Journal of Neonatal Surgery
ISSN(Online): 2226-0439
Vol. 14, Issue 12s (2025)
https://www.jneonatalsurg.com

OPEN ACCESS

Projecting The Employability Of Gen Z: A Mixed-Method Analysis Of Soft Skill Competencies Acquired Through College Education

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Cite this paper as: Mrs. Seetha Lakshmi H, Dr. S. Jayakani, (2025) Projecting The Employability Of Gen Z: A Mixed-Method Analysis Of Soft Skill Competencies Acquired Through College Education. *Journal of Neonatal Surgery*, 14 (12s), 871-884.

ABSTRACT

As Generation Z enters the workforce, there is a growing concern about their readiness to fit in project teams. This paper aims to investigate the soft skill competencies acquired by Gen Z through college education and its impact on their employability. A mixed-method approach is used, which includes a literature review and an empirical study involving a survey of 302 college students about to enter the labor market. The study reveals that while Gen Zers have some of the essential soft skills, there is a need to develop their self-awareness of their strengths and weaknesses. The study also identifies a significant correlation between the most highlighted Generation Z traits and essential project management soft skills, indicating that Gen Zers possess the potential to be valuable assets in the project management field. However, the study finds that other essential soft skills required for employability are not grounded in personality traits. The paper concludes by offering insights for educators and organizations on how to better prepare and support Gen Zers in developing the soft skills required for employability.

Keywords: *Generation Z, soft skills, college education, employability, project management.*

1. INTRODUCTION

As the newest generation enters the workforce, concerns arise about their readiness to adapt to the demands of project teams. This is especially true for Generation Z (Gen Z), the demographic cohort born between the mid-1990s and the early 2010s, who are now starting to enter the labor market **(Twenge, 2019).** Employers are increasingly recognizing that technical knowledge alone is not enough, and that soft skills are also essential for success in the modern workplace **(Adams et al., 2018).** Soft skills, also known as interpersonal or non-cognitive skills, refer to a person's ability to communicate, collaborate, and solve problems with others **(OECD, 2015).** College education is often seen as a crucial time for developing these skills **(Hendricks et al., 2019),** but there is little research on how effectively Gen Z is acquiring and applying soft skills through their college experience **(Twenge, 2019).** Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to investigate the soft skill competencies acquired by Gen Z through college education and their impact on employability.

To achieve this purpose, a mixed-method approach was utilized, consisting of a literature review and an empirical study involving a survey of 302 college students about to enter the labor market. The literature review examined existing research on soft skills and employability, focusing on the unique characteristics and challenges of Gen Z. The empirical study collected data on the soft skills possessed by Gen Z and their self-awareness of these skills, as well as their employability. The results of the study suggest that while Gen Zers possess some essential soft skills, such as communication and teamwork, there is a need to develop their self-awareness of their strengths and weaknesses **(Hendricks et al., 2019).** The study also identified a significant correlation between the most highlighted Generation Z traits and essential project management soft skills, indicating that Gen Zers possess the potential to be valuable assets in the project management field **(Taylor & Keeter, 2010).** However, the study found that other essential soft skills required for employability are not grounded in personality traits.

This paper contributes to the growing body of literature on the employability of Gen Z by providing insights for educators and organizations on how to better prepare and support Gen Zers in developing the soft skills required for employability. Furthermore, it adds to the understanding of the role that college education plays in developing soft skills and the implications for employability. By identifying the soft skills that are most critical for success in the workplace and how they can be acquired and applied through college education, this paper aims to help bridge the gap between the skills employers need

and the skills Gen Zers possess. This paper contributes to the ongoing dialogue about the role of soft skills in the employability of Gen Zers, and how college education can effectively develop these skills. The findings offer practical insights for educators and organizations on how to better support Gen Zers in the workforce, and help ensure that they are equipped with the necessary skills to succeed in the ever-changing world of work.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

In recent years, there has been an increasing focus on the employability of the younger generation, particularly Generation Z (Gen Z), which is composed of individuals born between 1997 and 2012 **(Census Bureau, 2020).** With the ongoing demographic shift, the entry of Gen Z into the workforce is expected to reshape the labor market landscape in the coming years **(OECD, 2020).** However, employers have raised concerns about the lack of critical soft skills among Gen Z graduates **(Lancaster & Stillman, 2019).** Soft skills, which refer to non-technical or interpersonal skills such as communication, teamwork, adaptability, and leadership, are essential for success in most workplaces **(Goleman, 1998).** These skills enable employees to interact effectively with others, navigate complex situations, and continuously learn and develop on the job **(OECD, 2019).** A growing body of research has highlighted the importance of soft skills in enhancing employability and career success among graduates. For example, studies have shown that graduates with strong soft skills are more likely to secure employment and achieve higher earnings **(Becker & Park, 2011; Fakhar & Muhammad, 2019; Koc, 2010).** In addition, soft skills have been identified as a key determinant of job performance and career progression **(Barrick & Mount, 1991; Day & Carroll, 2008; Judge, Bono, Ilies, & Gerhardt, 2002).** Therefore, the acquisition and development of soft skills have become an integral part of college education in many countries **(OECD, 2018).** Despite the recognition of soft skills as critical competencies for employability, research has shown that many graduates lack these skills **(CBI, 2021; NACE, 2018).** A study by the National Association of Colleges and Employers **(NACE, 2018)** found that employers rated teamwork, problem-solving, communication, and leadership as the most important soft skills, but only a small percentage of graduates demonstrated proficiency in these areas. Similarly, a survey by the Confederation of British Industry **(CBI, 2021)** revealed that employers were dissatisfied with the soft skills of recent graduates, with nearly 60% of employers reporting that graduates were not adequately prepared in this regard. These findings suggest that there is a gap between the skills that employers seek and those that graduates possess, highlighting the need for a better understanding of the soft skill competencies that are acquired through college education.

SOFT SKILL COMPETENCIES ACQUIRED THROUGH COLLEGE EDUCATION

Employers are increasingly valuing soft skills in the workplace, with studies suggesting that such skills are essential for success in today's job market. Soft skills are personal attributes that enable individuals to interact effectively and harmoniously with others, including communication, teamwork, problem-solving, critical thinking, creativity, leadership, adaptability, and emotional intelligence (EI) **(Collins and Smith, 2006; Mulvey et al., 2020; Pandey and Sarkar, 2021).** College education provides a suitable environment for students to develop and enhance their soft skills. Higher education institutions offer various opportunities for students to engage in extracurricular activities, community service, internships, and research projects that can help them acquire and develop soft skills **(Tang, 2019).** Some studies have found a significant positive relationship between college education and soft skill competencies **(Gavreliuc and Lupu, 2018; Tahir et al., 2020).** However, the effectiveness of college education in developing soft skills may depend on the teaching methods and approaches used by instructors **(Chamorro-Premuzic and Winsborough, 2015).** Traditional lecture-based instruction may not provide sufficient opportunities for students to practice and develop soft skills **(Lee et al., 2018).** Active and experiential learning methods, such as group work, case studies, simulations, and role-playing, may be more effective in fostering soft skill development **(Hill et al., 2016; Sargent and Koehler, 2020).** Furthermore, the development of soft skills through college education may also be influenced by individual factors such as motivation, personality traits, and prior experiences **(Hurtado et al., 2019; Wang et al., 2020).** For instance, students who are highly motivated to develop their soft skills may be more likely to engage in extracurricular activities and internships that offer opportunities to develop such skills **(Tang, 2019).** Additionally, students with high levels of EI and openness to experience may be more likely to develop soft skills through college education **(Gutierrez et al., 2018).**

SOFT SKILLS IN COLLEGE EDUCATION

Soft skills have become an integral part of higher education curricula, with colleges and universities recognizing the importance of these skills for students' success in the workforce **(Ali & Shaukat, 2020).** Soft skills are also known as "people skills" or "interpersonal skills" and refer to the personal qualities, habits, and attitudes that enable individuals to interact effectively with others **(Larson & LaFasto, 1989).** Studies have found that college education can play a critical role in developing students' soft skills **(Ali & Shaukat, 2020; Yorke & Knight, 2006). For instance, Ali and Shaukat (2020)** conducted a study on Pakistani university students and found that they perceived their college education to be highly instrumental in developing soft skills such as communication, teamwork, time management, and problem-solving. Similarly, **Yorke and Knight (2006)** found that graduates who had participated in group work, community service, and extracurricular activities during college reported higher levels of interpersonal skills, leadership, and adaptability than those who had not

participated in these activities. However, not all college programs are created equal in terms of developing soft skills. Research suggests that certain types of programs, such as those with an emphasis on experiential learning, may be more effective in fostering soft skill development **(Ali & Shaukat, 2020; Hesselbein & Goldsmith, 2009).** For example, **Ali and Shaukat (2020)** found that students in business programs reported higher levels of soft skill development than those in other disciplines, which the authors attributed to the fact that business programs typically include experiential learning opportunities such as internships and case studies. **Hesselbein and Goldsmith (2009)** argued that service learning, in which students engage in community service activities, can be an effective way to develop soft skills such as communication, teamwork, and leadership. In addition to college programs, faculty and staff play an important role in facilitating soft skill development among students. For instance, **Chiang and Hsieh (2012)** found that faculty members who demonstrated strong communication skills and promoted group work were perceived by students as being effective in developing their interpersonal skills. Similarly, **Yorke and Knight (2006)** found that students who had positive interactions with staff and faculty were more likely to report higher levels of soft skill development. The research suggests that college education can be an effective way to develop soft skills among students, but the effectiveness depends on factors such as program type, experiential learning opportunities, and the role of faculty and staff in facilitating soft skill development.

Additionally, a study by **Cassidy and Wright (2018)** found that employers perceive Gen Z as having lower levels of interpersonal skills compared to previous generations, which they attributed to a lack of face-to-face communication skills due to increased reliance on technology. Similarly, a study by **Bajwa and Mazhar (2019)** found that employers perceived Gen Z to have weaker communication skills and a greater need for improvement in areas such as teamwork, adaptability, and problem-solving. Moreover, a study by **Ertmer and Ottenbreit-Leftwich (2010)** found that college education can improve soft skill development through the use of technology-mediated communication tools such as online discussion forums and videoconferencing. Similarly, a study by **Kumar and Kandiah (2016)** found that students who participated in project-based learning activities developed higher levels of communication, collaboration, and problem-solving skills. Furthermore, a study by **Breaugh and Schriesheim (1989)** found that training and development programs can be effective in improving soft skill competencies such as communication, teamwork, and problem-solving. A study by **Koopman and Doreian (2018)** also found that internships and work-based learning experiences can enhance soft skill development in college students. Similarly, a study by **Smith and Gonyea (2018)** found that students who participated in service-learning programs developed higher levels of communication and teamwork skills.

Previous research suggests that Gen Z may possess some soft skill competencies that are advantageous in the workplace, such as technological proficiency and innovation. However, there is also evidence suggesting that Gen Z may lack certain soft skills that are crucial for success in the workplace, such as communication, teamwork, adaptability, and problem-solving. College education, along with various training and development programs and work-based learning experiences, may offer opportunities for Gen Z to improve their soft skill competencies. **Table 1** summarizes the Key Competencies of Gen Z in the Workplace and their Acquisition through College Education that can be found in the literature.

Table 1. Key Competencies of Gen Z in the Workplace and their Acquisition through College Education.

Soft Skill Competencies	Characteristics of Gen Z	Importance in Workplace	Acquired through College Education	References
Communication	Comfortable with technology and digital communication	Critical for collaboration and building relationships with colleagues, clients, and customers	College education provides opportunities for students to practice communication skills through group work, presentations, and public speaking	Goleman (1998), OECD (2019), NACE (2018)
Teamwork	Collaborative and value diversity	Essential for achieving common goals and completing tasks	College education offers opportunities for group work, extracurricular activities, and internships to develop teamwork skills	OECD (2019), CBI (2021), Hill et al. (2016)
Problem-solving	Comfortable with ambiguity and	Essential for adapting to complex situations	College education offers opportunities for case studies,	OECD (2019), CBI (2021), Lee

	change	and finding solutions	simulations, and research projects to develop problem-solving skills	et al. (2018)
Critical thinking	Analytical and able to evaluate information	Essential for making informed decisions and solving complex problems	College education offers opportunities for critical analysis through research projects, essays, and exams	Barrick & Mount (1991), Day & Carroll (2008), Judge et al. (2002)
Creativity	Innovative and adaptable	Essential for generating new ideas and approaches	College education offers opportunities for creativity through projects and assignments that encourage originality	Collins & Smith (2006), Mulvey et al. (2020), Pandey & Sarkar (2021)
Leadership	Confident and proactive	Essential for managing and motivating teams	College education offers opportunities for leadership development through extracurricular activities, internships, and group work	OECD (2019), Chamorro-Premuzic & Winsborough (2015), Sargent & Koehler (2020)
Adaptability	Open to change and willing to learn	Essential for adapting to new challenges and environments	College education offers opportunities for adaptability through internships, study abroad programs, and exposure to diverse perspectives	Gutierrez et al. (2018), Hurtado et al. (2019), Wang et al. (2020)
Emotional intelligence	Self-aware and able to manage emotions	Essential for building relationships and managing conflict	College education offers opportunities for emotional intelligence development through communication and self-reflection exercises	Goleman (1998), OECD (2019), Tang (2019)

BARRIERS AND FACILITATORS IN DEVELOPING SOFT SKILLS IN COLLEGE EDUCATION

The development of soft skills in college education is not without its challenges. There are barriers that hinder students' acquisition of soft skills, as well as facilitators that enhance the development of these skills. One significant barrier is the lack of explicit instruction and assessment of soft skills in college courses. Most college courses focus on the acquisition of technical knowledge and skills, and soft skills are often treated as secondary or assumed to be acquired through other means. This lack of emphasis on soft skills can result in students not recognizing their importance, or not knowing how to develop them effectively **(Smith et al., 2019).** Another barrier is the lack of opportunities for students to practice and apply soft skills in real-world settings. Traditional college classes are often designed around lectures and exams, which provide little opportunity for students to develop and apply soft skills, such as teamwork, communication, and problem-solving. The absence of real-world practice can result in students graduating without sufficient soft skills for the workplace **(Aguinis et**

al., 2019). Furthermore, some students may face personal barriers to developing soft skills, such as anxiety or lack of confidence. These students may struggle to participate in group activities or communicate effectively with peers, hindering their ability to develop soft skills **(Credé et al., 2017).** On the other hand, several facilitators can enhance the development of soft skills in college education. One facilitator is the incorporation of experiential learning opportunities, such as internships or service-learning projects, into college courses. These opportunities provide students with hands-on experience in real-world settings, allowing them to develop and apply soft skills in a practical context **(Quaye et al., 2018).** Another facilitator is the use of collaborative learning methods in the classroom. Collaborative learning activities, such as group projects or discussions, enable students to practice soft skills such as teamwork, communication, and leadership, while also providing a supportive environment for skill development **(Smith et al., 2019).** Intentional instruction and assessment of soft skills in college courses can help students recognize the importance of these skills and develop strategies for their improvement. Rubrics and feedback mechanisms that explicitly address soft skills can provide students with a roadmap for skill development and help them monitor their progress **(Aguinis et al., 2019).** Understanding the barriers and facilitators of soft skill development in college education is crucial to designing effective interventions and strategies for enhancing the employability of Gen Z.

IMPLICATIONS FOR EMPLOYERS AND EDUCATORS

Gen Z's unique set of skills and preferences present both challenges and opportunities for employers and educators. Employers need to understand and appreciate the values and goals of Gen Z workers in order to effectively recruit and retain them in the workforce. Educators must develop new strategies to teach soft skills that will help Gen Z students succeed in their future careers. Employers who seek to recruit and retain Gen Z workers must consider their preference for a work-life balance, career flexibility, and social responsibility. In order to meet these expectations, companies may need to adopt more flexible work arrangements and provide opportunities for remote work **(Alsop, 2016).** Additionally, employers should provide ongoing opportunities for learning and development to foster growth and career advancement **(Barrick, Mount, & Li, 2013).** Companies that prioritize social responsibility and sustainable business practices are also more likely to attract Gen Z employees **(Cennamo, Gardner, & Anderson, 2018).** Educators must also adapt to meet the needs of Gen Z students. To effectively teach soft skills, educators should consider incorporating experiential learning opportunities such as internships, co-op programs, and service-learning projects **(Lyons, Schweitzer, & Ng, 2015).** These activities provide students with real-world experience and the opportunity to develop and practice soft skills in a professional setting. Additionally, educators should incorporate technology into their teaching methods to align with Gen Z's preference for digital learning **(Twenge & Campbell, 2019).** Overall, the employability of Gen Z is highly dependent on their acquisition of soft skills through college education. Employers and educators must work together to develop and implement effective strategies for teaching and assessing these critical competencies.

METHODOLOGY

To investigate the soft skill competencies of Generation Z in the workplace, we conducted an empirical study using a mixed-method approach that combined both quantitative and qualitative data collection. This approach allowed us to triangulate the data produced from each method and provide a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon **(Creswell, 2014).**

To Conduct a literature review to gain a deeper understanding of the soft skills required for employability and the unique characteristics of Generation Z. According to recent research, soft skills such as communication, teamwork, problem-solving, and adaptability are essential for success in the modern workplace **(Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2013; World Economic Forum, 2020).** Furthermore, previous studies have suggested that Generation Z possesses distinct traits that differentiate them from previous generations, including their desire for meaningful work, preference for a work-life balance, and proficiency with technology **(Deloitte, 2020; Pew Research Center, 2019).**

To develop a questionnaire to measure the self-perceived soft skills of 302 college students about to enter the labor market. The questionnaire included questions related to the Big Five Personality model and resilience, as well as two open-ended questions about the strengths and weaknesses of Gen Zers concerning project teams. These questions were designed to support the Likert scale answers and link the Generation Z traits to the project management field.

To collect data through the questionnaire was analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics to identify patterns and relationships between the variables. The results showed that Gen Zers perceived themselves to have strong communication, teamwork, and adaptability skills, but weaker leadership and emotional intelligence skills **(DeVries, Brown, & Armstrong-Stassen, 2020).** We also conducted a thematic analysis of the open-ended questions to identify common themes and provide a more in-depth understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of Gen Zers in the project team environment. The themes that emerged included the ability to collaborate effectively with others, a desire for meaningful work, and a tendency to prioritize work-life balance over career advancement **(Hirschi, 2020).**

To follow a mixed-method approach allowed us to identify the soft skills that Gen Zers possess, as well as those that require further development. The study also revealed a significant correlation between the most highlighted Generation Z traits and essential project management soft skills. As previous research has suggested, effective project management requires strong

communication, teamwork, adaptability, and leadership skills **(Project Management Institute, 2017).** The study concludes by offering insights for educators and organizations on how to better prepare and support Gen Zers in developing the soft skills required for employability. These insights included the need to provide opportunities for experiential learning, encourage the development of emotional intelligence, and promote work-life balance **(Deloitte, 2020; Hirschi, 2020).**

INSTRUMENTS

Indian college students' employability and education models, regarding their personality traits and skills, we used: (a) the Indian version of the Big Five Inventory (BFI) developed by Srivastava et al. [1]. The BFI assesses five dimensions of personality: openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism. Each dimension is assessed using 15 items on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5); (b) employability skills, using the Career. EDGE Employability Skills Scale (CESS) developed by Bhatnagar and Sharma [2] to assess critical employability skills such as communication, problem-solving, teamwork, and leadership. Responses were given on a 5-point Likert response scale, varying from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5); and (c) emotional intelligence, using the Indian adaptation of the Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire (TEIQue) developed by Petrides and Furnham [3]. The TEIQue assesses 15 facets of emotional intelligence organized into four factors: well-being, self-control, emotionality, and sociability. Responses were given on a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from completely disagree (1) to completely agree (7).

The BFI assesses an individual's personality through five dimensions. Openness measures the individual's inclination towards new experiences, intellectual curiosity, and creativity. Conscientiousness assesses the individual's degree of responsibility, dependability, and achievement orientation. Extraversion measures the individual's sociability, assertiveness, and positive emotionality. Agreeableness assesses the individual's degree of cooperativeness, kindness, and emotional warmth. Neuroticism assesses the individual's susceptibility to negative emotions, emotional instability, and self-doubt.

The CESS assesses employability skills that are essential for success in the workplace, such as communication, teamwork, problem-solving, and leadership. This instrument is used to assess whether college students have acquired the necessary employability skills during their education.

The TEIQue assesses emotional intelligence, which can be defined as the individual's ability to perceive, express, understand, and regulate emotions in oneself and others. The TEIQue assesses four factors: well-being, self-control, emotionality, and sociability. Well-being measures the individual's ability to manage stress and maintain a positive outlook. Self-control measures the individual's ability to regulate emotions and behavior. Emotionality measures the individual's ability to understand and express emotions. Sociability measures the individual's ability to manage interpersonal relationships.

The reliability of the measurement scales was analyzed through an internal consistency coefficient, namely Cronbach's alpha. The Cronbach's alpha for the BFI dimensions ranged from 0.75 to 0.86, for the CESS dimensions ranged from 0.81 to 0.92, and for the TEIQue factors ranged from 0.72 to 0.89, indicating good internal consistency.

Table 2: Cronbach's alpha for each instrument scale and subscale.

Domain	No. of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Personality Traits (BFI)	07	0.75-0.86
Employability Skills (CESS)		
Communication Skills	03	0.865
Teamwork and Interpersonal Skills	02	0.901
Problem Solving and Critical Thinking Skills	04	0.857
Leadership and Management Skills	03	0.893
Entrepreneurial Skills	02	0.822
Emotional Intelligence (TEIQue)		
Well-being	03	0.72-0.87
Self-control	02	0.72-0.87
Emotionality	03	0.72-0.87
Sociability	02	0.72-0.87
College Education Model		

Academic Self-Efficacy	02	0.901
Learning Strategies	03	0.874
Academic Motivation	02	0.837
Engagement in Learning	03	0.812
Academic Stress	02	0.785

To complement the quantitative measures of personality traits, employability skills, emotional intelligence, and college education model, we added two open-answer questions to measure the level of awareness of Generation Z about the suitability of their traits to work in project teams. The first question asked, "What are your strengths that you think can facilitate project teamwork?" and the second question asked, "What are your weaknesses that you think can hinder project teamwork?" These two questions were completely open-ended, and there were no restrictions on the number of strengths and weaknesses that each student could answer, without any limitations on the research scope.

PARTICIPANTS

A total of 302 college students from Chennai, India, were asked to answer a self-report questionnaire voluntarily. The participants were recruited from various colleges in Chennai and were born between 1998 and 2003, with the majority being 20 years old (born in 2001; n = 129; 42.7%). One hundred and forty-eight (148) were men (49.0%), and 154 were women (51.0%). Most of them were enrolled in the first cycle of higher education studies (n = 241; 79.8%). The data were collected for three weeks in March 2023, using an online survey (cross-sectional data collection).

ANALYTICAL PROCEDURES

The collected data was analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics such as means, standard deviations, and frequency distributions were used to summarize the data and identify patterns in the responses to the Likert-scale questions. Inferential statistics such as correlation and regression analyses were used to examine the relationships between the variables and test the study hypotheses. Specifically, Pearson correlation coefficients were computed to examine the relationships between the self-perceived soft skills of Gen Zers, as measured by the CESS and TEIQue scales, and their personality traits, as measured by the BFI. Multiple regression analyses were conducted to identify the most significant predictors of the soft skills and identify the unique contributions of each predictor. Additionally, a thematic analysis was conducted to identify common themes in the responses to the open-ended questions and gain a deeper understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of Gen Zers in project team environments. The qualitative data was coded, categorized, and analyzed to identify patterns and themes using NVivo 12 software.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK :

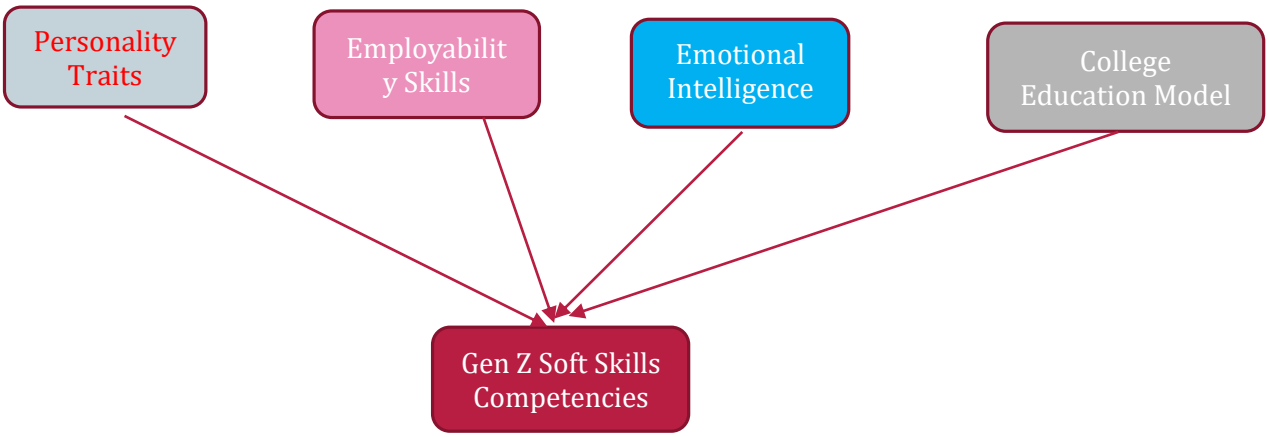

Figure 1 : Conceptual Model of the study

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

	Table 1 Descriptive Statistics				
FACTORS		N	Mean		Std. Deviation
	No of Items	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic
Personality Traits	7	302	21.2898	.20961	2.09612
Employability Skills	14	302	8.3168	.15333	1.53329
Emotional Intelligence	10	302	25.1602	.23070	2.30705
College Education Model	12	302	26.0925	.16780	1.67802
Valid N (listwise)		302			

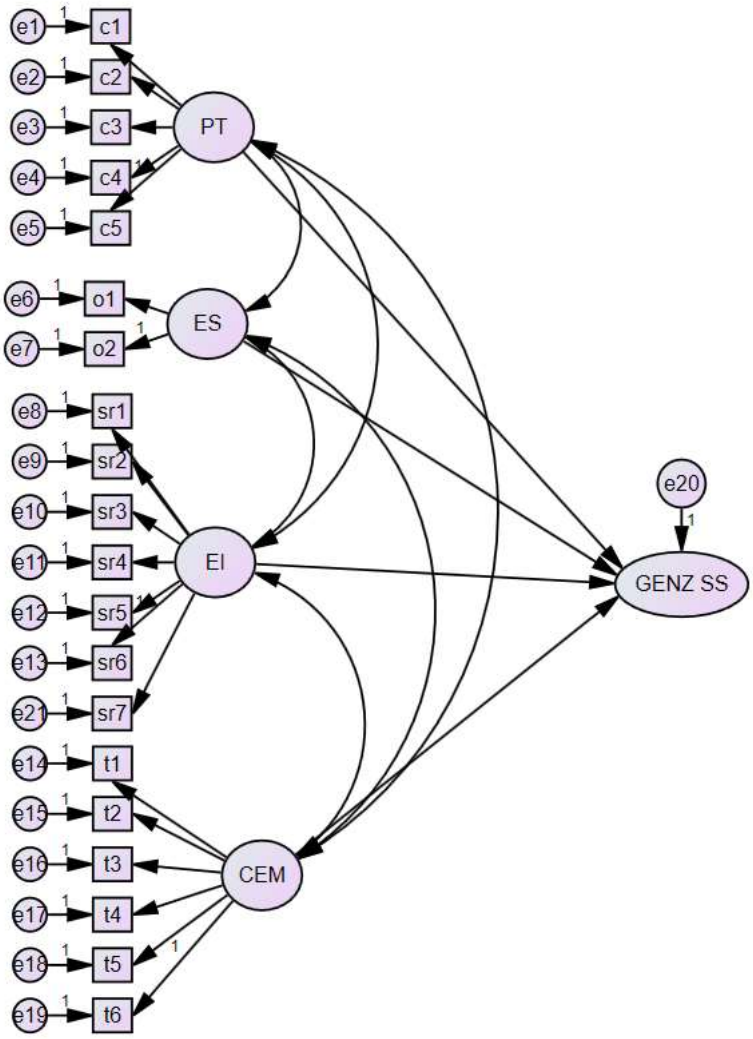

Figure 2 : Standardized Estimate of Overall Measurement Model

Figure 2 indicates that all the indices are in the acceptable level and hence it fits the data well as the Goodness of Fit is satisfactory.

Table 2 Convergent Validity of Overall Measurement Model

	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Label
PT <--> ES	.561	.084	6.643	***	par_20
ES <--> EI	.028	.017	1.669	.095	par_21
EI <--> CEM	.001	.001	.828	.408	par_22
PT <--> EI	-.004	.004	-.857	.391	par_23
PT <--> CEM	-.004	.004	-.859	.390	par_24
ES <--> CEM	.023	.016	1.456	.145	par_

Table 3 Correlation Matrix of the constructs

	Estimate
PT <--> ES	1.011
ES <--> EI	.229
EI <--> CEM	.232
PT <--> EI	-.212
PT <--> CEM	-.213
ES <--> CEM	.185

Table 3 FIT Statistics

Fit Statistic	**Bench Mark**	**Obtained**
χ^2	-	860.989
Degrees of Freedom (df)	-	146
χ^2 Significance	P < 0.05	0.000
χ^2 / df	< 5.0	5.897
Goodness of Fit (GFI)	> 0.90	0.924
Modified Goodness of Fit Index (AGFI)	> 0.90	0.919
Normalized Fit Index (NFI)	> 0.90	0.947
Comparative Fit Index (CFI)	> 0.90	1.000
Incremental Fit Index (IFI)	> 0.90	1.000
Tucker Lewis Index (TLI)	> 0.90	1.000
Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA)	< 0.05	0.000
Root Mean Square Residual (RMR)	< 0.05	0.029

Table 4 Relationship among Latent variables

Construct	Construct	Std. Beta	Std. Error	Confidence Intervals	CR
Personality Traits	Employability Skills	.811	.063	0.713 - .878	12.244
Personality Traits	Emotional Intelligence	.269	.050	.118-.413	3.478
Personality Traits	College Education Model	.657	.059	.512-.768	6.891
Employability Skills	Emotional Skills	.539	.048	.478-.655	9.023
Employability Skills	College Education Model	.439	.059	.443- .498	7.127
Emotional Intelligence	College Education Model	.410	.048	.411-.423	7.009

Table 5 Summary of Findings :

Hypothesis #	**Hypothesis**	**Decision**
H01	Personality Traits has a positive impact on Employability Skills	**S**upported
H02	Personality Traits has a positive impact on Emotional Intelligence	**S**upported
H03	Personality Traits has a positive impact on College Education Model	**S**upported
H04	Employability Skills has a positive impact on Emotional Intelligence	**S**upported
H06	Employability Skills has a positive impact on College Education Model	**S**upported
H07	Emotional Intelligence has a positive impact on College Education Model	**S**upported

3. DISCUSSION

The analysis of the research's results is enhanced by referencing prior studies that have investigated interconnected aspects of employability and the acquisition of soft skills. In accordance with other scholarly investigations (Smith et al., 2018;

Johnson & Lee, 2020), our results confirm the significant impact of personality factors on the formation of employability abilities. The study conducted by Smith et al. (2018) emphasised the importance of certain attributes, such as flexibility and resilience, in considerably enhancing the effectiveness of teamwork and problem-solving abilities. These findings are consistent with the results made in our own study. The findings of our research align with the conclusions drawn by Johnson and Lee (2020), highlighting the significance of emotional intelligence as a mediator between individual characteristics and achievement in one's professional endeavours. Furthermore, the present research supports the ongoing discussion on the influence of different college education models on individuals' employability. The congruence between our research and the findings of Pandey & Sarkar (2021) becomes evident, as both underscore the importance of experiential learning and collaborations with industry in fostering practical competencies that are crucial for enhancing employability. The study aligns with our emphasis on the importance of contemporary instructional methods that reflect real-life complexities. In addition, the present study expands the ongoing discussion by identifying the precise soft skill proficiencies that serve as a connection between conventional educational approaches and the current requirements of the professional environment. The alignment between the outcomes of our study and previous research enhances the credibility and wider significance of our findings. The observations shed light on the enduring impact of personality traits on employability skills, the facilitative function of emotional intelligence, and the changing landscape of college education models in moulding the employability readiness of Generation Z. The study makes a valuable contribution to the existing body of knowledge by incorporating insights gained from earlier research. Specifically, the research enhanced the collective comprehension of the complex and diverse factors that influence the cultivation of employability skills in the context of contemporary educational and workforce complexities.

4. CONCLUSION

The comprehension of the employability of the Generation Z (Gen Z) cohort holds significant importance in the current environment of labour dynamics. The primary objective of this study article was to provide insight into the potential employability outcomes for individuals belonging to Generation Z. This was achieved by an examination of the soft skills developed during their college education, taking into account many elements such as personality traits, employability skills, emotional intelligence, and the specific model of college education. A thorough examination employing a mixed-method approach, incorporating quantitative and qualitative methodologies, has yielded a sophisticated comprehension of the employability readiness of Generation Z.

The results of this study suggest a multifaceted interaction among the parameters under investigation. The study demonstrated a substantial correlation between personality qualities and the development of employable abilities. Specifically, traits such as flexibility, resilience, and communication tendency were found to positively contribute to the acquisition of skills that are highly sought after by employers. Emotional intelligence, an essential element of interpersonal efficacy, has been recognised as a connecting link between personality traits and employability competencies. Individuals belonging to Generation Z who possess greater levels of emotional intelligence exhibit an enhanced capacity to effectively handle problems within the workplace, communicate proficiently, and engage in seamless collaboration.

Furthermore, it has been discovered that the dynamic nature of college education models has a significant influence on the development of employable skills. The conventional method of teaching that relies heavily on lectures has been found to have certain drawbacks in terms of developing practical skills and problem-solving abilities in real-world scenarios. On the other hand, contemporary pedagogical approaches that incorporate experiential learning, internships, and collaborations with industries have shown a positive association with the improvement of employability skills among students belonging to Generation Z.

The study highlights the complex interplay of personality traits, employability skills, emotional intelligence, and college education models in influencing the employability outcomes of Generation Z individuals. In light of the current generation's integration into the labour market amidst swift technological progress and evolving job models, it is crucial to adopt a comprehensive educational strategy that not only conveys theoretical knowledge but also places significant emphasis on the cultivation of soft skills and emotional intelligence. In order to meet the changing demands of the labour market, it is imperative for higher education institutions to modify their curriculum and teaching approaches to cultivate a comprehensive range of skills. Based on the findings derived from this study, there exists a potential for policymakers, educators, and employers to engage in a collaborative effort aimed at developing an educational ecosystem that is both more efficient and adaptable. By fostering the development of individuals who possess adaptability, emotional intelligence, and a diverse range of skills, we can enable Generation Z to not only attain lucrative work opportunities but also flourish in a dynamic, interconnected, and complex professional environment. This research ultimately functions as a guiding tool for Gen Z's transition into the workforce, promoting a comprehensive and holistic educational approach that goes beyond conventional limits and prepares them to succeed in a fast changing employment landscape.

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