

The Importance of Soft Skills in Employability: A Two-Way Perspective*

(Research Article)

İstihdam Edilebilirlikte Soft Becerilerin Önemi: İki Yönlü Bir Bakış

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ABSTRACT

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Soft skills are skills that people are born with and are known to be strengthened and increased with experience and practice, such as effective communication, emotional intelligence, leadership, creativity, teamwork, and critical thinking. They are also called 21st century skills due to their power to compete with technology in employability. The business world needs employees with developed soft skills to complement their technical skills in an increasingly competitive environment with the development of technology.

In the research, the skills that employers and managers look for in the people they can employ were investigated through semi-structured in-depth interviews and it was seen that 26% of these were technical skills and 74% were soft skills. A total of 470 university senior students participated in the survey study conducted with students and the factors of skill perception were determined as Effective communication, Professional competence, Self-efficacy and Emotional intelligence. Skill perceptions differ according to gender. Perceptions of professional competence increase depending on the educational level of their mothers.

ÖZET

Anahtar Kelimeler:

Soft Beceriler, Teknik
Beceriler, Öğrenci,
Eğitim, İstihdam
Edilebilirlik

Soft beceriler, insanların doğuştan sahip olduğu ve deneyim ve uygulama ile pekişerek arttığı bilinen etkili iletişim, duygusal zekâ, liderlik, yaratıcılık, takım çalışması, eleştirel düşünme gibi becerilerdir. İstihdam edilebilirlikte teknoloji ile rekabet etme konusundaki gücüne ithafen 21. yy. becerileri olarak da adlandırılmaktadır. İş dünyası, teknolojinin gelişmesiyle birlikte artan rekabet ortamında teknik becerilerini tamamlayacak soft becerileri gelişmiş çalışanlara ihtiyaç duymaktadır.

Araştırmada işverenlerin ve yöneticilerin istihdam edebilecekleri kişilerde aradığı beceriler yarı yapılandırılmış derinlemesine mülakat ile araştırılmış bunların %26 teknik, %74 ise soft beceriler olduğu görülmüştür. Öğrenciler ile yapılan anket çalışmasına toplam 470 üniversite son sınıf öğrencisi katılmış ve beceri algısı faktörleri Etkili iletişim, Mesleki yeterlilik, Öz yeterlilik ve Duygusal zekâ olarak belirlenmiştir. Beceri algıları cinsiyete göre farklılık göstermektedir. Mesleki yeterlilik algıları annelerinin eğitim düzeyine bağlı olarak artmaktadır.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Soft skills are psychosocial, behavioral, and improvable skills that build on these basic skills. Job candidates must have hard skills as well as developed soft skills. Candidates with these two skills in balanced can meet the expectations of employers (Atabay, 2020). According to the World Health Organization, soft skills are skills that make people's lives easier and enable them to perform their duties successfully (World Health Organization, 2018). According to UNICEF, it is the social skills of people, including the changes they make in their behavior and attitudes, to achieve a healthy and productive life (UNICEF, 2020). According to UNESCO, individuals can use their inherent skills for their intended purpose (UNESCO, 2009). According to the European Association for Adult Education, soft skills are skills that are essential for survival in the social, cultural, and environmental environment (European Association for Adult Education, 2018).

Soft skills cannot be measured like hard skills, but the differences between people who have revealed their soft skills can be seen in their environments. Hard skills may lose their importance according to changing situations over time and technological developments. Soft skills are skills that will not lose their importance for people who own time and technology (Koran, 2018). As a result of globalization, employees who can easily adapt to different situations and are open to innovation and talents are desired. Employees of companies that constantly compete, need to renew. A company expects its employees not only to perform their duty like a machine but also to use their skills and all kinds of intelligence while performing their duties. The primary expectation from an employee is openness, honesty, respect, and responsibility (Akım, 2010). It is not possible to use technology effectively unless the real owner of everything is human and he knows and develops himself (Akça, 2010).

Some of the other names given to soft skills are 'Non-Technical Skills', 'Social Skills', 'Life Skills', 'Social Competencies' (Koran, 2018), 'Soft Skills', 'Sensitive Skills', 'Human Skills', (Urhan Torun, 2019). 'General Skills', and 'Generic Skills' (Atabay, 2020). According to the Workplace Learning Report published annually by LinkedIn, the prominent soft skills in 2019 are creativity, persuasion, collaboration, adaptability, and time management. The soft skills that stood out in 2020 were creativity, persuasion, collaboration, adaptability, and emotional intelligence. In the 2021 report, flexibility/adaptation, technology skills/digital fluency, communication between remote and distributed teams, emotional intelligence, cross-functional collaboration, leading change, change management, coping with stress/being more mindful, time management, and creativity (LinkedIn, 2021).

Table 1. Some Scientific Studies Listing Soft Skills

Spencer & Spencer (1993)	Achievement orientation Concern for order, quality, and accuracy Initiative Information seeking Interpersonal understanding Customer service orientation Impact and influence on others Organizational awareness Relationship building Developing others Directiveness Teamwork and co-operation Team leadership Self-control Self-confidence Flexibility Organizational commitment
Evers & Rush (1996)	Managing self Communicating Managing people and tasks

	Mobilizing innovation and change
Andrews & Helen Higson (2008)	<p>Professionalism.</p> <p>Reliability.</p> <p>The ability to cope with uncertainty.</p> <p>The ability to work under pressure.</p> <p>The ability to plan and think strategically.</p> <p>The capability to communicate and interact with others, either in teams or through networking.</p> <p>Good written and verbal communication skills.</p> <p>Information and Communication Technology skills.</p> <p>Creativity and self-confidence.</p> <p>Good self-management and time-management skills.</p> <p>Willingness to learn and accept responsibility</p>
Davies, Fidler, & Gorbis (2011)	<p>Sense-making.</p> <p>Social intelligence</p> <p>Novel and adaptive thinking</p> <p>Cross cultural competency</p> <p>Computational thinking</p> <p>New media literacy</p> <p>Trans disciplinary</p> <p>Design mindset</p> <p>Cognitive load management</p> <p>Virtual collaboration</p>
Robles (2012)	<p>Communication</p> <p>Courtesy</p> <p>Flexibility</p> <p>Integrity</p> <p>Interpersonal Skills</p> <p>Positive Attitude</p> <p>Professionalism</p> <p>Responsibility</p> <p>Teamwork</p> <p>Work Ethic</p>
Succi (2018)	<p>Being Committed to Work</p> <p>Being Professionally Ethical</p> <p>Being Tolerant to Stress</p> <p>Creativity/Innovation</p> <p>Learning</p> <p>Life Balance</p> <p>Self-Awareness</p> <p>Communication</p>

	Conflict Management & Negotiation
	Contact Network
	Culture Adaptability
	Leadership
	Teamwork
	Adaptability to Change
	Analysis
	Continuous Improvement
	Customer/User Orientation
	Decision Making
	Management
	Results Orientation
Urhan T. (2019)	Effective Communication
	Emotional Intelligence
	Teamwork
	Problem Solving
	Effective Presentation
	Adaptability
	Creativity
	Work Ethic
	Time Management
	Stress Management
	Leadership

The soft skills available in other studies were investigated (Table 1) and the scope of the skills to be examined in this study was determined according to the frequency of the mentioned skill concepts, and the scope of the study was decided by taking the opinions of the experts. Accordingly, the soft skills that will be examined in the study are effective communication skills, emotional intelligence, teamwork skills, problem solving skills, effective presentation, flexibility/adaptation skills, creativity, work ethic, time management, stress management and leadership. Students' graduation diplomas and technical knowledge do not enable them to take part in the modern business world, they need to reveal and develop their existing skills. Therefore, another name for these skills is '21st Century Skills' (Uluoyol & Eryılmaz, 2015).

2. MATERIAL AND METHODS

2.1. Research Method and Data Collection Tools

This study aims to determine the expectations of businesspeople in Antalya from their employees and the people they will employ, the skills they want them to have, whether these skills include hard skills or soft skills in proportion, and which skills senior students at Akdeniz University have and the ratio of these skills. It was designed to determine whether they think they have more hard skills or soft skills and whether they are qualified to meet the expectations of businesspeople. For this purpose, a mixed model was applied via a semi-structured in-depth interview with descriptive analysis and a field research technique with statistical analysis. In semi-structured in-depth interviews, the interviewer prepares the questions in advance. Partial flexibility can be provided to the interviewer during the interview. And it is important that the questions are open-ended for in-depth interviews (Ergün, 2021). For this reason, the questions prepared for the interview are open-ended.

The interview consists of 21 questions and was conducted with 46 participants between September 29 and December 5, 2021. The population of the interview research is businesspeople, and the sample is businesspeople living in Antalya. The convenience sampling technique was preferred where individuals are easily accessible and voluntarily participate. Convenience sampling is a method that accelerates the research as a close and easy-to-reach group is selected by the researcher (Kılıç, 2013).

In the field research, a 31-question questionnaire consisting of 3 sections was prepared using the data obtained as a result of the interviews and the scale included in the study titled 'Evaluating the Soft Skills Performed by Applicants of Malaysian Engineers' conducted by Zaharima, Ahmad, Yusoff, Omar, & Basri (2011) and the online questionnaire form was administered to 470 senior students studying at Akdeniz University between April 14 - November 1, 2022, with their consent. The population of the field research is the senior students studying at the university, and the sample is the senior students of Akdeniz University. The reason why senior students were selected as the population is that they will be among the candidates to be employed when they graduate.

3. DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

Semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with 46 participants. They are 25 men, 21 women and 24 business owners, and 22 managers. Considering the gender ratio of 24 business owners, it is seen that 50% are women and 50% are men, and of 22 managers' 41% are women and 59% are men. Considering the age group distribution of the participants, 15% of them were between 24-30, 39% between 31-40, 37% between 41-60, and 9% with an average age of 61-70. The distribution of the participants' work experience period is 19% between 1-10 years, 37% between 11-20 years, 33% between 21-30 years, and 11% between 25-35 years (Table 2).

Table 2. Work Experience of the Participants

Duration of Work Experience	Number of Participants	Percentage Rate
1-10 years	9	19%
11-20 years	17	37%
21-30 years	15	33%
25-35 years	5	11%

The duration of their management is 24% of participants between 1-5 years, 26% between 6-10 years, 30% between 11-20 years, and 13% between 21-31 years. In addition, 7% of the participants have been managers for 45 years. The data obtained from the interviews were processed by the descriptive analysis method (Table 3).

Table 3. Duration of Participants' Managerial Experience

Duration of Managerial Experience	Number of Participants	Percentage Rate
1-5 years	11	24%
6-10 years	12	%26
11-20 years	14	%30
21-31 years	6	%13
45 years	3	%7

From the answers given to the question 'As an employer, what characteristics do you expect the person you will hire to have?' the characteristics that the participants said they expected from the people they would hire were categorized as soft skills and hard (technical) skills. It has been determined that 2 participants expect 100% technical, 16 participants expect 100% soft skills, 12 participants expect 50% technical and 50% soft skills.

As a result of the analysis of the main characteristics stated by all participants in the interviews, it was seen that there were 123 characteristics. It was observed that 26% of the criteria were hard skills, and 74% were soft skills. It can be said that 74% of the participants expect soft skills from the people they will hire (Table 4).

Table 4. Ratio of the Skills that Respondents Desire the Recruiters to Have

Hard Skills	Soft Skills
26% (32 skills)	74% (91 skills)

According to the answers given in the interviews, the technical skills that 46 participants wanted in the people they would hire were listed as 'IQ', 'Intelligence', 'Practical intelligence', 'Field knowledge', 'self-training', 'mastery of materials and programs', 'Technical skills', 'Experience', 'Qualification', 'School, foreign language'.

The answers of the participants to the soft skills of those they would like to hire are as follows: 'Ethics, the responsibility', 'Smiling face, openness to learning', 'work ethic, diligence', 'Communication skills, awareness of private sector expectations', 'Strong, hardworking', 'Innovative', 'Open to knowledge, eager to work', 'Prone to teamwork', 'Honest, reliable', 'Good human relations, work ethic', 'Hardworking, solution-oriented, innovative', 'Loyalty, sincerity, excitement, self-confidence, determination to improve oneself', 'Being in harmony with the team and the team, having a sense of moral responsibility', 'Disciplined, fast, honest, practical', 'Correct stance, attitude', 'Sympathetic, courage', 'Loyalty', 'Talent', 'High empathy'.

When the answers given by 46 participants to the question "As an employer, what characteristics do you expect your current employees to have?" are analyzed, it is seen that a total of 106 skills are mentioned, and 11% of these 106 skills belong to hard skills and 89% belong to soft skills. Participants expect 89% soft skills from their current employees. It is seen that 35 of the participants want their current employees to have 100% soft skills, 1 of them wants their current employees to have 50% technical skills and 50% soft skills. No respondents expect 100% hard skills from their current employees. It is seen that the technical skills that 46 of the participants want their current employees to have been expressed as 'knowledge', 'experience', 'intelligence', and 'success' (Table 5).

Table 5. Skills that Participants Desire in Their Employees

Skills	Number	Percentage
Hard	12	11%
Soft	94	89%
Total	106	100%

In response to the question "What do your human resources recruitment interview questions mainly aim to measure?", 45 respondents indicated 73 measurement criteria, of which 38% were technical and 56% were soft skills. The other criteria were 'salary expectation' and 'reason for leaving your previous job'. When the percentages are analyzed, it is seen that 17 participants gave 100% hard skills, 18 participants gave 100% soft skills, and 5 participants gave 50% hard and 50% soft skills answers (Table 6).

Table 6. Criteria in Participants' Human Resources Recruitment Interview Questions

Criteria	Number	Percentage
Hard Skills	28	38%
Soft Skills	41	56%
Salary expectation	2	4%
Reason for leaving the previous job	1	2%

In response to the question "How important is a diploma for you when hiring someone?", it is seen that the responses include the statements "not important", "very important", "less important", "20% important", "50% important". Considering the percentages of answers given to the question asked about the importance of diploma in the recruitment process, it was seen that 15% of the participants found it unimportant, 35% first-degree important, 11% second-degree important, and 39% moderately important. 'Do you take into account which school the person you will hire graduated from?' It is seen that 24 participants answered 'yes' and 2 participants answered 'yes' depending on the position.

As a result of the analysis of the question 'How important is the communication skills (persuasion, listening, non-verbal and verbal communication, etc.) of the people you will hire to you?', it is seen that 78% of them answered this question as 'very important' and 22% as 'important'. According to the answers given to this question, there is no participant who finds the communication skills of the people to be unimportant.

'Do you have specific methods for determining the communication skills of the people you will hire? If yes, what are these?', it is seen that 80% of the participants have methods specific to their businesses, while 20% do not. When the specific methods of the participants to determine the communication skills of the people they will hire are examined, it was determined that 24 participants used 'interview', 5 participants used 'trial', 3 participants used 'eating with the team', 'training' and 'anger management' methods, and 2 participants looked at 'experience'.

The participants, who find the reliability of the people they will hire important, rated the importance of reliability as 'Very important', 'Most important', '100%', 'High', 'Important', '10 out of 10 important', 'Transparency is indispensable', 'Persons we cannot trust we are not hiring', 'They are crucial trust and mutual respect', 'Our most sensitive point'.

'If you care, do you have a method to test the credibility of your recruits?' It is seen that 28 of the 46 participants have a method to test the reliability of the people, and 14 of them do not.

The methods used by the participants to test the reliability of the people they will hire are 'reference', 'cross questions', 'feelings and emotions', 'conversation', 'experiment', and 'personality inventory'. It is seen that 10 of the respondents who expressed their method measured the reliability of the person they would hire with reference method.

In the answers given to the question "How important is it for the people you will hire to have self-confidence?", it is seen that there is no participant who answered 'unimportant', while 2 of the participants answered 'little' and 'partially'.

In response to the question "If it is important, do you have a method to test the trust of the people you hire?", 13 of the participants stated that they do not have a method. Some of the methods they use to test whether the people they will hire are self-confident as follows: 'observing', 'cross-questions', 'asked to develop ideas', 'position, speech, answers, body language', 'communication with third parties', 'starting with a low salary offer is not a problem for a self-confident person', 'Personality Inventory Test', 'over time', '3-month trial period'.

'Is it important for you that the people you hire are experienced? Why?', 4 respondents answered 'No', 'No, he/she will have experience when he/she starts working', and 'It is related to the unit we will hire. If possible, he/she should not be experienced', 42 participants answered, 'Experience is usually the basis of decision-making', 'It is important, it is difficult to get to know the staff starting from scratch', and similar answers.

'Emotional intelligence (EQ) means being aware of and able to manage one's own and other's emotions. Do you consider the emotional intelligence of the people you will hire? If so, do you have a method specific to your business to measure emotional intelligence?', it was seen that 25 (61%) of the participants considered the emotional intelligence of the people they would hire, while 16 (39%) did not.

'What does the concept of Soft Skills mean to you?' According to the answers given to the question, it was seen that 9 (20%) of the 46 participants had no idea about the concept of soft skills. 'Soft skills include expression that corresponds to skills such as teamwork, effective presentation, adaptability, creativity, work ethic, time management, conflict management, mediation, critical thinking, problem solving and stress management etc.

"According to research, it has been revealed that 90% of the characteristics that a leader should have been skills based on emotional intelligence. As a leader, do you think that your emotional intelligence is reflected in your management style?" 40 participants (95%) answered "yes", and 2 participants (5%) answered "no".

3.1. Survey Findings

In the analysis of the field research data, the demographic characteristics of the participants and the soft skills they found necessary in business life, and they think they have been subjected to frequency analysis. Factors of the items related to the skills of the participants were revealed by factor analysis. Correlation analysis was used to determine the relationship between the factors of the items related to the skills. T-tests and analysis of variance were used to determine the relationship between gender and the items related to the skills. ANOVA and analysis of variance were used to determine the relationship between the department they were studying, their parent's level of education, and the items related to skills. In addition, Tukey's test was conducted to understand the relationship with the mother's education level more comprehensively.

The field research was carried out with 202 male (43%) and 268 female (57%) students of Akdeniz University. Considering the age groups distribution of 470 students; There are 279 (59.7%) participants between the ages of 18-22, 144 (30.8%) between the ages of 23-27 and 44 (9.4%) with an average age of 28 and above.

'The Department where you studied?' When the answers to the question are analyzed, it is seen that 75 (16%) students from 9 departments in the field of Health Sciences, 150 (32%) students from 35 departments in the field of science, and 235 (50%) students from 48 departments in the field of Social Sciences participated. Since the answers of 10 (2%) students include the name of the university they studied, they are not included in the analysis.

Whether the data is suitable for factor analysis is examined by the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) coefficient. As a result of the analysis, the KMO value for the factors scale of the items related to the skills was determined as 0.896. A KMO value above 0.50 indicates that the sample is suitable for factor analysis (Koçak & Aydın, 2021).

Factor analysis was used to examine the answers given to 31 five-point Likert type questions prepared to determine the perceptions of the participants about the skills. As a result of the eigenvalue and slope graph analysis, 4 factor groups were considered. The arithmetic mean, standard deviation and factor loading values of the expressions in the scale are given in Table 7.

Table 7. Factor Analysis Results of Participants for Items Related to Skills

FACTOR ANALYSIS	\bar{X}	Sd	Factor Loading
1- Professional Competence			
I can use modern tools and software related to my profession	3.91	0.848	0.835
I have basic knowledge and equipment related to my profession	3.82	0.849	0.794
I can use the necessary techniques related to my profession	4.00	0.749	0.739
I can use communication technologies brought and required by the information age.	4.17	0.708	0.647
I can solve problems at work using my experience	4.02	0.763	0.434
I can be creative and innovative while solving problems, I can develop different perspectives	3.99	0.812	0.411
I can identify what the problems at work are	4.05	0.721	0.378
2- Effective Communication Skill			
I pay attention to the feelings and thoughts of other people	4.30	0.729	0.686
I can support and guide those around me.	4.29	0.610	0.676
I am aware of my social responsibilities in society.	4.17	0.722	0.656
I can act with other people	4.11	0.789	0.571
I am trusted and trusted by my environment.	4.32	0.686	0.542
I listen to the other person during communication	4.43	0.702	0.526
I can give constructive feedback to people around me.	4.12	0.639	0.513
I can dedicate myself to the responsibilities of my job	4.21	0.729	0.485
I understand my part in a group without being told	4.02	0.785	0.459
I follow what's going on with people and events around me.	3.97	0.863	0.377
3- Emotional Intelligence			
I trust myself	4.12	0.814	0.660
I present my ideas confidently and effectively	4.04	0.854	0.567
I speak and understand more than one language other than my mother tongue	2.95	1.184	0.541
I try to direct the discussion on any subject, I get my ideas accepted	3.38	0.983	0.534
I alone can make the final decision	3.99	0.863	0.516
I can make quick decisions without hesitation, even in high-pressure environments	3.49	1.018	0.486
I am not afraid of criticism	3.73	1.017	0.479
I can cope with the negative effects of stress	3.36	1.042	0.412
4- Self-sufficiency			
I can work effectively on my own	4.14	0.880	0.554
I can deal with a job without getting bored, I can bring it to the end	3.61	0.937	0.551
I can learn from my mistakes	3.98	0.963	0.517
I can use time correctly	3.42	1.007	0.487
I prefer to work individually rather than as a team.	3.61	1.007	0.482
I do it completely by going down to the details of a job.	4.04	0.819	0.304

In the classification and evaluation of factor groups, delta 0 value and oblique rotation table were taken into consideration. The items subjected to factor analysis were arranged to form four factors. The minimum loading size is not specified. Cronbach's Alpha method was used to test the reliability of thirty-one items included in the factor analysis. The Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was found to be 0.900 in the result of the reliability analysis of the scale of the items related to skills, which consisted of 31 items. This result shows that the scale is highly reliable. With four factors, 44,327% of the total variance is explained in terms of items related to skills. These factors are named as 'Professional Competence', 'Effective Communication Skill', 'Emotional Intelligence', 'Self-Efficacy'.

The vocational competence factor consists of 7 items and these items include the technical knowledge and competence perceptions of the senior students about their fields of education. The factor explains 27.762% of the total variance. The value of the arithmetic mean of this factor is 3.99, while the standard deviation is 0.55. The reliability level of the factor is Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.837$. The fact that the vocational competence factor, which we will define as hard skill, constitutes 27% of the total variance and is the first factor, shows us the importance that students attach to technical skills. Although the business world gives more importance to soft skills than technical skills, we see that this is not exactly the case for students who will graduate. It can also be said that students' perceptions about technical skills are higher. The expression 'I can use the communication technologies brought and required by the information age' with an arithmetic average of 4.17 has the highest value among the factors. Considering the age groups of the students it can be understood that this expression has a high value.

The arithmetic mean-value of the Effective communication skill factor, which is named one of the soft skills and consists of 10 items, is 4.19 standard deviation value is 0.45. The factor explains 6.088% of the total variance. The reliability level of the factor is Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.819$. In the last question of the questionnaire, when the skills that students find necessary in business life were asked, the fact that the effective communication skill, which was required by 81%, was 6% among the factors, which makes students think about their perceptions of this skill. The expression 'I listen to the other person during communication' with an arithmetic mean of 4.43 has the highest value among the factors. It can be said that the students' perception of listening skill, which is one of the sub-branches of effective communication skills, is higher.

The third factor, Emotional intelligence, is related to the emotional intelligence perceptions of senior students. The arithmetic mean-value of the factor consisting of 8 items is 3.63 and the standard deviation value is 0.59. The factor explains 5.824% of the total variance. Based on this, we can say that students' perceptions of emotional intelligence skills are quite low. The reliability level of the factor is Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.745$. The expression 'I trust myself' got the highest value among the factor with an arithmetic mean of 4.12.

Self-efficacy, which is considered as the last factor, consists of 6 items. The arithmetic mean value of the factor is 3.80 and the standard deviation value is 0.57. The factor explains 4.653% of the total variance. The reliability level of the factor is Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.655$. The expression 'I can work effectively on my own' has the highest value among the factor with an arithmetic mean of 4.14. The arithmetic mean, standard deviation, and Cronbach's α values of all factors are given in Table 8.

Table 8. Analysis Values of the Factors of the Items Related to Skills

Skill Factors	\bar{X}	Sd	Cronbach's α
Effective communication	4.19	0.45	0.819
Professional Competence	3.99	0.55	0.837
Self-sufficiency	3.80	0.57	0.655
Emotional intelligence	3.63	0.59	0.745

When the results of the Correlation Analysis are examined to define the level of the relationship between the factors, it is seen in Table 9 that there is a positive and significant relationship between the Professional Competence and Effective Communication Skill factors ($r=0.366$, $p<0.01$). In other words, senior students with effective communication skills also have professional competence skills. It is noteworthy that there is a low level of relationship among other factors.

Table 9. Findings of Correlation Analysis Between Factors of Items Related to Skills

Correlation Analysis Between Factors	Professional Competence	Effective Communication Skill	Emotional intelligence	Self-sufficiency
Professional Competence	1	0.366	0.263	0.286
Effective Communication Skill	0.366	1	0.288	0.230

Emotional intelligence	0.263	0.288	1	0.190
Self-sufficiency	0.286	0.230	0.190	1

3.2. Relationship Between Factors and Variables

Under this heading, there are descriptive statistics results in order to see the skill perceptions of the senior students studying at Akdeniz University. The arithmetic mean (\bar{X}) of the scores given by 470 participants on a scale between 1 and 5 points is 3.92. As seen in Table 10, the gender and skill perceptions of the participants show a statistically significant difference ($t= 76.29341$; $p<0.05$). Descriptive statistical results reveal that women ($\bar{X} = 3.89$) and men ($\bar{X} = 3.91$) have close values in terms of skill perceptions.

Table 10. Difference in Perception of Skills by Gender

	Gender	N	\bar{X}	Sd	t-value	Sig.
Total Skill	Woman	268	3.89	0.423007	76.29341	0.00
	Male	202	3.91	0.443732		

As seen in Table 11, there is a statistically significant difference between the genders of the participants and the professional competence factor ($t= 69.10755$; $p<0.05$). Descriptive statistical results reveal that women ($\bar{X} = 3.97$) and men ($\bar{X} = 4.02$) have close values in terms of professional competence factor. There is a statistically significant difference between the gender of the participants and the effective communication skill factor ($t= 91.69081$; $p<0.05$). According to the descriptive statistical results, it was determined that women had $\bar{X} = 4.25$ and men had $\bar{X} = 4.12$ in the perception of effective communication skills. There is a statistically significant difference between the gender of the participants and the emotional intelligence factor ($t= 53.202496$; $p<0.05$). According to the descriptive statistical results, it was determined that women had $\bar{X} = 3.53$ and men had $\bar{X} = 3.76$ values in emotional intelligence perception. There is also a statistically significant difference between the last factor, self-efficacy, and the gender of the participants ($t= 66.86104$; $p<0.05$). According to the descriptive statistical results, it was determined that women had $\bar{X} = 3.84$ and men had $\bar{X} = 3.75$ values in self-efficacy perception.

Table 11. Differences in Perception of Skills Factors by Gender

	Gender	\bar{X}	Sd	t-value	Sig.
Professional Competence	Woman	3.97	0.54035	69.10755	0.000
	Male	4.02	0.57346		
Effective Communication Skill	Woman	4.25	0.41889	91.69081	0.000
	Male	4.12	0.47706		
Emotional Intelligence	Woman	3.53	0.55843	53.202496	0.000
	Male	3.76	0.59784		
Self-sufficiency	Woman	3.84	0.55840	66.86104	0.000
	Male	3.75	0.57858		

As a result of the variance analysis performed to determine whether there is a significant difference between the skill perceptions of the participants according to the field of education there was no statistically significant difference between the education department and skill perceptions ($p>0.05$).

As a result of the variance analysis performed to determine whether there is a significant difference between the skill perceptions of the participants according to the mother's education level, there was no statistically significant difference between the mother's education level and total skill perceptions ($p>0.05$).

As seen in Table 12, according to the results of the Anova test, which was conducted to determine whether the vocational competencies of the participants differ according to the education level of their mothers, it differs significantly in favor of the participants who have a mother with a university or higher education level according to the education level of the mothers of the participants. Accordingly, the vocational qualifications of the participants whose mothers have a university or higher education level are higher than the vocational qualifications of the participants whose mothers are primary and secondary school graduates ($F=4.40$, $p<0.05$). When the Tukey Test results at the 5% significance level are examined, there is no significant difference between the mothers' educational status and the factors of effective communication skills, emotional intelligence, and self-efficacy ($p>0.05$).

Table 12. Differences in Skill Perception of Factors According to Mother's Educational Status

		Mother Education Status			
Professional Competence	Primary / Secondary School graduate	3.93	0.55676	4.40	0.013
	High school graduate	4.06	0.54452		
	University and above graduate	4.12	0.53542		
Effective Communication Skill	Primary / Secondary School graduate	4.17	0.46654	0.92	0.39
	High school graduate	4.21	0.41235		
	University and above graduate	4.24	0.42822		
Emotional Intelligence	Primary / Secondary School graduate	3.59	0.58054	1.19	0.30
	High school graduate	3.67	0.61606		
	University and above graduate	3.70	0.56080		
Self-sufficiency	Primary / Secondary School graduate	3.77	0.54073	0.94	0.38
	High school graduate	3.86	0.60978		
	University and above graduate	3.81	0.61253		

As a result of the variance analysis performed to determine whether there is a significant difference between the total skill perceptions of the participants according to the father's education level, there was no statistically significant difference between the father's education level and the skill perceptions ($p>0.05$). There is also no significant difference between the participants' father's education level and professional competence, effective communication skills, emotional intelligence, and self-efficacy factors ($p>0.05$).

The last question of the survey study was 'Which of the following skills do you think are most necessary in business life?' is the question. When the answers to this question are analyzed by frequency analysis, it is seen that the following options are marked: 387 (82.3%) 'Problem Solving Skills', 383 (81.5%) 'Effective Communication Skills', 372 (79.1%) 'Business Ethics', 334 (71.1%) 'Time Management', 322 (68.5%) 'Stress Management', 310 (66.0%) 'Teamwork Skills', 300 (63.8%) 'Creativity', 270 (57.4%) 'Flexibility/Adaptation', 270 (57.4%) 'Leadership', 230 (48.9%) 'Effective Presentation Skills', 152 (32.3%) 'Emotional Intelligence'.

Table 13. Percentages of Skills that Participants Think are Necessary in Business Life

Skills	Number of Students	Percentage
Problem Solving Skill	387	%82.3
Effective Communication Skill	383	%81.5
Work ethic	372	%79.1
Time management	334	%71.1
Stress Management	322	%68.5
Teamwork Skill	310	%66.0
Creativity	300	%63.8
Flexibility/Adaptation	270	%57.4
Leadership	270	%57.4
Effective Presentation Skill	230	%48.9
Emotional intelligence	152	%32.3

The fact that Problem Solving and Effective Communication skills are seen by students as the most necessary skills in the business world reflects the students' perceptions of the business world. It can be said that students define the business world as an area where there are problems. It has been seen that the education system needs to be rebuilt based on personality and personality, considering the human body, and that students should take lessons on soft skills (Calp and Edis, 2020; Türnüklü, 2004; Korkmaz, 2021).

4. DISCUSSION

This study reveals the importance of what we call 'soft skills' in business life as a result of the research conducted with the interview method. It has been analyzed that employers and managers prefer soft skills, which are inherent in human nature, more than technical skills in employability. It was found that employers and managers expect 74% of their new hires to have soft skills, while 89% expects their existing employees to have soft skills. When the skills that employers expect from their new hires are compared with the skills they expect from their current employees, the fact that the soft skills expected from current employees are 15% higher shows that although technical knowledge is sought at the beginning of working life, soft skills are needed in the future.

When the answers given by employers regarding the skills, they expect from their new hires are analyzed one by one, it is found that 37% of the participants expect 100% soft skills, 4% expect 100% technical skills, and 26% expect 50% soft skills and 50% technical skills.

No employer expects 100% technical skills from their current employees. 76% of employers expect 100% soft skills from their current employees, and 2% expect 50% soft skills and 50% technical skills. When the answers given to these two questions are analyzed, it is seen that they do not find only technical knowledge sufficient in working life. The soft skills expected from employees are expressed with the words morality, character, honesty, belonging, friendliness, responsibility, solution-oriented, and openness to development. Soft skills expected from new employees are 23% work ethics, 23% emotional intelligence, and 14% effective communication skills. The soft skills expected from current employees are business ethics 25%, emotional intelligence 24%, and effective communication skills 13%.

It was observed that 38% of the criteria sought in the recruitment interview questions were to measure technical skills and 56% were to measure soft skills. When employers' answers to this question are analyzed individually, it is seen that 37% of employers' hiring criteria consisted of 100% technical skills, 39% of employers' hiring criteria consisted of 100% soft skills and 11% of employers' hiring criteria consisted of 50% technical and 50% soft skills. These data suggest that when looking at the skills that employers expect from their new hires or existing employees, the criteria for measuring soft skills, which are more than 70% important for employers, are not sufficient. It is seen that 2 of the respondents who stated the criteria they look for in recruitment interview questions included the 'Personality' criterion.

Among employers, the number of respondents who find it unimportant that the person to be hired has a diploma is 7 (15%). When we look at the answers to the question "Is the school of graduation important?", it is seen that 26 (56%) of the employers answered yes and 20 (44%) answered no. In this case, it cannot be concluded that the school of graduation is important or unimportant.

In the recruitment process, it is seen that 78% of the respondents care about these skills and 71% stated that they use the interview method to measure the communication skills of the people they will hire. Evaluating effective communication skills, which is one of the important soft skills for business life, during the interview can be seen as an opportunity for the people to be hired to express themselves correctly.

When asked "How important is it that the person you hire is trustworthy?", 100% of the employers answered that it is important, while there is no 'unimportant' answer. 33% of employers do not have a measurement method in the recruitment process, while 46% of employers who have a measurement method use the reference method.

"How important is it for the people you hire to have self-confidence?" The answers to the question clearly show that employers do not want insecure employees in their organizations. Only 4% of the employers give low and partial answers. It is also possible to say that some employers consider the self-confidence of the people they will hire as important depending on the circumstances. They want the person to be self-confident enough to know his/her place, not to be arrogant, not to let his/her self-confidence prevent him/her from developing himself/herself and not to miss details. 29% of employers do not have a unique method for determining the self-confidence of their hires.

91% of the employers declares experience as "important" and it is seen that they find it important for reasons such as saving time and labor and preventing disruption of work.

'Emotional intelligence (EQ) means being aware of and able to manage one's own and other's emotions. If so, do you have a job-specific method for measuring emotional intelligence?' According to the answers to the question,

25 (61%) of employers take into account the emotional intelligence of the people they will hire, while 16 (39%) do not.

"What does the concept of Soft Skills mean to you? According to the answers given to the question, 9 out of 46 employers (20%) have no idea about the concept of soft skills. It is seen that 37 employers (80%) who have an idea define soft skills as characteristics that will make a difference for diploma holders, general abilities, self-development ability, invisible skills of the person, process management, personality, abilities required outside the job description to do the job, the quality of the way of doing business, the ability to perceive detail and make holistic connections.

Finally, "According to research, 90% of the qualities that a leader should have been skills based on emotional intelligence. As a leader, do you think that your emotional intelligence is reflected in your management style?" 40 employers (95%) answered 'yes' and 2 employers (5%) answered 'no'. Among the answers given, 'It is certainly reflected. My new recruits address me as ma'am, but after a month or two they call me sister' is an interesting answer.

According to the factor analysis results of the field study conducted with 470 senior students studying at Akdeniz University, skill perception factors were formed (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.900$). Skill perception factors are Effective communication skills, Professional competence, Self-efficacy, and Emotional intelligence. The arithmetic averages of the skill perception factors are as follows; 4.19=Effective communication skills, 3.99=Vocational competence, 3.80=Self competence, and 3.63=Emotional intelligence. Considering the arithmetic averages of the factors, the students think that they have effective communication skills, but they do not have enough emotional intelligence skills.

According to the results of the Correlation Analysis conducted to determine the level of relationship between the factors, there is a positive and significant relationship between the factors of professional competence and effective communication skills ($r=0.366$, $p<0.05$). It is possible to say that students who have professional competence also have effective communication skills. Within the scope of this study, it is seen that the two skills that students have the most are effective communication skills and professional competence.

The arithmetic mean of skill perceptions is 3.92 out of 5. This shows that students are not inadequate in terms of skill perceptions. When skill perceptions are analyzed in terms of gender, it is seen that there is a significant difference, and male students (3.91) have a higher value than female students (3.89). In the skill perceptions of genders according to the factors; it is seen that male students have higher professional competence and emotional intelligence skills than female students (Gür, Öztürk Altınayak, & Ejder Apay, 2019), and female students have higher values than male students in effective communication and self-efficacy skills.

It is seen that there is a relationship between students' mother's education level and professional competence factor, and as the mother's education level increases, students' perceptions of professional competence skills also increase. It was determined that there was no significant relationship between students' father's education level and their perceptions of skills.

The last question asked to the students is what skills they find necessary in business life. It was seen that the students found problem-solving skills to be the most necessary at 82% and emotional intelligence skills to be the least necessary at 32%. According to the results of the analysis, it was determined that emotional intelligence is a skill that students do not have a sufficient perception of. Compared to their answers to this question, it is thought that emotional intelligence is a skill that students do not develop themselves because it is not considered necessary in business life and its importance is not sufficiently known. After problem-solving skills, effective communication skills with 81.5% and business ethics skills with 79.1%.

The characteristics that employers expect from their newly hired and existing employees were also evaluated in terms of the factors created according to the factor analysis of the field research. Of the 123 characteristics that employers expect from their new hires, 56 (45%) are emotional intelligence, 27 (22%) are professional competence, 23 (19%) are self-efficacy, and 17 (14%) are effective communication skills. Of the 106 skills that employers expect from their current employees, 49 (47%) are emotional intelligence, 29 (28%) self-efficacy, 14 (13%) effective communication, and 12 (12%) professional competence. This clearly shows that soft skills rather than hard skills are needed in business life.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Technology and its productions cannot have skills such as effective communication, emotional intelligence, leadership, and creativity. Employees who have these skills are required to survive in the constantly developing and changing business life (Uluyol & Eryilmaz, 2015). In addition to technical training, each person should be given training in personality motivations appropriate to his/her own structure. Considering that one of the biggest obstacles to the employability of newly graduated students is the lack of experience (Dost & Bilgin, 2020), it is

seen that practical training is essential. As Anderson and Tomlinson's study (2020) demonstrates, further development of the skilled social action capabilities of recruited graduates supports ongoing internal employability development.

The fact that students are fully trained in terms of technical and social skills while graduating from their schools will increase employability and will contribute to the fact that working individuals are both self-confident and satisfied with their work by ensuring that they are emotionally satisfied at work as well as feeling confident outside. Until the current system is changed, it is recommended that students should not only stay with the education they receive from school, but also engage in activities that can improve themselves, create internship opportunities for themselves, and receive training to get to know their personality structures.

For other studies to be conducted on this subject, it is recommended to investigate more broadly the differentiation of emotional intelligence skills according to the gender variable, the differentiation of students' learning areas in terms of skill perceptions, and the differentiation of parental education status in terms of skill perceptions.

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