

Review Article

The Importance of Soft Skills in the Workplace

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Received: 17 February 2022

Revised: 27 March 2022

Accepted: 29 March 2022

Published: 12 April 2022

Abstract - *Appropriate soft skills are crucial for a successful career and social relationships in society. This study aims to understand public awareness of the significance of soft skills in everyday life, particularly at work. The major goal of this research was to see if there is a need for soft skills in industries/startups. A questionnaire was used for data collection from industries of Jodhpur and startups from Delhi. It was found that soft skills were beneficial for both social interaction and career advancement for the majority of the respondents. HR professionals highlighted communication, teamwork, and leadership skills as the top three essential soft skills. This paper proposes that one should have soft skills because, nowadays, employers are looking for employees with these skills as they make employees more productive. Finally, job seekers must sustain these skills, and students must recognize the importance of soft skills and incorporate them as soon as possible.*

Keywords - HR professionals, Jobs, Recruitment, Soft Skills, Thinking of Industries and Startups.

1. Introduction

Many factors make today's business environment more complex, uncertain, and competitive (Chandrashekar, 2015). Organizations of all types see human resources as a key asset that plays an important role. It is critical to the performance and success of any organization. Most employers hire, retain and encourage people who are trustworthy, resourceful, ethical, communicative, self-centred, willing to work, learn and have a positive attitude (Watts, M., 2009). Therefore, it is believed that learning, innovation, and entrepreneurship activities can be enhanced by developing soft skills as part of the education and training process (Liu, X., Lin, C., Zhao, G., & Zhao, D, 2019). Soft skills are a mix of human skills, social skills, communication skills, personality or personality traits, attitudes, occupational traits, and social and emotional intelligence that helps people find their environment, perform actively well, engage in teamwork, and complete tasks by applying hard skills. These skills are important in building relationships, building awareness, and creating additional career opportunities. These skills are skills that add value to a person's hard skills. The Centre for Career Opportunities at Purdue university defines soft skills as "the cluster of personality traits, social graces, facility with language, personal habits, friendliness, and optimism that mark each of us to varying degrees." (Jungsun K, 2011).

Most soft skills can be learned through training programs, and some of them come naturally. Soft skills are also necessary for life and career, although fewer work roles require more specialized/hard skills. Nowadays, Hard skills are easily measurable and tangible, whereas soft skills are demonstrated according to the situations encountered. Soft skills are well-known as strategic, proactive, and tactical elements in all workplaces. These skills are at the heart of the entire professional career. The growth and profit of any

industry or organization are built on its people's strong, soft skills (Gavin, 2019). Practising life skills or interpersonal skills will help to understand and absorb other facilitators, such as sociability, personality, confidence, patience, will, open mind, and other important skills. Organizations employ employees with reliable and durable excellent interpersonal skills for their benefit. In the 21st century, most organizations and industries look for excellent staff by hiring them based on soft skills. In other words, in the highly competitive labour market, the criteria for hiring are not limited to hard skills and expertise. Recruiters are always looking for people who can be leaders, and leadership itself depends on several key soft skills. (Doyle, 2020), (Doyle, 2021).

The importance of soft skills in modern society can be highlighted based on various surveys conducted in different countries. A study conducted in Japan on 'Technological Innovation, Ageing Labour Forces, and Effective Human Resource Management' discovered that logical intelligence, problem-solving ability, adaptability to change, and requiring employees to perform complex tasks such as programming, monitoring, etc., were all important. To understand each technical step in relation to their technical expertise, such professionals must have a diverse set of core skills and technical knowledge (Walther, J., Miller, S. E., & Sochacka, N. W., 2017).

A survey of 52 different professions of more than 8,000 managers in the United States found that employee soft skills are the most important ability in almost every profession, including the technical environment (Hodges, D., 2003). According to a survey of Fortune 500 CEOs, interpersonal skills account for 75 per cent of long-term success at work (S, Dr Vasanthakumari, 2019). Researchers at Boston University and Ross School of the Business University of



Michigan found that employees with interpersonal skills were 12% more productive than those without (Adhvaryu, 2017). Moreover, as per the public interest survey conducted by McDonald's in the UK, by 2020, more than 500,000 people will quit their jobs due to a lack of interpersonal skills. (S, Dr. Vasanthakumari, 2019)

While it is now widely known that companies emphasize soft skills, it is equally vital for students to properly assess the importance of these skills and concentrate their efforts on learning them. Porter said that many business students do not attach great importance to developing interpersonal skills (Porter, J., 2007). As a result, a perception gap leads to a lack of soft skills among business graduates entering the workforce (Rynes, S. 2003).

Most of the research reviews found that most studies on this topic were conducted from students' perspectives. Only a limited amount of research focused on employee perceptions and attitudes toward interpersonal skills (Grisi, C.G.A., 2014). Therefore, the main objective of this study was to investigate the importance of soft skills in different workplaces, such as industries and startups.

This paper tries to attempt, analyze, and differentiate between the need for soft skills in various industries according to their job description. Furthermore, it contrasts the importance of Soft Skills in various workplaces, such as industries and startups.

2. Methodology

2.1. Aim of the Study

The present research highlights the importance of Soft Skills in different workplaces, such as agricultural or textiles industries and startups, which comprise service-oriented businesses and also tries to differentiate between the thinking patterns of experienced industries and startups on the significance of soft skills.

2.2. Research Design

The study consists of a descriptive survey research design, and for the goals of this study, industries and enterprises were heterogeneous in terms of capital investment, years of experience, economic sectors, and other characteristics.

2.3. Consent and Ethical Issues

Respondents gave their written consent for data collection. The respondents' privacy and confidentiality were protected; no information would be shared with a third party. No identification, such as names or photographs, was revealed in the publication or during the study. The research was conducted in accordance with ethical standards.

2.4. Scales Used

The questionnaire mainly consisted of multiple-choice questions. The survey contained questions based on Soft Skills, i.e. "What are soft skills? Are soft skills really necessary? Why are they important in your industry? What are the most important soft skills while recruiting?" and much more. Most of the questions were closed-ended, but they were given the option to comment or provide additional information. (TestGorilla, 2022)

2.5. Sample

The survey sample comprises 11 startups from Delhi and 11 industries in Jodhpur. In Jodhpur, the data was collected from diverse industries. The information for the study was collected first from various research papers, reports, various documents, and articles. The information on various industries was analyzed based on capital investments and years of experience. The second and major data source was generated by a primary survey with the help of HR professionals from the food-related sector, textile industries, exporting industries, and handicraft industries from Jodhpur and Delhi. Human resource professionals work to establish and enforce organizational standards, and their function is associated with administrative activities such as hiring, onboarding, training and much more.

3. Results

The present goal of the research is to identify the most significant soft skills necessary for multiple departments and distinguish between industry and startup perspectives on soft skill requirements.

HR professionals were asked about the skills, which in their opinion, should be classified as soft skills. The goal is to see if they understand soft skills well. Only 13(63.6%) respondents out of the 22 chose the correct response, indicating that soft skills are classified as Emotional Intelligence Quotient. (See Figure 1).

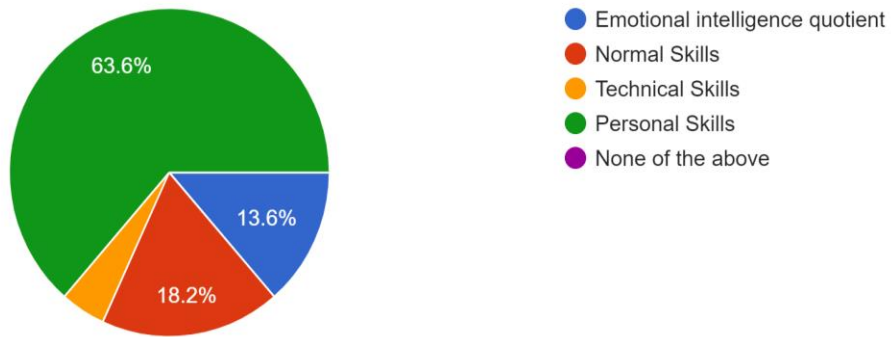


Fig. 1 HR professionals vote on how soft skills should be classified. Note = n - 22, I - 11, S - 11 (Where n refers to sample, I refers to Industries, and S refers to Startups)

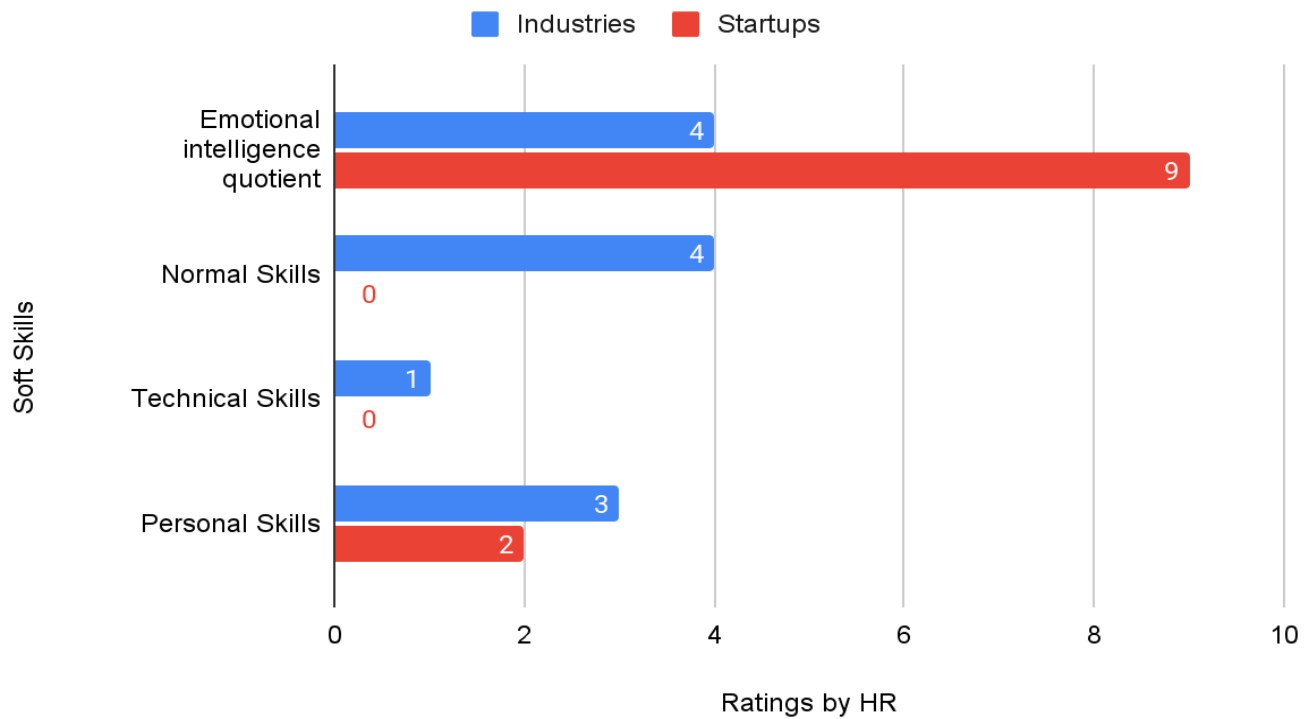


Fig. 2 HR Professionals Vote on How Soft Skills Should be Classified

Startups have a deeper understanding of soft skills than industries, as seen in Figure 2. Most industries classified soft skills as personal skills, normal skills, and emotional intelligence quotient, while 9 out of 11 startups selected the correct response.

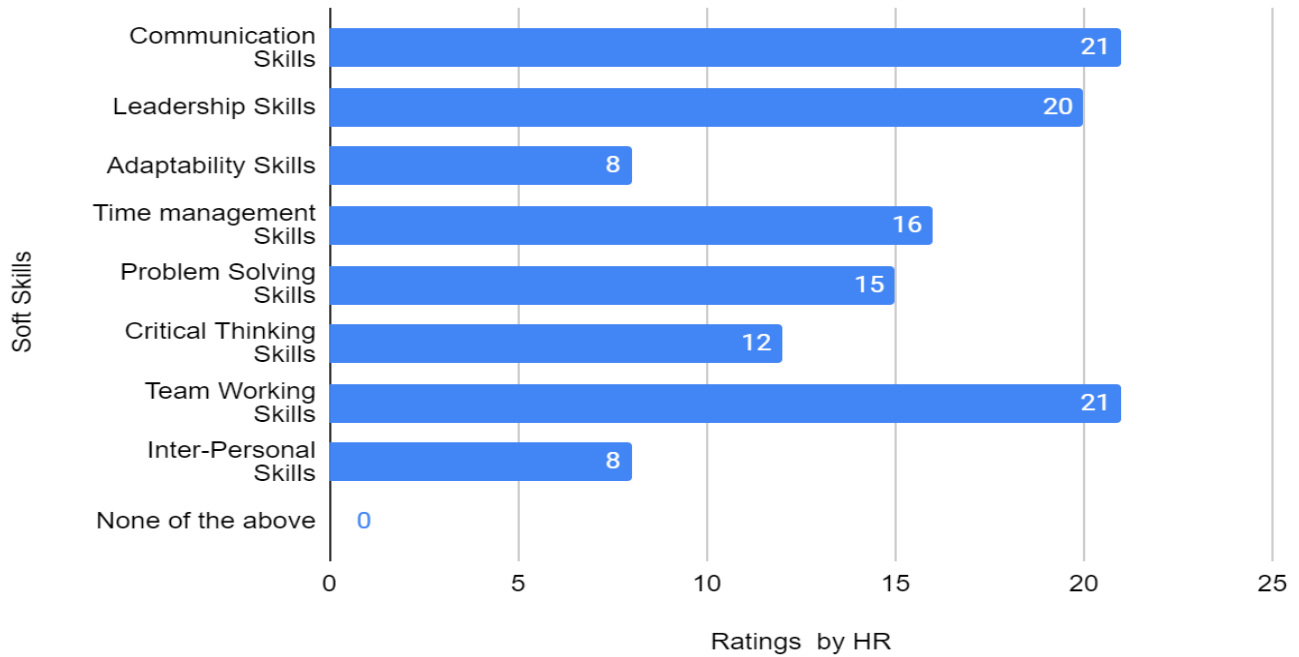


Fig. 3 HR Professionals Vote on Key Soft Skills for Recruiting

According to the above graph, with 21 votes each, communication, teamwork, and leadership skills are the most significant soft skills for the hiring process.

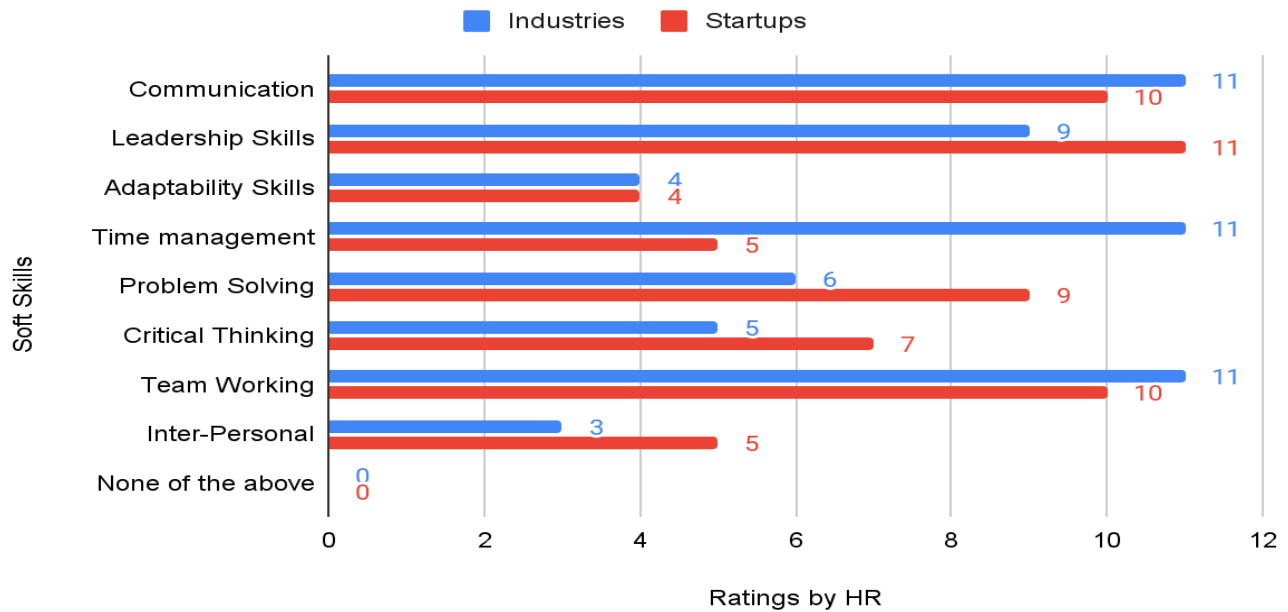


Fig. 4 HR professionals vote on key soft skills for recruiting

As shown in the diagram above, soft skill requirements vary from place to place. Communication skills, teamwork, and time management skills are highly valued when it comes to industries. Communication, leadership, problem-solving, critical thinking, and teamwork skills are more important at startups.

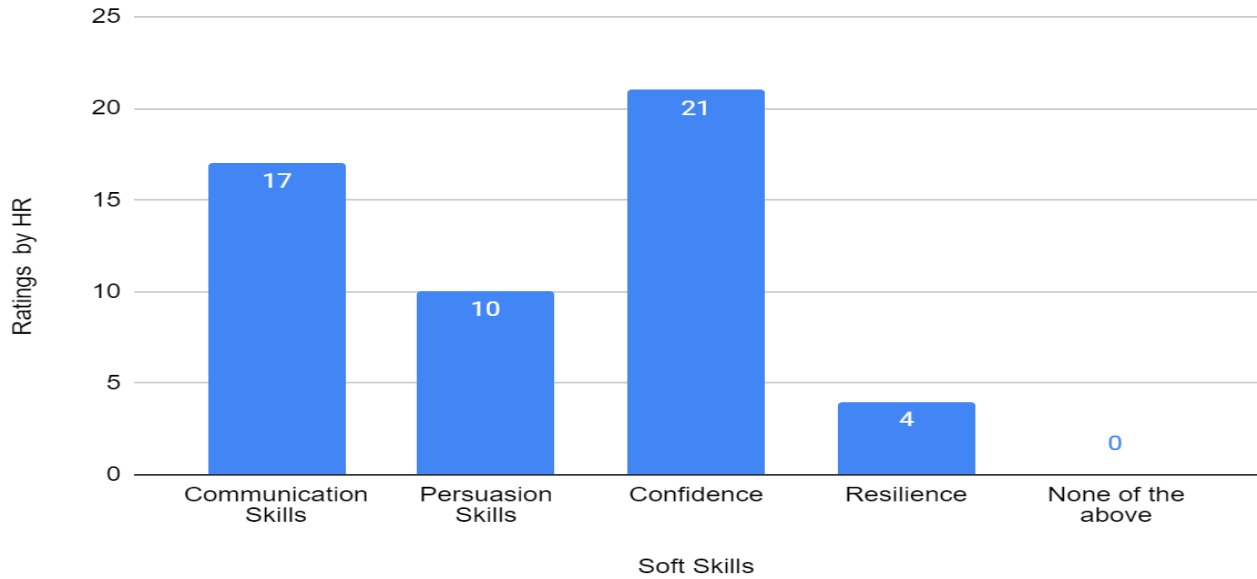


Fig. 5 HR professionals vote on soft skills necessary for Business Development and Sales positions

HR professionals from various companies were given four soft skills to pick between. They were instructed to select the most significant soft skills they believe are necessary for business development and sales roles. According to the graph, confidence is the most important quality in this sector, with 21 votes, followed by communication skills, with 17 votes (see Figure 5).

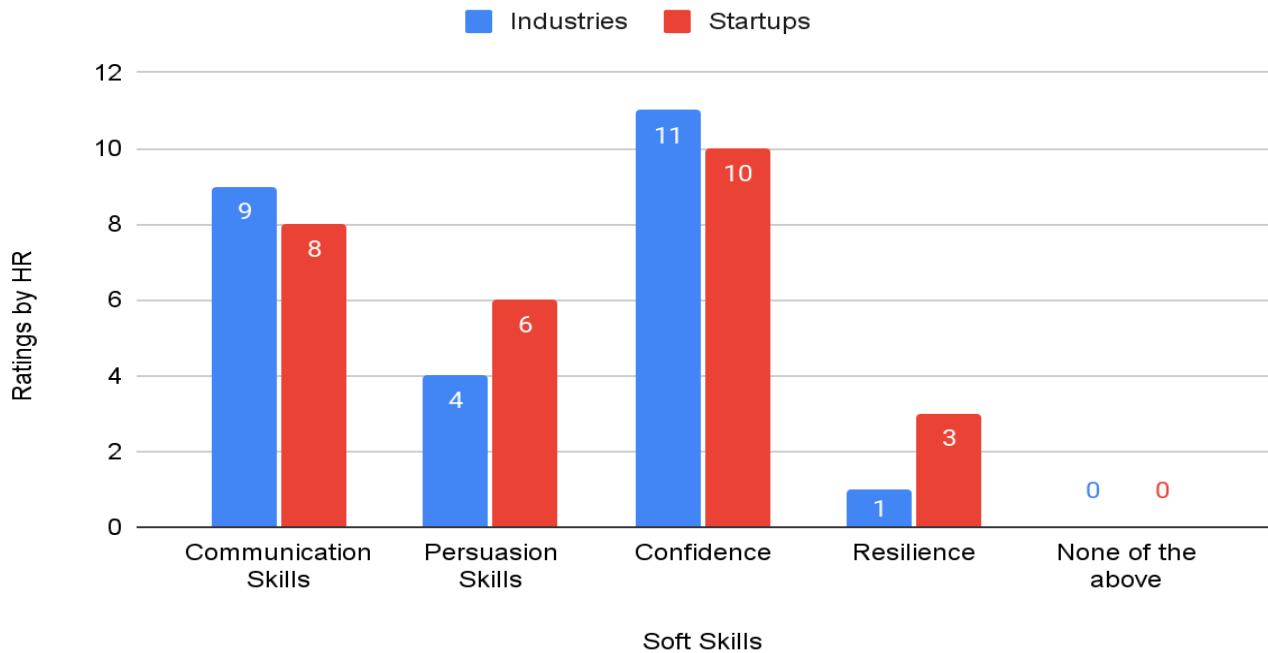


Fig. 6 HR professionals, vote on soft skills necessary for Business Development and Sales positions

The above graph shows that confidence gives tough competition to communication skills in both startups and industries. This means that if someone is applying for a business development or sales role, they must possess these skills.

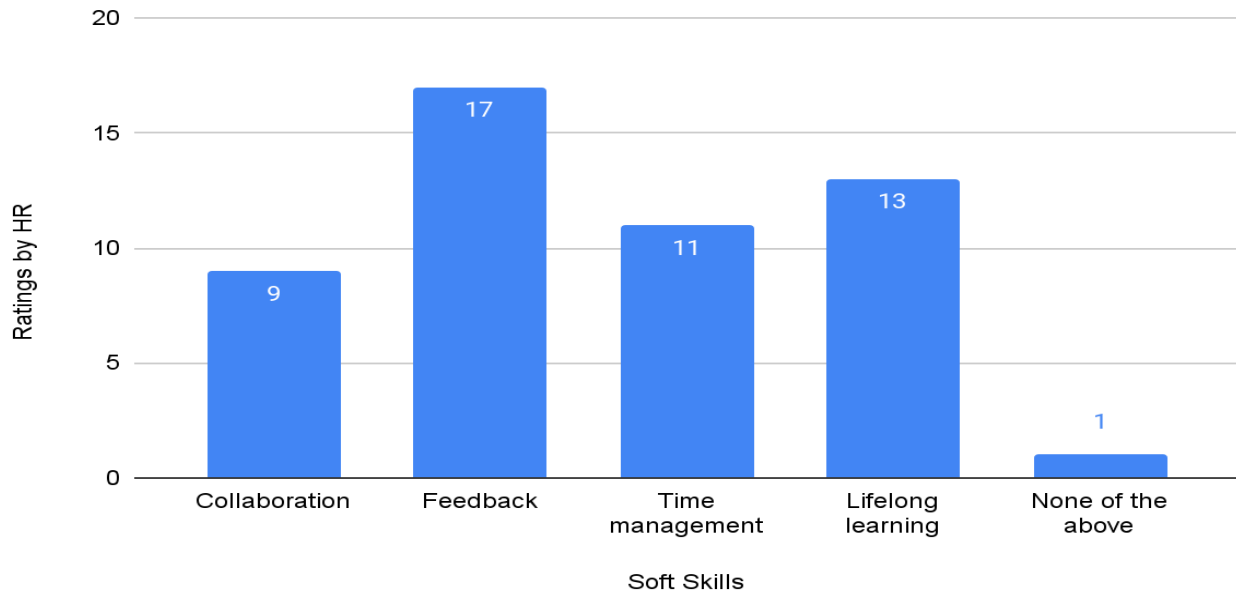


Fig. 7 Soft skills required for creative and digital media, as per HR professionals

Regarding soft skills required for the creative and digital media department, feedback and lifelong learning occur by receiving 17 and 13 votes, respectively. Feedback refers to giving and receiving constructive criticism from clients and team members. Lifelong learning refers to staying updated with new trends and software (see Figure 7). (TestGorilla,2022).

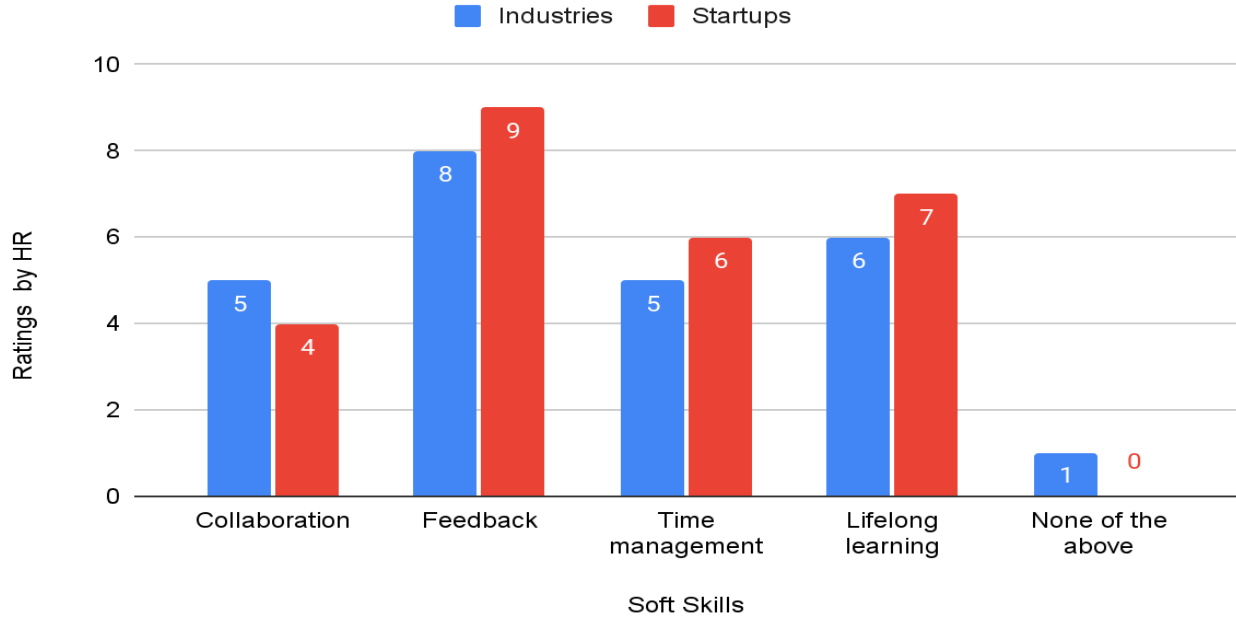


Fig. 8 Soft skills required for creative and digital media, as per HR professionals

As per the graph above, industries and startups are more interested in lifelong learning and feedback, but startups are more concerned with time management skills.

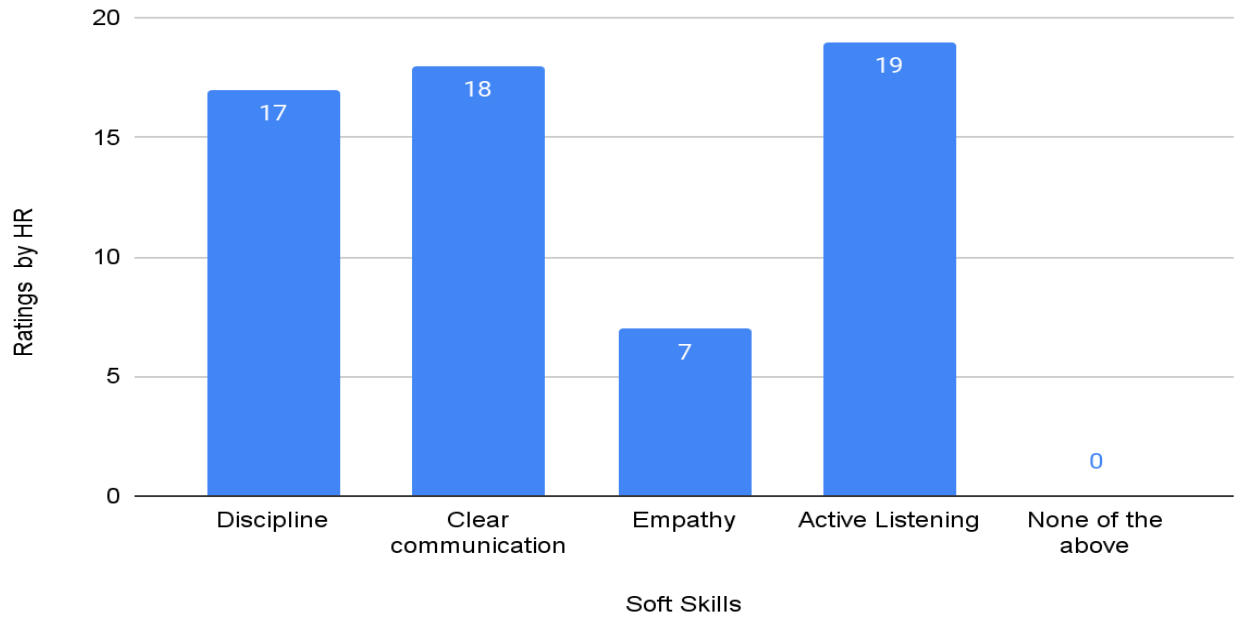


Fig. 9 HR professionals choose key soft skills for the customer service department

In terms of soft skills required in the customer service department, most companies chose all of the given skills except empathy, where empathy refers to being sensitive to the concerns and issues of customers (see Figure 9). (TestGorilla, 2022).

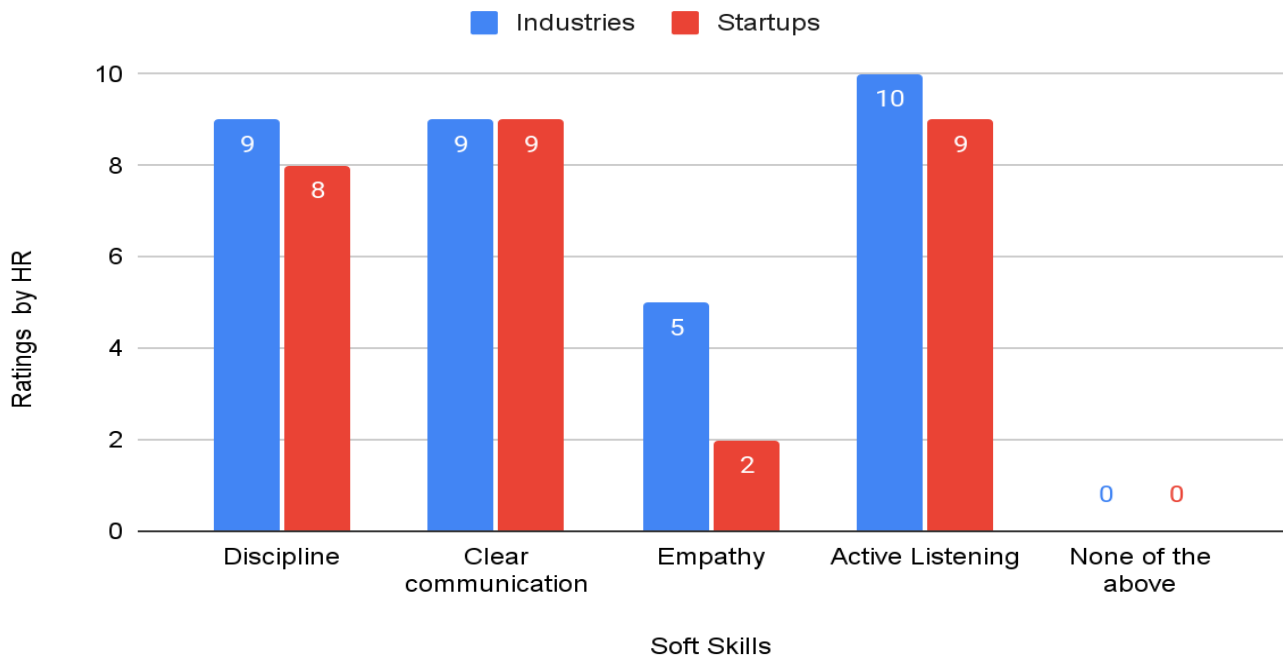


Fig. 10 HR professionals choose key soft skills for the customer service department

According to figure 10, when it comes to selecting soft skills, the choices of industries and startups are nearly identical.

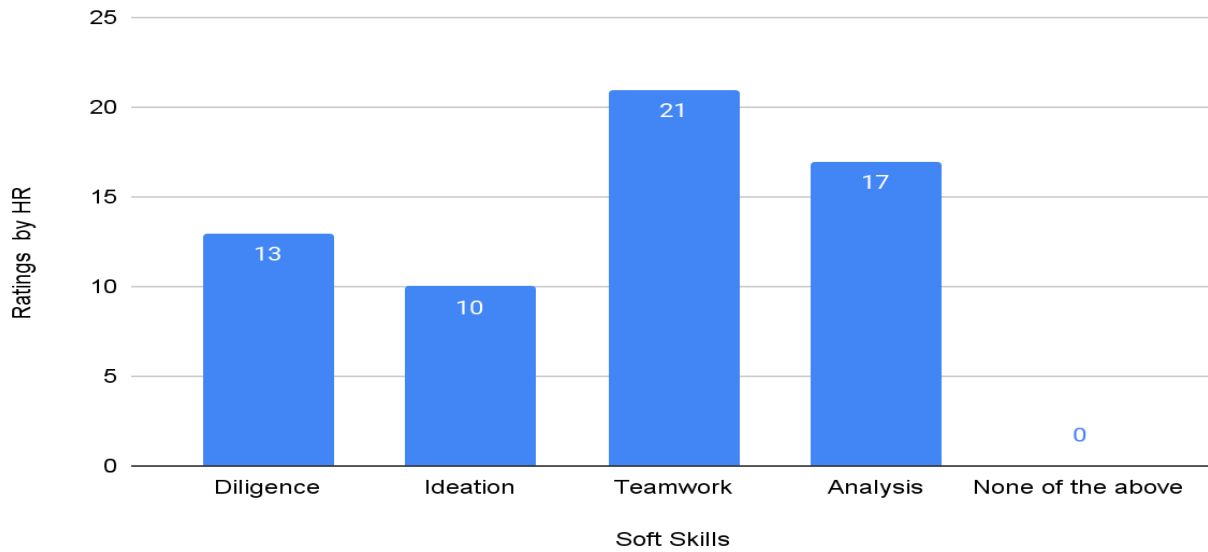


Fig. 11 The graph depicts the required soft skills for the marketing department as determined by HR professionals

One may deduce from the graph above (see figure 11) that the marketing department has a trend in teamwork and analysis skills. As a result, if someone is applying for this job, they must be familiar with these skills, as they are in demand.

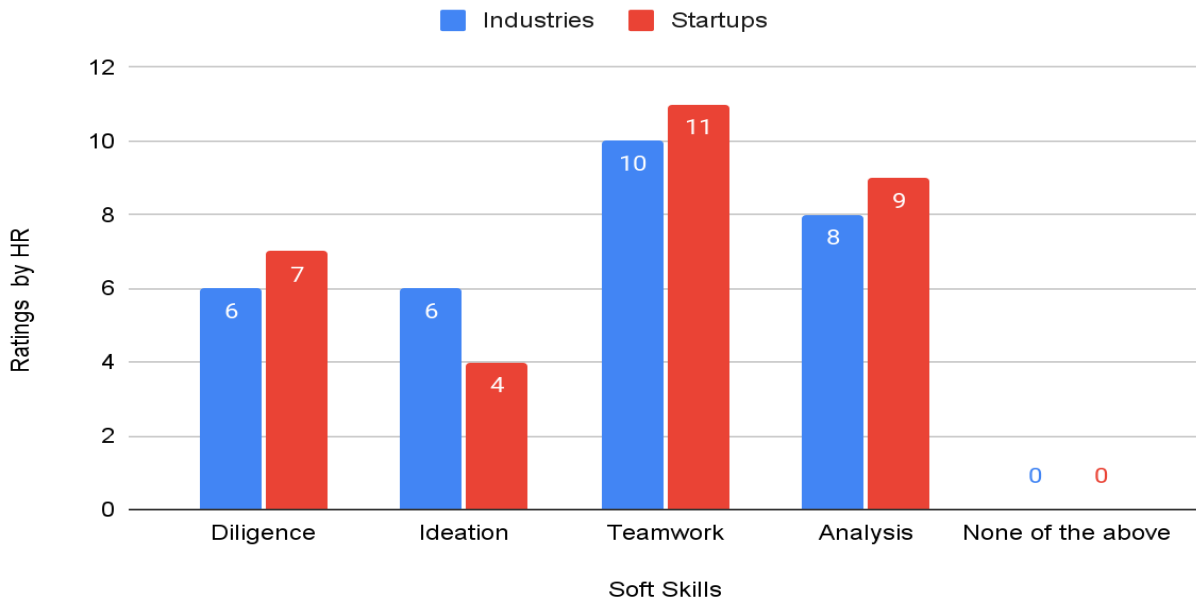


Fig. 12 The graph depicts the required soft skills for the marketing department as determined by HR professionals

According to the graph (Figure 12), industries and startups have the same mindset regarding the soft skills required for marketing departments. Hence the requirement for skills in marketing departments does not differ from one workplace to the next.

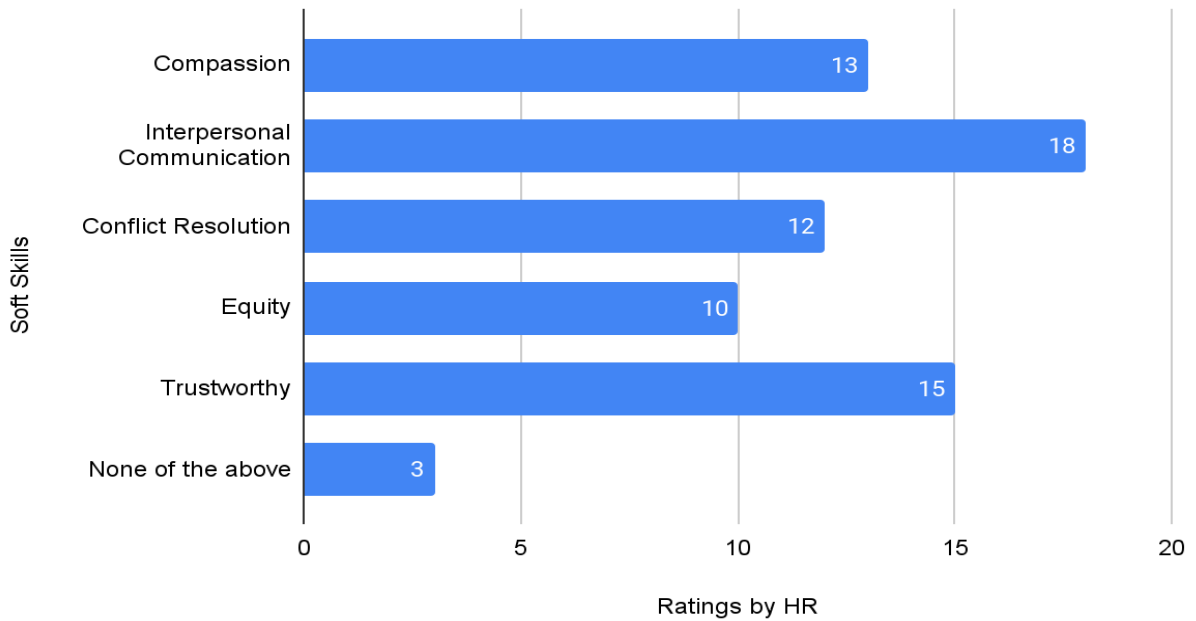


Fig. 13 HR professionals choose vital soft skills for the human resource department

In the Human Resource Department, interpersonal communication, trustworthiness, and compassion are essential when interacting with employees and learning about their issues at work, as shown in Figure 13.

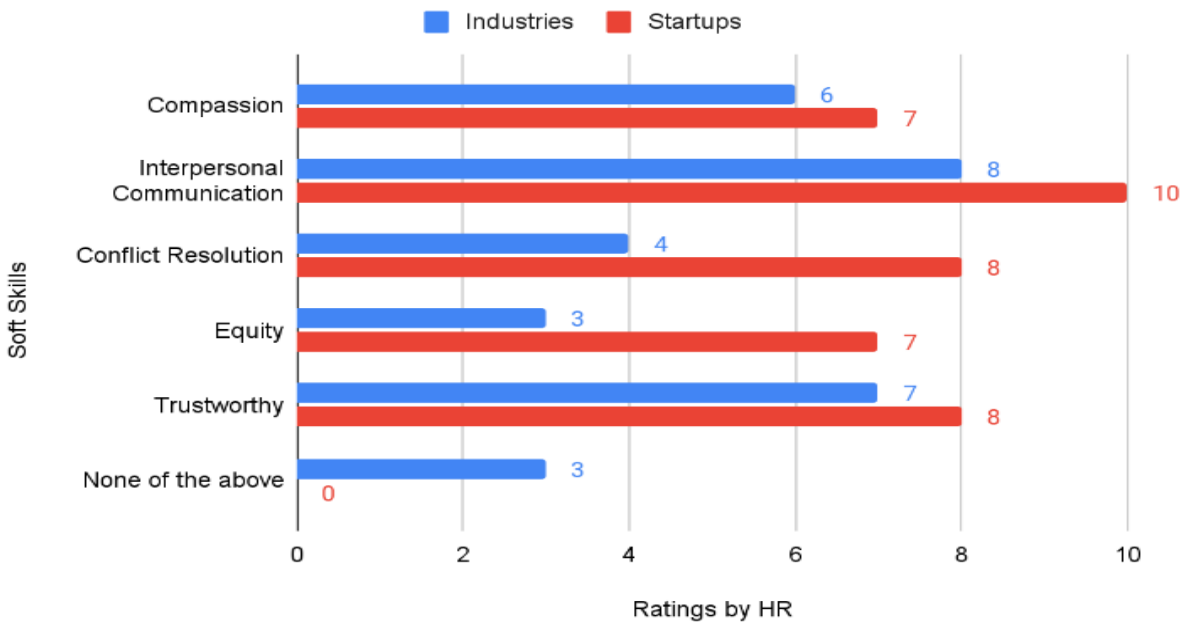


Fig. 14 HR professionals choose vital soft skills for the human resource department

According to figure 14, startups believe interpersonal communication, trustworthiness, compassion, conflict resolution, and equity are important, whereas industries only believe interpersonal communication and trustworthiness are essential.

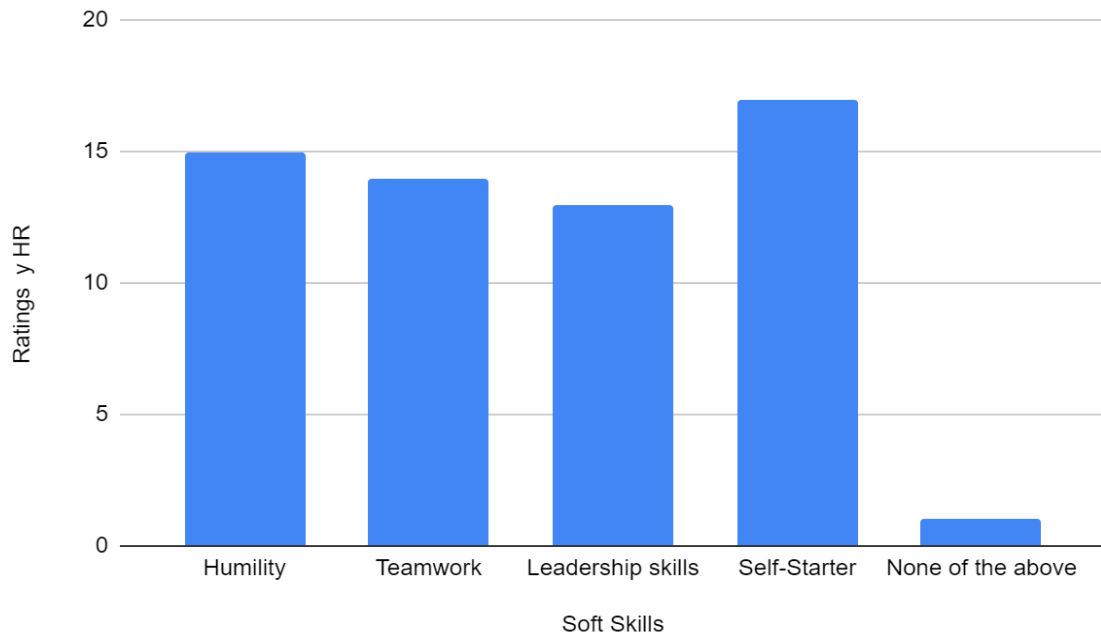


Fig. 15 Votes from HR professionals on significant soft skills required for the Technology department

According to the graph above, all skills are required in the technology department.

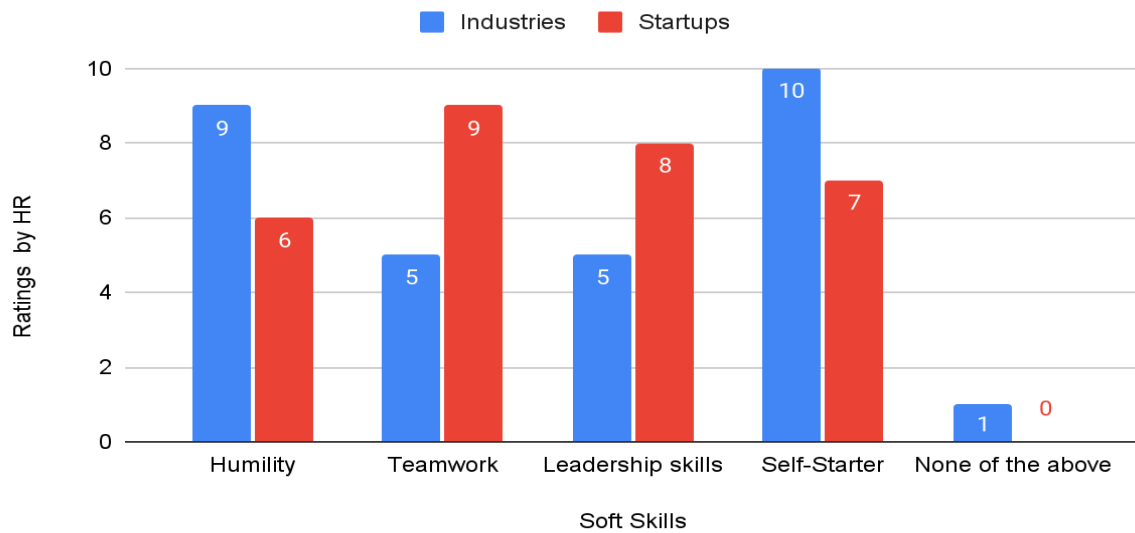


Fig. 16 Votes from HR professionals on significant soft skills required for the technology department

According to the figure (Fig. 16), industries chose humility and self-starter, but startups chose teamwork and leadership qualities. As a result, we might deduce that the need for soft skills differs.

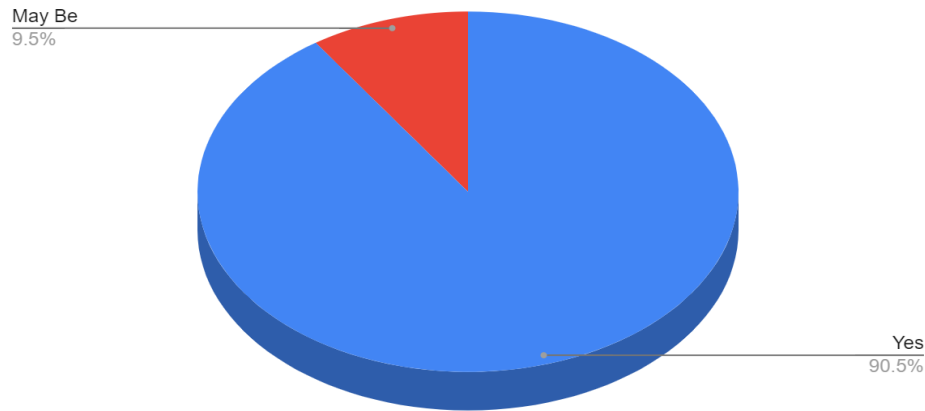


Fig. 17 Pie chart showing responses of HR professionals to the question 'Is it truly vital to have soft skills?'

Note = n - 22, I - 11, S - 11 (Where n refers to sample, I refers to Industries, and S refers to Startups)

4. Discussion

The study's first goal was to determine whether soft skills are required for industries/startups or not.

Fig. 17 was created with the help of votes cast by participants, and it is evident from the graph shows that soft skills are in high demand in every organization, whether the textile or food industry. As a result, most industries and companies are increasingly looking for excellent employees who may be hired based on their soft talents (Rockwood, 2021). In reality, hiring criteria go beyond hard talents and knowledge in today's highly competitive market. Recruiters are always on the lookout for people who have the potential to lead their companies, and leadership is dependent on a number of soft critical skills such as communication skills, interpersonal skills, team working skills, and much more.

According to table 1, someone applying for a job in a company should have communication, teamwork, and

leadership skills. It suggests that someone applying for a job must have certain skills, increasing their chances of getting hired.

Table 1 shows that each department requires a different set of soft skills, and the requirements differ from one department to the next. As a result, it became vital to have a wide range of soft skills to pass interviews. With the help of the table above, one may determine which skill to implement for which department.

A study by Wonderlic found that 93% of hiring leaders stated that soft skills are an "essential" or "very important" element when hiring decisions. What is more, many employers reported that soft skills are more important than tech skills. (*The Soft Skills Stats You Need to Know*, 2017).

Table 1. Key Soft Skills required by different departments based on the research survey

Departments	Required Skill	Required Skill	Required Skill
Business development and sales department	Confidence	Communication skills	-
The creative and digital media department	Feedback	Lifelong learning	Time management
Customer service department	Active Listening	Clear communication	Discipline
Marketing department	Teamwork	Analysis	-
Human Resource department	Interpersonal Communication	Trustworthy	Compassion
Technology department	Self-Starter	Humility	Teamwork

Table 2. Distinguishes between the need for soft skills in industries and startups

Departments	Industries	Startups
Business development and sales department	Confidence and Communication skills	Confidence and Communication skills
The creative and digital media department	Feedback and Lifelong learning skills	Feedback and Lifelong learning skills
Customer service department	Active Listening, Clear communication and Discipline	Active Listening, Clear communication and Discipline
Marketing department	Team working skills	Team working, Analysis and Diligence skills
Human Resource department	Interpersonal Communication and Trustworthy skills	Interpersonal Communication, Trustworthy, Conflict resolution, Equity, and Compassion
Technology department	Self-starter and Humility	Self-starter, Leadership and Teamworking skills

From the above table, it can be concluded that the thinking of experienced industries and startups is mostly similar. Still, sometimes they differ based on their requirements, and thus the requirement of soft skills varies from firm to firm. As a result, when applying for a job, one should thoroughly research the company they are applying to, using the company's website or any other source, and finally, try to find out the soft skills they are looking for.

4.1. The Implication of the Study

This study demonstrates the relevance of soft skills in one's life. These abilities are required in every aspect of life, whether for work or personal development, making it even more critical to acquire them as soon as possible (Schulz B, 2008). Some soft skills are required when applying for a job, such as communication, leadership, and teamwork skills (Barnard, 2019). Soft skills requirements may range from one department to the next and from one company to another. Soft skills, as well as hard skills, are required for today's new generation of managers. Modern business executives should be able to comprehend problems, connect and coordinate with others, and have the know-how to solicit the help of others. The ability to operate as part of a team and have solid interpersonal skills are important factors in corporate executive development and advancement. (John, J. 2009).

According to the research above, students can also learn how to apply soft skills, which soft skills to use in various departments, and which soft talents are in higher demand. As a result, students are encouraged to apply for a soft skills training course. After all, students exposed to soft skills training regularly would have an advantage over their peers not just in terms of employability but also in general personality development (Rani, E., & Mangala, S.,2010). This is expected to show up in their interviews for placements and overall performance throughout their lives. Though technical capabilities are required at the entry level

for any manager, their soft skills will allow them to advance in their profession. (John, J. 2009).

4.2. Recommendations

- Employees/students should enrol in a soft skills training program to develop soft skills faster. One may take a wide choice of soft skill courses online, many of which are free. Check them out at Coursera, Future Learn, edX, and Udemy (Colman, 2020).
- The government should educate citizens about soft skills and establish training institutes (Dondi, Klier, Panier, Schubert, 2021). It can be done by running various awareness programs like Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana 2016-2020.
- A college or university should run a course emphasizing soft skill development in its curriculum. Every institution should consider soft skills an extracurricular activity (Lane, 2021).

5. Conclusion

Overall, Soft skills are used in many organizations, including industries and startups, and the demand for soft skills varies from one business to the next. Communication, teamwork, and leadership abilities are the most important soft skills during the hiring process (Figure 3). As a result, soft skills have become an important part of any company. As a result, there has been a huge growth in soft skills learning. Soft skills are an important component of life because they improve one's capacity to collaborate with people and help to succeed in the job. According to most companies, soft skills are an important consideration in hiring since they help develop strong relationships and make it easier to get along with others. Understanding the importance of soft skills early on is extremely important because developing them takes a long time. With this study, students and employees will better understand the value of soft skills.

Limitations of the Study

Our research has one limitation. Therefore it is important to interpret the results carefully. The study's sample size is limited, with only 22 companies taking part. The larger the sample size, the better the degree of accuracy;

the topic "Soft skills are required in all professions". This study paper taught me a lot about soft skills and helped me understand how they may be acquired and their benefits and drawbacks. I hope this research report will help all employees and students looking to work in firms.

Acknowledgement

I am grateful to the Sitare Foundation for giving me a chance to prepare a research paper in the form of a thesis on

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