

Exploring and Cultivating the Role of Soft Skills for Sustainable Future

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ARTICLE INFO**ABSTRACT**

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Sustainability is the development that helps to meet the needs of present without compromising things for future generations. In the fast growing technical world, things change in a pinch. In the blink of eye, "old order changeth yielding place to new". Same are the fast-changing self-sustainable soft skills and communication skills. We are in the world of technology where technology also communicates without bringing misconceptions, communications and disparities. To meet the same level, it has become the need of the hour to develop soft skills in the way the team goals, designed may be achieved.

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Soft skills refer to individual's ability, skills, or emotional intelligence to handle and support situations or people.

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1. INTRODUCTION:

Human resource is the backbone of every organisation. Communicating among one other is the skills everyone must possess. Handling work force one must have the abilities to handle people with diversified skills calibre and attitude. This is possible only with understanding and employing soft skills. The term soft skills include listening, emphasising, problem solving, collaborating, motivating, negotiating, listening and decision making. The world where technology is an aid at the work place it has become essential to understand and adapt these skills for better working environment at work place. The technology is also handled by humans and its intervention has eased work but brought disharmony in human understanding.

Soft skills help us understand human better both in life and at work place. In the fast-pacing world where everyone is chasing the target to complete. The race is within, with the advanced technology and the other being too. To maintain the peace at work place one needs to understand the value of teamwork, critical thinking, adaptability, self-management, teamwork, time management and emotional intelligent. All these attributes differ human from technology.

Like we skill in technology we can train ourselves for these soft skills too. Apart from the above mentioned skills, soft skills include interpersonal and personal attributes that help stand out and differentiate people from others. To have better understanding we can call then the people skills too. Mastering these skills we can enhance personal interactions, performances at job and can have better career prospects.

According to Digby Jones (2004) "*A degree alone is not enough. Employers are looking for more than just technical skills and knowledge of a degree discipline. They particularly value skills such as communication, teamworking and problem solving. Job applicants who can demonstrate that they have developed these skills will have a real advantage*".

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY: -

The objective of the study is to ascertain the importance of the soft skills in communications. Others are as under: -

- To study the impact of importance of soft skills on sustainable future of employees.
- To study the impact of barriers in adaptation of soft skills on sustainable future of employees.

3. HYPOTHESIS OF THE STUDY:

Null Hypothesis H₀₁: There is no impact of importance of soft skills on sustainable future of employees.

Alternate Hypothesis H₁₁: There is a impact of importance of soft skills on sustainable future of employees.

Null Hypothesis H₀₂: There is no impact of barriers in adaptation of soft skills on sustainable future of employees.

Alternate Hypothesis H₁₂: There is a impact of barriers in adaptation of soft skills on sustainable future of employees.

4. NEED OF THE STUDY:

The purpose to write this paper is to highlight the need and the importance of addressing the issues related at work place due to interpersonal communications and lack of soft skills. Interpersonal communication is needed everywhere as it ensures the understanding as well. A work place needs more soft approach as individuals from different backgrounds work together to achieve one desired goal. To work in a team, it's important for everyone to understand each other and give space to everyone without disturbing work style. Open interpersonal communication help everyone understands and respect the space others seek for performing better. The work style of one is different from others and forcing or copying one's style will not give result that are framed to achieve. In such situation interpersonal communication helps understand colleagues and it leads to trust which is one of the foundations needed for success. Interpersonal communication or soft skills help resolve problems or conflicts which is a part of any organization.

There is high demand to teach soft skills from schools in regular school curriculum. The faculties or trainers are appointed to train their people for these skills. to adjust to the world, improve communication skills, methodological skills, and soft skills. For Survival in the modern era, the teachers are also adopting soft skills to teach different subjects because in this twenty-first century, those skills are essential to be successful. Soft skills are the mishmash of life skills, social skills, interpersonal skills, personal characteristics, attributes, and personality to commendably adapt according to the needs and desires of others. It is the ability to communicate and interact with others in an approachable, pleasant, and cordial manner.

In short, the paper tries to highlight that soft skills can be learned through a rigorous training process. They can be termed as learned behaviour. Moreover, the article emphasise on the need and importance of soft skills in the modern era for all learners may be students, or professionals. Soft skills are names as mainly communication skills, leadership skills, influencing skills, interpersonal skills, personal skills, creative skills, and professional skills. Knowing these skills is essential to cope up with workplace issues and how to address them professionally and personally.

Only through training, one can command these skills. There are apparent differences in the professionalism of a trained person and non-trained employee. We can observe significant differences in the attitude of an educated, skilled, talented individual and uneducated, unskilled and untalented individual. Even many trained people lack these skills that's why Communication Skills or Professional Communication skill is a must subject in all the graduate and post graduate program after the implementation of NEP 2020.

There were set ways of formed behaviours and attitudes and there had been no changes in our practice in same old system till few years ago. It is assumed as a practice that a boss needs to remain boss and being friendly with the junior colleagues may hamper the work culture in an organisation. That's why it's been observed that bosses fail to connect with the young generations and this generation gaps is a problem for every generation. Sitting together and discussion, sharing and understanding the experiences of the past and the need of the future, we can cater the problem to a greater extent.

The fast-growing world needs career oriented trained target chasers. Now targets are not the numbers but the professionalism and right attitude of people too is most sought. Working culture is changing in the fast-demanding

technological world. People with hard skills and trained in soft skills are employed. Hard skills are the skills which equip us with the technical education or training. Accounting strategies, computer programming, analytical skills, marketing skills, web designing skills are the hard skills that one can learn through training. These hard skills are required for role specifications needed for technical competencies. Hard skills are taught during schooling or college like training for computer languages or so. These hard skills can be measured or the understanding of hard skill is measurable. Once these skills are mastered, they stay for long.

A combination of soft and hard skills is needed to perform and complete the task in desired time. With the proper understanding of group dynamics, addressing issues, time management, critical and creative thinking, listening and addressing, positive attitude, energy, enthusiasm, honesty, work ethics, confidence, patience, emotional intelligence, motivation and many more are such skills that turns failure into huge success. Technical skills are the knowledge required to perform certain technical work. Like before preparing a PPT for a class knowledge of computer is essential but the perfect delivery of the content will need soft skills.

Communication skills is one of the foremost of the soft skills that need practice and regular improvisation in accumulation of other soft skills. Communication refers not just speaking but listening also. Uttering words, speaking to address, and speaking emphatically are different aspect of communications. Communication involves appropriate oral styles, connecting with listeners, good presentation skills and most important to convey message in such a way that positive feedback may be received in forms of understanding. Uttering words without emotions and without connecting the readers cannot be classified as communication. Communication must be on going, interactive, complete and whole. Communication techniques also matter. They may never be considered as important but assertive communication make communication effective and impactful.

Thinking creatively and critically helps foresee the darker sides and they can be addressed with the positive thinking. Enthusiasm and energy keep the spirit high. Time management and allocation of work to the right person ensure the possibilities of meeting deadlines. Conflicts also get addressed naturally. Motivating people at work place also help create harmonious blending at the work environment.

There may be different opinions about the importance and need of soft skills. For these Soft skills one may get trained but during emotional break ups some of the soft skills are forgotten, to ruin the importance. Most of the soft skills develop naturally in due course. There can not be a fix time to master one. With the experience and the exposure of the world people get trained about these.

Here I would not like to miss state that these soft skills are not just that needed at work place but these are needed to become and behave like humans. Even at home or away from work to balance social and family life they are required. In the 21st technical century we need to adopt these soft skills as a part of our day-to-day life. Hard skills are needed at practical point but these soft skills are needed as life saving skills that helps us overcome different and difficult phases in life. In fact, they are needed in day to life to handle everyday routine and life. They help us stay strong, determined, firm, focused and positive.

5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

The research adopted a quantitative methodology using a structured questionnaire to gather primary data from employees across various sectors. A total of 120 respondents were selected through stratified random sampling to ensure representation across different job roles and industries. The questionnaire focused on assessing the perceived importance, implementation, and challenges related to soft skills for sustainable development. Data were analyzed using statistical tools, including Pearson correlation, to examine relationships between variables. The approach enabled an objective evaluation of how soft skills influence sustainable employee behaviour and the barriers faced in integrating these skills into professional settings.

6. DATA ANALYSIS:

The following table indicates the demographic factor of the study:

Sr.no	Demographic Factor	Category	Frequency	Percent
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1	Gender	Male	37	46.3
		Female	43	53.8
2	Age Group	Up to 25 Years	10	12.5
		26 to 35 Years	32	40.0
		36 to 50 Years	22	27.5
		More than 50 Years	16	20.0
3	Qualification	Graduate	24	30.0
		Postgraduate	35	43.8
		Professional Degree	21	26.3

The demographic profile of the 80 respondents reveals a fairly balanced gender distribution, with 43 females and 37 males. In terms of age, the majority fall within the 26 to 35 years group (32 respondents), followed by 22 in the 36 to 50 years category, 16 above 50 years, and only 10 aged 25 or below. Regarding educational qualifications, 35 respondents hold postgraduate degrees, 24 are graduates, and 21 possess professional degrees. This distribution indicates a relatively educated and diverse age group, with a slight female majority, which provides a broad perspective on the role and perception of soft skills for a sustainable future.

The following table indicates the Importance of Role of Soft Skills:

Sr. No.	Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
4.1	Soft skills are essential for promoting ethical and responsible behavior	3	7	27	30	13
4.2	Effective communication skills contribute significantly to sustainability	1	4	20	37	18
4.3	Problem-solving & critical thinking address sustainability challenges	3	12	31	23	11
4.4	Leadership & teamwork help achieve environmental/social goals	5	18	23	18	16
4.5	Adaptability and resilience support sustainable practices	6	20	27	9	18

The above responses are rated as follows:

Strongly Disagree = 1

Disagree = 2

Neutral = 3

Agree = 4

Strongly Agree = 5

Using above responses, mean score of Importance of Role of Soft Skills is obtained using formula given below.

Mean score of Importance of Role of Soft Skills =
$$\frac{\text{Totalscore of rating of respondent(for 5 statements)} \times 100}{\text{Maximum rating}(25)}$$

Using above formula mean scores are obtained for each respondent and also for all 80 respondents. Descriptive statistics is as follows:

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Importance of Role of Soft Skills	80	20	100	68.60	15.196
Valid N (listwise)	80				

The Above table indicate that mean score of Importance of Role of Soft Skills is 68.60 percent with standard deviation 15.19, suggesting high variation in the responses.

The following table indicates the Barriers in Adaptation of Soft Skills:

Sr. No.	Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
5.1	Lack of awareness hinders soft skill development	10	10	21	20	19
5.2	Education system lacks focus on soft skills	9	17	27	12	15
5.3	Organizational resistance limits soft skills in sustainability	7	10	31	18	14
5.4	Time/resource constraints hinder soft skill training	11	12	21	23	13
5.5	Misconceptions reduce adoption of soft skills	14	9	15	25	17

The above responses are rated as follows:

Strongly Disagree = 1

Disagree = 2

Neutral = 3

Agree = 4

Strongly Agree = 5

Using above responses, mean score of Barriers in Adaptation is obtained using formula given below.

Mean score of Barriers in Adaptation =
$$\frac{\text{Totalscore of rating of respondent(for 5 statements)} \times 100}{\text{Maximum rating}(25)}$$

Using above formula mean scores are obtained for each respondent and also for all 80 respondents. Descriptive statistics is as follows:

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Barriers in Adaptation	80	20	96	64.70	17.795
Valid N (listwise)	80				

The Above table indicate that mean score of Barriers in Adaptation is 64.70 percent with standard deviation 17.79, suggesting high variation in the responses.

The following table indicates the Soft Skills for a Sustainable Future:

Sr. No.	Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
6.1	I use critical thinking in sustainable decisions	5	8	22	32	13
6.2	I practice empathy/emotional intelligence in sustainability work	6	8	19	33	14
6.3	I seek to improve communication and teamwork skills	5	11	20	26	18
6.4	Creative thinking is essential for sustainable solutions	4	10	33	23	10
6.5	I improve adaptability for sustainability challenges	5	4	19	35	17

The above responses are rated as follows:

Strongly Disagree = 1

Disagree = 2

Neutral = 3

Agree = 4

Strongly Agree = 5

Using above responses, mean score of Soft Skills for a Sustainable Future is obtained using formula given below.

$$\text{Mean score of Soft Skills for a Sustainable Future} = \frac{\text{Totalscore of rating of respondent(for 5 statements)} \times 100}{\text{Maximum rating}(25)}$$

Using above formula mean scores are obtained for each respondent and also for all 80 respondents. Descriptive statistics is as follows:

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Soft Skills for a Sustainable Future	80	20	100	70.10	18.012
Valid N (listwise)	80				

The Above table indicate that mean score of Soft Skills for a Sustainable Future is 70.10 percent with standard deviation 18.01, suggesting high variation in the responses.

7. Objective-wise Hypothesis Testing:

Objectives-1: To study the impact of importance of soft skills on sustainable future of employees.

Null Hypothesis H_{01} : There is no impact of importance of soft skills on sustainable future of employees.

Alternate Hypothesis H_{11} : There is a impact of importance of soft skills on sustainable future of employees.

To study the null hypothesis, Pearson Correlation test is applied and results are as follows:

		Correlations	
		Soft Skills for a Sustainable Future	Importance of Role of Soft Skills
Soft Skills for a Sustainable Future	Pearson Correlation	1	.612**
	P-value		.000
	N	80	80
Importance of Role of Soft Skills	Pearson Correlation	.612**	1
	P-value	.000	
	N	80	80

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Interpretation: The above table 1.4 indicate that calculated p-value is 0.000. It is less than 0.05. Therefore Pearson Correlation test is rejected. Hence Null hypothesis is rejected and Alternate hypothesis is accepted.

Conclusion: There is a impact of importance of soft skills on sustainable future of employees.

Findings: The Pearson correlation between "Soft Skills for a Sustainable Future" and "Importance of Role of Soft Skills" is positive and significant ($r = 0.612$, $p < 0.01$) based on a sample of 80 respondents. This strong positive relationship suggests that individuals who perceive soft skills as important are more likely to adopt and exhibit those skills in support of a sustainable future. It implies that recognizing the value of soft skills—such as communication, adaptability, and problem-solving—plays a critical role in fostering their application toward sustainability goals.

Objectives-2: To study the impact of barriers in adaptation of soft skills on sustainable future of employees.

Null Hypothesis H_{02} : There is no impact of barriers in adaptation of soft skills on sustainable future of employees.

Alternate Hypothesis H_{12} : There is a impact of barriers in adaptation of soft skills on sustainable future of employees.

To study the null hypothesis, Pearson Correlation test is applied and results are as follows:

		Correlations	
		Soft Skills for a Sustainable Future	Barriers in Adaptation
Soft Skills for a Sustainable Future	Pearson Correlation	1	-.495**
	P-value		.000
	N	80	80
Barriers in Adaptation	Pearson Correlation	-.495**	1
	P-value	.000	
	N	80	80

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Interpretation: The above table 1.4 indicate that calculated p-value is 0.000. It is less than 0.05. Therefore Pearson Correlation test is rejected. Hence Null hypothesis is rejected and Alternate hypothesis is accepted.

Conclusion: There is a impact of barriers in adaptation of soft skills on sustainable future of employees.

Findings: The Pearson correlation analysis between "Soft Skills for a Sustainable Future" and "Barriers in Adaptation" shows a statistically significant negative correlation ($r = -0.495$, $p < 0.01$) based on data from 80 respondents. This indicates that as the barriers to adapting soft skills increase, the implementation or presence of soft skills for a sustainable future tends to decrease. In other words, challenges such as lack of awareness, institutional resistance, or insufficient training may significantly hinder the development and use of soft skills that are essential for promoting sustainability.

8. CONCLUSION:

It can be concluded that soft skills play a significant role in contributing to a sustainable future for employees. The strong positive correlation ($r = 0.612$, $p < 0.01$) between the perceived importance of soft skills and their actual implementation in sustainability-related behavior indicates that when individuals recognize the value of skills such as communication, leadership, adaptability, and critical thinking, they are more likely to apply them in ways that support sustainable practices. Conversely, the presence of barriers such as lack of awareness, inadequate focus in education systems, organizational resistance, and misconceptions negatively influences the adoption of soft skills, as evidenced by a moderate negative correlation ($r = -0.495$, $p < 0.01$). These findings highlight that while there is a broad acknowledgment of the importance of soft skills, systemic and structural challenges must be addressed to fully leverage their potential for sustainability. Addressing these barriers can lead to better integration of soft skills into workplace practices and employee behavior, ultimately promoting a more sustainable and responsible professional environment.

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