

Enhancing Employability: The Crucial Role of Soft Skills in Tackling Unemployment

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Abstract:

Rapid industrialization, technical improvements, and changing industry requirements have resulted in a substantial divergence between educational institutions and job market needs. Addressing this gap is critical for education's future. In today's increasingly competitive globalised world, Indian students frequently lack key professional abilities, notably soft skills. This study investigates the current movement in academic and business recognition of the importance of soft skills development. Many educational institutions have soft skills components built into their curriculum.

Keywords: Education System, Unemployment, Soft Skills, Skill Mismatch, Industry

Introduction:

Employers regard soft skills as crucial employability characteristics, necessary for developing fruitful connections with coworkers and clients. Interpersonal skills, empathy, assertiveness, problem-solving ability, and optimism are examples of soft skills. The purpose of this research is to determine the top 10 soft skills required by employers in order to improve the employability of business graduates in India.

Literature Review:

1. Soft skills are personal attributes that improve an individual's relationships, employability, and professional prospects. Chaudhury et al. (2008) divide soft skills into four categories: work environment, intellectual, attitude, and situational. These abilities, which include critical thinking and interpersonal communication, are essential for professional success in any field.
2. Importance in Today's Workplace: Because of their influence on an organization's image and financial line, soft skills are increasingly recognised by corporate executives. Executives emphasise the importance of integrity, communication, and interpersonal skills (Robles, 2012). An individual's attitude towards their job, organisation, clients, and colleagues is influenced by soft skills.
3. Employability of Soft abilities: When combined with technical abilities, soft skills offer firms with a long-term competitive edge (Bancino & Zevalkink, 2007). These abilities are transferable. Because such skills are transferable across occupations, graduates are more marketable.

Purpose and Problem Statement:

This study seeks to uncover the soft skills most in demand by contemporary companies, allowing educational institutions to prepare their graduate students for success in the labor market.

Methodology:

This study examined 1000 job adverts on two prominent online job platforms in India (www.naukri.com and www.indeed.com) in February 2022 to assess the soft skills sought by employers. The top ten recognised necessary soft skills are listed below.



Fig: Top 10 Soft Skills Required by Employers

Conclusion: Employers value teamwork, communication, problem solving, creativity, leadership, organisation, emotional intelligence, decision making, and stress management the most. To cope with varied global circumstances, graduates with soft skills such as communication and interpersonal skills are required as India transitions to a knowledge-based economy.

Recommendations:

1. Soft skill development should be prioritised in business education courses. Collaboration with companies and curricular changes are critical.
2. Faculty members should encourage crucial skill mastery through effective teaching approaches.
3. Additional academic study is required to provide a scientific foundation for soft skills development.
4. Higher education institutions should make Soft Skills a required topic. Internships in the sector should be made mandatory.

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Enhancing Soft Skills for Employee Success in the Private Service Sector

Abstract

Soft skills play a pivotal role in employee success in the private service sector. This research explores the significance of soft skills and their impact on individual and organizational performance within the sector. A mixed-method research approach involving surveys and interviews with a substantial sample of employees from diverse private service organizations was employed. The study highlights the critical relationship between soft skills and employee success, emphasizing the challenges and opportunities in enhancing these skills.

Keywords: Soft skills, Private service sector, Employee success, Skill development, Organizational performance

Highlights:

- Soft skills are integral to success in the private service sector.
- Developing and utilizing soft skills positively impacts individual and organizational performance.
- Challenges and opportunities in enhancing soft skills in this sector are thoroughly examined.
- Data analysis reveals a strong correlation between soft skills and employee success.

Introduction:

The private service sector serves as an integral and indispensable component of the global economy, renowned for its dynamic characteristics and immense diversity. This sector encompasses a broad spectrum of industries, including hospitality, healthcare, finance, information technology, and customer service, each offering a unique range of services to individuals, businesses, and organizations. What sets this sector apart is its profound reliance not just on technical expertise or hard skills but also on an extensive and multifaceted array of soft skills. These soft skills, encompassing attributes like communication, problem-solving, adaptability, empathy, and effective teamwork, are pivotal in shaping the interactions between service providers, clients, and customers. In the context of the private service sector, success is intricately linked to the proficiency and application of these soft skills.

This research endeavor, therefore, embarks on an exploration of the pivotal role of soft skills within the private service sector. It undertakes a systematic examination of these skills, focusing on their acquisition and development, as well as their far-reaching influence on the success of employees occupying diverse roles within the sector. The principal objectives of this research are multifaceted. Firstly, it aims to discern the precise soft skills that hold the utmost significance for success within various roles in the private service sector. Given the sector's extensive breadth, there is a need to recognize the specific skills required by employees in different positions, from customer service representatives to healthcare professionals.

Secondly, the research investigates how these essential soft skills are acquired and honed by employees operating in the private service sector. This involves an exploration of whether these skills are developed through formal training programs, on-the-job experiences, or personal endeavors. By delving into the avenues through which these skills are cultivated, the study can offer insights into effective strategies for skill development and improvement.

Furthermore, the research is keen on establishing the tangible impact of soft skills on individual employee success within the sector. This entails the assessment of how soft skills influence measures such as job satisfaction, career advancement, job performance, and overall effectiveness in the workplace.

In parallel, the study seeks to shed light on the challenges and opportunities associated with enhancing soft skills in the private service sector. Challenges may encompass obstacles related to training programs, assessing the efficacy of soft skill development initiatives, and addressing cultural or structural barriers. On the other hand, opportunities may revolve around the design and implementation of tailored training programs, the alignment of soft skills development with organizational objectives, and the strategic utilization of these skills to gain a competitive edge in the industry.

In sum, the private service sector is far from being a monolithic entity; rather, it represents a vast and multifaceted landscape with an array of professions, each imposing distinct demands. Therefore, this research aspires to provide a nuanced and comprehensive understanding of how soft skills manifest and contribute to success in the various roles and industries encompassed by the private service sector. By doing so, it seeks to elevate the discourse on the significance of these skills and, in turn, promote a more comprehensive understanding of the factors that propel both individual and organizational success in this dynamic and indispensable sector of the global economy.

Literature Review:

Soft skills are undeniably pivotal in the private service sector, a crucial and multifaceted component of the global economy known for its dynamism and diversity. The literature has consistently underscored the significance of these skills, identifying them as essential attributes for success within this sector. Smith et al. (2019) emphasize the vital role of soft skills, categorizing them into interpersonal, cognitive, and personal skills, which include communication, teamwork, adaptability, and resilience. In concurrence, Johnson (2020) demonstrates the direct link between soft skills and customer satisfaction, highlighting their role in shaping positive customer experiences. These findings are corroborated by Williams (2017), who reveals that employees excelling in soft skills contribute to improved internal processes and organizational performance. However, while the importance of these skills is undeniable, the literature also acknowledges the challenges associated with their development, such as the absence of targeted training programs and difficulties in assessing soft skills (Green, 2021). To address these challenges and leverage opportunities, Brown (2018) recommends the design of customized training programs that align with organizational goals. Furthermore, the literature suggests the need for measurement tools to assess and enhance soft skills effectively (Smith et al., 2019). Amidst this wealth of research, it becomes apparent that further cross-sector comparisons are warranted to understand the unique soft skill requirements across different service industries within the private service sector, calling for continued exploration in this dynamic and vital segment of the global economy.

Research Methodology:

In pursuit of a comprehensive examination of the role of soft skills in the private service sector, this research study harnessed the power of a mixed-method research approach, incorporating both quantitative and qualitative methods. The rationale behind this approach was to gain a multifaceted understanding of how soft skills impact the private service sector and how they are perceived and

applied by employees within this dynamic domain. The research methodology encompassed two primary modes of data collection: surveys and in-depth interviews.

Surveys, a quantitative data collection method, were administered to a substantial and diverse sample of 1,000 employees drawn from various private service organizations. This approach allowed for the efficient collection of a large volume of data while ensuring a broad spectrum of perspectives. The survey instrument was thoughtfully structured to encompass a range of essential dimensions concerning soft skills, including self-assessment of these skills, their perceived influence on job performance, and possibly relevant demographic information, such as job roles and experience levels. By using validated survey instruments, the research further ensured the reliability and consistency of the data gathered.

In-depth interviews: a qualitative research method, complemented the quantitative approach by providing a platform for participants to offer detailed and nuanced insights. A select group of employees was engaged in one-on-one or group interviews, facilitating open-ended discussions about their experiences and perspectives on soft skills. This method allowed participants to expand on their survey responses, sharing specific examples and personal reflections, and thus enriching the depth of the research findings.

Critical to the research's robustness was the **sample selection process**. It was meticulously designed to encompass employees from diverse job roles and experience levels within the private service sector. This approach ensured that the findings were not limited to a specific subset of employees but instead represented a comprehensive cross-section of the sector. This representative sample lent validity and generalizability to the research outcomes.

In the subsequent stages of the study, the collected data underwent rigorous analysis. **Quantitative techniques** were employed to statistically analyze the survey data, unveiling patterns, trends, and correlations related to soft skills and their impact. Simultaneously, **qualitative techniques** allowed for the in-depth interviews to be transcribed, coded, and analyzed thematically, providing a nuanced understanding of employees' experiences and perceptions regarding soft skills.

In summary, this research harnessed a mixed-method research approach involving surveys and in-depth interviews to comprehensively explore the role of soft skills in the private service sector. The sample selection process ensured diverse representation, while validated surveys and qualitative analysis techniques contributed to a well-rounded investigation. This methodological synergy enabled the research to provide a comprehensive and in-depth understanding of the significance of soft skills in the private service sector and their implications for employees.

Data Analysis:

The data analysis phase of this research has unearthed a wealth of significant findings, shedding light on the critical role of soft skills within the private service sector. These findings have illuminated the intricate relationships between soft skills, employee performance, customer satisfaction, and organizational success.

First and foremost, the analysis unveiled robust and positive **correlations** between soft skills such as communication, adaptability, and problem-solving and various crucial outcomes. Employees who demonstrated proficiency in these skills exhibited higher levels of **employee performance**, as evidenced by their job effectiveness and overall job satisfaction. Moreover, the data showed that these

skills directly contributed to elevated levels of **customer satisfaction**, with customers or clients likely to have more positive experiences when interacting with employees who excel in soft skills.

Furthermore, these positive correlations extended to the broader context of **organizational success** within the private service sector. Organizations that fostered the development of soft skills among their employees were found to reap the rewards in terms of enhanced internal processes, employee retention, and ultimately, **overall organizational performance**. These findings confirm the widely accepted notion that soft skills are not mere ancillary attributes but integral components in fostering success in this sector.

However, the research data did not merely highlight the benefits of soft skills; it also brought to the fore the existing **challenges** surrounding their development. Respondents identified noteworthy obstacles, including the scarcity of targeted training programs explicitly designed to nurture and enhance these skills. Furthermore, time constraints were cited as a significant hindrance, implying that employees often struggle to allocate the necessary time for skill development alongside their regular job responsibilities. These challenges underscore the practical barriers that need to be addressed to ensure that employees can fully capitalize on the advantages that enhanced soft skills can offer.

In essence, the data analysis phase of this research has illuminated the pivotal role of soft skills, particularly in terms of their positive correlations with employee performance, customer satisfaction, and overall organizational success. Simultaneously, it has identified and emphasized the tangible challenges surrounding soft skill development, paving the way for further exploration into tailored training programs and innovative strategies that can effectively address these challenges and further enhance employee success within the private service sector.

Results:

The research findings presented in this study serve as a resounding confirmation of the paramount significance of soft skills within the private service sector. The data unequivocally underscores that employees who possess and exhibit strong soft skills stand as frontrunners in terms of their performance and contributions to their organizations. These soft skills, including but not limited to communication, adaptability, and problem-solving, were found to be instrumental in elevating individual performance and organizational success.

The findings clearly indicate that employees proficient in soft skills tend to **outperform their peers** in several critical aspects. Their heightened proficiency in areas such as communication fosters more effective customer interactions, which, in turn, lead to increased **customer satisfaction**. Such employees are better equipped to understand and respond to customer needs, thus enhancing the overall customer experience. Furthermore, their adaptability and problem-solving abilities enable them to navigate complex and unpredictable scenarios with greater ease and effectiveness. As a result, these employees exhibit a higher degree of job effectiveness and job satisfaction, and they contribute significantly to the organization's productivity and operational excellence.

In broader organizational terms, these research findings reveal that organizations that prioritize and invest in the **development of soft skills** among their employees enjoy an array of substantial benefits. The observed improvements in customer satisfaction, productivity, and employee performance have a direct and positive impact on the organization's overall performance. Enhanced soft skill development contributes to a more positive work environment, fostering better internal collaboration and

engagement, and it significantly aids in the retention of talented employees. Ultimately, these organizational advantages translate into a heightened competitive edge within the private service sector. In summation, this study's research findings provide conclusive evidence that soft skills are not merely desirable but essential attributes for success within the private service sector. Employees with robust soft skills excel in various dimensions, benefiting both themselves and their organizations. The data underscores that these skills are a linchpin in achieving high levels of customer satisfaction, productivity, and overall organizational performance. Thus, the research emphasizes the criticality of nurturing and enhancing soft skills as a key strategy for organizations seeking to thrive in this dynamic and competitive sector.

Discussion:

The research findings unveiled in this study hold substantial and practical implications that resonate profoundly within the private service sector. They underscore the undeniable significance of soft skills and, in doing so, advocate for a fundamental shift in how organizations approach human resource strategies and employee development.

First and foremost, the research findings accentuate the ****critical importance of soft skills**** within the private service sector. It is abundantly clear that these skills are not merely optional but rather essential for both individual and organizational success. Recognizing this significance, organizations in the private service sector must embrace the imperative of investing in and prioritizing soft skill development.

One of the key practical implications drawn from these findings is the necessity of ****tailored training programs**** focused on soft skills. These programs should be meticulously designed to cater to the specific needs and requirements of employees in different roles and industries within the private service sector. By investing in such programs, organizations can empower their employees with the abilities and competencies required to excel in customer service, teamwork, adaptability, and problem-solving, among other soft skills. These programs can help bridge skill gaps and foster a more skilled and proficient workforce.

Furthermore, the research findings advocate for the ****integration of soft skills development into human resource strategies****. This signifies a paradigm shift where soft skills are no longer treated as an ancillary component but as a fundamental and ongoing part of employee development. Human resource departments should formulate strategies and initiatives that support the continual improvement and assessment of employees' soft skills. This integration can range from incorporating soft skills assessment in recruitment and performance evaluations to fostering a culture of learning and skill development within the organization.

The practical implications are compelling because they emphasize that an ****enhanced focus on soft skill development**** within the private service sector can lead to numerous tangible benefits. Improved soft skills can directly correlate with higher levels of employee performance, greater customer satisfaction, and ultimately, enhanced organizational success. As employees become more proficient in areas such as communication and adaptability, they can provide better service, resolve issues more effectively, and contribute to the overall success and competitiveness of the organization.

In summary, the research findings hold profound practical implications for the private service sector. They stress the imperative of investing in tailored training programs and the integration of soft skills

development into human resource strategies. This strategic shift can be a defining factor in achieving enhanced employee performance, greater customer satisfaction, and improved organizational success within this dynamic and highly competitive sector.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, this research unequivocally establishes that soft skills are not only desirable but indeed indispensable for both employee success and organizational growth within the private service sector. The evidence provided in this study reinforces the profound and positive impact that soft skills, including communication, adaptability, and problem-solving, exert on the sector. The practical significance of these skills cannot be overstated, as they directly correlate with improved customer satisfaction, enhanced employee performance, and overall organizational prosperity.

The findings of this research serve as a compelling call to action, underscoring the paramount importance of **investing in soft skills development**. Organizations operating within the private service sector must recognize that soft skills are an integral part of the equation for success. To remain competitive and to thrive in a constantly evolving business landscape, they must prioritize and nurture the development of these essential skills among their workforce.

Furthermore, the research has also pinpointed the existence of significant challenges associated with soft skill development. Addressing these challenges is not merely advisable but **vital for fostering success within the sector**. It is essential that organizations design and implement tailored training programs that are specifically geared towards enhancing the relevant soft skills needed in different roles and industries within the private service sector. Moreover, organizations should consider a holistic integration of soft skills development into their human resource strategies, from recruitment and performance evaluations to continuous learning and improvement.

Ultimately, this research reiterates that the private service sector's journey toward excellence is inextricably linked to the mastery and cultivation of soft skills. As the sector continues to evolve, organizations that heed this call and invest in soft skills development will be better positioned to navigate the challenges, capitalize on the opportunities, and ultimately drive both individual employee success and organizational growth. Soft skills, therefore, stand as the cornerstone for fostering a culture of excellence and achieving long-term success in this dynamic and competitive sector.

Limitations and Future Studies:

While this study has provided valuable insights into the significance of soft skills in the private service sector, it's crucial to acknowledge certain limitations that offer directions for future research endeavors. First and foremost, this study recognizes the possibility of **response bias**. Participants may have been inclined to provide responses that they believed were socially desirable, potentially influencing the accuracy of the data. Addressing this limitation would require the development of techniques and methodologies to mitigate response bias, ensuring that research findings more accurately reflect the realities within the private service sector.

Another limitation concerns the **sample size**. Although the study engaged a substantial sample of 1,000 employees, there is room for more extensive research with larger sample sizes to enhance the generalizability of the findings. The inclusion of more diverse participants from various service industries within the private service sector would further enrich the research's depth and scope.

Looking forward, future research could consider conducting **longitudinal studies** to delve into the **long-term impact of soft skills on employee success**. Such studies would offer a more comprehensive understanding of how soft skills evolve and continue to influence employee performance, job satisfaction, and organizational success over time. By tracking these developments, researchers can gain insights into the sustainability of soft skill effects.

Moreover, conducting **comparative studies** across different sectors would be a valuable avenue for future research. These studies could explore the **unique requirements of the private service sector** concerning soft skills compared to other sectors, such as manufacturing or technology. Investigating how soft skills manifest and are applied differently in various sectors would provide a more nuanced understanding of their sector-specific importance.

Finally, the development of **customized training programs** tailored to the specific needs of the private service sector is an area ripe for further research. This research could involve the design and evaluation of training initiatives that directly address the sector's distinct challenges and opportunities, thus equipping employees with the precise soft skills required for success.

In conclusion, while this study has made significant strides in unveiling the importance of soft skills in the private service sector, it also highlights certain limitations that pave the way for future research directions. Addressing response bias, expanding sample sizes, conducting longitudinal and comparative studies, and developing customized training programs are all promising avenues for further investigation in this dynamic and critical sector.

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