



Bridging the Gap: Enhancing Soft Skills for Employability and Career success in Management Graduates to meet Industry Expectations

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Abstract: *In today's fast-paced and dynamic job market, employers report significant gaps in essential soft skills among graduating students during the hiring process. This study tries to identify critical soft skills missing from recent management graduates. Research findings have emphasized the essential soft skills preferred by hiring managers are communication skill, teamwork and collaboration, leadership, cognitive skills like problem-solving and critical skills. Studies have supported that these skills are predictors of employability. Secondly, attempt has been made to explore how personal attributes like resilience, adaptability, social intelligence, and emotional intelligence impact workplace effectiveness and employability. Studies have clearly shown a significant relationship between personal attributes (resilience, adaptability, flexibility, social intelligence and emotional intelligence) and employability. Finally, these key soft skills enhance employability, career advancement, and job performance. Personal attributes such as resilience and adaptability are critical psychological career resources that enhance employability across various sectors. Success in workplace depends on factors like cognitive, affective and behavioural knowledge and skills. Technical skills and academic qualifications are essential for securing a job, it is the mastery of soft skills that give students an edge in competition and often determines long-term career success. This review highlights the significance of prioritization of certain soft skills as guiding factors to educators, employers, and policymakers.*

Key words: *Soft skill, Employability, Personal attributes, Resilience, Adaptability, Social Intelligence, Emotional Intelligence.*

1. INTRODUCTION:

In today's dynamic job market, employability is defined not just by technical expertise but by a holistic blend of hard and soft skills. It includes a set of skills, knowledge and personal attributes that facilitates students to secure a job as well as being successful. A study by Harvard University, the Carnegie Foundation, and Stanford Research Centre found that 85% of job success comes from soft skills and people skills, while only 15% comes from technical skills and knowledge (hard skills), (Mann, 1918 by the Carnegie Foundation). Soft skills are increasingly recognized as essential for management students to enhance their employability in today's competitive job market. Almost more than 100 years, the importance of 'soft skill' has been recognized as critical to workplace success. In a study (2010, U.S), it was observed employers spent \$171.5 billion US dollar on employee training and 27.6 of those training dollars was on soft skills. The findings emphasize, 72% spent on 'hard skills' and 28% on soft skills (National Soft skills association). Now, employers' attitudes towards hiring suitable talent criteria have changed. Soft skills are the new currency of the workplace (Rachel Wells). In extensive research, it was observed, certain soft skills are high in demand and consequently enabling those who possess them to earn higher income (The World Economic Forum, Future of Jobs Report 2023). They are: According to a LinkedIn Global Talent Trends report (2019), 92% of talent professionals and hiring managers indicated that soft skills are as crucial as, or even more important than, technical skills. Employers in India and globally are increasingly seeking graduates with strong softy skills alongside technical expertise (Naha, 2024). In India soft skills



training market size reached US\$654.5 Million in 2023. IMRC Group expects the market to reach US\$1,635.2 Million by 2032 exhibiting a growth rate (CAGR) of 10.4% during 2024-2032.

Research studies show that students are lacking the required soft skills as expected by industries.

- In a survey conducted by NASSCOM, in 2011 observed that about 75% of graduates are trained in academics that emphasizes on scoring good marks but lack in soft skills that give a competitive edge in employability (Rohan Fernandez, 2021).
- In a study, it was reported that 59 percent of hiring managers said, that soft skills are ‘difficult’ to find in job applicants. (White Paper, The Soft Skills Imperative, The Adecco group, 2017 as cited in Kulkarni & Kulkarni, 2019).
- In a 2019 report, the Society for Human Resource Management found that 51 percent of its members who responded to a survey said that education systems have done little or nothing to help address the skills shortage.
- In a survey of 291 hiring managers in the United States, 58 percent of respondents said soft skills deficiencies in the pool of candidates are “limiting their company’s productivity.” (as cited in Kulkarni & Kulkarni, 2019).
- In the immediate future, the most valuable work skills will be those that machines can't yet perform, like soft skills, according to a survey by the Pew Research Centre of about 1,400 technology and education professionals.
- The rise of automation, clearly says, easily automated skills are not in demand like quantitative skills, memory skills, repetitive skills rather it needs human skills like interpersonal skills, communication skills, critical thinking skills, listening skills etc.
- Time magazine published an article, *The Real Reason New College Grads Can't Get Hired*, purporting that non-cognitive skills are the true culprit when it comes to the employability of new college graduates. The article cited many credible studies, including *State of St. Louis Workforce report* which found that more than 60% of employers say recent job applicants lacked communication and interpersonal skills.

After 25 years in teaching profession, my observation is, “college graduates are lacking soft skills that hamper their employability”. Conversation with senior management of various companies also reflects the same idea that fresher’s/ new employees lack of soft skills like work ethics, effective communication skills, writing skills, confidence, etc. Most of Indian Universities focus on a theory intensive education, basically the hard skills/domain knowledge. Of course, that is required for employability but they are significantly lacking in soft skills which is required to make them more effective employees. This paper is focusing on soft skills required for undergraduate and post-graduate students. These studies raise few research questions like:

- Which key soft skills are highly valued by industries during the hiring process for management graduates?
- Do personal attributes such as resilience, adaptability, social intelligence and emotional intelligence predict the likelihood of being hired?
- Do personal attributes such as resilience, adaptability, social intelligence and emotional intelligence have an impact on career success?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW:

In present day scenario, people skills give a competitive edge in employability as well as in work performance. Forbes (Nikita Tambe) has identified few soft skills that help in being hired are communication, teamwork, problem solving, critical thinking, leadership, planning and organizing, time management, adaptability, self-management, creative thinking, productivity, conflict resolution, and initiative. "The socio-emotional attitudes which businesses consider to be growing in importance most quickly are curiosity and lifelong learning; resilience, flexibility and agility; and motivation and self-awareness—evidence that businesses emphasize the importance of resilient and reflective workers embracing a culture of lifelong learning as the lifecycle of their skills decreases," the report's findings reveal (Future of Jobs, 2023 Report). These aspects of life skills help to improve critical thinking, enhance cognitive flexibility, and develop negotiating skills. As compared to other skills, soft skills training results in improved customer service, employee retention, increased job satisfaction and overall work productivity. Emerging technologies (like AI) are reshaping the workforce demand. It leads to greater emphasis on ‘soft skills’ (like, adaptability). The amazing point is every soft skill is highly transferable across industries and has a life cycle of it. As the time changes, one has to update and learn new skills that are high on demand. This will enable the person to progress up in the career ladder faster.

Learning skills are the most crucial areas where every educator needs to understand and apply it while transferring knowledge. Bloom’s taxonomy helps us to understand different domains of learning. It is a hierarchical model that classifies learning objectives by different levels of complexity. It has three domains of learning, namely, cognitive,



affective and psychomotor domain. *Cognitive domain* includes processes involved acquiring knowledge; *Affective domain* emphasizes the way one receives information, responds to it as well as values and organizes it through emotional engagement. *Psychomotor domain* includes learning through physical performance. In this article, the emphasis will be on 'affective learning'.

Affective learning represents skills that foster appropriate emotional responses while dealing with situations, circumstances, people or issues. It includes the manner in which we deal with things emotionally, such as feelings, values, appreciation, enthusiasms, motivations, and attitudes (Krahwohl, Bloom, Masia, 1973). For example, how an individual copes/handles a situation in challenging or frustrating situations. The taxonomy of affective domain contains five levels, from lowest to highest: *Receiving information*: listening to others with respect, asking questions if not understood, able to pick up major points or important issue in a discussion, replying properly, etc. *Responding*: This skill can describe as, participating in the classroom discussion, in debate, assist others, add value to the discussion, greets people, presents the topic, etc. Learners will learn how to be comfortable in public speaking and confident in contributing to the discussion. *Valuing*: emphasizes on being sensitive towards people, cultural or linguistic differences. Understanding own values and reason behind. *Organization*: focuses on understanding others values, its reason and supporting evidences. It is learning to appreciate others' values and to put it in place. *Characterization*: Once the person recognizes various belief systems, he develops his own unique affective system. It highlights on team work by balancing one's own values and other's values, to perform task and prioritize on completion of work successfully. Both affective and cognitive domain are complementary to each other while developing learning skills.

Cognitive learning skills are the foundation to affective learning process (Kraiger et al., 1993). Together cognitive and affective learning process contribute to critical behavioural performance and practical skills (psychomotor domain). Therefore, affective domain can contribute to effective performance of the graduates in all sphere of professional life. In this article, the focus will be on skills namely, affective domain learning skills. It is coined as 'soft skill' or 'critical behavioural skill'. Developing soft skills enhances employability and prepares students to excel in competitive environments. Studies noted that interactive workshops and engaging teaching strategies are particularly effective when incorporated throughout academic programs.

3. OBJECTIVES:

1. To identify and analyse the key soft skills that industries consider essential for hiring management graduates.
2. To explore how personal attributes like resilience, adaptability, social intelligence, and emotional intelligence impact workplace effectiveness and employability.
3. To examine the influence of personal attributes such as resilience, adaptability, social intelligence, and emotional intelligence on career success.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

This paper constitutes a conceptual study derived from an extensive review of educational reports and articles. Utilizing secondary data extracted from diverse journals, educational reports, and research papers. The study synthesizes finding from both domestic and international researches. It includes studies conducted in India and other countries. The article presents a synthesized overview of relevant literature to contribute to the discourse on the subject.

5. DISCUSSION ON RESEARCH OBJECTIVES:

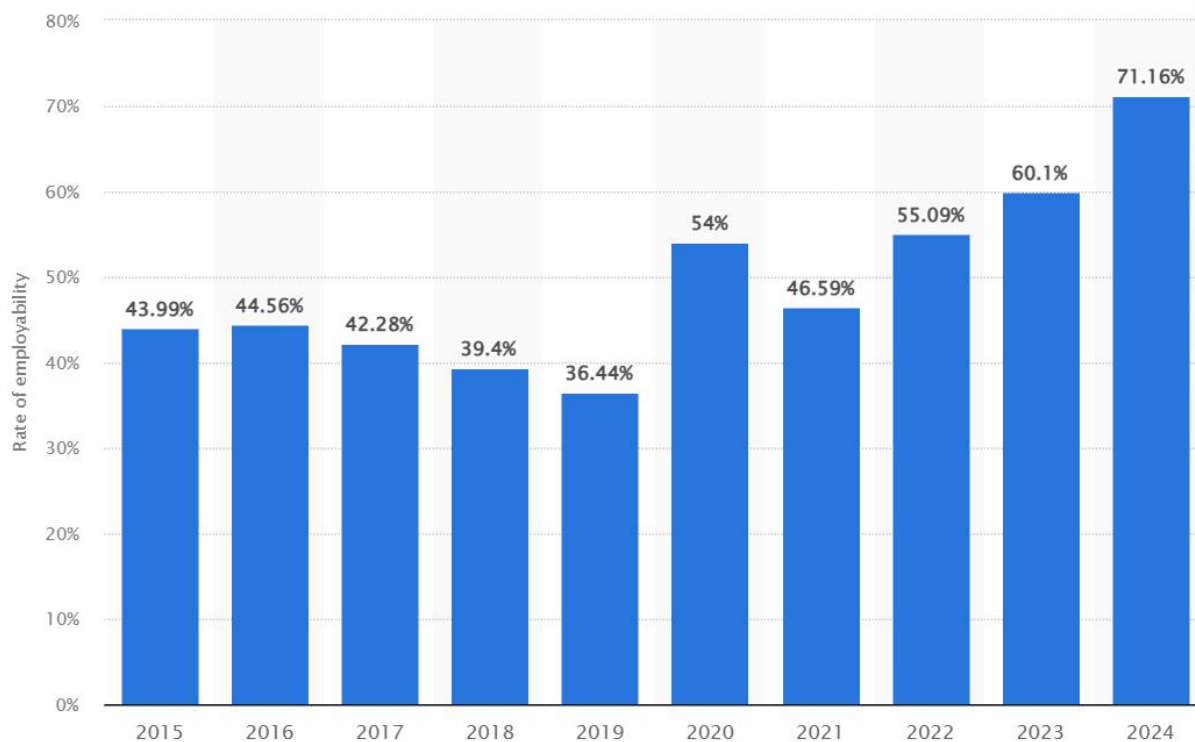
Objective 1: To identify and analyse the key soft skills that industries consider essential for hiring management graduates.

This study seeks to address a critical research gap in identifying the specific competencies that align with contemporary industry requirements, particularly in the context of dynamic organizational environments. While the significance of technical expertise is well-documented, limited research exists on systematically categorizing and analysing the breadth of soft skills deemed essential for management students to enhance their employability and leadership capabilities. By bridging this gap, the study aims to provide a comprehensive framework for understanding and integrating these skills into management education.



Soft skills are psychosocial skills, personal attributes, and emotional engagement in work scenario that enable individuals to interact effectively and harmoniously contributing to excellence in workplace. It has a greater influence on employability. As we understand, a workplace consists of many employees of different levels (subordinates, colleagues, superiors) of various talents, skills, and experience. In order to work smoothly, it requires an ability to interact effectively with others. Soft skills are seen as a combination of interpersonal and social skills (Dixon et al., 2010). These skills are shown in our personality traits, social interactions, language, nonverbal communication, conflict management, teamwork capacity, cultural awareness and creativity (Schulz, 2008).

Current employers are of the view, college graduates are not prepared with the soft skills needed to work in their corporations. Students believe they are exiting college well prepared and ready to take on the work force. According to the report, MBA is still ranked as the second most employable course, but only less than half of students 46.59 % with an MBA degree are employable or are good to be hired. The report points out that the percentage was best in the year 2020 at 54%, but it is way too far less (Vanigandha, 2021). In another study reported by Manya Rathore, (2024), in 'Employability among Masters of Business Administration graduates across India from 2015 to 2024' is shown in below mentioned statistics. The overall employability of the youth in the country was about 52.25 percent in 2024.



Source: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/738214/employability-among-business-administration-graduates-india/>

In 2024, employability among Indian business administration graduates was about 71 percent, an increase from 47 percent in 2021. The overall employability of the youth in the country was about 52.25 percent in 2024. It leads to the fact that employability skills need to be incorporated in professional programmes for the graduates by the HEI. However, the theoretical and empirical evidences suggest that HEIs have been unable to inculcate employability skills among their graduates (Blom & Saeki, 2011; Suleman, 2018; Wye et al., 2009). A new study suggests that only 45 per cent of Indian graduates who apply for jobs are employable, with the skills to meet the industry's rapidly-changing demands, The Economic Times (ET, 2023) reported on Tuesday. The "India's Graduate Skill Index: 2023" report published by online talent assessment company Mercer | Mettl, is based on evaluations across 2,500 campuses and 440,000 learners (Business Standard, 24th June, 2024).

HR managers seek candidates who can adapt and thrive in modern, technology-driven workplaces. According to the World Economic Forum (2020), the top 10 necessary skills include complex problem-solving, critical thinking, creativity, people management, cognitive flexibility, emotional intelligence, coordination, judgment and decision-making, service orientation, and negotiation. Thornton and Perreault (2004) highlighted that a successful manager must improve personal attributes and skills holistically. To enhance their employability, management students



should focus on developing a range of key soft skills that are increasingly valued in the job market. Seven employability skills for job applicants in a dynamic work environment, hiring manager prefer are willingness to learn (85%), dependability (84%), problem-solving (78%) and adaptability (78%). Communications (77%), initiative (76%), critical thinking (73%) and fitting in with the company culture (72%) are also highly rated skills for employers (Agile Teams, Agile Career, Corporate Learning- Play Ablo). Soft skills such as communication, teamwork, and leadership are critical for employment success among business management students (Shiwakoti et al., 2024). It will be discussed in detail with literature review.

Communication: Effective communication is essential for collaboration and leadership (Shiwakoti et al., 2024; Yilmaz & Urhan, 2024; & Shah et al., 2022). It includes interpersonal communication skill that enable efficient listening and conversation, fostering collaboration, and conflict resolution skills. Poor communication can lead to misunderstanding and conflict, affecting productivity of the organisation (Bhatnagar & Bhatnagar, 2012). Technological advancements and a dynamic business environment have shifted employer expectations, making communication and presentation skills crucial for management students (Mitchell et al., 2010). Management students must develop persuasive communication skills to effectively present ideas and influence stakeholders (Apparaju, 2016).

Teamwork and Collaboration: Employers prioritize teamwork as projects require collective effort from various perspectives (Kuregyan & Khusainova, 2022, Choudhary et al., 2022, Neha, 2024). Employers actively seek candidates who can work effectively in teams, as collaboration is essential for achieving shared goals (Yadav et al., 2024). Neglecting this skill will hinder young management graduates' employability as these skills are increasingly valued by employers (Lin-Stephens et al., 2019). The disconnect between educational practices and workforce demands highlights the need for integrating teamwork into curricula to enhance employability (Yadav et al., 2024). Effective collaborations enhance graduates' capabilities and character, making them more attractive to potential employers in a competitive job market (O'Leary 2013). Without effective teamwork training, graduates may struggle to meet workplace demands, limiting their ability to transfer skills and succeed in collaborative environments essential for professional growth (Riebe et al., 2009).

Leadership: Leadership skills are necessary for guiding teams and making strategic decisions (Shiwakoti et al., 2024). It was found that leadership skills, along with soft skills and adaptability skills, positively impacted employability (Zhang, et al., 2023). The leadership skills that are most valued by the employers are the ability to anticipate challenges and make informed decisions especially in uncertain environments (Schoemaker, et al., 2013). Leaders must excel in building and nurturing teams, promoting collaboration and diversity to enhance performance (M.S, 2023; Caroselli, 2000). Leadership skills, including the capacity to motivate and guide others, are also critical for managerial roles ("Inventory for Critical Managerial Soft Skills (ICMS) – Development and Standardisation", 2022). The study highlights that leadership skills have the strongest influence on employment opportunities among these competencies (Ahmad Ridhuwan, Abdullah, Mohd Zulkifli Muhammad, Nsoorul Azwin Md Nasir, 2019). These skills are crucial for managers to lead effectively and ensure organizational success in today's competitive job market.

Problem-Solving and Critical Thinking: Employers seek graduates who can analyze situations, think critically, and devise innovative solutions (Shah et. Al., 2022; Kuregyan & Khusainova, 2022; Rovenska et al., 2023). Critical thinking fosters a growth mindset, allowing individuals to adapt and learn continuously (Rovenska et al., 2023). Problem-solving is increasingly recognized as a fundamental job requirement across all industries, with employers valuing candidates who can approach challenges with thoughtful solutions (G.J.et al., 2023). The prevalence of misinformation underscores the importance of strong critical thinking skills to evaluate credible information, which is essential for professional success (Dumitru & Halpern, 2023). Employers have identified a gap in new hires' ability to effectively apply critical thinking, emphasizing the need for improved educational strategies (Song et al., 2024). Educational institutions must prioritize integrating critical thinking and problem-solving into their curricula to better equip students for the demands of the workforce (G.J.et al., 2023; Shorman et al., 2024).

Management students are increasingly expected to possess a range of soft skills that enhance their employability in today's dynamic job market. They are leadership skills, teamwork skills, and communication skills, problem solving skills as these soft skills significantly enhance their employability. The study highlights that leadership skills have the strongest influence on employment opportunities among these competencies. While the emphasis on soft skills is growing, some argue that the focus on technical skills remains paramount in certain industries. However, the



integration of soft skills training into academic programs is increasingly recognized as essential for preparing graduates for the complexities of modern workplaces (Romanenko et al., 2024). These skills complement technical knowledge are critical for effective workplace performance.

Objective 2: To investigate the influence of personal attributes such as resilience, adaptability, social intelligence, and emotional intelligence on workplace effectiveness and employability.

In this section, the discussion is based on the relationship between personal attributes and its impact on workplace effectiveness and employability. Personal attributes, includes resilience, social intelligence, emotional intelligence, and adaptability, that enhance an individual's employability, particularly in dynamic job markets. Research studies show personal attributes and emotional intelligence influence graduate employees' employability in service sector SMEs (Veeriah et al., 2024). Graduates with strong personal attributes are perceived as more capable and are often favoured by employers, leading to better job opportunities (Zuluaga, 2023). to respond to challenges and seize opportunities (Urquijo, Extremera & Azanza These traits enable individuals to navigate the complexities of modern work environments, enhancing their ability, 2019). Kreber (2006) identified employability as a critical outcome for graduate employees across many countries. Tertiary institutions are increasingly under pressure to ensure graduates are employable upon graduation as per the report (Pillai (2009). Both industries and governments worldwide looked forward to bridging the graduate employees' skills gap (Jackson, 2010). The challenge here is ensuring that the knowledge, attributes, and skills supposed to align with the industries' requirements.

Resilience in workplace refers to the ability to recover from setbacks, adapt to challenges and maintain a positive attitude despite adversity. It is reflected by certain behaviours like: the ability to stay calm and composed under pressure; the skill to approach challenges logically and creatively with patience, continuously striving for it; having the flexibility and willingness to take up new responsibilities; with a positive mind-set, at the same time knowing one's own strengths and weakness that enables a person to learn from his/her mistake. Resilient individuals are more likely to maintain their employability by continuously developing their skills and seeking new opportunities, even in adverse conditions (Rossier et al., 2017, Peila-Shuster, 2017). According to the National Bureau of Economic Research, employers emphasize hiring individuals who possess emotional intelligence and resilience, as these traits predict an employee's ability to thrive in various workplace settings. A resilient employee has the capability to overcome difficulties and stay engaged is highly valued by employer. Career resilience is the capacity to recover from setbacks and persist in the face of challenges. It is particularly important in sectors characterized by high volatility and uncertainty (Maree 2017; Glavin et al, 2017). Resilient individuals are more likely to maintain their employability by continuously developing their skills and seeking new opportunities, even in adverse conditions (Rossier, 2017). Emotional resilience training enhances employability and well-being. Developing resilience equips individuals with the skills to navigate to complexities of the job market, making them more attractive to potential employers (Smaliukiene et al., 2024).

Adaptability and Flexibility: In a rapidly changing work environment, the capacity to adapt to new challenges and learn continuously is vital (Rovenska et al., 2023; (Kuregyan & Khusainova, 2022). Adaptability involves skills such as problem-solving, learning agility, and openness to new experiences, which are vital in sectors undergoing rapid technological and organizational changes (Glavin et al., 2017). As we look into the present scenario, working conditions changing very fast. The ways to solve the problems require navigating through ambiguity and face the new challenges, learning new skills and contribute positively to assignments and collaborative environment and contributing to employee retention. It is reflected in behaviours like: willingness to learn new skills, coming up with new ideas or new way of solving problems, adaptable to think critically and creatively, managing oneself when faced with work pressure and desire to work collaboratively.

Emotional Intelligence: The key components of emotional intelligence impacting workplace behaviour include the ability to recognize, understand, manage, and influence emotions in oneself and others. Understanding and managing one's emotions, as well as empathizing with others, enhances interpersonal relationships and conflict resolution (Rovenska et al., 2023). These skills enhance stress management and interpersonal relationships, leading to improved productivity and collaboration. Emotional intelligence (EI) is consistently linked to both objective and subjective career success, acting as a mediator between personality traits and career outcomes (Sharma & Tiwari, 2024). Studies show the impact of personal emotional intelligence on employability (Rathi & Rastogi, 2009; Coetzee & Harry, 2014). Further studies indicate that emotional intelligence positively influences employability, enabling individuals to navigate workplace challenges effectively (Veeriah et al., 2024). Employees with high *self-*



awareness can better manage their reactions and contribute positively to team dynamics (Kour & Bhatia, 2024). Self-regulation involves managing one's emotions and impulses. Individuals who can self-regulate are more adept at handling stress and conflict, leading to improved productivity and collaboration (Shah & Sah, 2024; Olsson, 2024). *Empathy* – the capacity to understand and share the feeling of others. Empathetic employees share stronger relationship and enhanced teamwork which is essential for organizational success (Kour & Bhatia, 2024; Olsson, 2024).

Social intelligence: It includes empathy, self-regulation, social awareness, relationship management and communication skill that help the individual to express oneself clearly and listening attentively. Proficient communication and relationship management skills enable effective collaboration and conflict resolution contributing to a positive workplace culture (Kaur & Singh 2022). Social intelligence matters to employability as it helps in collaboration and teamwork, leadership (helps to navigate workplace politics and handle complex interpersonal challenges effectively), customer relationship (to connect with clients, understand their needs, and respond empathetically, adaptability (adjust their communication, and behaviour, depending on the situations) and problem solving (workplace issues that is social in nature, conflict which is vital to problem solving and decision-making). Golman (2006) argues that social intelligence is critical for career success, especially in leadership and team-based environments where the ability to understand and manage social dynamics is key to professional advancement. Dymond (1950) argued that individuals with higher social intelligence excel in professional environments by effectively navigating social complexities and building strong interpersonal relationships. In study by Lopes et a., (2003) links high social intelligence with better interpersonal relationships at work, which in turn facilitates career advancement.

Objective-3: To examine the influence of personal attributes such as resilience, adaptability, social intelligence, and emotional intelligence on career success.

Resilience and Career Success: A study by (Coutu, 2002) focused on the importance of resilience in business and career development, showing that individuals who demonstrate resilience tend to recover faster from professional setbacks, ultimately leading to more successful careers. It is positive emotions that helps them to bounce back from negative emotional experiences (Tugade & Fredrikson, 2004). Luthans and Youssef provide a comprehensive review of positive organizational behaviour (POB), including resilience as a core factor that contributes to career success and performance. They argue that resilient individuals are more likely to adapt to challenges, leading to greater professional growth. (Luthans & Youssef, 2007). Resilient individuals are more likely to persist through challenges and continuously improve their professional skills (Reivich, & Shatté, 2002). In another study by Sweet, & Stryker, (2003) explores the concept of professional resilience and its relationship to career development. It underscores the importance of resilience in the professional context for individuals seeking long-term growth in their careers. Studies have proved that resilience as a predictor of career success or its contribution to professional growth and organizational performance (Jackson, 2018). Employees with higher resilience experience lower levels of stress and burnout, resulting in better job performance.

Adaptability and Career Success: Adaptability as it is defined as “adaptive performance, is crucial for employees in workplace. The research links adaptability to key aspects of career success, such as job performance, career advancement and the ability to manage job stressors (Pulakos, et al., 2000). Adaptability in career decision-making, influenced by self-efficacy, is a key driver for career success. Those who are adaptable in adjusting their goals and strategies are more likely to experience career success in evolving work environments (Heslin & Vande Wale, 2008). Employees who display higher levels of adaptability are more likely to achieve career success in a rapidly changing Chinese job market. The ability to cope with uncertainty and change is a critical factor in career progression (Jiang & Probst, 2019). Adaptability is a key component of the protean career attitude, which is linked to career success. Adaptable employees are better able to manage career transitions, build a broad skill set, and take control of their career trajectory (De Vos & Soens, 2008). In fact, resilience and adaptability enables the workers to bounce back from challenges and adaptability allows them to thrive in dynamic environment. Attributes such as self-awareness and self-confidence are essential for graduates, as they contribute to better decision-making and problem-solving skills, which are highly valued by employers (Suartha et al., 2017).

Social Intelligence (SI) and Career Success: Social intelligence refers to the ability to understand and manage interpersonal relationships effectively, which plays a crucial role in navigating workplace dynamics and advancing one's career. High SI individuals are adept at adapting to change, a vital skill in today's fast-paced work



environment (Fagoulis & Philips, 2011). Low SI leads to interpersonal relationship problems. Individuals with high social intelligence (SI) leverage their skills to enhance career success by fostering effective interpersonal relationships, demonstrating leadership, and adapting to dynamic work environments. These competencies are increasingly recognized as essential in modern workplaces, where collaboration and communication are paramount (Butenko & Butenko, 2024). They can navigate complex social situations, which aids in conflict resolution and negotiation, crucial for career advancement (Albrecht 2009).

Emotional Intelligence and Career Success: EI is important for navigating social and emotional challenges, which can have a significant impact on career success (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). Golman (1995) argued that EI is essential for leadership, interpersonal relationships, and handling stress, which are critical to career advancement. The meta-analysis was conducted by Joseph & Newman (2010) on emotional intelligence and its relation to career success. The findings suggest that EI positively correlates with job performance, leadership effectiveness, and career success. EI has shown to contribute significantly to effective leadership which is directly related to career advancement (Wong & Law, 2002). Research shows that emotional intelligence is positively related to job performance and career success. Specifically, individuals with higher EI are better able to manage work relationships and handle stress, which contributes to career progression Carmeli & Josman, 2006). In a study by (Mayer et al, 2008) discusses how emotional intelligence influences career growth by helping individuals manage their emotions and respond to challenges. EI contributes to resilience, relationship-building, and career adaptability, which are essential for professional development.

6. CONCLUSION

Researches have emphasized the importance of soft skills in getting hired and career success. Despite its importance, graduates enter workforce without having required skills. For example, students know the factors that lead to team cohesiveness but they cannot work in a team effectively. This article is for educators and policy makers that skills like communication, leadership, teamwork and collaboration, problem-solving and critical thinking are highly valued by the employers as they translate directly into effective performance. Management students must align their skills with employers' requirements and address any gaps for better employment prospects. Personal attributes like resiliency are considered as an asset who can thrive in uncertain conditions, a quality that aligns with evolving industry demands. The positive effect of resilience works as protective factor for employees against workplace stressors. Emotional intelligence is a key contributor to career success, influencing objective and subjective outcomes, as well as acting as a mediator between personality traits, career planning and self-efficacy. Schools and universities can integrate soft skills training into their curricula, while companies can offer workshops and mentorship programs to foster these capabilities. The gap between soft skills as expected by the employer and the existing skills, students have after graduates need to be addressed. National policy makers must align skills with Management students must align their skills with employer requirements and address any gaps for better employment prospects. Bridging this gap requires a collective effort from educational institutions, employers, and individuals. In an era where automation and artificial intelligence are reshaping the landscape of work, soft skills remain uniquely human attributes that machines cannot replicate. They differentiate candidates, drive innovation, and sustain competitive advantage. For job seekers and professionals, investing in the development of soft skills can significantly enhance employability, career satisfaction, and long-term success.

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