Soft Skills: The Success Formula for the Newly-Hired Graduates in the Educational Workplaces During and Post Covid-19

المهارات الناعمة: معادلة النجاح للخريجين المعينين حديثا في أماكن العمل التربوية في ظل جائحة كوفيد 19 وما بعدها

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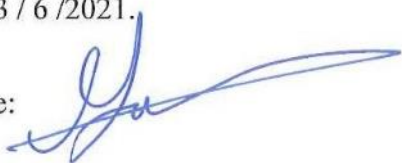
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This thesis "**Soft Skills: The Success Formula for the Newly Hired Graduates in the Educational Workplaces During and Post COVID-19**", was successfully defended and approved in June 2021.

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Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis represents my own work which has been done after registration for the degree of Academic Administration and Leadership at The Middle East University, and has not been previously included in a thesis or dissertation submitted to this or any other institution for a degree, diploma or other qualifications.

This thesis is a presentation of my original research work. Wherever contributions of others are involved, every effort is made to indicate this clearly, with due reference to the literature, and acknowledgement of collaborative research and discussions. The work was done under the guidance and supervision of Dr. Ahmad Tabieh.

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Dedication

*With honor, I dedicate this thesis to my **family**, especially to my lovely three children; **Mohammad, Mira, and Alma**, who were very inspiring and encouraging though they could endure their mother being busy and caught up in studying and attending lectures. To the little angels whose support was what kept me on track and still showing me all the lights at the end of the tunnel.*

To family…

To all the loved ones…

To myself…

I dedicate this humble work

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Soft Skills: The Success Formula for the Newly-Hired Graduates in the Educational Workplaces During and Post Covide-19

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Abstract

The COVID 19 crisis has imposed many changes as well as challenges in various workplaces, and in the educational ones the challenges were of different types and levels. The requirements constricting employability in the educational sector have expanded beyond to include non-cognitive and practical skills. The non-cognitive skills became a fundamental standard for the selection process of candidates. These skills guarantee that the job candidates can contribute effectively and efficiently to the institution while facing unexpected challenges such as the ones caused by the COVID 19. Through a mixed approach method, this paper presents the top ten in-demand soft skills for the newly-hired graduates to guarantee a comprehensive deliverance of educational content during and after the COVID 19 crisis from the perspective of employers. These skills are; Being professionally ethical, Communication, Teamwork, Self-management, Creativity, Innovation, Adaptability to change, Critical thinking, Time management and flexibility. Moreover, this paper investigates the level of awareness among graduates about the soft skills demanded to succeed in education during COVID 19 and in the post COVID 19. The results show that respondents have deep awareness of the importance of Communication, Creativity and Innovation in the educational workplaces. Meanwhile, good awareness has been shown of the importance of Being professionally ethical, Adaptability to change, Teamwork, Time management, and Flexibility. On the other hand, respondents show that they have partial awareness of the importance of Self-management and Discipline. Through the quantitative method; a questionnaire and a survey that 121 experienced employers and 250 teachers have responded to, this paper provides newly-hired graduates with a clear perception about their required soft skills acquisition degrees that are demanded by employers in the educational field. The results show a strong availability degree in Communication and Time management. It also shows a significantly positive correlation between the acquisition of the in-demand soft skills and the teachers' performance. Moreover, this paper contributes to providing employers with some strategic practices and tools to be utilized to enhance their employees' soft skills acquisition, thus, enhancing the teaching-learning process.

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الملخص

هدفت الدراسة إلى استقصاء المهارات الناعمة من وجهة نظر أرباب العمل و درجة وعي وامتلاك المعينيين حديثا في أماكن العمل التعليمية لتلك تامهارات الناعمة و أثر مستوى أدائهم على درجة الإمتلاك. و قد تكونت عينة الدراسة من (121) رب عمل و (250) معلم و معلمة معينيين حديثا في أماكن عمل تعليمية متنوعة حيث تم اختيار العينة باستخدام المعاينة سهلة الوصول.و لجمع بيانات الدراسة تم إعداد مقابلة شبه منظمة لرصد المهارات الناعمة المطلوبة من قبل أرباب العمل واستبيان لقياس درجة وعي و امتلاك تلك المهارات. و قد تم التحقق من صدق و ثبات كلا الأداتين. و قد خلصت الدراسة إلى أن كل من أن تكون مهنيا أخلاقيا، والتواصل، و العمل الجماعي، و الإدارة الذاتية، و الإبداع ، و الإبتكار ،والقدرة على التكيف مع التغيير، والتفكير الناقد، و إدارة الوقت، و المرونة تمثل المهارات المطلوبة من قبل أرباب العمل. كما أظهرت أن هناك درجة وعي عميق لأكثر هذه المهارات و خصوصا التواصل، و الإبداع و الإبتكار .أما فيما يخص درجة امتلاك تلك المهارات فقد أكد أرباب العمل أن كل أن تكون مهنيا أخلاقيا، و القدرة على التكيف مع التغيير ،والعمل الجماعي و إدارة الوقت و المرونة. أما فيما يخص درجة امتلاك تلك المهارات فقد أكد أرباب العمل أن كل من التواصل و إدارة الوقت امتازتا بدرجة امتلاك عالية. كما ظهر أن مستوى أداء المعلمين يؤثر بشكل إيجابي و جوهري على درجة امتلاكهم للمهارات الناعمة المطلوبة. و قد أوصت الدراسة ببناء برامج تدريبية قائمة على قياس درجة توفر تلك المهرات لدى العاملين من المعينيين حديثا.

الكلمات الدالة: المهارات الناعمة، الخريجين المعينين حديثا، اماكن العمل التعليمية، الكوفيد 19

CHAPTER ONE

Background and Significance of the Study

Introduction

The COVID-19 wave that hit the whole world fiercely in 2020 has affected almost all life sectors. Therefore, there should be steps taken towards recovery that require tremendous changes in the mindsets and skills of employees and employers all over the world. The recovery demands a great shift into what seems to be a novel set of skills to cope with the current situation that has been affecting the productivity level in almost all countries negatively (Chakraborty & Maity, 2020). Covid-19 has not only cost the world precious lives but also led to huge damages to the economy. Employers were forced to eliminate the number of workers in their institutions and terminating the contracts of many employees.

The parameters constricting employability have expanded beyond to include non-academic and practical skills. They embrace the amalgam between the two sets of skills; soft and academic, to facilitate the work process (Singh Singh, P., Thambusamy, R. X., & Ramly, M. A, 2014). The institutions have begun to abide by a new set of requirements that became the criteria for the shortlisted candidates. The non-academic skills thus have become a fundamental standard for the selection process. These skills guarantee that the job candidates can contribute effectively and efficiently to the institution while facing unexpected challenges and adversities. Employers focus on the skills that help maintain balance between the job demands and the unforeseen hardships that could occur over time (Meganck, S., Smith, J., & Guidry, J. P. D, 2020). For example, in 2020 the breakout of COVID-19 obliged many companies and institutions to reduce the number of workers for different reasons such as the drastic decline economical and commercial exchanges.

The educational sector has been affected enormously by the negative consequences of the pandemic (Chakraborty & Maity, 2020). Zheng (2020) has reported, school leaders found themselves forced to reduce the number of teachers and administrators; therefore, teachers have found themselves working in extraordinary circumstances because the actual teaching-learning process has drastically and suddenly changed into another pattern that requires different strategies and techniques to deliver the content to students who are far away from the actual learning environment.

The scholastic system has completely changed to meet the demands of the circumstances enforced by the COVID-19 pandemic (Mishra, D. L., Gupta, D. T., & Shree, D. A, 2020). As a result, the skills and the strategies principals, supervisors, and teachers need to manage and organize the classes have changed. Therefore, the acquisition of soft skills has become a must and the adoption of this new set of skills by employees who intend to join the educational workplaces has also become essential (Fixsen & Ridge, 2019).

Soft Skills, as defined in Tang (2020), are personality traits which distinguish individual means of communication with others. In the workplace, soft skills and hard skills, which refer to a person's knowledge and occupational skills, complement each other. The need for the acquisition of soft skills by graduates and newly-hired employees in the educational field has emerged during the COVID-19 crisis; since this field has required a balance between the academic skills and the other non-academic skills such as: flexibility and problem-solving skills, which have become essential in these tough times. (Zheng, F., Khan, N. A., & Hussain, S, 2020)

Educators and school principals are usually used to focusing on the teacher's knowledge and the academic competencies of candidates. However, the world pandemic

has shifted this focus to new perspectives that look for candidates with multifaceted performance and a wide range of skills, both hard and soft, (Tang, 2020), the matter that is, unfortunately, unacknowledged by many graduates or newly-hired employees. The acquisition of soft skills along with the cognitive ones is vitally important to form the mixture of a personality that contributes to the success of the institution and substitute for any loss in the human resources (Jagannathan, R., Camasso, M. J., & Delacalle, M, 2019).

This thesis presents the most important soft skills required for the newly-hired graduates to guarantee a comprehensive deliverance of educational content during and after the COVID-19 crisis from the perspective of employers to create the balance between the knowledge capacity and the novel skills set required for the success of the teaching-learning process. Moreover, this thesis raises the awareness among graduates about the soft skills needed to ensure a smooth employment process during and post COVID-19 era.

Additionally, the thesis will shed the light on the top 10 soft skills that employers seek while recruiting during and post Covid-19 period of time to guarantee a smooth transition into the next phase, and in preparation for any crisis that might hit the markets or the practice fields in the future. Basically, this thesis introduces soft skills as a formula to obtain success in the educational filed; the acquisition of in-demand soft skills to maintain employability stability and to ensure effective learning.

Study Problem

The need to identify the soft skills that employers seek in their employees due to the efforts of institutions to reduce the number of employees considering financial problems they face in light of the Corona pandemic is highly required. The matter which supports newly hired graduates to maintain their job value since they are mostly unaware

of the soft skills they need to acquire to meet the job demands or the ones employers seek in employees at the educational workplaces.

Patel and Rietveld (2020) state that employment rates are in drastic decline caused by the world's pandemic COVID-19, and employers have to make tough decisions regarding whom to fire or keep. Thus, preferences will be in favor of those employees who possess the required set of soft skills, with the desired level, that enables them to succeed and contribute to the survival of the academic institution (Singh et al., 2014).

According to Singh Dubey and Tiwari (2020), the attempt of presenting the importance of soft skills to students is a bit hesitant. Academia prefers technical skills over soft skills and is reluctant to focus on them or extend them to students, creating a soft skill gap. On the other hand, educational institutions accuse the industrial ones of not giving accurate information about the soft skills required because they give more attention to the hard skills and the practical abilities to fulfill the job requirements.

Furthermore, the skills employers demand and focus on in job advertisement are not similar to the skills focused on during the recruitment process and different from what graduates believe they have already. Therefore, the importance of listing the most important soft skills for employability during and post COVID-19 became a strongly urgent issue (Meganck et al., 2020).

Another important area that has to be covered is the need for evaluation tools for the newly-hired teachers to reflect the level of the acquisition of the in-demand soft skills to foresee the future job's potentials (Tang, 2019). Hence, an evaluation tool with the top soft skills demanded in the educational field is a demand that should be met as soon as possible in addition to examine the relationship between the acquisition of soft skills and the performance of the newly-hired graduates in the educational workplaces.

Thus, a conclusion will be drawn about the in-demand soft skills from employers' perspectives, and the ones being prioritized. In a step towards achieving these goals, an attempt would be made to explain why so many graduates are being rejected by employers (Singh et al., 2014).

Therefore, the main aim of this thesis is to bridge the gaps between the acquired and required soft skills from the views of the two main parties in the educational sector; the educational employers and the newly-hired graduates during and post COVID-19 era.

Study Purpose

This study aims at investigating the soft skills that employers seek in graduates and newly-hired employees in a step towards success in the educational workplace. It also sheds the light on the significance of raising awareness among graduates about the soft skills they need to acquire that will make them employable and successful after being hired in the educational workplaces.

Study Questions

1- What soft skills do employers in the educational sector seek in newly-hired graduates in the educational workplaces during and post COVID-19 crisis?

2- What is the degree of newly-hired graduates' awareness of the in-demand soft skills required by the employers in the educational workplaces?

3- What is the degree of soft skills acquisition by the newly-hired graduates in the educational workplaces from the employers' perspectives?

4- What is the relationship between the level of performance among the newly-hired graduates and the in-demand soft skills which employers seek in employees in the educational field?

5- Are there any significant statistical differences in the degree of soft skills acquisition attributed to the performance level of the newly-hired graduate?

Significance of the Study

Interest in blending soft skills along with the cognitive ones in the educational field originates from dimensioning the drastic changes facing the world with the hit of the COVID-19. Eventually, employees are confronted with hostile situations that challenge individuals' ability to adapt to the work environment. Employers and employees need to recognize this reality because they should be prepared to transform the classical approaches of education, and respond by teaching strategies to mitigate these difficulties (Meganck et al., 2020).

This study will present a list of the most important soft skills that are essentially required by employers in the educational workplaces during and post COVID- 19 period of time and will be reflected in their performance in the employment field in a positive manner that is compatible with the needs and requirements of the 21st-century challenges. It will also provide employers with a clear vision about the training needs based on in-demand soft skills related to boosting the performance of the employees in educational workplaces through a correlational matrix that this study will design and develop.

Study Limitations

Human Limits

The study will be conducted on the employers in the educational workplaces of the private sector; private schools in addition to the newly-hired graduates who are working in private schools.

Geographical Limits

The study will include employers and employees in private schools in Amman.

Time Limits

The study will be conducted in the second semester of the academic year 2020/2021 while the impact of the COVID-19 still exists and strongly effective.

Content Limits

The study will be conducted on the Soft skills demanded by employers in the educational workplaces during and post COVID-19 in addition to the soft skills that are acquired by the newly-hired graduates and the relationship between the existence of the soft skills already acquired and the performance of the newly-hired graduates' performance.

Study Delimitation

The results of the study will be affected by the seriousness of the recipients of the research instrument and the validity and reliability of that instrument in terms of responding to all the questions seriously and accurately. Another factor that might affect the results is the level of the respondents' awareness about the definition of soft skills and distinguishing between soft skills and other types of skills.

Definitions of Key Terms

Soft Skills

According to (UNESCO, 2017; Tseng, 2019; Garcia, 2014) Soft Skills (also known as Non-Cognitive Skills) are a mixture of emotions, attitudes, behavior and thoughts that are recognized by society and developed throughout individuals' attempts to determine values. Soft Skills can comprise personal characteristics, motivations, and attitudes and are very important for the employability and adaptability of employees, such as critical thinking skills, problem-solving skills, social skills, persistence, creativity, and

self-control—that allow individuals to contribute meaningfully to society and to succeed in their public lives, workplaces, homes, and other societal contexts.

These traits are also nontechnical and hard to detect depending on abstract evaluation tools. They also involve both the interpersonal abilities, which help the person collaborate and work with others, and the intrapersonal abilities, which help the person recognize his or her strengths and weaknesses. Therefore, these skills play a positive role in an individual's employability and other labor market outcomes and values.

Newly-hired graduates

Graduates who have been recruited for less than two years and currently working in educational institutions.

Educational Workplaces

Private schools and other institutions that provide teaching services to students at different educational levels.

COVID-19 Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic is considered the most crucial and cruel calamity of the century and the greatest challenge that humankind has encountered since the second world war (Chakraborty & Maity, 2020). This pandemic has hit the world with a great negative impact in almost all fields and sectors including the economic, medical, educational, and other commercial sectors.

CHAPTER TWO

Review of Related Literature

Conceptual Framework
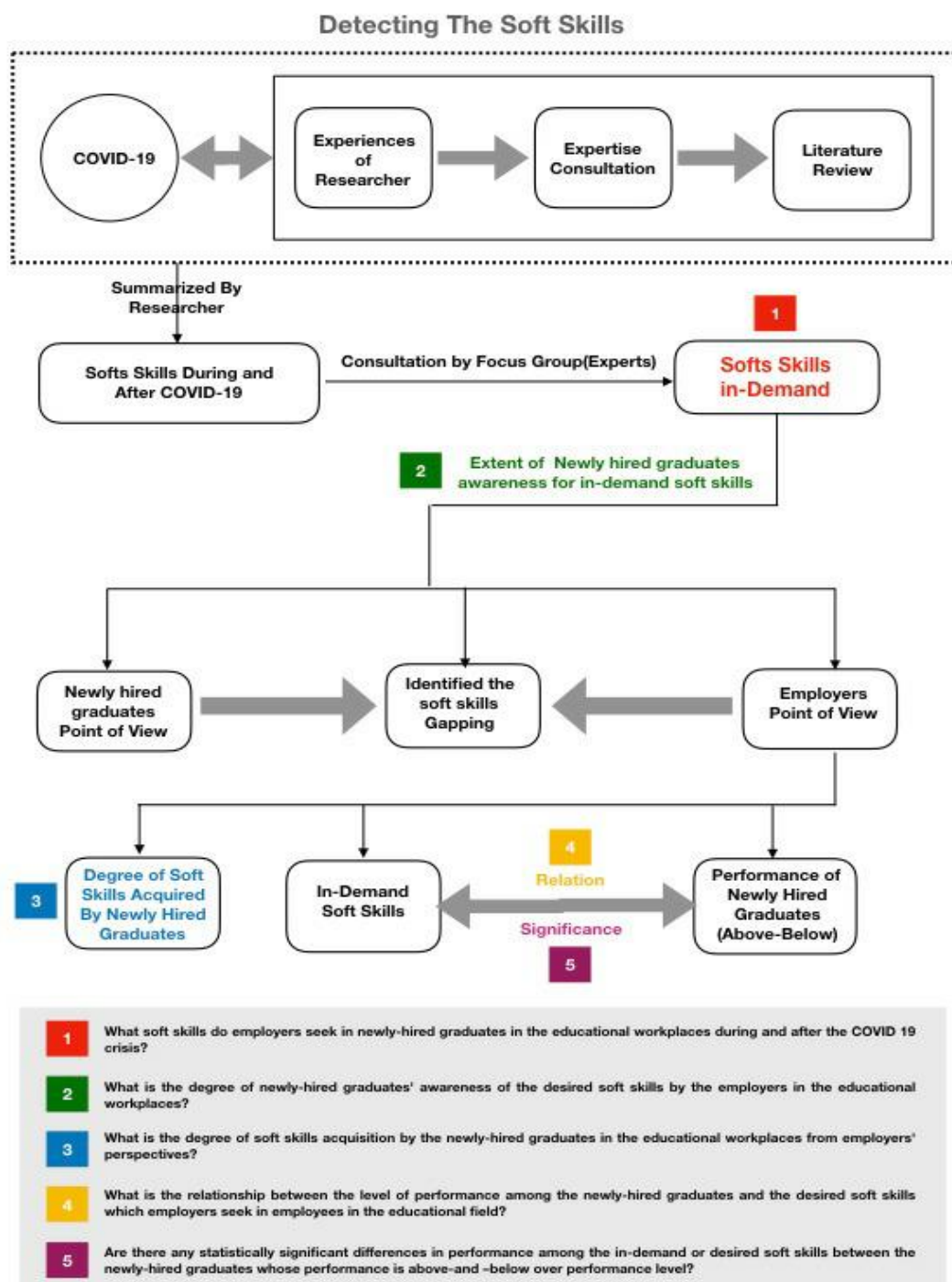
Figure 1. Study Conceptual framework

Theoretical Framework

Soft Skills

The term "Soft skills" is used to refer to the set of personality traits that enable individuals to handle challenges, overcome obstacles and tackle the requirements, and opportunities of the surrounding in pursuit of personal or organizational goals (Fixsen & Ridge, 2019). Unlike technical skills, soft skills require social interaction and practice to be acquired. They cannot be acquired alone; guidance and supervision and mentorship should be essential in the acquisition process.

Moreover, the term is used to indicate personal competencies such as social tendency, language and communication skills, friendliness, and ability to be an effective team member and other personality traits that determine relationships between individuals (Abraham & Succeeded, 2015; Singh Dubey & Tiwari, 2020). Soft Skills supplement Hard Skills, which are the abilities to execute a certain task or to follow certain steps to get an activity done. Soft Skills are essential to be successful in personal and professional life then are necessary for a candidate when trying to seek the best job offer.

Enterprises generally recruit new employees, especially recent graduates, taking more into consideration the Soft Skills they have acquired than the Hard Skills (Syah Putra, A., Novitasari, D., Asbari, M., Purwanto, A., Iskandar, J., Hutagalung, D., & Cahyono, Y, 2020). This happens for almost all technical professions, such as engineers, because the company, to be enterprising and pioneering, needs to create good and effective teams and a collaborative working atmosphere which soft skills enhance if acquired by the team members. The quality of products provided by any industry doesn't only depend on the materials and the equipment or the technology utilized, but the

quality of the workers themselves. Human resources are the key factors of any institutions success. Thus, the quality of products depends strongly on the human's interaction competencies to achieve the desired outcomes (Sonmez, 2015).

Singh Dubey and Tiwari (2020) stated that many studies have been conducted on the soft skills demanded for the market and several researchers have given the priority to the non-technical or the generic skill as also explained in Singh (2014) over the technical ones. Many researchers have prioritized soft skills over technical ones since soft skills develop and improve with the complexity of the market situation as is the case during the COVID-19 crisis.

Classifications of Soft Skills

Soft skills are usually defined as the personal traits that enhance the employee's interactions, job performance, and career viewpoint. Understanding these soft skills is vital for employees themselves because they need to have self-actualization to reach their professional goals, thus, they must understand what are the soft skills they have and the ones they need to acquire (Tang, 2020).

According to Singh (2014) and Fixsen & Ridge (2019), Soft skills fall into two domains; self-care, and entrepreneurship. The first domain comprises communication skills, critical thinking, teamwork, self-improvement, and information management. On the other hand, the second domain includes integrity and work ethics, entrepreneurship skills, leadership skills, decision making (Fixsen & Ridge, 2019). Considering the aforementioned skills, it is essential and highly recommended to investigate what employers seek in their hired employees as opposed to what these employees acquired previously.

There several classifications emerge from the multiple reference criteria for grouping soft skills. For example, some soft skills were grouped into either interaction skills or motivation skills (Cornali, 2018), while others have been classified in a matrix whose rows are the different competences (cognitive, realization, social, emotional) and whose columns are the different organizational roles (operational, manager, executive) (Jagannathan et al., 2019).

Soft Skills vs. Hard Skills

According to Tang (2020), soft skills are supplements of hard skills that enhance employees' abilities to organize their work. The study conducted by (Tang, 2020) proved that soft skills such as teamwork and communication skills were significant and desperately demanded along with hard skills in some career areas, they were more preferred than the hard skills and the academic ones.

Some studies presented the difference between the transfer of soft skills and the transfer of hard skills. For example, some studies presented in Botke (2018) show that it is easier and more relevant for a trainee to "mirror" the skills from the training in the work environment and this is due to the difficulty in determining what the employee has to know and the context of applying what he or she is trained for. The study also showed that measuring the implementation and application of soft skills was much harder than measuring the application of hard skills because of the lack of an accurate rubric to measure soft skills.

Newly-Hired Graduates Employability and Soft Skills

While graduate employability has been a major concern and a serious issue over the last decades, the concept itself is still being investigated and studied within the modern literature on higher education in relation to what represent the right set of graduate employability skills. Succi & Canovi (2020) defined graduate employability as the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that graduates have acquired and are expected to be able to demonstrate in the work environment.

Skill is defined as the ability to execute a specific task. Whereas employability is about having the capacity to gain initial job, maintain employment, and obtain new job offers if required. This also includes self-employment (Buheji & Buheji, 2020).

Graduates' employability is highly enhanced by a balanced blend between the soft skills and the hard ones (Singh Dubey & Tiwari, 2020). It is always the greatest concern of graduates who are seeking the best job offers. It is also a matter for those who are recently hired but need to improve themselves in the workplace, especially in a market that depends on high competition among its employees, such as the educational field. Although soft skills cannot be directly associated to employability, such skills are essential for obtaining and remaining in employment throughout the hierarchy.

Like employability, soft skill is also a wide concept that includes more than one component; soft skills have also been called social skills, employability skills, emotional skills, etc. Soft skills cover a wide range of attributes, and many of them are vital for educational professionals. Therefore, the relationship between the acquisition of soft skills and employability can be described as a linear relationship. As it is reported in

(Singh et al., 2014), the main reasons for employability are related to the lack of generic skills "Soft skills".

From employers' perspective, soft skills are an area to focus on when hiring a graduate or, recently; during the COVID-19 (Mishra et al., 2020), when considering keeping the hired employee, along with the academic qualification. This means that technical skills that specialist have are less important than the soft skills that can be transferred between different tasks and jobs. Therefore, employers need to ensure that their staff has the right qualities and set of skills to accomplish their tasks and contribute to the institution's success (Tang, 2019).

In educational workplaces, which were drastically affected by the COVID19 crisis, the job demands have changed and enforced the change in the skills set demanded in the workers. Students are seriously affected by this pandemic; it is not only life threatening, but also imposed different changes in the educational process. Starting with the schools' and educational institutions closure, to the shift to virtual learning platforms to ensure teaching- learning continuity (Zheng et al., 2020). Therefore, the leap into the virtual teaching-learning process has become a must, and coping with the virtual scenario of teaching became as essential as survival.

For some teachers and educators, the shift towards virtual learning has become a challenge, because of the impact of personality factors on effective interaction has become in a virtual setting, thus, a challenging setup and a novel set of skills should be acquired t cope with it (Zheng et al., 2020).

COVID-19 Crisis

The loss of many lives because of the world pandemic known as COVID19 has irretrievably affected societies all around the world and the majority of countries have imposed a complete lockdown on the matter which paralyzed many economic sectors (Chakraborty & Maity, 2020). The rates of unemployment among the post-COVID-19 generation are expected to be extremely high; unless innovative solutions are suggested to cope with this period of time and its frequently turbulent market (Buheji & Buheji, 2020).

Zheng (2020) stated that the crisis of COVID-19 enforced the drastic change from traditional learning to digital learning because the instructions of the lockdown included all educational institutions, and these institutions were compelled to arrange online classes. The matter which posed new challenges to students and teachers.

The significant focus of the online learning experience is not only on delivering the educational content but also on determining the role of personality traits in succeeding in delivering educational content in a virtual environment and having the balance of the two of them (Singh Syah Putra, A., Novitasari, D., Asbari, M., Purwanto, A., Iskandar, J., Hutagalung, D., & Cahyono, Y, 2014; Tang, 2019). In challenging situations, such as COVID-19, people with strong personality traits are in a better position to deal with stress and challenge, to adapt to the digital mode, and to cope with the unstable academic scene during the COVID-19 era.

The COVID-19 pandemic has provoked the need for further investigations to explore in-demand soft skills (such as self-efficacy and interaction quality) that can cater to the success formula in digital education. (Patel & Rietveld, 2020)

Literature Review

A study that was conducted by Succi and Canovi (2020) aimed at presenting the increased demands of soft skills in an unstable working environment. The research was carried out to compare the students' and the employers' point of views about the importance of soft skills in Europe. Results show that 86% of respondents emphasized that soft skills became very important in the last 5-10 years. Moreover, the differences emerged in the ranking of the 20 soft skills listed in this study while according to the level of their priority.

The paper also suggests that companies and Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) need to collaborate not only to increase students' awareness of the importance of soft skills but also to provide them with professional consultation about finding the best means for improving them. Also, to present soft skills in academic curricula as essential skills to continuously adapt to the unstable labor market and improve their employability.

This research has been designed to shed the light on how students and employers identify the importance of soft skills in the recruitment process. It also pinpoints how students and recent graduates identify the importance of soft skills in their first job through an exploratory study that has been developed to achieve the research objectives.

Results of the pilot study, which were obtained from the pilot survey sent to HR managers, showed that the development of soft skills is a top priority on the agenda of Italian HR managers. Teamwork, communication skills, and learning skills were considered fundamental skills when assessing and looking to employ young graduates.

Results further presented significantly different perspectives about the importance of soft skills in comparison with the hard skills among employers and graduates. Interestingly, employers consider being ethical, adaptability to change, creativity,

innovation, and teamwork as the most important skills, while students consider networking and conflict management skills more important.

Another study by (Kinsella & Waite, 2020) presented an answer to the question about the soft skills that public managers find desirable when filling entry-level positions. The authors had semi-structured interviews with heads of departments in a municipal government in the Midwestern states of the USA to identify what employers consider as in-demand soft skills. Additionally, the authors provided public administration educators and consultants with several means to help students develop these skills.

This paper is based on the findings and results of interviews with the heads of departments during a faculty externship at a reputable municipal government. The findings are intended to help public administration educators make wise choices regarding curriculum, training and teaching pedagogy. Yet, the goal of this paper is to help ensure that students graduate with the correct combination of hard and soft skills necessary for success in public-sector employment.

Moreover, the paper identifies the soft skills employers expect students to have when entering the public sector workforce. It also provides students with suggestions and recommendations on the best ways to prepare for public-sector employment and what skills to focus on in their professional development throughout their career journey.

In the study conducted by Fixsen and Ridge (2019), the researchers examine results from an ethnography of SSPs in a university setting, using dramaturgical theory to investigate their cultural forms and ethos.

They begin by investigation the origins of the term 'Soft Skills" in the contemporary context and its relevance in the Higher Education sector. The focus here is on the resources of work stress and pressures on the staff within an organization that leads to self-determining, in addition to the focus on the cultural and social impact of SSPs

while transforming the learning environment to the virtual platforms rapidly. This matter is considered as important as learning and developing professionals and academics with an interest in organizational practices.

Empirical research was conducted over almost two years in a UK university. Establishing professional and trusting relationships with managers in HR and organizational development was important to ease gaining information and access the parts of the organization that could not be, in normal situation, accessible. Another consideration was choosing from a variety of soft skills programs (SSPs) and activities available at the time, in addition to the list of courses and workshops suggested by Human Resources, to ensure preparing staff for a restructuring of the academic program.

The researchers interviewed stakeholders and managed to record their discussions manually in addition to the notes obtained through observations. The notes led to presenting inconsistency due to the gender imbalances. The researchers also noted that there was a discrepancy between the attempts to create positive atmosphere by managers and the reality of having overwhelming workload the staff has to handle.

A study that was conducted during the COVID-19 crisis is the study of Buheji and Buheji (2020) presented employability demands for post COVID-19 period of time. The researcher introduces new approaches in equipping employees with what they need for times of uncertainty and instability, new challenges and changes that would probably hit the world in the future and how to survive them.

A framework for employability pattern during the current situation imposed by the world's pandemic was proposed along with a strategy to ensure employees being capable of meeting the demands and the conditions expected during times of instability. The study presents an empirical research that would support employability and competency development planners to survive the post-COVID-19 era.

The researchers try to design the new competency requirements while shedding more lights on the importance of 'inquiry-based learning' since it addresses many of the 'new normal' demands, i.e. curiosity, creativity, innovation, learning by exploring, etc. Which are considered as non-cognitive but soft skills.

Based on the literature review, a table representing the toolkit for the implementation of the proposed novel employability competency scale is designed to help manage the conditions of the era. The purpose of the table is to explained the link between the conditions of the "New Normal" and the its special requirements. The researcher managed to reveal the necessity of different competencies that depend of mixed requirements presented in the toolkit proposed in this study in the form of a table.

The study of Plant (2019) sheds the light on soft skills development as part of professional development in the educational field, especially for early-career internal auditors. The study lists the soft skills accountant graduates need in the workplace. Through a qualitative approach, the South African study presents perspectives of some stakeholders about the professional development challenges and problems they face.

Some soft skills that are demanded to handle the challenges of the workplace were presented in this study. The list begins with adaptability, which has not been highlighted in many studies, communication, critical thinking ad time management with references to the context in which tasks are performed and could be appreciated by educators who focus on the professional development programs.

The study was conducted through the interactive qualitative analysis technique to determine participants' experiences of professional development challenges for early-career internal auditors. The data analysis showed that there are specific soft skills needed by early-career internal auditors to deal with these challenges in the workplaces and improve the quality of the work as well.

In the study of Byrne (2018), the researchers developed a tool to evaluate engineering students' attitudes towards professional skills acquisition. This is considered to be a very important step in identifying clear pathways to engineering students to develop these essential skills along with the soft skills. Therefore, and in a step that aims at providing students with the best education in the engineering profession, the National Academy of Engineering (NAE) gathered 35 experts across various fields to develop a clear vision of pioneering engineering in 2020.

The project constituted a new era in engineering education. An era that requires a focus not only on the technical skills for overcoming anticipated challenges in 2020, but also on soft skills that guarantee success in such turbulent workplace. The mentioned social skills, also referred to as soft skills include communication with its different methods, global awareness, flexibility, and community service in addition to ethical decision- making, creativity, innovation, leadership and teamwork.

The study aimed at creating a scale that accurately and consistently measures engineering students' attitudes towards learning professional skills. The researchers used a rigorous measurement development methodology. Data from a sample of 534 engineering college students were divided into two groups. The first group is a development sample which led to the formation of the initial scale, and the second group is the confirmatory sample whereby the researchers obtained initial validity evidence for distinct dimensions. A five-factor scale of 25 items for assessing engineering students' attitudes towards learning professional skills (ATLPS) obtained high-reliability estimates.

Another study is the one by Yan (2019) which evaluates the feasibility of an Australian course in soft skills at a Chinese university. The sample included 29 second-year students who were exposed to the course. Through the mixed-method study design,

quantitative impact measures were collected pre-and- post intervention and added to the qualitative ones.

Results show that participants found that the training content and the social approach were relevant. The training had a positive impact on the assessed human qualities and highlighted that soft skills acquisition can lead to better outcomes.

(Cimatti, 2016) conducted a study that presented a complete view of soft skills and their importance in maintaining the quality of products in any job as well as the quality of living. This study also aims at enhancing the relevance of soft skills in several work fields and sectors, i.e. industrial organizations and educational workplaces. Furthermore, the study provides suggestions on how soft skills can contribute to the development of the employees' competences through creating a competitive and positive environment in the institutions or organizations.

The researcher developed a questionnaire that was answered by the directors of Didactical programs at 78 Italian universities. The survey aimed at clarifying the connection between different skills and different disciplines. A primary result showed the easiness to teach academic or cognitive competencies compared to teaching soft skills. Another result of considering the connection between the skill and its perception is that each group perceive the importance of each soft skill differently. For example, for architects is much more significant to be able to work in a team than for lawyers.

Comments on Previous Studies (Gapping Table)

Table 1. Gapping Table

Study Title	Study Purpose	Variables of the study	Methodology	Sample
Soft skills to enhance graduate employability: comparing students and employers' perceptions	To examine and compare students' and employers' perspectives regarding the importance of soft skills.	Graduates and employers' perspectives regarding soft skills and their impact on employability.	A pilot survey sent to employers and a questionnaire that was sent out to the target groups.	Employers and students.
GAP	To rank the top in-demand soft skills by employers in the Educational field and to create awareness about the importance of the acquisition of soft skills by the graduates.	Soft skills and success at the educational workplaces.	Qualitative and quantitative approaches, a questionnaire, and an interview.	Newly-hired graduates and experienced employers in the educational field.
Identifying and developing desirable soft skills for public service	This paper identifies soft skills employers expect students to have when seeking a job in the public-sector workforce.	In-demand soft skills for public workplaces.	Interviews	Department heads in a municipal government in the Midwester

				n states of the USA.
GAP	Identifying ad ranking the in-demand soft skills in the newly-hired graduates in the educational workplaces and detecting the existence of these skills in these employees, in addition to discussing the importance of such skills in the educational sector especially during and post COVID-19 era.	Soft skills and success at the educational workplaces.	Qualitative and quantitative approaches, a questionnaire, and an interview.	Newly-hired graduates in the educational workplaces and experienced employers in the educational field.
Shades of Communitas: A Study of Soft Skills Programs	Identifying the impact of SSPs (Soft Skills Programs) on higher education staff and investigating SSP social worlds.	Soft Skills Programs and the staff's performance in the higher education field.	Fieldwork; observation, interviews, stakeholder discussions, and "site documents"	Ethnography of SSPs in a UK university setting.

GAP	The current thesis identifies the top in-demand soft skills by employers in the educational field and the impact of soft skills acquisition in the success of the educational field especially during and post COVID-19; the world pandemic which represents a new challenge to the whole world.	Soft skills and success at the educational workplaces.	Qualitative and quantitative approaches, a questionnaire, and an interview.	Newly-hired graduates and experienced employers in the educational field.
Planning Competency in the New Normal– Employability Competency in Post-COVID-19 Pandemic	To explore requirements of employability competency in the new normal era.	Competencies required for employability post COVID-19 era.	A table of a toolkit for the implementation of the 'new normal employability competency scale.	An anonymous number of employers.
GAP	To identify and rate the top in-demand soft skills for a better employability status in the educational field during and post COVID-19 era.	Soft skills and success at the educational workplaces during and post COVID-19 era.	Qualitative and quantitative approaches, a questionnaire, and an interview.	Newly-hired graduates and experienced employers in the

				educational field.
Preparing work-ready graduates – skills development lessons learned from internal audit practice	Highlights the importance of soft skills development as part of sustainable professional education for early-career internal auditors.	Skills development and audit practice.	A qualitative approach; interviews and group discussion.	-Internal audit employers. -Early-career internal auditors. -Internal audit professional body IIA (SA) representatives.
GAP	The thesis highlights the top soft skills demanded by employers in the educational field and the soft skills newly-hired graduates need to have to maintain a table employability status in uncertain times.	Soft skills and success at the educational workplaces.	Qualitative and quantitative approaches, a questionnaire, and an interview.	Newly-hired graduates and experienced employers in the educational field.

Development of a Scale for Measuring Students' Attitudes Towards Learning Professional (i.e., Soft) Skills	To create a scale that measures engineering students' attitudes towards learning professional skills.	Students' attitude towards learning and the soft skills obtained.	rigorous measurement development methodology; a survey	534 engineering college students from a public university located in the western United States.
GAP	To create awareness about the top soft skills demanded by employers in the educational field especially to be acquired by the newly-hired graduates to guarantee success and stable employability status.	Soft skills and success at the educational workplaces.	Qualitative and quantitative approaches, a questionnaire, and an interview.	Newly-hired graduates and experienced employers in the educational field.
Teaching "soft skills" to university students in China: the feasibility of an Australian approach"	This paper, assesses the feasibility of an Australian Family Wellbeing (FWB) soft skills training for university students in China.	The feasibility of an Australian wellbeing course in the context of explicit soft skills training.	A mixed-methods design was adopted; Quantitative questionnaire, Workshop evaluation	29 second-year university students at Shenyang University of Chemical

			questionnaire, and Personal wellbeing index.	Technolog y (SUCT) in north-east China.
GAP	This thesis focuses on the soft skills demanded for success in the educational field from the perspective of experienced employers and contributes to creating awareness about the importance of soft skills acquisition to excel and maintain stability in the novel educational workplaces.	Soft skills and their contribution to success at the educational workplaces.	Qualitative and quantitative approaches, a questionnaire, and an interview.	Newly-hired graduates and experience d employers in the educationa l field.
Definition, development, assessment of soft skills and their role for the quality of organizations and enterprises"	This paper intends to provide a view on Soft Skills and their importance to achieving quality in any job and more widely in an individual's life.	Soft skills acquisition and their role in quality organizations.	A survey and a questionnaire	Directors of didactical programs at Italian universitie s.

GAP	This thesis presents new definitions of soft skills based on the novel mindset that appeared among economic, industrial, educational experts during the COVID-19 crisis and identifies the top soft skills demanded in educational workplaces to maintain success and stable employability status.	Soft skills and success at the educational workplaces.	Qualitative and quantitative approaches, a questionnaire, and an interview.	Newly-hired graduates and experienced employers in the educational field.

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

Study Design

The study is using a mixed-methods approach design; Qualitative-Quantitative

Table 2. Study Design

Qualitative	Quantitative			
Identifying In-Demand soft skills	Gapping Analysis	Descriptive	Correlational	Differences
	Newly-hired graduates' awareness	The degree of In-Demand soft skills acquisition	The In-Demand soft skills and newly-hired graduates' performance	The difference in the acquisition of the in-demand soft skills according to the newly-hired graduates' performance

Population and Sampling

The study population consists of two groups; the first group is the administrative and managerial staff whose experience is over ten years in educational workplaces (Private Schools) in the capital city of Amman. The second group is the teaching staff (teachers) who are newly-hired with one year of experience in the educational field (Private schools) in Amman.

The sample has been chosen according to the convenience sampling and consisted of 121 members of the administrative staff and 250 teachers. The sample has been distributed according to gender, job title, and professional specialty.

Study Instruments

The first instrument is an interview with employers to investigate in-demand soft skills from their perspectives to answer the first question which aims at envisaging the in-demand soft skills in the newly-hired graduates from the perspectives of the employers. The researcher has developed a semi-structured interview questions which included several soft skills that the researcher has monitored by referring back to the literature review (Previous studies citation) in addition to the open question; "What are soft skills that must be acquired by the graduates and rank them according to their importance".

The second instrument in this study is a questionnaire about the degree of awareness and the acquisition of soft skills by the newly-hired graduates. To answer the questions (2-5), the researcher has composed a Five-Likert questionnaire that includes a group of soft skills that have been detected throughout the interview (the first instrument) and the literature review.

Validity and Reliability of the Study Instruments

The validity and reliability of the first instrument, which is the one-to-one interview, to investigate the in-demand soft skills.

The researcher has followed the following steps to achieve a high level of validity and reliability of the qualitative instrument (The one-to-one interview):

- The researcher has composed the questions while consulting three of the experts in academic leadership and compliance with the literature review about soft skills.

- The initial draft of the instrument has been presented to two schools' principals to be reviewed and to get genuine feedback.

- The instrument has been presented to employers whose institutions are more than ten years, and feedback will be taken for any improvements or adjustments.

- Experts in evaluation and measurements have reviewed the instrument and check the extent of correlation between the interview questions and the study questions.

- The instrument has been presented to linguists to check the clarity of the questions.

- Five employers of more than ten years of experience in the educational field have reviewed the list of skills and the open questions, and then the instrument has been adjusted accordingly.

The validity and reliability of the second instrument, which is a questionnaire, to detect the degree of awareness and the acquisition of the in-demand soft skills by the newly-hired graduates.

The validity of the instrument has been checked using content validity method by presenting it to ten experts in the educational leadership in Jordanian universities and their comments and notes have been taken into consideration for improvements and amendments.

Moreover, the instrument has been applied to a pilot sample of 30 teachers and administrators from outside the sample to rationing the study instrument and to check its validity to the application on the original sample group. The values of the specific correlation parameters have been calculated for the constructive validity check. As for the reliability of the instrument, it has been verified through Alpha Cronbach to measure the internal consistency. Table (1) show the Correlation coefficient and Cronbach's Alpha of soft skills.

Table 3. Correlation Coefficient and Cronbach's Alpha of Soft Skills

Soft Skill	Validity		Reliability
	Pearson Correlation	Sig	Cronbach's Alpha
Global Awareness	0.82	0.000*	0.91
Teamwork	0.77	0.001*	0.81
Problem solving	0.74	0.000*	0.85
Communication	0.78	0.000*	0.86
Being Professionally Ethical	0.70	0.03*	0.77
Time Management	0.96	0.04*	0.78
Adaptability to change	0.66	0.002*	0.88
Creativity	0.79	0.000*	0.80
Self-Management	0.77	0.000*	0.81
Innovation	0.74	0.000*	0.85
Critical Thinking	0.54	0.01*	0.92
Self-Learning	0.78	0.000*	0.78
Flexibility	0.77	0.000*	0.81
Decision Making	0.91	0.000*	0.71
Leadership	0.82	0.000*	0.89
Digital Literacy	0.80	0.000*	0.90

Data Analysis (Processing Data)

1) Content analysis, the frequencies, and the percentages to answer the qualitative question which aims at investigating the in-demand soft skills or the ones required by employers in the educational workplaces.

2) The researcher has used the gap analysis equation to detect the degree of awareness of the newly-hired graduates.

3) Arithmetic means and standard deviations to calculate the degree of soft skills acquisition.

4) Pearson correlation coefficients to calculate the relationship between soft skills acquisition and the performance of the newly-hired graduates.

5) T-test to calculate the effect of the in-demand soft skills acquisition on the performance of the newly hired graduates.

The Criteria followed in prioritizing the soft skills employers in the educational sector seek in newly hired graduates in the educational workplaces during and post COVID-19 crises

- The relative importance of each skill within each order (1-18) was determined, where

$$Relative\ importance\ of\ the\ skill(x)\ in\ the\ rank\ (y)$$
$$= \frac{the\ number\ of\ recipients\ who\ ranked\ the\ skill\ (x)\ in\ the\ rank\ (y)}{the\ overall\ number\ of\ recipients(121)}$$

Rank (y) is the variable that values (1-18).

- The skill that has higher relative importance in the rank to be determined is the one that gets that ranking.

- If more than one skill is equal in relative importance within a specific rank, then we determine the skill that will receive the ranking according to the higher relative importance of the competing skill in the previous hierarchies of the order under determination and in ascending mode (starting from the first and then the second to the determined arrangement).

Example: when two of the soft skills have got an equal relative importance in rank 3, the researcher has looked up at the relative importance for these two particular soft skills in rank one and two. The soft skill that has got more relative importance's in the previous top ranks, was put in the current rank; in this case, rank 3.

The Equation followed in the calculation of the degree of newly hired graduates' awareness of the in-demand soft skills required by the employers in the educational workplaces

$$Awarness\ Percentage = [100 - \frac{100}{15} |Ranked\ by\ Employers -$$

$$Ranked\ by\ Employees|]\%$$

Table 4. The Intervals and Status of the Soft Skills Awareness Degree.

Awareness interval	Awareness Status	Awareness interval	Awareness Status
(0 – 20) %	No Awareness	(41 – 60) %	Partial Awareness
(21 – 40) %	Weak Awareness	(61 – 80) %	Good Awareness
(81 – 100) %	Deep Awareness		

The criterion adopted to measure the degree of soft skills acquisition by the newly hired graduates in the educational workplaces from the employers' perspectives

Interval	Relative Wight	Availability Degree
1 – 1.80	20% - 36%	Strongly Unavailable
1.81 – 2.60	More than 36% - 52%	Unavailable

2.61 – 3.40	More than 52% - 68%	Natural
3.41 – 4.20	More than 68% - 84%	Available
4.21 - 5	More than 84% - 100%	Strongly Available

Study Procedures

1- The researcher has collected and presented the literature review.

2- Experienced administrators in the educational field have been interviewed.

3- A questionnaire was composed.

4- Checking the validity and reliability of the research instruments.

5- Applying the instruments in the field, collecting data, coding it, and then processing it.

6- Doing the statistical analysis and processing the data by using the SPSS.

7- Coming up with the results of the study.

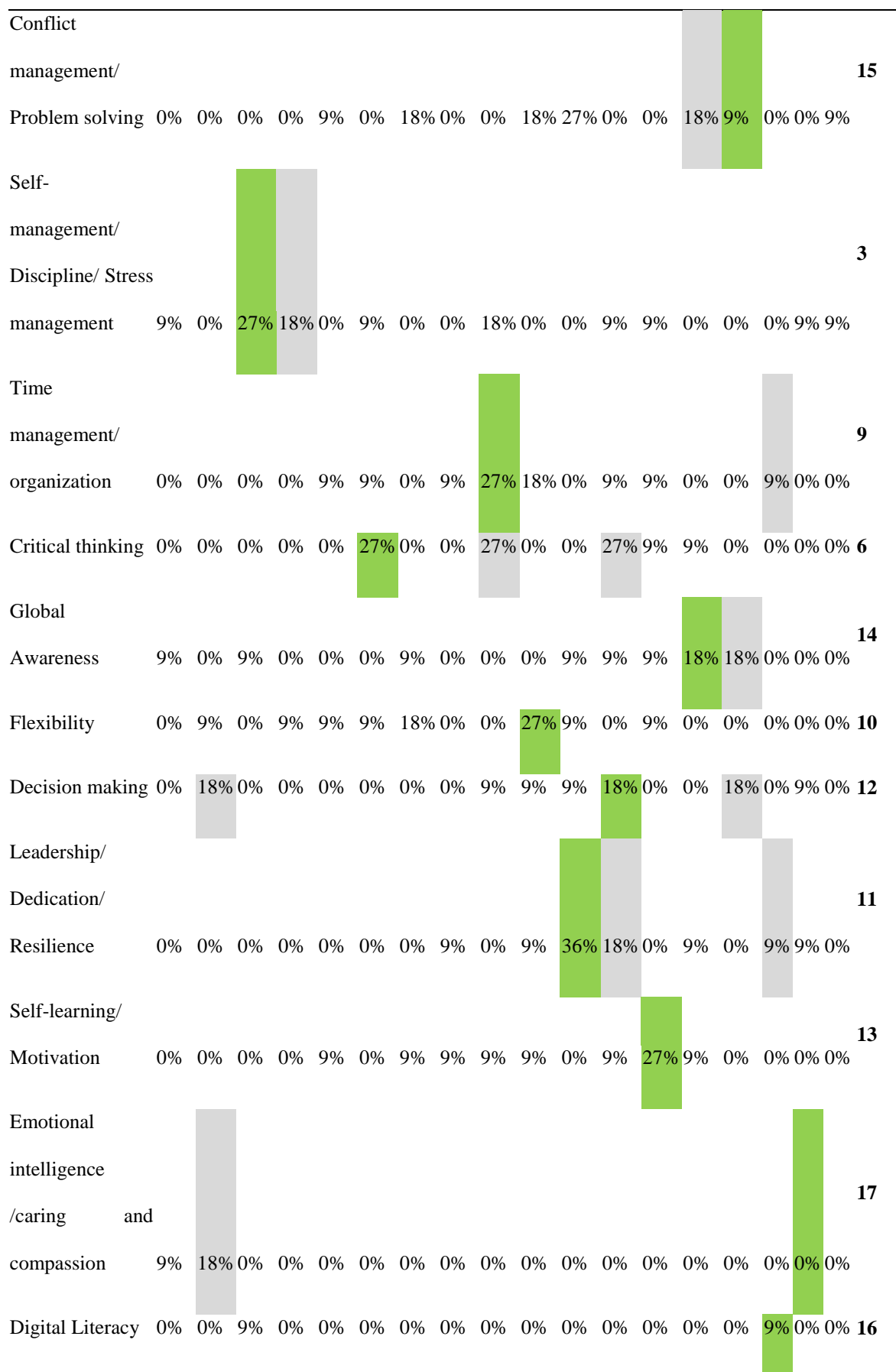8- Discussing the results and writing recommendations.

CHAPTER FOUR

Results

4.1. The findings of the soft skills employers in the educational sector seek in newly-hired graduates in the educational workplaces during and post COVID-19 crisis

According to the results of the interview with 121 educational experts, ten soft skills were highlighted and ranked as the most important ones to be acquired by employees in the educational field.

Table 5. The Relative Importance of the Soft Skills in Each Rank from the Perspective of Educational Experts.

Listed Soft skill	Ranking																		Final Rank
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	
Teamwork	0%	9%	18%	0%	18%	18%	0%	9%	0%	0%	0%	18%	0%	0%	0%	9%	0%	0%	5
Communication	18%	18%	9%	9%	18%	9%	0%	0%	0%	9%	0%	0%	0%	9%	0%	0%	0%	0%	2
Being professionally ethical/ Professionalism	45%	9%	0%	18%	9%	0%	9%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	9%	0%	0%	1
Adaptability to change	0%	9%	9%	18%	9%	9%	0%	9%	9%	0%	0%	0%	9%	0%	9%	0%	0%	0%	4
Creativity	0%	9%	9%	0%	0%	0%	27%	36%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	18%	0%	0%	0%	0%	7
Innovation	0%	0%	9%	9%	9%	0%	9%	18%	0%	0%	9%	0%	0%	0%	36%	0%	0%	0%	8

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17		
Conflict management/ Problem solving	0%	0%	0%	0%	9%	0%	18%	0%	0%	18%	27%	0%	0%	18%	9%	0%	0%	9%	**15**
Self-management/ Discipline/ Stress management	9%	0%	27%	18%	0%	9%	0%	0%	18%	0%	0%	9%	9%	0%	0%	0%	9%	9%	**3**
Time management/ organization	0%	0%	0%	0%	9%	9%	0%	9%	27%	18%	0%	9%	9%	0%	0%	9%	0%	0%	**9**
Critical thinking	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	27%	0%	0%	27%	0%	0%	27%	9%	9%	0%	0%	0%	0%	**6**
Global Awareness	9%	0%	9%	0%	0%	0%	9%	0%	0%	0%	9%	9%	9%	18%	18%	0%	0%	0%	**14**
Flexibility	0%	9%	0%	9%	9%	9%	18%	0%	0%	27%	9%	0%	9%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	**10**
Decision making	0%	18%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	9%	9%	9%	18%	0%	0%	18%	0%	9%	0%	**12**
Leadership/ Dedication/ Resilience	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	9%	0%	9%	36%	18%	0%	9%	0%	9%	9%	0%	**11**
Self-learning/ Motivation	0%	0%	0%	0%	9%	0%	9%	9%	9%	9%	0%	9%	27%	9%	0%	0%	0%	0%	**13**
Emotional intelligence /caring and compassion	9%	18%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	**17**
Digital Literacy	0%	0%	9%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	9%	0%	0%	**16**

| Focus and concentration; attention to details | 0% | 0% | 0% | 18% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% 0% 0% | 18 |

It is noted from the table above that "Being Professionally Ethical" has got the top rank from employers' perspective with the highest percentage of importance; 45%. While Communication has got the second rank. Self-Management in the third, followed by Adaptability to change in the fourth rank, Teamwork in the fifth, Critical Thinking in the sixth, then creativity in the seventh, Innovation in the eighth, Time Management in the ninth and Flexibility was the last skill in the raking scale with the percentage of 27%.

4.2. The findings of the degree of newly hired graduates' awareness of the in-demand soft skills required by the employers in the educational workplaces

Table 6. The Relative Importance of the Soft Skills in Each Rank from the Perspective of Newly-Hired Graduates.

Listed Soft skill	Ranking																Final Rank
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	
Global Awareness	21%	21%	8%	16%	4%	3%	3%	5%	1%	6%	0%	0%	0%	4%	5%	1%	4
Teamwork	31%	27%	6%	16%	3%	5%	6%	1%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%	1%	1
Problem solving	12%	12%	21%	19%	12%	10%	1%	0%	1%	1%	3%	0%	0%	4%	4%	0%	3
Communication	16%	25%	18%	16%	4%	8%	4%	4%	0%	1%	0%	3%	0%	0%	1%	1%	2
Being Professionally Ethical	17%	17%	19%	3%	23%	5%	3%	5%	0%	1%	0%	0%	3%	3%	0%	1%	5

Skill																	Rank
Time Management	13%	8%	5%	0%	13%	25%	12%	12%	6%	1%	0%	0%	1%	1%	0%	1%	6
Adaptability to change	16%	8%	6%	6%	1%	5%	27%	14%	3%	0%	5%	1%	4%	1%	1%	0%	7
Creativity	12%	12%	1%	0%	4%	5%	16%	23%	10%	8%	5%	1%	0%	1%	0%	1%	8
Self-Management	6%	13%	4%	5%	5%	5%	3%	1%	21%	10%	4%	6%	5%	1%	3%	5%	9
Innovation	6%	9%	4%	4%	3%	1%	1%	5%	8%	21%	6%	13%	5%	9%	1%	3%	10
Critical Thinking	13%	9%	3%	0%	3%	3%	3%	0%	5%	9%	18%	9%	4%	13%	8%	1%	11
Self-Learning	12%	8%	3%	3%	3%	0%	0%	4%	1%	6%	14%	13%	9%	12%	8%	5%	12
Flexibility	8%	10%	4%	3%	1%	4%	0%	1%	4%	4%	5%	14%	23%	5%	6%	6%	13
Decision Making	12%	6%	1%	4%	1%	0%	0%	1%	0%	9%	4%	13%	10%	16%	16%	6%	14
Leadership	12%	8%	4%	0%	0%	0%	3%	1%	4%	4%	3%	4%	14%	4%	14%	26%	15
Digital Literacy	14%	13%	4%	1%	6%	0%	1%	0%	6%	3%	9%	0%	3%	13%	6%	19%	16

Table 6. shows the ranking of each in-demand soft skill required by employers in the employees in the educational workplaces during and post the COVID-19 period of time. The respondents were not exposed to the ranking of the employers, and they ranked the soft skills according to importance of each soft skill from their perspectives.

Teamwork has been ranked the first with 31% of importance, Communication comes in the second rank with 25%, Problem solving has come in the third followed by Global awareness in the fourth rank. Being professionally ethical has been ranked number five, Time management is in the sixth rank, then comes Adaptability to change in the seventh rank, followed by Creativity in the eight and Self-management/ Discipline/ Stress

management which come in the ninth rank. Finally, Innovation come in the tenth rank from the employees' perspective.

Table 7. The Awareness Degree of Newly-Hired Graduate of the In-Demand Soft Skills.

In-Demand Soft Skills	Ranked by Employers	Ranked by Employees	Awareness Degree Percentage*	Status**
Being professionally ethical/ Professionalism	1	5	73%	Good Awareness
Communication	2	2	100%	Deep Awareness
Self-management/ Discipline/ Stress management	3	9	60%	Partial Awareness
Adaptability to change	4	7	80%	Good Awareness
Teamwork	5	1	73 %	Good Awareness
Critical thinking	6	11	67%	Good Awareness
Creativity	7	8	93%	Deep Awareness
Innovation	8	10	87%	Deep Awareness
Time management/ organization	9	6	80%	Good Awareness
Flexibility	10	13	80%	Good Awareness

Table 7 presents the employees' awareness status regarding the soft skills demanded by employers in educational fields during and post COVID-19 period of time. It clearly shows that employees have an acceptable degree of awareness of the importance of the majority of the suggested soft skills. The highest awareness percentages reflect deep awareness of soft skills like communication, creativity and innovation, as well as good awareness of skills like teamwork, being professionally ethical, adaptability to change, critical thinking, time management and flexibility. Surprisingly, employees showed partial awareness of the importance of self-management, discipline and stress management. Figure (2) shows the gap in awareness degree
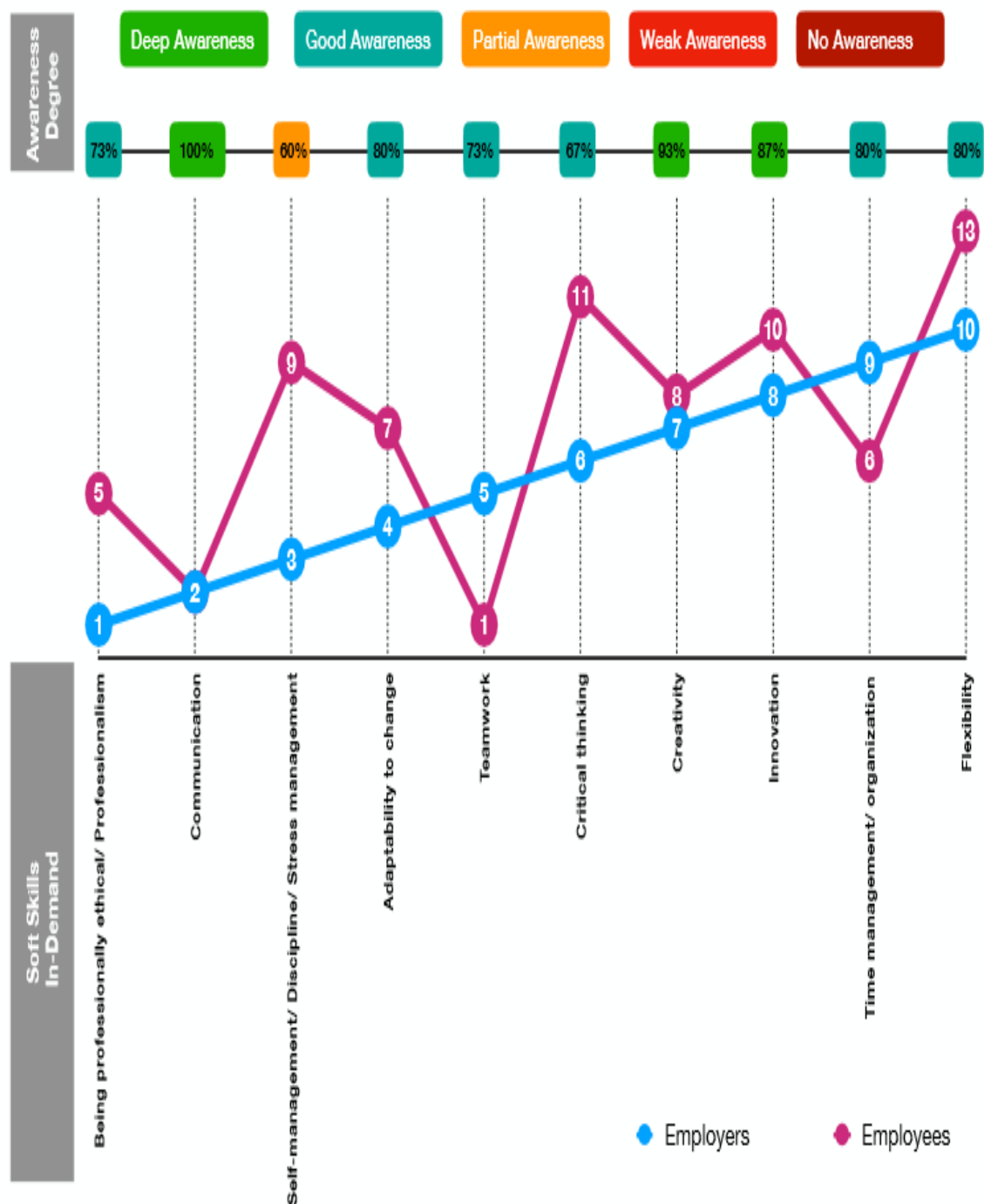
Figure 2. The Gap of Employers' Awareness and Employees' Awareness of In-demand Soft Skills

4.3. The findings of the degree of soft skills acquisition by the newly hired graduates in the educational workplaces from the employers' perspectives

Table 8. The Degree of Soft Skills Acquisition by the Newly-Hired Graduates in the Educational Workplaces from the Employers' Perspectives.

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Availability Degree
Being professionally ethical	121	3.13	.340	Neutral
Communication	121	4.52	.44085	Strongly Available
Self-management/ Discipline/ Stress management	121	3.44	.50837	Available
Adaptability to Change	121	3.1488	.48151	Neutral
Teamwork	121	4.0405	.54092	Available
Critical Thinking	121	2.9091	.62249	Neutral
Creativity	121	2.5347	.62044	Unavailable
Innovation	121	3.7397	.65542	Available
Time Management/ Organization	121	4.9124	.55326	Strongly Available
Flexibility	121	3.0124	.59324	Neutral

Table 8 shows that the acquisition degree of Time Management/Organization and Communication was the highest among the other soft skills with arithmetic average of 4.91 and 4.52 respectively. On the other hand, Teamwork, Innovation and Self-management were available with arithmetic averages of 4.04, 3.73 and 3.44.

Employers have given a neutral degree of acquisition of skills like Adaptability to change, Being professionally ethical, Flexibility and Critical Thinking with arithmetic averages of 3.14, 3.13, 3.01 and 2.91. In regards to the skill of Creativity, the acquisition degree's arithmetic average was 2.53, which suggests the lack of this skill in the majority of employees in the educational workplaces from the employers' perspective.

4.4. The finding of the relationship between the level of performance among the newly hired graduates and the in-demand soft skills which employers seek in employees in the educational field

Figure 3. The Degree of Availability of Being Professionally Ethical in Employees

The diagram reflects the importance of Being Professionally ethical to employers who gave this skill the first rank of importance. Figure 3 presents that 98% of employers in the educational workplaces see that the majority of the newly-hired

graduates whose performance level is high and satisfactory possess the skill of Being professionally ethical while 2% of them see that they do not. Meanwhile, the employees whose performance is unsatisfactory were found to be lacking this skill according to 82% of employers while only 4% of them see that these employees do possess it.

The majority of respondents requested high acquisition of this particular skill in their employees and considered it as an essential and in-demand soft skills in their employees. It shows from the contrast that few employers considered it as less important. Though, it is placed in the requested points by all respondents.
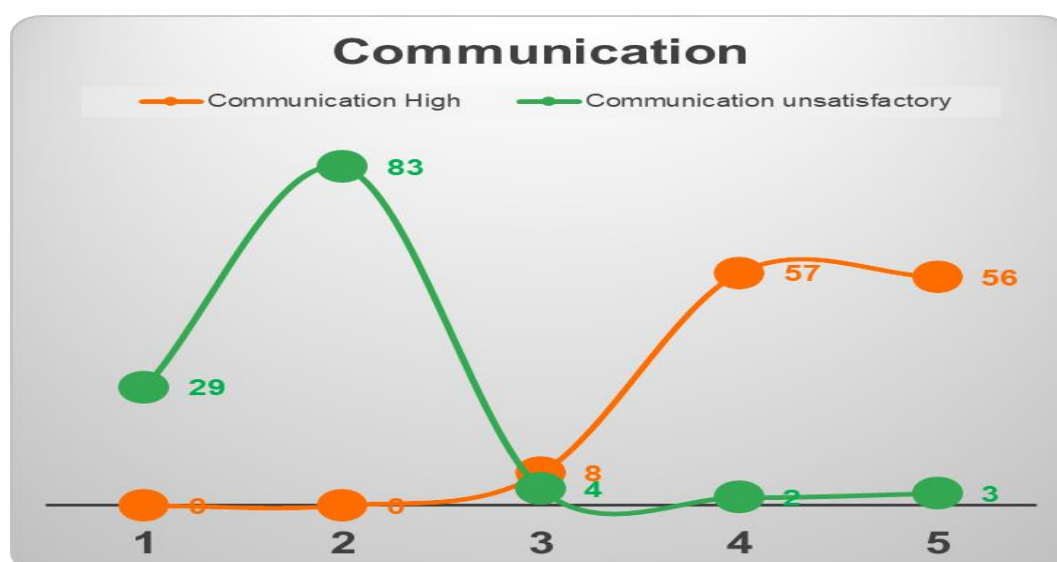
Figure 4. The Degree of Availability of Communication in Employees

As for Communication, the respondents reflected the importance of this skill acquisition during COVID-19. 93% of employers see that employees with high performance level possess the required communication skill w 7% of them see that those employees possess it with a neutral level. Figure 4 shows that 93% of employers in the educational workplaces see that the majority of the newly-hired graduates whose performance level is high and satisfactory possess Communicational skills. Surprisingly,

the same percentage of employers,93%, see that employees whose performance is unsatisfactory lack this skill and only 4% see that they do.

The contrast shows that desirable employees have a very high level of communication, while the employees with unsatisfactory level of communication are not needed in the institution. The matter which highlights the importance of this skill ad tis impact on the evaluation of the employees' performance level during the COVID-19.

Figure 5. The Degree of Availability of Self-Management in Employees

Figure 5 shows that 93% of employers see that employees with high performance level possess the skill of Self-Management or discipline and only 2% see that they do not. On the other hand, 90 % of the employers find that employees with unsatisfactory performance evaluation lack this skill and only 4% find that they do. However, these skills vary of their level of importance among the respondents. The majority find it important but not highly demanded in their perspectives since it does not affect the employees' performance during the COVID-19.

Figure 6. The Degree of Availability of Adaptability to Change in Employees

Figure 6 shows that Adaptability to change has been addressed by the majority of respondents as an essential soft skill in the high-performing employees. 95% of employers see that employees whose performance level was satisfactory possess this skill.

The minority considered it less important, however, it is in-demand soft skill that distinguished the employees whom the institution tend to keep as 86% of employers see that employees whose performance is unsatisfactory lack this skill which is considered very important during the COVID-19 crisis and only 6% of them see that the employees do.
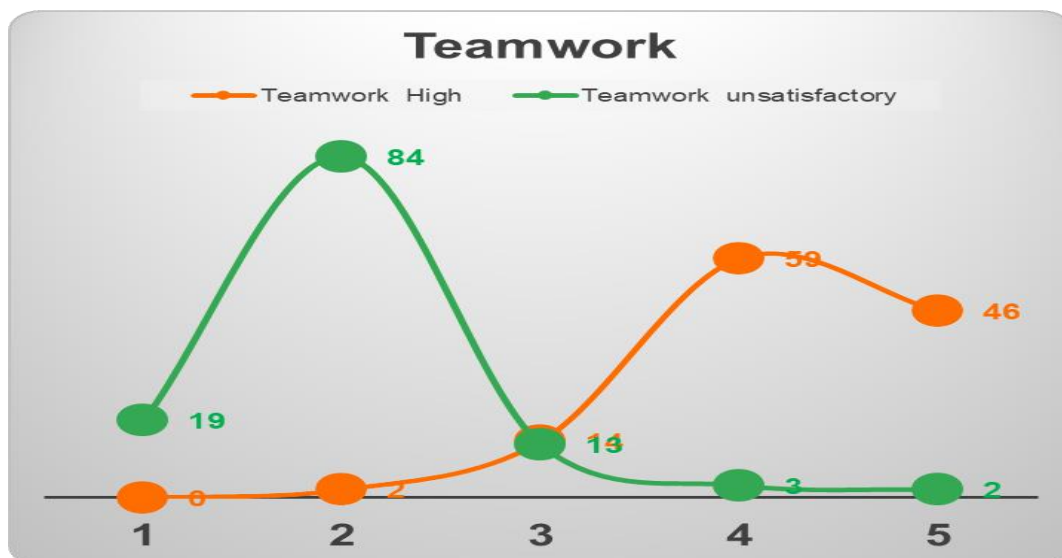
Figure 7. The Degree of Availability of Teamwork in Employees

Figure 7 shows that 87% of employers see that employees whose performance evaluation is satisfactory possess this skill while only 2% see that they do not. Meanwhile, 85 % of the employers see that employees whose performance level and evaluation is unsatisfactory lack this skill and only 3% see that they do.
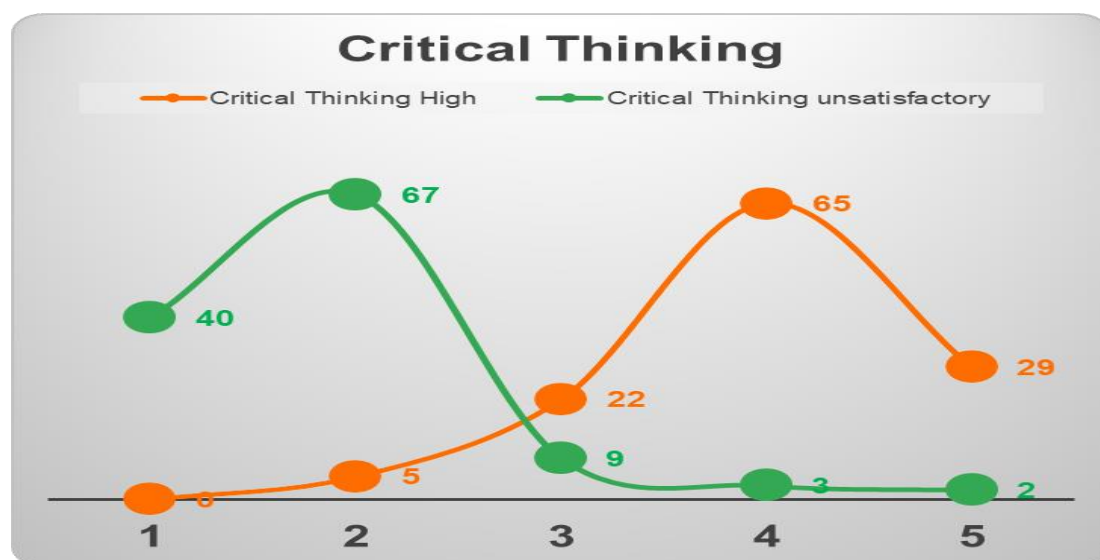
Figure 8. The Degree of Availability of Critical Thinking in Employees

Despite the importance of Critical thinking as one of the 21st century skills, employers were modest in considering it as an essential skill in their employees. 78% of employers see that employees with high performance level possess this skill and 4% of

them see that those employees possess this skill with a neutral level. This skill has not affected the performance of the employees during the COVID-19 and employers highlighted the fact that not all their best employees possess it. In the contrary, 88% of employers see that those employees who have unsatisfactory performance levels possess this skill and only 3 % see that they do not, yet, it does not affect their evaluation.
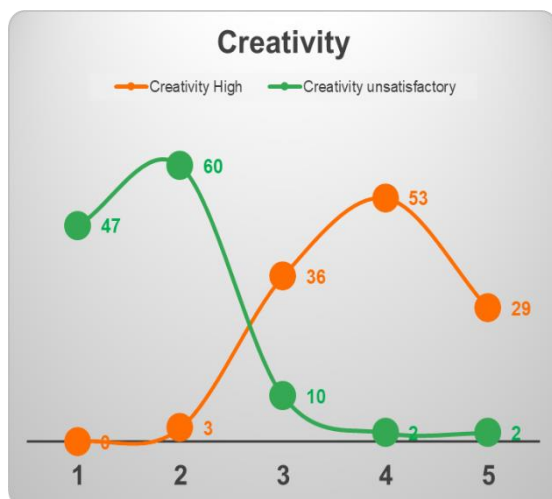
Figure 9. The Degree of Availability of Creativity in Employees
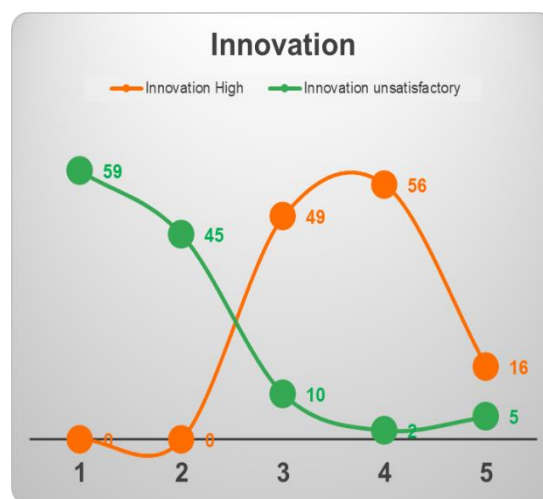
Figure 10. The Degree of Availability of Innovation in Employees

The two diagrams above show that employees who have a modest performance evaluation are not necessarily creative or innovative. 68% of employers see that employees with satisfactory performance level are creative while 2% see that they are not. On the other hand, 88% of the employers see that the employees whose performance level is unsatisfactory are not creative and only 3 % see that they are.

The same pattern applies to innovation, since 60% of employers see that the employees with satisfactory performance levels are innovative. Meanwhile, 86 % of the employers see that employees whose performance is unsatisfactory are not innovative and only 6% see that they are. Surprisingly, the percentages suggest that employers did not connect creativity and innovation as essential factors in the employees' performance during the COVID-19. Innovation, is usually combined with creativity, thus, the skill is not given a high focus when evaluating the performance of the best and the less favored employees. The contrast in the two lines shows that this skill does not affect the employer's decisions about renewing the employees' contracts, neither is the case with creativity.

Figure 11. The Degree of Availability of Flexibility in Employees

Despite the great importance of flexibility during tough times like the COVID-19 crisis, Figure 11 shows that Flexibility has been given a neutral level of importance in the performance evaluation of employees in the educational field. 83% s of respondents see that employees with satisfactory performance level possess this skill and only 2% see

that they do not. Meanwhile, 85% see that employees whose performance is unsatisfactory lack Flexibility and only 5% of them see that they do.

Employers in the educational places do not consider it in the top requirement for keeping their best employers nor based their decisions about terminating the contracts for those who do not show an acquisition of that skill. 23 % of the employers see that both employees with the satisfactory performance level and those with unsatisfactory ones possess this skill with a neutral percentage.

Figure 12. The Degree of Availability of Time Management in Employees

Figure 12 shows that 83% of employers in the educational workplaces see that employees with high performance possess the skill of time management and organization and only 2% see that these employees lack this skill. the majority of respondents highlighted the importance of implementing Time management and organization during the COVID-19. Employees who have a good performance evaluation were the ones who could reflect high levels of time management and organization at their work. On the other hand, 88% see that employees with unsatisfactory performance levels lack this skill and only 3% of them see that they possess it.

4.5. The findings of the significant statistical differences in the degree of soft skills acquisition attributed to the performance level of the newly hired graduate

Table 9. The Statistical Differences in the Degree of Soft Skills Acquisition Attributed to the Performance Level of the Newly-Hired Graduate

Soft Skill in-Demand	Performance	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Being professionally ethical	High Performance	121	4.8678	.64475	.05861
	Unsatisfactory Performance	121	1.8843	.88685	.08062
Communication	High Performance	121	4.3967	.61209	.05564
	Unsatisfactory Performance	121	1.9008	.74616	.06783
Self-management/ Discipline/ Stress management	High Performance	121	4.3719	.65995	.06000
	Unsatisfactory Performance	121	1.8678	.76313	.06938
Adaptability to Change	High Performance	121	4.3058	.56040	.05095
	Unsatisfactory Performance	121	1.9917	.79053	.07187
Teamwork	High Performance	121	4.2314	.71601	.06509
	Unsatisfactory Performance	121	2.0496	.71707	.06519
Critical Thinking	High Performance	121	3.9752	.76880	.06989
	Unsatisfactory Performance	121	1.8430	.79591	.07236
Creativity	High Performance	121	3.8926	.79374	.07216
	Unsatisfactory Performance	121	1.7769	.80091	.07281
Innovation	High Performance	121	3.7273	.68313	.06210
	Unsatisfactory Performance	121	1.7521	.97708	.08883
Time Management/ Organization	High Performance	121	4.1240	.74800	.06800
	Unsatisfactory Performance	121	1.9008	.75724	.06884
Flexibility	High Performance	121	4.1074	.72803	.06618
	Unsatisfactory Performance	121	1.9174	.82246	.07477

In table 9 Above it is noticed that there is a difference in the acquisition degree of Being professionally ethical between employees with satisfactory performance degree and those with unsatisfactory performance degree. From employers' perspective, the average of the degree of acquisition of this particular skill in employees with satisfactory performance was 4.87 while the average of the degree of acquisition in those with unsatisfactory performance was 1.88. This difference emerged with all other soft skills listed by the employers in the educational field.

When addressing Communication, the average of the degree of acquisition among the employees with satisfactory performance degree was 4.49 while the average of the degree of acquisition of this skill in employees with unsatisfactory performance level was 1.90. The same pattern was repeated in the skills of Self-Management, with a difference of 4.47 among the employees with the satisfactory performance and 1.97 among the ones with the unsatisfactory performance level and almost the same difference degree was found with Adaptability to change; 4.30-1.99, Time management; 4.12-1.90, and Flexibility; 4.10-1.91.

As for skills like Teamwork, Critical Thinking, and Innovation, the difference was not big. The average of the degree of acquisition among employees with satisfactory performance level was 4.23, while the average of the degree of acquisition among the employees with unsatisfactory performance level was 2.04. The same pattern is repeated in the skills of Critical Thinking; 3.97-1.84, Creativity and Innovation with almost the same average of 3.99 among employees with satisfactory performance level and 1.87 among those of unsatisfactory performance level.

In order to study the substantial difference between the averages of the degree of skill acquisition in accordance to the level of performance, a T-test has been conducted

to measure the effect of the level of performance on the degree of the skills acquisition, as shown in Table 10.

Table 10. Leven's Test for Equality of Variances

				T-test for Equality of Means				95%Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig(2tailed	Mean difference	Std.error difference	lower	upper
Being professionally ethical	Equal variances assumed	25.991	.000	29.931	240	.000	2.98347	.09968	2.787 12	3. 17 98 3
	Equal variances not assumed			29.931	219. 152	.000	2.98347	. 09968	2.787 02	3. 17 99 2
Communication	Equal variances assumed	4.523	.034	28.448	240	.000	2.49587	.08774	2.323 04	2. 66 87 0
	Equal variances not assumed			28.448	231. 164	.000	2.49587	.08774	2.323 00	2. 66 87 3
Self-management/ Discipline/ Stress management	Equal variances assumed	1.324	.251	27.302	240	.000	2.50413	.0172	2.323 45	2. 68 48 1

				t	df	Sig.	Mean Diff	Std. Error	Lower	Upper
	Equal variances not assumed			27.302	235.08	.000	2.50413	.0172	2.323 44	2.68 48 3
Adaptability to Change	Equal variances assumed	.630	.428	26.269	240	.000	2.31405	.08809	2.140 52	2.48 75 8
	Equal variances not assumed			26.269	216.291	.000	2.31405	.08809	2.140 42	2.48 76 8
Teamwork	Equal variances assumed	8.006	.005	23.684	240	.000	2.18182	.09212	2.000 35	2.36 32 9
	Equal variances not assumed			23.684	239.999	.000	2.18182	.09212	2.000 35	2.36 32 9
Critical Thinking	Equal variances assumed	.294	.588	21.196	240	.000	2.13223	.10060	1.934 06	2.33 04 0
	Equal variances not assumed			21.196	239.712	.000	2.13223	.10060	1.934 06	2.33 04 0
Creativity	Equal variances assumed	.109	.742	20.639	240	.000	2.11570	.10251	1.913 77	2.31 76 4

		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig.	Mean Difference	Std. Error	Lower	Upper
	Equal variances not assumed			20.639	239.981	.000	2.11570	.10251	1.91377	2.31764
Innovation	Equal variances assumed	4.768	.030	18.224	240	.000	1.97521	.10838	1.76170	2.18871
	Equal variances not assumed			18.224	214.691	.000	1.97521	.10838	1.76158	2.18884
Time Management/ Organization	Equal variances assumed	1.146	.285	22.975	240	.000	2.22314	.09676	2.03253	2.41375
	Equal variances not assumed			22.975	239.964	.000	2.22314	.09676	2.03253	2.41375
Flexibility	Equal variances assumed	.042	.837	21.933	240	.000	2.19008	.09985	1.99338	2.38679
	Equal variances not assumed			21.933	236.516	.000	2.19008	.09985	1.99337	2.38680

The table above shows that there is a statistical effect or a statistical indication of the employees 'performance level on the degree of the skill of Being professionally ethical and for the benefit of employees with satisfactory performance level, as the value

of T-test 29.931 with a level of significance of (α=0.000). Moreover, there is a statistical difference between the averages of the degree of acquisition of Communication skills due to the level of performance for the benefit of the employees with satisfactory performance where the value of T-test is 28.45.

Meanwhile, the same difference appears with skills like Self-management where T-test is 27.37, Adaptability to change with an average of 26.37, Teamwork where T-test is 23.79, Critical thinking where T-test is 21.196 which is close to the result in creativity where T-test is 21. Also, Time management and Flexibility showed almost the same statistical differences where T-test is almost 22 in both.

CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusion and Discussion

The primary purpose of this thesis is to shed the light on the soft skills demanded in employees in the educational workplaces specially to cope with the impact of the COVID-19 on the educational field. This chapter of the thesis contributes to it by drawing the conclusions about the thesis questions regarding the soft skills importance during and post-COVID-19 crisis.

Conclusion one:

The top ten in-demand soft skills by the employers were Being professionally ethical, Communication, Teamwork, Self-Management, Adaptability to change, Creativity, Innovation, Time management, Critical Thinking, and Flexibility.
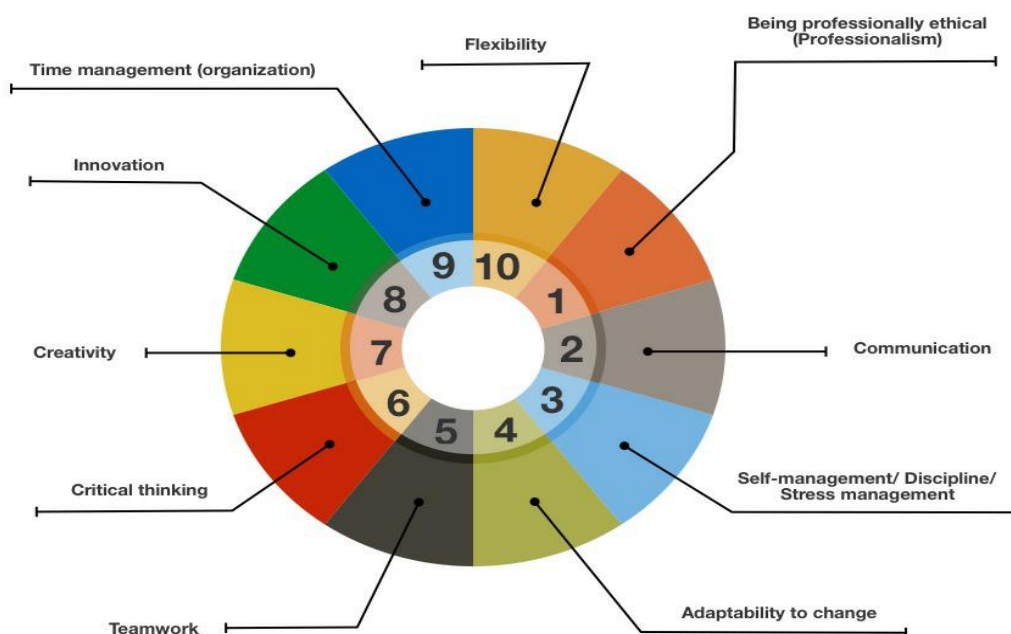
Figure 13. In-Demand Soft Skills for Newly-Hired Graduate at Educational Workplace

Figure 14. shows the top ten skills that should be acquired by graduates working in educational workplaces from educational employers' perspectives. It is worth to mention that according to some employers in the educational field, the set of soft skills demanded in any employee should be in a circular mode. In other words, these employers have refused to rank the soft skill according to their importance due to their strong believe that the successful employee is the one who is able to acquire them all and utilize them whenever need.

Being professionally ethical is considered as the first in-demand soft skill and the most important one in the time of COVID-19. According to the majority of educators, this skill is very difficult to be monitored or detected, yet it is highly demanded. This can be related to the fact that the COVID-19 has enforced the shift to the online teaching which requires a high commitment to classes time and to students' psychological safety to learning community in COVID-19 afflicting period (Mishra et al., 2020).

Through good Communication, which is the second in the rank of importance, employees can deliver their creative ideas and can propose solutions to problems. Thus, this skill is a key for maintaining other skills (Sonmez, 2015). Skills like Stress management and Adaptability are given high ranks, which seems to be very logical during tough times like the COVID-19 crisis that hit the world in every single field. Whereas Flexibility has been ranked as the least important skill.

Conclusion two:

The degree of newly-hired graduates' awareness of the in-demand soft skills required by the employers in the educational workplaces is deeply shown in Adaptability to change, Critical thinking, Time management and Flexibility. However, participants have shown partial awareness to the importance of self-management, discipline, and

stress management which were given a high rank of importance by the employers. The awareness status has ranged between partial awareness to the importance of Self-management to good awareness degree of the importance of Being professionally ethical, Stress management, Adaptability to change, Teamwork and Critical thinking. Moreover, graduates show deep awareness of the importance of skills like Communication, Creativity, Innovation and Flexibility.

In tough unstable times caused by the world pandemic, it has been eminent for both employers and employees that adaptability to the drastic changes and flexibility are essential. The COVID-19 has caused a tremendous change in the teaching-learning process in terms of the skills both teachers and students have required and in the learning environment. Therefore, these two skills have emerged to be very important from both parties' perspectives. Moreover, finding new ways and strategies to overcome the obstacles opposed by the crisis required reflecting critical thinking in order to find and be able to solve the novel set of problems and to cope with the challenges of the shift toward the virtual and the online teaching platforms.

The quantitative method used in this thesis has portrayed the awareness status that newly-hired graduates have regarding the importance of soft skills acquisition during the COVID-19 period of time. For a highly ranked skill by employers like Being professionally ethical, employees reflect deep awareness and good awareness levels. Moreover, participants are deeply aware of the importance of creativity and innovation even though these skills have not received a high rank by employers.

Surprisingly, Teamwork has been given the first rank from employees' perspective, while employers have put it in the fifth rank. Employers have not prioritized Teamwork; believing that the online work does not depend on collaborative effort. On

the other hand, communication is given a high rank to indicate the great contribution of communication to the success of the online teaching-learning process during the lockdown and the participants have deep awareness of its importance (Tseng, H., Yi, X., & Yeh, H. Te, 2019).

The awareness gap between employers and employees indicates that graduates are aware of the importance of soft skills acquisition to succeed in the educational workplaces during and post COVID-19. Therefore, higher education institutions such as universities should work on developing the implementations of soft skills in their syllabuses and transfer these skills into the practical practice (Singh Dubey & Tiwari, 2020). Thus, graduates will be equipped with what seems to be suitable novel set of skills to cater to the requirements of the unstable markets and workplaces.

Surprisingly, graduates have shown high levels of awareness regarding the soft skill employers demand in the post-COVID-19 workplaces. The degree of awareness presented in this study reflects the graduates' realistic expectations regarding the set of skills they are demanded to acquire to excel in the educational field during and post COVID-19 era. (Succi & Canovi, 2020). Nevertheless, employees are not fully aware of the importance of self-management and skills related to organization and discipline as well. Such skills have been considered as important to employers particularly during the lockdown caused by the COVID-19. The remote working environment has created new challenges for employers and managers in the follow up procedure, the matter which has led to demanding a high sense of responsibility towards work which can be enhanced if the employee possess skills like organization and self-management, and self-discipline which is also related to being professionally ethical.

Conclusion Three:

The degree of soft skills acquisition by the newly-hired graduates in the educational workplaces from the employers' perspectives varies between strong availability of skills like Communication and Time management. Meanwhile, it is available in skills like Self-management, Teamwork and Innovation. On the other hand, Being professionally ethical, Adaptability to change, Critical thinking, and Flexibility are neutrally available or available to a humble degree. As for Creativity, most employees lack this skill in particular from employers' perspectives.

The implications of such results urge educational institutions to focus on improving certain skills that graduates lack such as Flexibility and Critical thinking. It is mere an opinion that creativity cannot always be acquired but it is a natural talent that many people lack because they were not born with this skill. Some arguments are in favor of the idea that skills like Innovation and Creativity are meant to exist by the person's nature and cannot be developed.

Another point to be considered is that the acquisition process of these competencies is a dynamic one through which soft skills evolve and develop gradually by time and by involving in the practical field (Cimatti, 2016). Therefore, it can be acceptable for some extend for graduates to lack certain skills due to the lack of applying these skills during the studying period of time.

Conclusion Four:

The relationship between the level of performance among the newly-hired graduates and the acquisition of the in-demand soft skills is positive. The employers

whose perspectives are the base of the answers, find that the acquisition of some skills is affected by the level of the employees' performance. Employees with high and satisfactory performance levels are the ones who possess important in-demand soft skills, such as Being professionally ethical, Communication, and Teamwork.

It is worth to emphasize that soft skills modify and complement hard skills, which are connected to the practical implementation of knowledge in the practical field. Success in this case is a combination of two main factors; the technical knowledge or the hard skill which is measurable and evaluated by observing the performance while the other factor comprises the soft skills which contribute to the success of delivering knowledge (Singh et al., 2014).

Thus, the relationship between the two sets of skills is a positive correlation and each one is influenced by the other. It is obviously presented in this study that acquisition of soft skills is positively reflected in the performance and vice versa. Employees with high level of performance have shown excellent levels of soft skills acquisitions, especially to skills that are highly ranked by employers such as Being professionally ethical, Teamwork and Communication.

Employers, are not interested in renewing contracts with those who lack the previous skills in the educational workplaces, the matter which reflects the importance of these skills during the COVID-19 era. Other skills such as Creativity, Innovation and Flexibility are naturally preferable and both employees of satisfactory and unsatisfactory performance level possessed them with a neutral level without affecting their employability status from their employers' perspectives.

Conclusion Five:

There is a substantial impact of the employees' performance levels; satisfactory and unsatisfactory, on the degree of the in-demand soft skills acquisition.

The significant statistical differences in the degree of soft skills acquisition are attributed to the performance level of the newly hired graduate, the T-test results showed a positive correlation regarding the existence of the difference. The statistical differences indicate that employees with satisfactory performance levels possess soft skills in higher levels than those whose performance levels are unsatisfactory.

The positive correlation between the employees' performance level and the in-demand soft skills acquisition is eminent. Employers highlighted that the focus on skills like Being professionally ethical, Teamwork, Communication and Adaptability to change enhanced employees' performance during the lockdown imposed by the COVID-19.

The recent drastic changes in the educational workplaces have placed this field under pressure to choose and keep the best employees. In order to achieve this, training programs and university qualifications should be developed to implement soft skills effectively in education as acquisition and practice. Moreover, there should be sustainable update of the set of soft skills implemented to ensure compliance with the requirement of the era (Cacciolatti et al., 2017). For example, digital literacy and global awareness and considered as novel skills that have been prioritized currently due to globalization and to the world pandemic.

It is evident that most educational institutions select and recruit the human resources with the best soft skills available. The current markets and workplaces that

were changed by the impact of the COVID-19 foster the development of skills more than cognitive knowledge (Cimatti, 2016).

Recommendations (Practical solutions)

Designing a consistent soft-skills acquisition training program for university students is recommended in a step towards maintaining a smooth transition into the practical field.

In addition, this report recommends further work to:

1. Make regular assessments to newly-hired graduates based on their soft skills and their performance in the field.

2. Develop training programs for employees based on the in-demand soft skills.

3. Research further the novel soft skills that might be in demand in the future.

4. Implement soft skills acquisition in schools' curriculums and educational programs.

5. Focus on soft skills in job announcements and giving them the same importance as the academic qualifications and the cognitive skills.

6. Develop and abide by the "Soft Skills Matrix" (Appendix D), to tackle employees needs and build training programs based on its findings. The matrix can contribute to the employees themselves by giving them feedback about the status of their acquisition to the in-demand soft skills in the educational workplaces. It also gives employers an eminent image about the progress of employees in acquiring and implementing soft skills, thus, assessing and evaluating the performance of these employees based on the data given by this matrix.

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Appendices

Appendix-A

Educational Experts Interview Form

This interview is part of investigating the in-demand soft skills among newly-hired graduates in the educational workplaces.

Fill in the following table in line with the interviewer instructions

Name: _____

Institution name (Optional): _____

Position: ☐ Owner   Years of Experience: ☐ 10-15

☐ General Manager   ☐ 15-20

☐ Principal   ☐ More than 20 years

No.	Soft Skill	In demand	Rank of skill (1-15) where (1) is the most important and (15) is the least important
1	Teamwork The collaborative effort of a group to achieve a common goal or to complete a task in the most effective and efficient way.	☐ Yes ☐ No	

2	Communication The ability to communicate effectively with superiors, colleagues, and staff.	☐ Yes ☐ No	
3	Being professionally ethical Professional ethics encompass the personal and corporate standards of behavior expected by professionals.	☐ Yes ☐ No	
4	Adaptability to change Skill sets that encompass a person's ability to adjust to changes in their environment.	☐ Yes ☐ No	
5	Creativity A phenomenon whereby something somehow new and somehow valuable is formed.	☐ Yes ☐ No	
6	Innovation he "carrying out of new combinations" that include "the introduction of new goods, ... new methods of production, ... the opening of new markets, ... the conquest of new sources of supply ... and the carrying out of a new organization of any industry	☐ Yes ☐ No	
7	Conflict Management	☐ Yes ☐ No	

	The process of limiting the negative aspects of conflict while increasing the positive aspects of conflict.		
8	Self-management (Self-control) Being able to make balanced decisions based on what is really important, and not just how we feel at the time.	☐ Yes ☐ No	
9	Time management The process of organizing and planning how to divide your time between specific activities.	☐ Yes ☐ No	
10	Critical thinking The intellectually disciplined process of actively and skillfully conceptualizing, applying, analyzing, synthesizing, and/or evaluating information gathered from, or generated by, observation, experience, reflection, reasoning, or communication, as a guide to belief and action.	☐ Yes ☐ No	
11	Global Awareness A capacity that incorporates the attitudes, knowledge, and skills necessary for a person to competently and perceptively	☐ Yes ☐ No	

	navigate the challenges and opportunities of a globalized world in a way that promotes the greater good.		
12	Flexibility The willingness and ability to adapt to change, particularly regarding how and when work gets done.	☐ Yes ☐ No	
13	Decision making The process of making choices by identifying a decision, gathering information, and assessing alternative resolutions.	☐ Yes ☐ No	
14	Leadership The art of motivating a group of people to act toward achieving a common goal.	☐ Yes ☐ No	
15	Self-learning A process by which individuals take the initiative, with or without the assistance of others, in diagnosing their learning needs, formulating learning goals, identifying human and material resources for learning, and evaluating learning outcomes	☐ Yes ☐ No	

❖ What are other soft skills that must be acquired by the graduates and rank
them according to their importance?

No	Soft Skills	Rank

Appendix-B

Employees' Questionnaire for investigating the in-demand soft skills among newly-hired graduates in the educational workplaces.

This questionnaire is part of investigating the in-demand soft skills among newly-hired graduates in the educational workplaces.

Name: _____

Institution name (Optional): _____

Position: ☐ Teacher   Years of Experience: ☐ 1-3

                                                    ☐ More than 3

Teachers should put the following in-demand soft skills in ranks (1-15) according to their importance from their perspectives.

No.	Soft Skill	Rank of skill (1-16) where (1) is the most important and (16) is the least important
1	Global Awareness A capacity that incorporates the attitudes, knowledge, and skills necessary for a person to competently and perceptively navigate the challenges and opportunities of a globalized world in a way that promotes the greater good.	
2	Teamwork	

	The collaborative effort of a group to achieve a common goal or to complete a task in the most effective and efficient way.	
3	Conflict Management/ Problem Solving The process of limiting the negative aspects of conflict while increasing the positive aspects of conflict.	
4	Communication The ability to communicate effectively with superiors, colleagues, and staff.	
5	Being professionally ethical Professional ethics encompass the personal and corporate standards of behavior expected by professionals.	
6	Time management/ Organization The process of organizing and planning how to divide your time between specific activities.	
7	Adaptability to change Skill sets that encompass a person's ability to adjust to changes in their environment.	
8	Creativity A phenomenon whereby something somehow new and somehow valuable is formed.	

9	Self-management/ Discipline/ Stress management/Resilience Being able to make balanced decisions based on what is really important, and not just how we feel at the time. Discipline is action or inaction that is regulated to be in accordance (or to achieve accord) with a particular system of governance.	
10	Innovation The "carrying out of new combinations" that include "the introduction of new goods, ... new methods of production, ... the opening of new markets, ... the conquest of new sources of supply ... and the carrying out of a new organization of any industry	
11	Critical thinking The intellectually disciplined process of actively and skillfully conceptualizing, applying, analyzing, synthesizing, and/or evaluating information gathered from, or generated by, observation, experience, reflection, reasoning, or communication, as a guide to belief and action.	
12	Self-learning	

	A process by which individuals take the initiative, with or without the assistance of others, in diagnosing their learning needs, formulating learning goals, identifying human and material resources for learning, and evaluating learning outcomes	
13	Flexibility The willingness and ability to adapt to change, particularly regarding how and when work gets done.	
14	Decision making The process of making choices by identifying a decision, gathering information, and assessing alternative resolutions.	
15	Leadership The art of motivating a group of people to act toward achieving a common goal.	
16	Digital Literacy Refers to an individual's ability to find, evaluate, and compose clear information through writing and other media on various digital platforms.	

Appendix-C

Educational Employers' Survey

As an employer, decide the level of acquisition of each of the following soft skills in teachers whose performance is above the average and for those whose performance is below the average. The scale of availability is from (1-5) where 5 indicates strong availability and 1 indicates unavailability.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Unavailable	**Unavailable**	**Neutral**	**Available**	**Strongly Available**

From your point of view, to what degree is the mentioned skill available in teachers whom you want to renew their contracts at your institution (teachers with high-performance evaluation). As well as for those whom you do not want to renew their contracts (teachers with unsatisfactory performance evaluation).

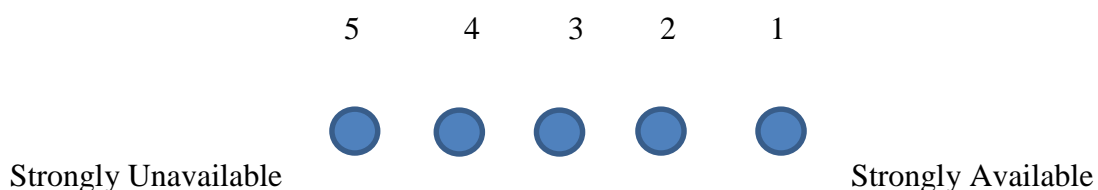| **Being professionally ethical** |
|---|
| (Professional ethics encompass the personal and corporate standards of behavior expected by professionals) |
| The degree of availability in teachers with high-performance evaluation |
| 5   4   3   2   1 |
| Strongly Unavailable   Strongly Available |

The degree of availability in teachers with unsatisfactory performance evaluation

5   4   3   2   1

◯   ◯   ◯   ◯   ◯

Strongly Unavailable   Strongly Available

Communication

(The ability to communicate effectively with superiors, colleagues, and staff.)

The degree of availability in teachers with high-performance evaluation

5   4   3   2   1

◯   ◯   ◯   ◯   ◯

Strongly Unavailable   Strongly Available

The degree of availability in teachers with unsatisfactory performance evaluation

5   4   3   2   1

◯   ◯   ◯   ◯   ◯

Strongly Unavailable   Strongly Available

Self-management/ Discipline/ Stress management

(Being able to make balanced decisions based on what is really important, and not just how we feel at the time. Discipline is action or inaction that is regulated to be in accordance (or to achieve accord) with a particular system of governance.)

The degree of availability in teachers with high-performance evaluation

| 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

Strongly Unavailable   Strongly Available

The degree of availability in teachers with unsatisfactory performance evaluation

| 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

Strongly Unavailable   Strongly Available

Adaptability to Change

(Skill sets that encompass a person's ability to adjust to changes in their environment.)

The degree of availability in teachers with high-performance evaluation

| 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

Strongly Unavailable   Strongly Available

The degree of availability in teachers with unsatisfactory performance evaluation

| 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

Strongly Unavailable   Strongly Available

Teamwork

(The collaborative effort of a group to achieve a common goal or to complete a task in the most effective and efficient way.)

The degree of availability in teachers with high-performance evaluation

5	4	3	2	1

Strongly Unavailable   Strongly Available

The degree of availability in teachers with unsatisfactory performance evaluation

5	4	3	2	1

Strongly Unavailable   Strongly Available
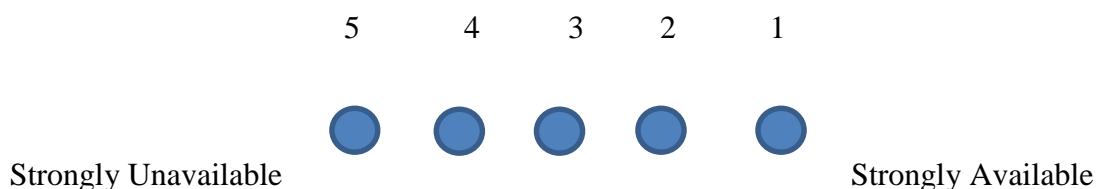
Critical Thinking

(The intellectually disciplined process of actively and skillfully conceptualizing, applying, analyzing, synthesizing, and/or evaluating information gathered from, or generated by, observation, experience, reflection, reasoning, or communication, as a guide to belief and action.)

The degree of availability in teachers with high-performance evaluation

5	4	3	2	1

Strongly Unavailable   Strongly Available

The degree of availability in teachers with unsatisfactory performance evaluation

| | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | |

Strongly Unavailable   Strongly Available

Creativity

(A phenomenon whereby something somehow new and somehow valuable is formed.)

The degree of availability in teachers with high-performance evaluation

| | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | |

Strongly Unavailable   Strongly Available

The degree of availability in teachers with unsatisfactory performance evaluation

| | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | |

Strongly Unavailable   Strongly Available

Innovation

(The "carrying out of new combinations" that include "the introduction of new goods, new methods of production, the opening of new markets, the conquest of new sources of supply and the carrying out of a new organization of any industry)

The degree of availability in teachers with high-performance evaluation

	5	4	3	2	1	

Strongly Unavailable   ⬤   ⬤   ⬤   ⬤   ⬤   Strongly Available

The degree of availability in teachers with unsatisfactory performance evaluation

	5	4	3	2	1	

Strongly Unavailable   ⬤   ⬤   ⬤   ⬤   ⬤   Strongly Available

Time Management/ Organization

(The process of organizing and planning how to divide your time between specific activities.)

The degree of availability in teachers with high-performance evaluation

	5	4	3	2	1	

Strongly Unavailable   ⬤   ⬤   ⬤   ⬤   ⬤   Strongly Available

The degree of availability in teachers with unsatisfactory performance evaluation

	5	4	3	2	1	

Strongly Unavailable   ⬤   ⬤   ⬤   ⬤   ⬤   Strongly Available

Flexibility

(The willingness and ability to adapt to change, particularly regarding how and when work gets done.)

The degree of availability in teachers with high-performance evaluation

5   4   3   2   1

Strongly Unavailable   Strongly Available

The degree of availability in teachers with unsatisfactory performance evaluation

5   4   3   2   1

Strongly Unavailable   Strongly Available

Appendix-D

Soft Skills Matrix

Soft Skills Matrix

Legend		
Auctoneer	0	
Novice	1	
Professional	2	
Expert	3	
Leading-edge expert	4	

#	Skill / competence	Percent of skill coverage
	Being Professionally Ethical	0.0%
	Communication	25.0%
	Teamwork	50.0%
	Time Management	75.0%
	Adaptability to Change	100.0%
	Creativity	46.4%
	Innovation	78.6%
	Self Management	11.9%
	Critical Thinking	8.3%
	Skill or competence	10.7%
	Flexibility	9.5%
	Skill or competence	10.7%
	Skill or competence	7.1%
	Skill or competence	7.1%
	Skill or competence	9.5%
	Skill or competence	7.1%
	Proficiency level	