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Perceptions of Undergraduate Students of Islamic Studies of the Importance of Soft Skills for Education and Future Career at King Khalid University

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ARTICLE INFORMATION	ABSTRACT

This paper examines Islamic undergraduate students' awareness and perceptions of the importance of soft skills for education and future career among undergraduate students of Islamic Studies at King Khalid University. The study is carried out to redirect the focus of undergraduate students' training and development goals to the acquisition of soft skills, which have a very high effect on improving undergraduate student's performances. This study aims to discover student awareness and perception towards the importance of soft skills among engineering students. This study adopted a quantitative research approach. A questionnaire was administered and used to gather the data. Also, the questionnaire was specifically designed to examine the importance of soft skills for education and future career for Islamic Studies undergraduate students. The target population in this study consisted of 4500 Islamic undergraduate students. The purposive sample was 300 students were randomly selected from the population with an 85 percent confidence level within 0.05 risk of sampling error. The findings of the study indicated that Islamic undergraduate students at King Khalid University were aware of the importance of soft skills for their education and future carrier as well. Participants ranked the following soft skills as the essential skills for Islamic undergraduate students' improving decision making, besides a greater willingness to accept the ideas of others, improving leadership skills, oral and verbal communication, a gain in self-confidence, small group discussions, and learned more about technology and various applications. They thought soft skills are important for accelerating students' academic performance and developing the learning environment while less important for finding a better job opportunity and considering it a primary employment requirement by modern workplaces.

1. Introduction

Today, many changes have taken place in educational environments worldwide to meet the Saudi Vision 2030 requirements and to survive in the current global business competition. Employees regardless, of their educational levels, have acquired both hard and soft skills. For that, Saudi researchers, educational decision-makers and educators during the last decade alike have emphasized the importance of fostering a set of soft skills, non-academic attributes, such as teamwork, group development, communication, and solve problem skills. Employers are looking for vital soft skills obtained by employees during academic study and work experience, rather than jest degree-specific knowledge.

Unlike academic or disciplinary knowledge, which is subject-based, content-specific and formally assessed, soft skills comprise a range of independent competencies, albeit often developed by formal curricula and rarely assessed explicitly. Thus, soft skills are often defined as those skills, abilities, and personal attributes that can be used within the wide range of working environments that graduates operate in throughout their lives. (Fraser, 2001, p.1). Moreover, Bennet, Dunne, & Carre (1999) stated that soft

skills are generic skills in higher education that include cooperating and communicating with others. Additionally, empirical researches indicted soft skills are synonymous with core skills, which are the list of personality key competencies (Gibbons and Lange ,2000). In terms of defining soft skills, Lorenz (2009) clarified soft skills as "a cluster of personal qualities, habits, attitudes, and social graces that make someone a good employee and a compatible coworker" (p.1). Similarly, Maniscalo (2010) explained soft skills as a "cluster of qualities, habits, personality traits, attitudes and social graces" (p.9). So, employees possess these skills in varying academic degrees to meet the employer's expectations and private sector requirements. However, several educational studies have indicated that there is often a gap between what we require of students in assessment tasks and what occurs in work. For example, oral communicational skills, which are highly rated in the industry but rarely fostered or assessed at university (Premuzic et al., 2010; Ibrahim & Kayode, 2017).

Over the past decade, educational associations, governmental institutions have identified a slightly different set of attributes, personal qualities, habits, attitudes as the key skills for higher education. Essentially, Premuzic et al. (2010) mentioned that researchers and scholars had faced difficulties with addressing the soft skills and listing the skills in higher education across the world for two reasons: "Firstly, the catalogue of soft skills have varied widely from one study or intervention to another and include a wide range of attributes. Secondly, many of these attributes can only be assessed subjectively. That is, there are no objective tests for interpersonal and management skills. Moreover, several of the attributes that constitute soft skills taxonomies refer to dispositional traits that may change very little during the years of higher education and are known to affect academic grades" (p.222). Yen et al. (2001) differentiated among the hard skills and soft skills in terms of observation, measurement, and acquisition. They affirmed that "hard skills are typically easier to observe, quantify, and measure. They are also easier to train, acquire, and deal with because the skill sets are not brand new to the learner and no unlearning or behavioral change is involved. On the other hand, soft skills are typically difficult to observe, quantify, measure and to deal with" (p.433).

According to Bennett et al. (1999), soft skills categorize into four major groups underlying soft skills, including management of self, others, information, and daily tasks. Similarly, Gallivan, Truex, and Kvasny (2004) identified six commonly sought soft skills in the USA, consist of communication, interpersonal, leadership, organization, self-motivation and creativity. Saudi Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development lists the critical competencies of labour which encompass communication, analytical, the ability to work under pressure, interpersonal, teamwork, motivation, imagination/creativity, willingness to learn, critical thinking, flexibility, tacking responsibility, planning and organizing skills, insight, insight, maturity, professionalism, emotional intelligence, detail orientation, and organizational skills.

Kember, Leung &Rosa (2007) indicated that improving soft skills help students to accomplish not only academic but also occupational goals after graduating. For that, Barrie (2006) and Premuzic et al. (2010) asserted that soft skills should be embedded within the university academic courses to be foster these abilities. Also, they suggested that university academic performance should be assessed based on mastering soft skills. It is very important to increase the congruency between what students need to learn for university and what employers expect after graduating, stimulating students to develop work-relevant skills.

In Saudi Arabia, vocational or work-related skills and soft skills have been considered controversial and debatable topics since the 2000s due to the market needs. However, Alwadai (2020) mentioned that hard and technical skills are less important concerning individual employability comparing to the different types of soft skills. Therefore, academics refuse to acknowledge their importance, seeing them as a distraction from other academic priorities, in particular research. Likewise, students reportedly characterize their learning environments as formal/disciplinary subjects rather than soft skills development. Nowadays, soft skills have become a major concern of the Minister of Education, especially higher education institutions, because of the connection between the higher education students' soft skills and performance. For that, Ibrahim & Kayode (2017) stated that "soft skills played an important role in determining the success of a project or work performance, and they are required for the success of the organization" (p.2). To meet the market requirements, universities should provide their students with their training opportunities through a variety of development programmes to build their personalities and change their attuites based upon organizational functions such as not taking criticism personally, making friends easily, self-awareness, handle job crises, risk management, teamwork and group development. Thus, training is the key element of produce a high work performance culture in the workplace.

1.1 Statement of the problem
Based upon the Saudi Vision 2030, employees must accomplish the institutions' goals in the government and private sectors by meeting certain requirements, including academic certification and technical (work-related skills) competencies. Also, they have to master several hard skills embedded in various knowledge areas such as Social Science, Science, Math, Biology, Engineering, and Language and Arts while they have to possess soft skills such as self-management, time management, teamwork, etc.

Significantly, the Saudi Vision 2030 emphasizes the importance of soft skills in employees' competencies due to their effects on the success of the organization. However, Universities are yet to fully recognize the importance of enhancing soft skills because of the positive or negative effect on learning performance. For that, they do not set enhancing students' soft skills as one of their educational goals and resist investing in students training soft cornering skills. Meanwhile, Nealy (2005) and Bailly and Lene (2013) stated that soft **skills** are a fundamental component of students' competencies and areas the topic skills in the business and industrial world. Therefore, they develop the service labour process to become highly epitomized and personified. For that, this study examines the importance of soft skills for Islamic undergraduate students at King Khalid University for their education and future career. Also, it focuses on the Islamic undergraduate students' perceptions and attitudes towards soft skills.

1.2 Research Objectives
This study intends to achieve the following objectives:
- To identify the necessity of improving soft skills for Islamic undergraduate students.
- To examine Islamic undergraduate students' perceptions of the importance of soft skills for education and future career.

1.3 Study Questions
The main research question envisaged for the current paper is:
How do Islamic undergraduate students perceive soft skills?

The following sub-research questions are also posed to address some issues related to the study:
RQ1 What skills can be categorized as soft skills based on Islamic undergraduate students' perceptions?
RQ2 how do Islamic undergraduate students rate the importance of soft skills for their education and future carrier?

2. Literature review
There is a wide debate among Saudi educational stakeholders and policymakers about the purpose of higher education because "graduate employability has increasingly become the key measure of a college and university's value, the coin of the realm. This focus on the economic returns to education is not just an American trend, as postsecondary leaders all over the world are increasingly preoccupied with proving to sceptical legislators that their students are getting jobs after they graduate" (Hora, Benbow & Smolarek,2018, p.31). Today, in Saudi Arabia, one of the key research areas in Islamic education is, according to the Saudi National Qualifications Framework (2009), the knowledge, teaching methods, soft skills that future in-service teachers must learn and develop during professional training in the universities and institutions. Regarding the Islamic preparation program at King Khalid University (KKU), undergraduate students have abundant theoretical and practical knowledge, but they lack both interpersonal and social skills required by modern Saudi job settings and opportunities. Therefore, there are several factors driving change in today's Saudi undergraduate students.

The most important factor is preparing future leaders which is directly likened to these changes. For example, Ellyatt (2018) mentioned that Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman has declared young Saudis will drive the Saudi government reform mostly because of their ability to change and the leading societies. For that, Saudi workforces have been transformed due to increasing the demand for 21st- century skills acquisition. In line with this, higher education literature highlights the urgency to help undergraduate students to possess and acquire a broad range of soft skills and get enough training to facilitate those skills in the workplace. Consensually, instructors should adopt meaningful learning models and provide students with enriching learning environments to build their interpersonal and social skills such as communication, effective dialogue, and cross-cultural relations, etc.

Soft skills
Hora, Benbow and Smolarek (2018) mentioned that the purpose of higher education today is primarily (if not solely) to instil undergraduate students' essential skills, abilities and competencies that relate to workplaces such as soft skills which are "transferable behaviors that can use be within a wide range of functions, activities and contexts" (King, 2012, p.3). Moreover, Ibrahim & Kayode (2017) defined soft skills as "the non-cognitive abilities that are innate in individuals and are necessary for good social relationships at the workplace." (p.4). Additionally, soft skills are "social, attitudinal and self-regulatory competencies or traits that allow us to communicate effectively, work with others, and persist in the face of adversity" (Hora, Benbow & Smolarek,2018, p.31).

In terms of classifying soft skills, Steven and campion (1999) categorized soft skills into five categories: communication, problem-solving, conflict resolution, goal setting, and planning and task coordination. Additionally, Leigh et al. (1999) stated that "workplace competencies include problem-solving, communication skills, personal qualities and work ethics, which are soft skills categories" (p.27). Moreover, Zedeck and Goldstein (2000) listed that several soft skills such as dealing with conflict, gathering and sharing information are highly sought after by organizations." (p.233). Many organizations, "both governmental and private'',

set improving soft skills as the main goal of developing human resources, for instance, teamwork requires the acquisition of different kinds of abilities, such as time management, leadership management, and conflict management. So, this implies that if higher education institutes aim to shape their students' future professional lives in a good way, they have to take into account soft skills and provide them with a rich and technical training environment.

Soft skills enable students to propel change in their academic environment and societies (Massaro et al., 2016) by using coursework information. Saudi National Qualifications Framework for higher education in KSA (2009) emphasizes the importance of providing undergraduate students with extensive knowledge and professional skills. Also, it indicated that undergraduate students ought to have strong skills in communication, collaboration, teamwork, conflict resolution, negotiation, critical decision-making, and critical reasoning. These skills are essential in the workplace so finding ways to enhance content knowledge, professionalism, and soft skills simultaneously can be daunting for Islamic education faculty members.

3. Methodology
3.1 Research design
To achieve the study goals, the researcher used a quantitative research method, which is "concerned with collecting and analyzing structured data and can be represented numerically. One of the central goals is to build accurate and reliable measurements that allow for statistical analysis" (Goertzen, 2017, p.12). Also, it focuses more on the what the research problem than the why of the research subject. For that, research questions are direct and quantifiable to get numeric data, such as to what extent? How many? How much? What percentage of? Moreover, it allows researchers to learn more about the demographic information from different aspects to get accurate data about the subject of the study preference related to a service or product.

Quantitative is classified into two categories: experimental research and non-experimental research. In terms of nonexperimental research, "the researcher identifies variables and may look for relationships among them but does not manipulate the variables. Major forms of nonexperimental research are relationship studies including ex post facto research, correlational research and survey research" (Ary, Jacobs, Sorensen, 2010, p.26). The appropriate research form for this study is survey research which is known as descriptive research. It describes the characteristics of the population such as gender, social and economic level, and ethnicity or phenomenon studied in order to get a clear and holistic view. Adelman (1994) stated that a descriptive study aims "to describe, record, analyze, and interpret existing conditions involving comparison and/or contrasts while attempting to discover relationships between existing non-manipulated variables" (p.35). So, it helped both researcher and reader to understand the research problem quantitatively based upon the participant perceptions. In this study, the researcher examines the Islamic undergraduate students' perceptions of the importance of soft skills for education and future career at King Khalid University.

3.2 Study Participant
Initially, this study's target and the accessible population is all Islamic undergraduate students at King Khalid University. It included both all-male and female students in the main campus of KKU and its branches in Asser province. Identifying the target population of this study would help the researcher generalize the results of the study and draw a study sample, while assigning accessible population would less the time and effort of the researcher needed for data-collection. Based on the KKU Statistic report (2021), 4500 Islamic undergraduate students have presented the study population. The appropriate and convenient type of sampling for this study was simple random sampling. According to Ary, Jacobs, Sorensen (2012), "the basic characteristic of simple random sampling is that all members of the population have and an equal and independent chance of being included in the random sample" (p.150). The first step in drawing the study sample from the population is enumerating all individuals in the study population. Deanship of admission and registration supplied a list of all Islamic undergraduate students enrolled in King Khalid University during 2021with their KKU identification numbers. Secondly, the researcher chose 300 students based upon a table of random numbers which is produced by a computer program that assures that all the students' identification numbers have an equal chance to participate in the study. The age of participants ranged from 19 to 21 years.

3.3 Study Variables
The independent variable included in this study was the soft skills, whereas the dependent variable included in this study was the effectiveness of utilizing the soft skills on education and future career for Islamic Studies Undergraduate Students at King Khalid University.

3.4 Instruments
A questionnaire was used to collect data from Islamic Studies undergraduate students at King Khalid University, Saudi Arabia. It consisted of multiple-choice and rating scale matrix questions to seek participants' responses and contained 45 items. Also, it

was designed based on the literature review and findings of several studies in terms of defining soft skills, identifying the essential soft skills for undergraduates, the importance of enhancing soft skills for Islamic undergraduate students. Fittingly, the study's survey included two sections. The first section was designed to collect demographic characteristics of the study's participants such as gender, academic level (Freshman, Sophomore, Junior, and Senior). The second section was designed to examine Islamic undergraduate students' perceptions on:

(1) Personal view for soft skills.
(2) The most important soft skills for Islamic undergraduate students.
(3) The importance of enhancing soft skills for Islamic undergraduate students.

Participant responses to each statement were ranked using a three-point Likert scale (minimum importance, undecided, maximum importance) to assess attitudes toward a topic by presenting a set of statements about the topic and asking respondents to indicate for each item. The majority of the survey statements were adopted from Majid, Liming, Tong & Raihana (2012) study regarding undergraduate students' perceptions on the importance of soft skills for education and career success. Islamic undergraduate students were approached with an online request to participate in this study. An electronic questionnaire was sent by email for those students who express their willingness to participate. The questionnaire was answered by 300 Islamic Studies undergraduate students. The ethics approval of the study was obtained from the Institution Review Board (IRB) of the KKU.

3.5 Validity and Reliability of the Questionnaire
Regarding instrument validation, A panel of faculty members working in King Saud University, Umm Alqura University, Taif University, and King Khalid University reviewed the questionnaire for content validity to decide whether the study is feasible and worthwhile to continue. They assess the questionnaire statements in terms of their wording and relevance of the items to the study. Based upon the reviewer's suggestions, the necessary modifications were made to help the researcher to get accurate and precise data. Also, the researcher implemented the pilot tests for the questionnaire. He introduced the questionnaires to the number of King Khalid University undergraduate students from different disciplines such as Language and Art, Science, Math, and Social Science with selected definitions of soft skills, the importance of soft skills and a list of necessary soft skills for undergraduate students. It was carried out with 100 students in January 2021. These procedures were followed for the internal validity of the questionnaire. For external validity, the study's sampling type was a sample random sampling that allowed me to generalize the study's findings over the entire population. In terms of reliability, the reliability test of Cronbach's Alpha (1960 was estimated to be 0.88, which is considered acceptable.

3.6 Procedure
The researcher applied to Vice president for scientific research and publications seeking permission to access the Islamic undergraduate students. After that, the selected participants completed consent forms to meet the KKU Human Subject Board requirements. The researcher then distributed the questionnaires by Blackboard system, an online learning system at KKU, with a short letter of appreciation and clarification explaining the study's purpose and future contributions to developing the KKU educational system.

3.7 Data analysis
The questionnaire data was analyzed to determine the Islamic undergraduate students' perceptions toward the importance of soft skills for their education and future career. For this purpose, the statistical package for social science version 16.0 (SPSS Inc.,2006) was used to compute the descriptive statistics. The researcher calculated the frequency and percentage of the participants' demographic data and computed each survey statement's frequency, mean scores, and standard deviation.

4. Limitations of the Study
This study had the following limitations:
1. The study's population was limited to Islamic undergraduate students at KKU and the results of this study were generalized only to the study population.
2. This study is limited to examining soft skills' importance for Islamic undergraduate students' educations and future careers.

5. Timeline of the Study
The pilot test was conducted for the questionnaires at the beginning of January 2021. Between February 5-12, 2021, the researcher distributed the questionnaires to the selected subjects by the Blackboard system. After that, the study data was analyzed by using SPSS by the end of February 202. The write-up of the study's results was completed by March 10, 2021.

6. Results and Discussion

The results obtained from the analysis of the questionnaire identify the perceptions of Islamic undergraduate students of soft skills and the importance of soft skills for education and future career. This section was used to answer the following questions:

(1) How do Islamic undergraduate students perceive soft skills?
(2) What skills can be categorized as soft skills based on Islamic undergraduate students' perceptions?
(3) How do Islamic undergraduate students rate the importance of soft skills for their education and future carrier?

The Main Research Question

Through this section, the researcher attempted to determine whether or not Islamic undergraduate students have a basic knowledge of soft skills. One goal was to discover the degree of appreciation Islamic undergraduate students have and their value on soft skills for education and future career. Other goals were to determine whether or not the Islamic undergraduate students' perceptions were positive, whether or not they value soft skills in general or not, and whether or not they understand the meaning of soft skills.

In order to accomplish these goals, Islamic undergraduate students were questioned to investigate whether Islamic undergraduate students understand what are soft skills or not and determine their degree of agreement or disagreement with eight particular statements about the meaning of soft skills.

Table 1: *General perceptions of soft skills*

Statement	Strongly agree (5)	Agree (4)	Undecided (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly Disagree (1)	Mean *M*	Standard deviation *SD*
Soft skills are non-technical skills that relate to how you work with others either inside or outside the university.	43.8	29.9	0	10.5	15.8	4.34	0.585
Soft skills are personality traits and behaviors that are related to the learning environment and workplace.	47.1	26.5	0	22.1	4.3	4.31	0.551
Soft skill is a personal attribute that supports situational awareness and enhances an individual's ability to get a better job with high quality.	29.9	46.1	10	4	10	4.31	0.551
soft skills are very important for academic achievements and a successful future career .	37.0	44.9	8.7	7.2	2.2	1.92	.971
soft skills are complicated skills and difficult to learn and practice compared to professional knowledge.	7,2	2.2	8.7	37.0	44.9	1.92	.971
Soft skills are not as important as professional knowledge	0	0	0.7	36.2	63.0	4.34	.521
soft skills cannot be enhanced through practice	7.2	2.2	8.7	37.0	44.9	1.92	.971
soft skills are highly sought by employers due to the 2030 vision requirements.	63.8	35.5	0.7	0	0	4.63	.499

As shown in Table 1, the majority of respondents (74%) agreed with the given definition of soft skills which means non-technical skills that relate to how you work with others either inside or outside university. Also, they are personality traits and behaviors that are related to the learning environment and workplace. A third definition is a personal attribute that supports situational awareness and enhances an individual's ability to get a better job with high quality. As a result, Islamic undergraduate students have a basic knowledge of soft skills and understand the fundamental components of skills such as personality traits, personal

behaviours,etc. Additionally, they need more information about soft skills through academic courses, especially psychological, sociological courses. The findings are consistent with the findings of several studies such as Zedeck and Goldstein (2000), and Majid, Liming, Tong & Raihana (2012). On the other hand, over 25% of the respondents did not agree with the definition given soft skills because they thought they were technical skills. Students have to learn through two phases; the theoretical phase and the practical phase.

On the contrary, only 7 of the Islamic undergraduate students in this study did not value the importance of soft skills for higher education students because these skills are not accountable in the workplace due to the importance of academic degree and socioeconomic level in your society. Also, they believe soft skills are complicated skills and difficult to learn and practice compared to professional knowledge due to consuming time and effort without retaining back benefits for students. Illustrating these findings, those students do not understand the differences between soft skills and professional knowledge, so faculty members have to pay attention to clarify them for students and encourage students to read about the soft skills and professional knowledge. These procedures would help students to succussed in their academic and future work lives.

Research subsidiary Questions No.1
The main research question has been dovetailed in the previous section. In the following section, the researcher attempted to discuss the subsidiary questions in detail.
The researcher attempted to list the soft skills through this section based upon the Islamic undergraduate students' perceptions.

As table 2 shows, the study participants listed the skills which are considered soft skills. As a result, these findings emphasized the literature that asserts that soft skills include communication, problem-solving, conflict resolution, goal setting, and planning and task coordination. Also, it contains problem-solving, work ethics, and personal qualities, etc. These findings are consistent with several studies, For example, Leigh et al. (1999), Steven and campion (1999), Zedeck and Goldstein (2000).

Table 2: Skills considered as soft skills by the Participants' perceptions

Ranking	Statement	Frequency (n=300)
1	Improving Decision- Making	298
2	A greater willingness to accept the ideas of others.	288
3	Improving leadership skills	277
4	oral communication	276
5	A gain in self-confidence	275
6	Small group discussions	272
7	Learned more about technology and various applications	268
8	Sharing information with others	268
9	Improving time management	260
10	project management skills	258
11	Passion towards work	256
12	Learned to disagree without feeling angry	254
13	Positive work attitude	251
14	written communication	250
15	Self- motivations and self-direction	241
16	Personal effectiveness.	244
17	Learning Foregoing language	247
18	Strategic thinking	247
19	A gain of credibility due to actual work experience.	235
20	Gain confidence that goals can be achieved with assistance (instructor and peers)	231
21	Teamwork spirit	222
22	know when/ where to stop an argument	215
23	Recognized the importance of organization and employees' relationships	213
24	Learned that active learning activities can be informative and fun	211
25	Learned the negative aspects of stereotypes	210

26	saying no to inappropriate requests/suggestions	209
27	Taking personal responsibility	200
28	Younger students accepted mature views due to life experience.	200
29	Flexibility	199
30	A gain of knowledge and understanding of other cultures	186
31	Greater respect from traditional students.	179
32	Made friends with some team members who had been less active in class	177
33	Continues learning	163
34	Dealing with work pressure	148
35	Adapting to change	159
36	Setting working goals	137

Research subsidiary Questions No.2

In this section, the respondents were given five statements about the importance of soft skills for education and future carrier based on Islamic undergraduate students' perceptions. As table 3 indicated, soft skills were considered the most important of soft skills is accelerating students' academic performance (mean score 4.48), followed by developing the learning environment (mean score 4.21). These findings are consistent with Massaro et al. (2016), Ibrahim & Kayode (2017), and Hora, Benbow & Smolarek (2018). However, participants thought that such skills were comparatively less important for complementing technical skills (hard skills) as well as finding a better job opportunity and considering soft skills as a primary employment requirement by Modern workplaces. There is a lack of understanding of the benefit of improving soft skills for preparing students for a future career so it is required to have more workshops and roundtable discussions with the business managers to change the student's misconceptions about the relationships between soft skills and the business world.

Table 3: *Importance of Soft Skills*

Statement	Strongly agree (5)	Agree (4)	Undecided (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly Disagree (1)	Mean *M*	Standard deviation *SD*
Soft skills accelerate students' Academic performance	52.9	44.9	0	2.2	0	4.48	.618
Soft skills develop the learning environment.	68.1	11.6	2.9	8.7	8.7	4.21	1.344
Soft skills complement technical skills (hard skills).	37.0	44.9	8.7	7.2	2.2	1.92	.971
Finding a better job opportunity.	7,2	2.2	8.7	37.0	44.9	1.92	.971
Modern workplaces consider soft skills as a primary employment requirement.	37.0	44.9	7.2	2.2	8.7	1.92	.971

7. Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to investigate Islamic undergraduate students' perceptions of the importance of soft skills for their education and future carrier. The results showed that Islamic undergraduate students at King Khalid University were aware of the importance of soft skills for their education and future carrier. They thought soft skills are important for accelerating students' Academic performance and developing the learning environment while less important for finding a better job opportunity and considering it a primary employment requirement by modern workplaces. Participants ranked the following soft skills as the essential skills for Islamic undergraduate students improving decision-making, a greater willingness to accept the ideas of others, improving leadership skills, oral communication, a gain in self-confidence, small group discussions, and learned more about technology and various applications. They

8. Pedagogical Implications

8.1 Implications for research and practice

The present research findings have highlighted several implications of the importance of soft skills in the academic lives and Careers for Islamic undergraduate students.

8.2 Theoretical implications

Even though studies have shown that hard skills mostly influence student performance increase in productivity, this study has proven that soft skills acquisition will directly influence Academic student achievements. Theoretically, it can conclude that if universities plan to develop their student's soft skills, they should consider seriously embedded soft skills in courses and adopting training programmes.

8.3 Implications for practice

This study's findings help raise the awareness of the vice president's office for academic affairs, faculty members, and college to rethink the necessity of improving soft skills for Undergraduate students at King Khalid University.

9. Recommendations

Future research could explore the influence of soft skills on Islamic studies undergraduate students based upon their learning styles. Also, it could examine the relationship between enhancing soft skills and getting good job opportunities for KKU graduates and other Saudi university graduates

Acknowledgements

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