

# Creating a Competitive Advantage in the Job Market with Soft Skills: Literature Review

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**Abstract-** Soft skills significantly influence individual career development; effective communication, interpersonal skills, and good leadership have been proven essential to career success. The demand for soft skills by employers is also increasing, which emphasizes the importance of having these skills in today's world of work. This research aims to review various journals to provide an overview of the development of the definition and benefits of soft skills and to collect these findings systematically. The method used is to use a literature review to look for journals with a soft skill theme and summarize them to look for patterns of findings. Through a careful search strategy, Relevant research has been identified and analyzed to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the role of soft skills in career development. In conclusion, soft skills have a significant role in individual career development. This ability can be learned and improved through relevant education and training. Individuals must develop their soft skills to have a competitive advantage in an increasingly competitive job market.

**Index Terms-** Career, communication, development of soft skills, interpersonal

## I. INTRODUCTION

Career development is determined by more than technical expertise or hard skills in facing increasingly fierce business competition (Calanca et al., 2019). Communication skills must be designed and taught to everyone with ambitions to achieve career success (Manohar & Reddy, 2018). More and more companies and organizations are realizing that soft or non-technical skills are essential in achieving success in the world of work. Individual career development has become a significant focus in the professional world. In addition to technical expertise, soft skills are recognized as a critical factor in achieving career success (Kumar et al., 2022). Soft skills cover various abilities, such as communication, teamwork, leadership, and other interpersonal skills (Taylor, 2016). However, even though the importance of soft skills has been recognized, research on the role and importance of soft skills in career development still needs to be completed. Therefore, this study aims to conduct a systematic literature review and collate findings from existing research to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the role of soft skills in career development. Below it can be described that soft skills affect career development.



Figure 1: Soft Skills Influence the Career Development of the Model (Malang State University Alumni Association 2021)

*Soft skills* cover various aspects, which include interpersonal skills, effective communication, leadership, teamwork, adaptability, work ethics, creativity, and problem-solving (Malova, 2019). The ability to interact well with others, manage emotions wisely, and have integrity and responsibility are some examples of soft skills that companies highly value. Soft skills, also known as interpersonal or soft skills, have become increasingly crucial in career development. The increasing complexity of the world of work (Lado et al., 2020), Changes in organizational paradigms, and shifting demands from employers have emphasized the importance of having these skills to achieve success in a career Brungardt, (2011). Tripathy (2020) explained that soft skills become crucial in individual career advancement. In this context, a systematic literature review on the role and significance of soft skills in career development is essential to explore a deeper understanding of this topic. The importance of soft skills in career development lies in the ability of individuals to adapt to change, work together in teams, communicate well, and overcome challenges faced in the workplace. Soft skills enable one to become an effective leader, build good relationships with colleagues and clients, and manage conflict wisely. By possessing solid and soft skills, individuals have a competitive advantage in advancing their careers.

Previous research has highlighted the importance of soft skills in individual career development. Corneli (2018) concluded that engineering graduates are more skilled in technical than interpersonal skills. However, soft skills remain relevant and essential for their career success. Asserraji & El-Ghouati (2021) emphasize that soft skills benefit social integration and career advancement. They point out teamwork, communication, and adaptability are essential in professional contexts. Previous research has also revealed that soft skills can be learned and improved through education and training (Asserraji & El-Ghouati, 2021). Therefore, education and training institutions need to pay sufficient attention to developing soft skills through relevant curricula and special programs that can help individuals develop these skills. Studies on soft skills have shown that college graduates with these skills have higher success rates in finding jobs and enhancing their career prospects. (Schleutker et al., 2019). Employers look for individuals with solid technical knowledge and the ability to adapt quickly, communicate clearly, and work in teams (Lozovoy et al., 2020).

This systematic literature review has used a careful search strategy to identify relevant research on the role of soft skills in individual career development. Keyword combinations such as "soft skills," "career development," and "interpersonal skills" were used in the search to ensure the completeness and relevance of the research included in the review (Meekel & Kirke, 2022). Prisma, a well-known framework in systematic literature reviews, has been used as a guide in article selection and data extraction (Subedi, 2018). The systematic literature review will collect and analyze various studies on the role and importance of soft skills in career development. We will look at the available empirical evidence, look for trends and general findings, and identify areas of research that still need to be better understood. Through a deeper understanding of the role and importance of soft skills in the world of work, this research can provide guidance and insight for individuals, educators, and decision-makers to enhance the development of soft skills in the context of career development.

At the article selection stage, inclusion and exclusion were based on predetermined criteria. Articles relevant to the research topic, published in English, and focusing on the relationship between soft skills and career development are considered for inclusion (Prasanta Kumar et al., 2022). After article selection, relevant data were extracted and analyzed systematically to identify the main findings of this study (Brungardt, 2011).

Based on the systematic literature review conducted, we aim to identify significant findings regarding the role of soft skills in career development. Through a comprehensive review and careful analysis, this article can make a valuable contribution to understanding the importance of soft skills in the context of individual career development. Some studies still define definition *soft skills* in various versions, following definitions from various authors:

Table 1: Definition of soft skills in various versions, along with definitions from various authors

No	author	Definition
1	Mitashree Tripathy (2020)	<i>Soft skills</i> are the non-technical abilities and qualities critical to career advancement and success. These abilities include interpersonal, communication, leadership, adaptability, work ethic, creativity, and problem-solving skills. Soft skills enable individuals to interact effectively with others, manage emotions, and demonstrate integrity and responsibility in the workplace.
2	R. Afroze, T. Eva, Atiqur Rahman Sarker (2019)	<i>Soft skills</i> are an essential skill for engineering graduates in Bangladesh to possess besides technical skills. While technical skills are essential, soft skills such as interpersonal, communication, teamwork, adaptability, and problem-solving are equally crucial in enhancing job skills and success in the job market.
3	Rym Asserraji, Azize El-Ghouati (2021)	<i>University students</i> consider soft skills valuable because they contribute to social integration and are essential to their educational attainment and career. These abilities include interpersonal skills, communication, leadership, adaptability, and success in various professional contexts.
	Sonya M. Meekel, Eamonn Kirke	Soft skills training and development must be a strategic priority in the organization, involving all levels of employees and not just limited to the management level. Leadership is essential in enabling and facilitating the acquisition and improvement of soft skills among individuals throughout the organization.

No	author	Definition
	I. Tsalikova, SV Pakhotina (2019)	The development of soft skills in pedagogy is in line with development trends observed in foreign scientific research. This includes acquiring and improving interpersonal, communication, teamwork, and other non-technical skills essential for personal and professional growth.

## II. RESEARCH METHOD

The research method that will be used is a literature review. By searching for and reviewing relevant literary sources, such as journal articles, books, and research reports, this literature source will be searched from online databases such as Scopus, Google Scholar, and others, as many as 20 journals found in 2011 to 2022, by using the literature review method to collect and analyze existing information about the development of soft skills. Survey methods are used in several studies to collect data from respondents regarding their opinions, attitudes, or perceptions about the importance of soft skills. At the same time, case studies are conducted to study specific cases, such as student attitudes toward the relevance of soft skills in education and careers and the influence of soft skills on career involvement in various age groups. Several studies have also involved content analysis of job advertisements to identify the required soft skills. A literature search was conducted using Scopus, Web of Science, and other indexed journals. Relevant keyword combinations, such as "soft skills" and "career development," are used in searches to ensure appropriate article inclusion. The method used in collecting data from the selected articles. We follow prism steps, including data identification, selection, extraction, and synthesis, to ensure the accuracy and integrity of each article. We collect information such as article title, summary, author, PDF link, and year of publication, for example, looking for studies discussing soft skills' role in supporting increased career development. In addition, setting inclusion and exclusion criteria for selecting the literature to be reviewed will also prioritize literature with a transparent research methodology relevant to the focus of the research to be written. This method aims to understand how organizational culture influences open innovation practices in the creative industry. The data extracted from the selected articles were analyzed systematically. We analyze the main findings, trends, and approaches used in previous research on the role of soft skills in career development.

## III. DISCUSSIONS

Based on the systematic literature review, several main findings can be identified. First, soft skills have a significant influence on individual career development. Skills such as effective communication, interpersonal skills, and good leadership have been proven essential to achieving career success. Second, soft skills can be learned and developed through appropriate education and training. Educational programs that pay attention to the development of soft skills can benefit individuals in achieving their career goals. Third, employers' demand for soft skills is increasing, which emphasizes the importance of having these skills in today's world of work (Subedi, 2018). Theories that can be used in discussing soft skills in career development.

Table 2: Table of theories that can be used to discuss soft skills in career development

No	Theory name	Contents	Writer
1	Significance of Soft Skills	Explain the importance of soft skills in career development. Soft skills have a crucial role in the progress and success of a person in the world of work.	Mitashree Tripathy (2020)
2	Do Soft Skills Matter?	Discusses the relevance of soft skills in the careers of engineering graduates in Bangladesh. Although technical skills alone are insufficient, soft skills such as interpersonal and communication skills are also needed to enhance success in the job market.	R. Afroze, T. Eva, Atiqur Rahman Sarker (2019)
3	University Students' Attitudes	Examine students' attitudes towards the relevance of soft skills in education and career achievement. We are highlighting the importance of soft skills in social integration and students' academic and professional progress.	Rym Asserraji, Azize El-Ghouati (2021)
4	Strategic Imperatives of Soft Skills	Explains that soft skills training and development should be a strategic priority within the organization. Describe the role of leadership in facilitating the acquisition and improvement of soft skills throughout the organization.	Sonya M. Meekel, Eamonn Kirke
5	Scientific Research on Soft Skills	We are presenting scientific research on the development of soft skills, including development trends in line with	I. Tsalikova, SV Pakhotina (2019)

No	Theory name	Contents	Writer
		foreign research. Highlight interpersonal skills, communication, teamwork, and other non-technical skills.	

The era of globalization is shaping the world more and more unified, and the workplace has developed aggressively. Providing a high level of workplace excellence has become essential and mandatory. Fast competition is everywhere, especially in the workplace. Many business organizations assume that only the strongest can survive, which is essential and a significant obstacle for today's business organizations. At this point in the explanation, the question arises of how to stay ahead of this competition, keeping pace with the rapid development, and how to survive and overcome this competition. Studies suggest that employees in the workplace must have skills other than those in their field that can influence their career growth and help them develop (Volkova et al., 2020). The importance of soft skills in the workplace and focusing on selected soft skills such as positive attitude, communication skills, work ethics, teamwork skills, and time management skills are necessary to enhance career perspectives (Prasanta Kumar et al., 2022).

*Soft skills*, besides having an impact on career development, also have relevance to the demand for graduates in the labor market; the ability to adapt quickly to employer requirements or change specializations in a short time is one of the main aspects that are increasingly important and necessary (Majid et al., 2012). This is related to an increase in the amount of information and the level of uncertainty. Developing soft skills (together with professional skills) in education can also help increase flexibility, quick reactions, and speed in decision-making as well as sensitivity and systemic problem-solving. As a result, a stable personality and professional employees are formed, such as the results of research on the development of soft skills for undergraduate students from Samara State Agricultural University, where the results obtained have shown ways, approaches, and methods that are relevant for the development of soft skills. Recommendations for the development of soft skills for students have also been analyzed. It has been proven that additional education, especially related to foreign languages (Tripathy, 2020)

#### IV. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

##### Conclusion

*Systematic literature review.* This article highlights the role and importance of soft skills in individual career development. The conclusion of the article shows that soft skills have a significant impact on achieving career success. Therefore, individuals must develop and improve their soft skills through relevant education and training. Governments, educational institutions, and employers also need to recognize the importance of soft skills and provide appropriate opportunities for their development. Thus, individuals will have a competitive advantage in an increasingly competitive job market.

##### Suggestion

Individuals need to develop and enhance their soft skills. Soft skills have a significant impact on achieving career success. Therefore, individuals need to develop and improve these skills actively. They can do this through relevant education, training, and practical experience in the work environment.

The government needs to recognize the importance of soft skills. The government can play an essential role in raising awareness of the importance of soft skills. They can get involved in education efforts and campaigns that educate the public about the importance and benefits of these skills in individual career development.

Educational institutions need to provide opportunities for the development of soft skills. Schools, colleges, and other educational institutions can provide training and programs to develop soft skills. They can integrate these skills into their curriculum and provide opportunities for students to hone interpersonal, leadership, communication, and collaboration skills. Employers need to recognize the importance of soft skills. Employers must also know the value and importance of soft skills in the work environment. They can seek employees with these skills and provide training and further development to help employees improve their soft skills.

Society needs to recognize the value of soft skills. Awareness of soft skills' importance must be disseminated to the broader community. Society must recognize that adaptability, creativity, leadership, and teamwork are as important as technical skills in achieving career success.

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