

Chapter 17

Enhancing Graduate Employability Through Soft Skills: Insights From Malaysian Technical Universities

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ABSTRACT

This chapter explores the influence of soft skills on graduate employability among final-year students within the Malaysian Technical University Network (MTUN). In today's competitive labor market, competencies such as communication, teamwork, adaptability, and problem-solving are essential complements to technical knowledge. Grounded in Human Capital Theory and Social Cognitive Theory, this study employed a quantitative research design with 370 respondents from four MTUN

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institutions. Findings indicate that soft skills significantly and positively affect graduate employability, with higher proficiency linked to increased job readiness and alignment with employer expectations. The chapter offers practical insights for higher education institutions, industry stakeholders, and policymakers, emphasizing the importance of integrating soft skills development into technical curricula to enhance workforce preparedness and improve employment outcomes.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of Study

The evolving demands of the job market have compelled organizations to reassess the skills and competencies required for workforce success. While technical expertise remains essential, it is no longer sufficient to ensure long-term career progression. Increasingly, employers prioritize soft skills such as communication, teamwork, adaptability, and problem-solving competencies that foster workplace resilience, effective collaboration, and leadership (World Economic Forum, 2023).

This global trend is reflected in recent findings from the World Economic Forum (2023), which ranked the most in-demand skills for 2023 and beyond.

Table 1. Top 10 In-Demand Skills for 2023

Rank	Skill
1	Analytical Thinking
2	Creative Thinking
3	Resilience, Flexibility, Agility
4	Motivation and Self-Awareness
5	Curiosity and Lifelong Learning
6	Technological Literacy
7	AI and Big Data
8	Leadership and Social Influence
9	Quality Control
10	Systems Thinking

Source: World Economic Forum, The Future of Jobs Report 2023

Despite the rising importance of these interpersonal skills, a significant gap persists between graduates' self-assessment of their soft skills and the expectations of employers (Succi & Canovi, 2020; Robles, 2012). This disconnect is particu-

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