (SD 0.26): 118 respondents (92.9%) scored 5 and 9 respondents (7.1%) scored 4. Because the items are yes/no, acquiescence may partly explain the near-unanimous agreement (Podsakoff et al., 2003).

4.3 Differences between groups (H2)

Group comparisons are shown in Table 3. None of the tests was significant. Differences on the decisions item were not significant given these small numbers: for example, the 3 respondents who said experience did not help with decisions were all in the 10-hour group. No differences in the Index were found across the four age bands (Kruskal-Wallis test, $H(3) = 1.67$, $p = .644$). There were no indications that age, education or working hours affected the degree of agreement, but the very high percentage of "yes" responses limited the ability of these tests to detect differences. Fisher's exact test is appropriate for small sample sizes (Fisher, 1935); the Mann-Whitney (Mann & Whitney, 1947) and Kruskal-Wallis (Kruskal & Wallis, 1952) tests are distribution-free, i.e. they do not assume normality.

Table 3. Comparison of groups (Fisher's exact test for items, Mann-Whitney U for Index)

Grouping	n	Decisions % yes	Good brand % yes	Index mean	Index p
Age 30 or under	61	96.7	93.4	4.90	
Age over 30	66	98.5	97.0	4.95	.250
Non-graduates	109	97.2	96.3	4.94	
Graduates	18	100.0	88.9	4.89	.479
9 hours or fewer	66	100.0	92.4	4.92	
10 hours	61	95.1	98.4	4.93	.828

Fisher's exact p-values: decisions - age .608, education 1.000, hours .108; good brand - age .426, education .201, hours .210. Index p-values are shown beside the second group of each pair.

4.4 Correlations and regression (H3)

Spearman correlations of the Index with age ($\rho = .075$, $p = .401$) and with working hours ($\rho = .018$, $p = .844$) were close to zero, as was the correlation between age and hours ($\rho = -.047$, $p = .602$). Table 4 shows the multiple regression. None of the predictors was significant and the model explained about 1% of the variation ($R^2 = .011$, $F(3, 123) = 0.46$, $p = .711$). Not supported: H3. Spearman's rank correlation does not assume normality and was used to assess the monotonic association between two variables (Spearman, 1904).

Table 4. OLS regression of the Experience Support Index (n = 127)

Predictor	B	SE	t	p
Constant	4.748	0.311	15.28	< .001
Age (years)	0.004	0.005	0.93	.356
Graduate (1 = yes)	-0.052	0.066	-0.79	.432
Working hours	0.005	0.028	0.18	.854

The regression is indicative only, as the Index is bounded and nearly all scores were 5. An exploratory logistic regression for the good-brand item gave odds ratios of 1.09 for each extra year of age (95% CI 0.89–1.33, $p = .428$), 0.28 for graduates (0.05–1.72, $p = .169$) and 1.97 for each extra working hour (0.72–5.41, $p = .187$). These estimates are unstable, as only six respondents did not answer "yes", which is too few events for three predictors. Fisher's test was used for the decisions item because a logistic model could not be fitted: all three "no" answers were in the 10-hour group (complete separation).

4.5 Education versus experience

All respondents answered "both" (100%, 95% CI 97.1–100). There was no variation, so no test of education versus experience is possible. Supporting literature: Both education and experience are positively related to job performance (Ng & Feldman, 2009; Quiñones et al., 1995), which is consistent with respondents choosing "both".

5. Discussion

The first thing to note is that support is high: in this sample, even the lowest confidence limit across the five items (90.1% for the good-brand item) is above 90%. Since snowball sampling is non-random, the confidence intervals are representative of a sample and are not exact limits for the entire population of workers. Support was equally shared among younger and older workers, graduates and non-graduates, and workers with shorter and longer days were nearly identical to one another and a regression on all three characteristics was also not consistent. So this is what you would expect if experience is seen as a common feature of work life and not something that is valued only by a small group of workers. In terms of why employers value experience, Indeed Hiring Lab (2024) explains that it mitigates training costs and hiring risks and, on the other hand, experience cannot always be transferred to a new firm and can sometimes have negative effects on performance (Dokko et al., 2009). In addition, workers are more likely than employers to cite on-the-job experience within their top three credentials (NIIT, 2026). Education implications are also important. Because all respondents chose "both", the data can't provide evidence that experience is more important than education. Instead, they believe workers see the two as complements which is the case for human capital theory. The difference in good-brand value (88.9% among graduates and 96.3% among non-graduates) is not significant and there is no evidence graduates value brand less. Education, like experience, is viewed as human capital (Becker, 1964; Mincer, 1974) and is linked to job performance (Ng & Feldman, 2009). The takeaway for employers and policymakers is that experience should be recognised in pay and promotion and employers could help workers display experience if they recorded it in a reputable organisation. The near-ceiling responses indicate that there is little room to separate respondents with regard to binary yes/no responses. In future surveys, rating scales and actual years of experience and income should be asked, as results must be regressed on experience. Experience is not always a measure that can be found with objective data: a meta-analysis of 81 samples found that common measures of experience prior to work were only weakly related to performance on later jobs (Van Iddekinge et al., 2019).

Table 5. Summary of hypothesis tests

	Hypothesis	Key test	Result
H1	Support is above 50% and above 90%	Exact binomial	Supported
H2	Agreement differs by age, education or hours	Fisher, Mann-Whitney, Kruskal-Wallis	Not supported (all $p > .10$)
H3	Age, education and hours predict the Index	OLS regression	Not supported ($R^2 = .011$)
H4	Majority value good-brand experience	Exact binomial	Supported (95.3%)

6. Conclusion, Limitations and Recommendations

In this study, we explore workers' perceptions of the value of work experience in decision making, career growth, and salary growth. The results show high support for experience in all three dimensions. Almost all of the respondents believed that experience is important to decision making, and all of them also believed that experience is important for career and salary growth. Experience gained from a reputed brand was also valued in a professional world that was perceived to be valuable. These perceptions were not dependent on age, educational attainment, or working hours. Moreover, all respondents felt that education and experience were necessary, suggesting that they view actual experience as a complement to formal education rather than as a substitute. We believe these findings are in line with research that has shown that experience is very helpful in decision making and can be useful when the situation is familiar and feedback is relevant (Klein, 1998; Kahneman & Klein, 2009). However, perceived value should not be interpreted as evidence that experience improves decision quality or that experience in a job leads to better career prospects. Prior work has shown that experience alone is not a strong predictor of job performance (Quiñones et al., 1995; Van Iddekinge et al., 2019).

First, snowball sampling likely led to respondents with similar backgrounds and views, which limited the validity of the findings to workers in Berhampore (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981). Second, the very similar responses led to a ceiling effect, so the statistical power for measuring differences between groups was not as high as expected. So non-significant results should not be interpreted as meaning that perceptions are identical according to demographic and employment groups. Furthermore, the sample was relatively homogeneous in that the mean age was 31.3 years ($SD = 4.8$) and 83.5% of the respondents had Class 12 education, whereas only 18 respondents were graduates. The low number of negative responses also hampered the ability to compare subgroups. Third, the study is based on perceptions rather than actual outcomes. Years of experience, income, occupational sector, and type of job were not recorded, so the relationship between perceived value and actual returns to experience could not be measured. Fourth, the binary yes/no questions were not meaningful and did not provide us with a sense of the level of belief in the answers. The questions were positive in nature and asked face to face and also included social desirability biases (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Fifth, the Experience Support Index is only five items that are not really reliable and valid. Finally, the 90% benchmark for the prevalence of support was an exploratory threshold, not an established theoretical one. Because the data were not randomly sampled, therefore the results are exploratory in nature rather than conclusions on the wider workforce. These findings have implications for the workforce and managers. They might see the job experience as something to be recognised in recruitment, training, performance management, and promotion decisions while not assuming that experience alone is the key to better job performance. Workers may also have to record their skills, responsibilities, and competencies through their employment, in particular experience acquired at high-performing organisations. But the perceived value of an employer's reputation should not be confused with its effect on future job opportunities or remuneration. Although skills-focused hiring is now a priority, the reality of recruitment practices is not always aligned with these aspirations (Indeed Hiring Lab, 2024, HR Dive, 2024; Burning Glass Institute & Harvard Business School, 2024). Future research should use larger and more diverse samples recruited through probability-based or otherwise more representative

sampling methods. Multi-item rating scales, objective assessment of work experience and employment outcomes, and measurement of the Experience Support Index would allow measurement and analytical precision to be better. There could also be gaps for industries, occupations, education, and organisational types. Importantly, linking workers' perceptions with actual earnings, promotions, and job performance would allow us to assess whether the widely accepted value of experience is related to actual career benefits. In short, we find preliminary evidence that workers in the survey sample feel work experience is an important part of professional development, but so much more research is needed to quantify the actual benefits.

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