



SOFT SKILLS: NEED OF THE HOUR

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ABSTRACT

While technical expertise is essential, the lack of soft skills can hinder graduates' ability to effectively communicate, collaborate, and thrive in their careers. Research conducted by the Stanford Institute International in collaboration with the Carnegie Mellon Foundation indicates that nearly 75% of job success relies on people skills, rather than technical skills alone. Employers increasingly prioritize candidates with strong interpersonal abilities, as evidenced by a LinkedIn survey where 57% of employers believed that graduates with good interpersonal skills have better long-term career prospects.

The NASSCOM report highlights that 75% of engineers are deemed unemployable due to a focus on academic knowledge without sufficient attention to overall development. This narrow approach has created a culture that produces graduates lacking well-rounded skills, resembling the manufacturing of "robots" rather than nurturing individuals with diverse talents. The National Society of Professional Engineers (NSPE) stresses the evolving role of engineers, emphasizing the need for effective communication, teamwork, and interpersonal skills. Collaborative projects demand engineers who can navigate multidisciplinary teams and complex professional environments.

This research paper underscores the importance of soft skills for students and graduates, emphasizing their benefits in career growth, teamwork, problem-solving, and adaptability. By striking a balance between technical expertise and soft skills, graduates can position themselves for long-term success in the dynamic and professional world.

Keywords- Soft Skills, Professionalism, Engineering, Career

[1] INTRODUCTION

The acquisition of new technology skills has taken up a growing amount of time in our lives in this era of rapid technological innovation and digitalization. Technical skill acquisition is appealing since it can lead to new opportunities and improve job chances. It's important to remember the value of soft skills, even as you strive for technical mastery. Why should someone bother developing soft skills is a valid issue. Are they any different from the Moral Science lessons that are taught by rote in elementary and middle schools? Is it really necessary to concentrate on communication skills as one moves through the post-graduation years? How

will it affect future employment opportunities and the jobs graduates land? These questions prompt to delve into the role and significance of soft skills in higher education and graduation. As the Partnership for 21st Century Skills (P21) highlights a set of "21st-century skills" that encompass both academic and soft skills. Their framework includes skills such as collaboration, communication, creativity, critical thinking, and social and cross-cultural skills.

They emphasize the integration of these skills into education to prepare students for the demands of the modern world.

This research aims to shed light on the concrete advantages of acquiring soft skills during the academic years through an analysis of case studies, surveys, and expert comments. It will emphasise the role these abilities play in future job placement success, career promotion, and all-around personal development. One in three of the talents listed in job ads are "baseline" or soft skills, according to research done in 2015 by the labor analytics company Burning Glass on millions of U.S. job postings. More than 25% of all skill requirements are for baseline competencies, even in the most technical employment fields like IT, healthcare, and engineering. Understanding the importance and role of soft skills in higher education would enable one to arm themselves with the abilities needed to successfully negotiate the ever-changing professional landscape and ensure a happy and productive future.

One could equip themselves with the skills necessary to successfully navigate the ever-changing professional landscape and assure a happy and successful future by understanding the significance and role of soft skills in higher education.

AIM OF THE ARTICLE

While the importance of technology-driven competences cannot be overstated, the importance of good communication, interpersonal skills, and emotional intelligence should not be neglected. These abilities not only improve personal connections but also have a significant impact on one's career journey.

OBJECT OF THE RESEARCH

- Investigate the link between soft skills and personal growth and development.
- Examine the relationship between soft skills and successful communication, teamwork, problem-solving ability, and leadership qualities.
- Identify the difficulties and barriers that students face when developing and implementing soft skills.
- Provide students with realistic ideas and tactics for improving their soft skills and increasing their employability.
- Examine case studies and surveys for empirical data supporting the importance of soft skills in higher education and graduation.

METHODOLOGY

This research article includes data gathered through surveys and interviews done in Jaipur, Rajasthan, colleges. The study's theoretical foundation is established by an exhaustive evaluation of literature on the development of soft skills. To obtain vital information, relevant documents, reports, research papers, and articles were thoroughly analyzed. In addition, perspectives from English and Soft Skills faculty members, who teach soft skills as part of the first-year college curriculum, were included.

To obtain meaningful meanings, the collected data was analyzed using simple statistical tools such as percentages and averages. The application of these analytical tools enabled a thorough examination of the data and the development of meaningful conclusions.

Harvard professor David Deming revealed in a 2017 paper that employment with high social-skill needs are on the rise. Between 1980 and 2010, the share of these employment in the US labour force increased by about ten percentage points. During the same time period, the share of employment that were math-intensive but less social (including many STEM jobs) decreased by roughly 3%.

According to prominent psychologist and author Daniel Goleman (Goleman D. 1995, 1998), emotional intelligence is a critical soft talent. Goleman emphasizes the importance of emotional intelligence in promoting effective leadership, teamwork, and general success in both personal and professional domains, which includes self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, and social skills. His observations illuminate the critical role that emotional intelligence plays in managing interpersonal relationships and obtaining desired objectives.

To acquire a better picture of the current talent market, HR professionals from nine industries were polled on a variety of recruiting and skills concerns. According to the findings, many HR professionals are facing a more difficult recruiting environment than in past years.

HR experts also notice a lack of expertise among job applicants looking for available positions: According to a SHRM blog post, more than half of respondents report some level of basic skills/knowledge deficits (e.g., written English, basic computer skills, basic maths, and science) in job applicants in the last year, and 84% report applied skills shortages (e.g., critical thinking, professionalism, and leadership).

Soft skills are defined as "social and emotional skills" by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in 2015, emphasizing its importance for personal well-being, social integration, and success in education and the employment. The OECD defines soft skills as key characteristics such as self-regulation, perseverance, empathy, and social awareness. Their paper "Skills for Social Progress: The Power of Social and Emotional Skills" is a useful resource for understanding the impact of soft skills on individuals' overall development and societal growth.

[2] RELATED WORK

The evaluations below are of pertinent studies and research in the topic of soft skills development, with a particular emphasis on observations and surveys conducted in an engineering college.

Subject 1, a college student, revealed disconnect between his academic success and practical abilities. Despite his lack of attention to coding and topic expertise, he was able to acquire a managerial position as the Student Council's Cultural Head. However, due to his informal attitude to coding, his technical interview performance worsened during the placement process. Furthermore, his lack of soft skill expertise hampered his achievement in the HR round. As a result, Subject 1 was unable to obtain a job offer from any organization. This case study demonstrates the negative consequences of ignoring both technical expertise and critical soft skills in a competitive labour market.

Subject 2, another college student, demonstrated the optimal combination of technical prowess and outstanding soft skills. She effectively used LinkedIn by dedicating coding preparation and taking a proactive approach to impressing possible employers. Subject 2 succeeded academically while also demonstrating great soft skills by hosting events and completing numerous internships. As expected, she landed a sought position in a prestigious company with an amazing compensation package. This case study emphasises the significance of a well-balanced blend of technical ability and well-developed soft/social skills for success in the competitive placement process.

Subject 3, a student with poor communication skills and stage presence, had low English competence. However, he excelled in technical aspects and concentrated completely on them. Despite his lack of interpersonal skills, he was able to earn the highest package in the college. Despite facing rejection in the early phases of training, he persevered and displayed a growth mentality. Subject 3 learned from his experiences, strengthened his abilities, and eventually achieved extraordinary success in this case, highlighting the remarkable quality of resilience, a critical soft skill.

Further inquiry on campus revealed that a substantial majority, around 63%, of the engineering students set to enter the placement phase lacked interest or willingness to participate in activities targeted at strengthening their soft skills. This figure highlights the general lack of interest among these people in improving their soft skills.

In support of this conclusion, the Secretary General of a Model United Nations Organising Committee disclosed that just 60 students out of a total of 4000 on campus expressed interest in becoming delegates for the event. This statement exemplifies the prevalent trend in which students either dread engaging in such activities or fail to recognise their significance.

[5] SUMMARY

Based on the survey, several conclusions can be drawn regarding the importance and requirements of soft skills:

Soft Skills Complement Technical Competence: While technical knowledge is important, the case of Subject 1 shows that focusing entirely on technical skills might be detrimental to one's job chances. Inadequate soft skills, such as good communication and interpersonal ability, can stymie interview success and limit career chances.

Balance is essential: Subject 2 demonstrates the importance of balancing technical and soft abilities. A well-rounded strategy that includes high academic performance, technical proficiency, and well-developed soft skills can greatly improve a student's placement prospects.

Subject 3's journey emphasises the significance of resilience and a growth mentality. Despite early setbacks and soft skill limitations, the subject's ability to learn, adapt, and grow contributed to eventual success. This emphasises the importance of constant improvement and the determination to overcome challenges.

Overall, these case studies highlight the importance of technical abilities in today's competitive

employment market. According to the authors of the Deloitte 2017 Global Human Capital Trends report, "ninety percent of companies are redesigning their organisations to be more dynamic, team-centric, and connected."

Soft qualities such as excellent communication, adaptability, teamwork, and resilience are critical for professional success. Employers are increasingly looking for applicants with a well-rounded skill set that combines technical expertise with good interpersonal skills.

These case studies demonstrate the need of investing in the development of soft skills in addition to technical expertise.

To improve their employability and job prospects, students should actively strengthen their communication, teamwork, problem-solving, and leadership skills. To ensure that students are well-prepared for the demands of the professional world, educational institutions should recognise the need of including soft skills training within their curriculum.

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