



The soft-skills characteristics of Generation Z employees: A scoping review and research agenda

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Orientation: Generation Z (Gen Z) often considered the more educated generation, struggles with employment and workplace success, largely because of a soft-skills gap.

Research purpose: This scoping review aims to define the soft-skills of working Gen Z professionals and explore their most highly regarded soft-skills, strengths, and weaknesses from the perspectives of employers, industry experts and Gen Z employees. The study also identifies the methods companies use to develop the soft-skills of Gen Z professionals.

Motivation for the study: There is no comprehensive scholarly overview of the current state of research on soft-skills and Gen Z.

Research approach/design and method: This scoping review followed the Joanna Briggs Institute (JBI) methodology and reported findings using the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses Extension for Scoping Reviews checklist method. Twenty articles were selected and utilised for this study.

Main findings: Phase 1 identified a lack of consensus regarding the definition of soft-skills and its taxonomy of skills. Phase 2 revealed that communication, teamwork and interpersonal soft-skills were the most valued yet deficient in Gen Z employees. Communication was recognised as their most significant soft-skill asset. Phase 3 showed employers invest in developing soft-skills through online training, coaching, workshops and experiential learning.

Practical/managerial implications: There is ambiguity surrounding soft-skills and it is imperative to develop communication, teamwork and interpersonal skills in Gen Z professionals.

Contribution/value-add: This study provides insights into the industrial perspectives of Gen Z employees' soft-skills, value-add, shortcomings and training methods.

Keywords: Generation Z; soft-skills; emotional intelligence; scoping review; Gen Z.

Introduction

The Fourth Industrial Revolution is shifting economies towards service-orientated models that value soft-skills (Daly et al., 2022), particularly as artificial intelligence (AI) takes over technical tasks (Shareef, 2023). Soft-skills are essential for Generation Z to navigate mental health issues (Balbinot et al., 2024) and enhance employability in competitive job markets (Habiyaemye et al., 2022). While employers seek candidates with a mix of technical and soft-skills (Sreehari, 2021), many in Generation Z struggle with these crucial abilities, limiting their job opportunities (Schroth, 2019).

Over the last 10 years, interest in soft-skills as a research topic has grown significantly (Stewart et al., 2016; Succi & Canovi, 2020; Poláková et al., 2023; Wheeler, 2016). However, a unified understanding of soft-skills is elusive because of differing interpretations by experts (Ismail et al., 2023; Marin-Zapata et al., 2022; Touloumakos, 2020). Despite this lack of consensus, both employers and industry experts highlight that Generation Z employees frequently fall short of essential soft-skills in the workplace (DeJuliis & Saylor, 2021; Succi & Canovi, 2020). Interestingly, Gen Z individuals often self-assess their soft-skills highly (Noah & Aziz, 2020), leading to a growing discrepancy known as the soft-skills gap (Singh Dubey et al., 2021), which is evident to employers (Magano et al., 2020; Noah & Aziz, 2020). Research by Kraght and Brøndum (2025) explicitly identifies significant gaps in expectations regarding workplace flexibility, leadership roles and career development. The authors conclude that while Gen Z's adaptability and digital

competencies are assets, their aspirations for rapid growth and independence tend to clash with the structured and performance-driven systems prevalent in many workplaces.

Research on Generation Z professionals reveals a lack of soft-skills demanded by employers (DeJuliis & Saylor, 2021; Horváth-Csikós et al., 2023; Magano et al., 2020; Noah & Aziz, 2020; Pujiawati et al., 2022; Succi & Canovi, 2020) and highlights varying definitions of soft-skills and its underlying taxonomy of skills (Benitez-Marquez et al., 2022; Marin-Zapata et al., 2022). This study aims to fill this knowledge gap by examining the conceptualisation and taxonomy of soft-skills among working Gen Z professionals. It will gather insights from employers, industry experts and Gen Z employees to provide a comprehensive view of Gen Z professionals' soft-skills landscape. Additionally, the research will identify which training methodologies companies employ to enhance soft-skills among their Gen Z workers, contributing to a better understanding of soft-skills development in the Gen Z workforce.

Soft-skills

The theoretical dispersion underlying soft-skills can be attributed to the wide range of individual skills, values and attributes it covers (Daly et al., 2022). While some scholars maintain soft-skills are non-technical competencies associated with personality, attitude and the ability to effectively connect with others (Stewart et al., 2016), others regard them as a cohesive blend of knowledge, abilities and values that support the effective development of a skill or activity (Rodriguez Martinez et al., 2021). Yet, most definitions of soft-skills share two components: interpersonal and intrapersonal (Ismail et al., 2023; Marin-Zapata et al., 2022).

Still, soft-skills are so expansive that they mean different things to different people (Touloumakos, 2020) depending on the industry (Kiel, 2016), country and context (Wats & Wats, 2009). Thus, it is also known as transferable skills, interpersonal skills, life skills, employment skills, critical skills, social skills, essential skills, emotional intelligence (EQ), behavioural skills and 21st-century professional skills (Daly et al., 2022; Kiel, 2016; Succi & Canovi, 2020). Soft-skills are primarily used interchangeably with EQ (Daly et al., 2022) because of their extensive overlap and blurred boundaries (Kiel, 2016). Ritter et al. (2018) argue that soft-skills are the labour market's jargon for EQ, whereas Wheeler (2016) maintains that EQ falls under soft-skills. New evidence from a study by Sahar (2024) revealed a positive correlation between soft-skills and EQ, yet many still disagree on the convergence and divergence between these concepts.

Whichever way it is framed, soft-skills are fundamental in giving employees a competitive advantage to secure employment, future-proof their careers and facilitate networking capabilities because they help drive innovation; promote adaptability, resilience and team collaboration; and enable people to build enriching interpersonal

relationships (Poláková et al., 2023). Furthermore, soft-skills are instrumental in increasing youth employment when there is job scarcity (Horváth-Csikós et al., 2023), helping to differentiate between equally qualified and experienced candidates (Bano & Vasantha, 2021), enabling graduates' professional development and career advancement (Poláková et al., 2023), and promoting organisational development and effectiveness (Krawczyk-Sokolowska et al., 2019).

However, these benefits of soft-skills are diminished by the conceptual differences surrounding soft-skills, ultimately hindering this field's development and validation (Marin-Zapata et al., 2022). Therefore, exploring the conceptual foundation and underlying characteristics of soft-skills is essential.

Generation Z employees

Generation Z (1995–2010) is the youngest of the five economically active generations, which also includes the Baby Boomers (1946–1964), Generation X (1965–1979) and Generation Y (1980–1994) (Bieleń & Kubiczek, 2020). Even though Gen Z is the highest qualified generation yet and is technically savvy (Fry & Parker, 2018; Schroth, 2019), they struggle to secure employment and meet employers' expectations (Noah & Aziz, 2020; Sharvari & Kulkarni, 2019). In fact, youth unemployment is an international crisis (Fakih et al., 2020; Lambovska et al., 2021), with South Africa having one of the highest youth unemployment numbers in the world, despite the demand for skilled labour (Habiyaemye et al., 2022).

Even though literature strongly suggests that Gen Z employees lack the essential soft-skills employers require (DeJuliis & Saylor, 2021; Horváth-Csikós et al., 2023; Noah & Aziz, 2020; Pujiawati et al., 2022; Succi & Canovi, 2020), Gen Zs believe they have strong social and interpersonal skills and consider it an asset (Cinque, 2016; Stewart et al., 2016). Many attribute this perceptual discrepancy to Gen Z's lack of self-awareness in identifying their strengths and weaknesses (Magano et al., 2020; Noah & Aziz, 2020; Succi & Canovi, 2020) and their low EQ scores (Machová et al., 2020).

Further research is required to understand Generation Z professionals' soft-skills, strengths and weaknesses, as current studies on this group are insufficient (Benitez-Marquez et al., 2022; Bieleń & Kubiczek, 2020; Ensari, 2017). Most studies focus on the scholarly or academic perspective of Gen Z rather than on Gen Z in the workplace (Barhate & Dirani, 2022).

The literature that does exist on Gen Z professionals suggests they are a challenge to manage (Benitez-Marquez et al., 2022), and soft-skills development can help to circumvent this and additionally help them secure employment and mitigate the challenges of technological advancements (Magano et al., 2020; Sutil-Martín & Otamendi, 2021). Even though there are many advantages for companies that invest in their

employees' social and emotional skills (Poláková et al., 2023), such development is fraught with challenges, especially for Gen Z with their unique learning style (Singh Dubey et al., 2021). Early and prolonged exposure to technology has impacted Gen Z's brain development, resulting in a more advanced visual imagery centre than auditory learning centres (Rothman, 2016). This results in a need for a multi-modal, experiential and collaborative approach to learning that encourages self-directed learning (Cinque, 2016; Riley & Nicewicz, 2022; Sharvari & Kulkarni, 2019). However, there is a lack of research on whether companies develop the social and emotional skills of their youngest working cohort and, if so, what methodologies do they employ.

A scoping review will explore the conceptual foundations and boundaries of soft-skills to clarify how they are perceived in Gen Z professional practice. Moreover, it will help investigate Gen Z professionals' soft-skills characteristics, strengths and deficiencies as evaluated by employers and industry experts and self-rated by working Gen Z professionals themselves. Finally, this scoping review will provide insight into whether companies invest in the social and emotional learning of their youngest working cohort and, if so, what methodology they employ to develop soft-skills.

Research design

Defining and aligning the objectives and research questions

Scoping reviews identify and summarise the available evidence on a specific topic, field or issue, primarily focusing on mapping existing evidence and highlighting significant characteristics or factors to clarify key concepts and definitions within the literature (Pollock et al., 2023). Typically, these reviews analyse data by quantifying text and counting the frequency of extracted data items; however, they do not address questions related to feasibility, appropriateness, meaningfulness or effectiveness (Pollock et al., 2023).

A scoping review is proposed for this research because it helps clarify key concepts and definitions (Munn et al., 2018), such as soft-skills and their underlying taxonomy of skills as seen from the lenses of employers, industry experts and Gen Z employees. Moreover, a scoping review is helpful for examining new evidence in a field and investigating a topic that has not been extensively researched (Mays et al., 2001), as is the case with Gen Z in the workplace (Bieleń & Kubiczek, 2020; Ensari, 2017). As a scoping review helps to map existing literature regarding its volume, nature and characteristics (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005), it will help to identify and map which soft-skills are highly valued, deemed insufficient or regarded as strengths in Gen Z employees, from the perspectives of employers, industry experts and Gen Z employees. Furthermore, it will help identify whether companies invest in the soft-skills development of their Gen Z employees and which methodologies are commonly used.

Finally, a scoping review seeks to identify and analyse knowledge gaps (Munn et al., 2018; Pollock et al., 2023), which will help to determine any research gaps that emerge from the data. Thus, a scoping review is more suited for this study than systematic literature because of the novelty of the subject matter, its conceptual disparity, its indefinite underlying characteristics, and its objective to identify and analyse knowledge gaps in the field. Moreover, a scoping review has a broader scope than systematic literature with less restricting inclusion criteria (Aromataris et al., 2024). Based on the background outlined above, the research questions formulated for this scoping review are as follows:

- RQ 1: *What is the conceptual definition of soft-skills?*
- RQ 2: *What skills are categorised as soft-skills?*
- RQ 3: *Which soft-skills are essential for Generation Z employees?*
- RQ 4: *What are Generation Z employees' soft-skills deficiencies?*
- RQ 5: *What are Generation Z employees' soft-skills strengths?*
- RQ 6: *How do organisations develop Generation Z employees' soft-skills?*

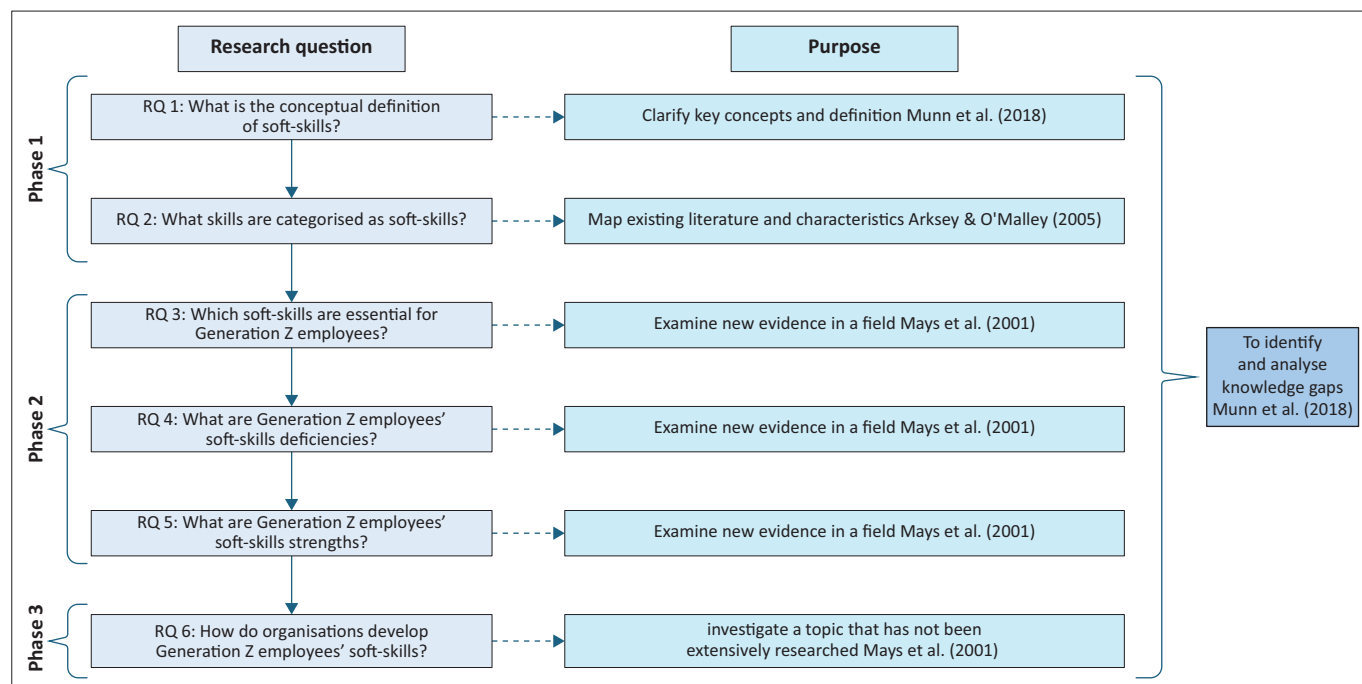
The scoping review has three phases. Each phase has a purpose and answers specific research questions, as shown in Figure 1.

Framework and study design

This scoping review was conducted following the Joanna Briggs Institute (JBI) methodology for scoping reviews (Peters et al., 2020) and reported according to the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses Extension for Scoping Reviews checklist (PRISMA-ScR) (Tricco et al., 2018). Arksey and O'Malley (2005) originally proposed a methodological framework for scoping reviews that was extended by Levac and colleagues (2010) and further refined by a working group from JBI and the JBI Collaboration (Peters et al., 2020).

The JBI guidelines (Peters et al., 2020) recommend that researchers utilise frequency counts, present information in tables or graphs, and conduct basic qualitative content analysis when appropriate. Additionally, Arksey and O'Malley (2005) suggested employing an analytical framework that merges simple numerical analysis with thematic development for the purpose of scoping reviews.

A priori protocol was developed before the scoping review to pre-define the objectives, methods and reporting of the scoping review, as prescribed by the JBI framework (Aromataris et al., 2024). The protocol was posted on Figshare, a web-based interface designed for academic research data management and dissemination. The protocol provides a plan for the scoping review that ensures the process is transparent and limits reporting bias (Aromataris et al., 2024). Several deviations from the protocol took place and were highlighted and explained under the JBI framework guidelines (Aromataris et al., 2024). Supplementary data can be accessed at https://figshare.com/authors/Cicilia_Visser/18094936.



Note: Please see the full reference list of this article Visser, C., & Terblanche, N. (2025). The soft-skills characteristics of Generation Z employees: A scoping review and research agenda. *SA Journal of Human Resource Management/ SA Tydskrif vir Menslikehulpbronbestuur*, 23(0), a2975. <https://doi.org/10.4102/sajhrm.v23i0.2975> for more information.

FIGURE 1: The scoping review process.

Inclusion criteria

The inclusion criteria follow Kao et al.'s (2017) recommendation on the population, concept and context (PCC) mnemonic.

Population

The study population consist of economically active Generation Z participants because the research aims to explore the current state of research on young working professionals' soft-skills. Generation Z is a large generational cohort (Benitez-Marquez et al., 2022) and restricting the scope of participants to include only the older economically active segment of Gen Z serves the purpose of the study and enables a more focussed approach.

The scoping review includes the opinions, perceptions and expectations of employers and industry experts. The latter includes human resource (HR) experts, academics, consultants and recruiters. Employers entail anyone in a leadership and team management position to whom the Gen Z employee reports. Evidence sources were gathered from Gen Z professionals to get first-hand input on their soft-skills expectations, experience and perceptions. Thus, the data were gathered and analysed from the vantage point of three role-players: employers, industry experts and Gen Z employees.

Concept

This study includes all concepts and terminology pertaining to the non-cognitive skills of the economically active Generation Z population. The terminology included in this study selection were soft-skills and employability skills because it was most frequently cited and used interchangeably in the literature search.

Context

Generation Z entered the workplace as recently as 2019 (Schroth, 2019), which coincides with the volume of research carried out on Gen Z in the workplace that depicts an incremental spike from 2018 onwards, peaking in 2019 (Benitez-Marquez et al., 2022). Therefore, this scoping review considered only research evidence on the soft-skills of economically active Gen Z from 2019 to 2024.

The scoping review includes all research evidence on the soft-skills of economically active Gen Z across all industries, nationalities, geographical locations, genders, qualifications and educational backgrounds. All evidence sources were considered regardless of the language and translated into English with the help of Google Translate software. Primary, secondary and documentary analyses were included in the study on the condition that they adhere to the inclusion criteria stated above.

Types of sources

According to Aromataris et al. (2024), a scoping review may draw on data from any evidence source and research methodology. Therefore, inclusion criteria include studies from peer-reviewed journals and industry reports if the resources helped answer the relevant research question. This consists of all qualitative studies and designs, quantitative studies, experimental and quasi-experimental studies, observational studies and systematic literature studies.

Search strategy

The search strategy aimed to locate all primary and secondary sources, published studies, articles, reviews, unpublished

industry reports and conference papers. The keywords used for the search included 'gen z', 'gen z employees', AND 'soft-skills', 'soft-skills gap', OR 'emotional intelligence', 'social-emotional intelligence', AND 'workplace', 'economically active', OR 'employers' soft-skills expectations' AND 'gen z professionals', AND 'gen z soft-skills strengths', OR 'gen z emotional intelligence strengths', AND 'gen z soft-skills deficiencies' OR 'gen z emotional intelligence deficiencies', OR 'gen z lack soft-skills' AND 'employment' AND 'workplace', OR 'gen z lack emotional intelligence', AND 'workplace', AND 'organisations'. Different variations of these keywords were also used to optimise the search results. Seven electronic databases and the evidence sources' reference lists were screened. The electronic databases included Scopus, Web of Science, EBSCO, APA PsychNet, ResearchGate, Google Scholar and Stellenbosch University's library catalogue. Stellenbosch Library Catalogue is an electronic, multi-database search engine that includes Scopus, EBSCO and Web of Science platforms. The search strategy, index terms and keywords were adapted for each database to optimise results.

Study selection

Three independent reviewers employed a two-step search strategy to sift through the volume of evidence. During step one, the titles and abstracts were scanned for relevant keywords, index terms and inclusion criteria. Only abstracts and titles pertinent to the research objectives and questions were included. These evidence sources were used during step two to develop a complete search strategy on the various database platforms. A pilot study was conducted to test the process. Following the search, all citations were uploaded onto EndNote, a referencing management software, and onto Covidence. Covidence is a screening and data extraction tool for conducting systematic and scoping reviews.

After the initial pilot test, the reviewers screened titles and abstracts and labelled them with a yes, no or maybe vote next to each article. Only abstracts and titles relevant to the research objective and questions were included. Any selection disputes between the independent reviewers were discussed, and a consensus was reached on which evidence sources to include in the full-text review. A total of 410 abstracts and titles were screened and narrowed to 128 articles for the full-text screening.

The full-text documents of the 128 articles were downloaded from the relevant databases, uploaded onto EndNote, and then uploaded onto Covidence for the full-text review. The full-text articles were assessed against the inclusion and exclusion criteria, and each reviewer voted either a yes or no next to the article. The reasons for exclusions were either the article needed to be stronger, the full-text was inaccessible or it did not comply with the inclusion criteria. Disagreements between the reviewer votes were discussed and resolved; the full-text documents were narrowed to 20 articles for the final data extraction (Appendix 1: Table 1-A1). The scoping

review's workflow was mapped using the PRISMA extension for scoping review, the PRISMA-ScR (Tricco et al., 2018), as seen in Figure 2.

Data extraction

The data were extracted using a data extraction form on Covidence. A single-reviewer extraction process was followed, and the 'Extraction 2' template on Covidence was used as a guideline because it allowed for flexibility and customisation. During the extraction phase, a two-stage process consisting of extraction and consensus was followed. During stage one, a single reviewer extracted the data, and during stage two, a team member checked that the data were relevant to the inclusion criteria, objective and research questions.

The data extraction form has standard details such as title, author(s), publication year, country, and type, key findings and limitations, in addition to study-specific information such as soft-skills definitions, soft-skills taxonomy, soft-skills valued in Gen Z employees, soft-skills lacking in Gen Z employees, soft-skills strengths in Gen Z employees and soft-skills development methods in the workplace. Appendix 1: Table 1-A1 provides an overview of the general characteristics of the evidence sources. Appendix 1: Table 2-A1 and Appendix 1: Table 3-A1 reflect the definitions and complete taxonomy lists of soft-skills relevant to RQ 1 and RQ 2.

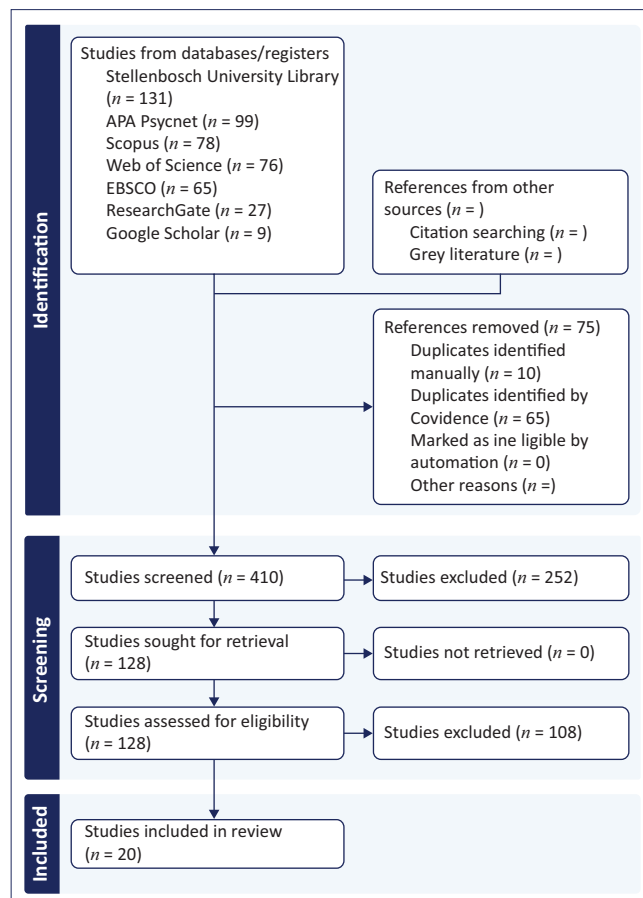


FIGURE 2: The Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses Extension for Scoping Reviews checklist workflow.

Appendix 1: Table 4-A1 and Appendix 1: Table 5-A1 depict the soft-skills most valued in Gen Z employees (RQ 3), the soft-skills deficiencies (RQ 4) and strengths (RQ 5) of Gen Z employees and the development methodologies companies use to educate these skills (RQ 5).

Data synthesis

The frequency counts and basic qualitative content analysis outlined by the JBI framework (Pollock et al., 2023) aims to answer the research questions, clarify the concept of soft-skills, identify the critical soft-skill characteristics of Gen Z professionals and provide an overview of how soft-skills are developed in the workplace. A basic qualitative analysis was employed as a descriptive method to analyse the resources, using open coding to categorise the concepts and characteristics of soft-skills into overarching categories and to help identify common themes, as well as patterns of convergence, divergence or discrepancies. Open coding entails examining the sources of evidence and noting initial thoughts, possible categories or comments to investigate what is occurring within the data, thereby clarifying the objective and the review question (Pollock et al., 2023). The frequency count of soft-skills across literature sources is shown in Appendix 1: Table 4-A1 and Appendix 1: Table 5-A1.

Ethical considerations

This article followed all ethical standards for research without direct contact with human or animal subjects.

Results

Characteristics of the evidence sources

Several key characteristics emerged from the data, as seen in Table 1. Most studies utilise a quantitative research design, descriptive reporting and purposive sampling, with surveys and questionnaires as research methods. The publication types were predominantly journal articles, except for two industry reports, one book chapter and a conference paper. Nine of the 20 studies used documentary or secondary analysis as the first part of a two-stage process. The data were extracted based on adherence to the inclusion criteria, study objective and research questions. Thus, data from irrelevant sections of the articles were not captured.

The population comprised 14 employers, 7 industry experts and 4 Generation Z employees, totalling 25 participants across the 20 evidence sources. The sample population differed for each study. Several studies had two participant samples in one study, whereas others had very few participants in a category of investigation. The unequal distribution and representation of the three participant samples made it difficult to compare results because some were underrepresented, and others were over-represented in several categories of investigation.

The respondents' industries included information technology (IT), electrical and electronics products (E & E), education

and academic institutions, manufacturing, recruitment services, e-commerce and the digital market, as well as the tourism and hospitality industry. The studies spanned several continents, including (1) Asia: Indonesia, India, Malaysia, Hong Kong, Bangladesh and Palestine; (2) Europe: Italy, Germany, Hungary, Slovakia and Romania; (3) East Africa: Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda; (4) the United States and 5) Australia. Table 1 summarises the study characteristics.

Presentation of results

Phase 1

Definition of soft-skills: From the conceptual synthesis and the taxonomy of soft-skills, one can infer that almost every evidence source had a different opinion on what constitutes as soft-skills. Most evidence sources quoted other authors' conceptual definitions of soft-skills, which were not included in the scoping review because they did not portray their own interpretation of soft-skills. The complete list of authors, definitions and taxonomy of soft-skills is tabulated in Appendix 1: Table 2-A1.

Seven of the 20 evidence sources defined soft-skills, as seen in Table 2. Yet, they differ significantly, with little similarity between the seven conceptual interpretations of soft-skills. The conceptual descriptions of soft-skills varied significantly from personal characteristics to behaviours, competencies, traits and/or values.

The taxonomy of soft-skills: The conceptual disparity is equally evident in the taxonomy of soft-skills, as all the evidence sources differ in how they classify and categorise soft-skills. A total of 112 soft-skills were identified across the evidence sources, and a frequency count determined which soft-skills were mentioned more than once across the studies, as seen in Appendix 1: Table 3-A1. The soft-skills cross-referenced more than once were added to a reduced list of 52 (see Figure 3).

However, there is considerable overlap between these 52 skills, as many are related concepts that can be grouped together. Thus, the list of 52 soft-skills was narrowed down to 21 categories based on their relatedness, as shown in Figure 4.

From the data source, EQ emerged as the biggest category in the classification of soft-skills. Emotional intelligence

TABLE 1: Characteristics of the evidence sources.

Characteristics of the evidence sources			
General information	Industries x 7	Countries x 6	Evidence sources x 20
Publication type	Journals x 16	Reports x 3	Other x 2
Participants	Employers x 14	Industry experts x 7	Generation Z x 4
Research design	Qualitative x 2	Quantitative x 12	Mixed method x 6
Study type	Descriptive x 10	Exploratory x 3	Other x 7
Research method	Questionnaires and surveys x 17	Secondary data analysis x 9	Other x 5
Sampling method	Purposive sampling x 8	Convenience sampling x 3	Other x 9

formed the biggest category because it is fundamentally very similar to soft-skills, as many of these skills can be classified under the domains and competencies of EQ. Communication skills were the second most cited soft-skills category among the evidence sources, followed by cognitive performance and thinking skills, such as critical and analytical thinking. Thus, the dataset revealed EQ, communication and critical-analytical thinking skills as the most significant soft-skills categories. On the contrary,

subject knowledge was the least cited skill and formed the smallest category of soft-skills.

Phase 2

Table 3 summarises the findings of Phase 2. The study is based on 20 evidence sources, but the sample populations, consisting of employees, industry experts and Generation Z employees, varied within each evidence source. In Phase 2.1, a sample population of 21 referred to the most sought-after soft-skills in Gen Z employees, compared to 10 samples referring to Gen Z's soft-skills deficiencies in Phase 2.2 and six samples identifying Gen Z's soft-skills strengths in Phase 2.3. In Phase 2.2 and Phase 2.3, the numerical variance between the highest-scoring and lowest-scoring skills was so little that it was not reflected in the summary in Table 3 and because of the volume of soft-skills mentioned three times or less in Phase 2.2 or once in Phase 2.3. The full report is available in Appendix 1: Table 5-A1.

The value of soft-skills for Generation Z employees:

Figure 3 identifies a list of 52 soft-skills that were identified as highly valuable for Gen Z employees. The list was compiled by calculating the frequency of times a sample population mentioned each soft-skill. The soft-skills with the highest frequency count are summarised in Table 3. Teamwork, communication and interpersonal skills emerged as the top three soft-skills most sought-after in Generation Z professionals, as reported by a sample of 12 employers, 7 industry experts and 2 Gen Z employees. Although Gen Z did not rate interpersonal skills at all, other role-players scored it highly. Figure 5 provides a graphical illustration of the most highly rated soft-skills for Gen Z professionals. On the contrary, the sample population reported ambition, conflict resolution and empathy, among other skills, as the

TABLE 2: Evidence sources' definitions of soft-skills.

Author(s)	Definition of soft-skills
Staiculescu, C., Lacatus, M.L., and Livinti, R. (2021)	There are mainly two main types of skills: professional skills or so-called hard skills, which are required to effectively perform different professions and transversal skills or soft-skills which help people to be adaptable, open to change, able to mobilise their internal resources in order to successfully cope with challenges of any kind. (p. 186)
Noor, N.N.M., Rodzalan, S.A., Abdullah, N.H., Saat, M.M., Othman, A., and Singh, H. (2024)	This study defines soft-skills as abilities relating to individuals' characteristics and behaviour in everyday life in the era of Industry 4.0. (p. 775)
Guàrdia, L., Mancini, F., Jacobetty, P., and Maina, M. (2021)	Employability skills is used in this study to designate the attributes that graduate students possess and which are valued by employers, that is, attributes which make graduates worth employing. (p. 170)
Horváth-Csikós, G., Juhász, T., and Gáspár, T. (2023)	Soft-skills are often viewed as personality traits and behaviours that individuals either possess or do not possess. (p. 2)
Poláková, M., Suleimanová, J.H., Madžik, P., Copuš, L., Molnárová, I., and Polednová, J. (2023)	In our study, soft-skills are viewed as the constituent elements of competencies. (p. 5)
Ismail, D.H., Nugroho, J., and Rohayati, T. (2023)	Soft-skills is an individual's personal resilience in the work process, self-management (intrapersonal skills), interpersonal interactions (interpersonal skills) and wisdom or well-being, enabling the maximum development of personal and organisational performance. (p. 123)
Singh, A., and Jaykumar, P. (2019)	In broad terms, we can say that soft-skills comprise concepts such as skills, disposition, attitudes, beliefs and values. (p. 14)

Note: Please see the full reference list of this article Visser, C., & Terblanche, N. (2025). The soft-skills characteristics of Generation Z employees: A scoping review and research agenda. *SA Journal of Human Resource Management/ SA Tydskrif vir Menslikehulpbronbestuur*, 23(0), a2975. <https://doi.org/10.4102/sajhrm.v23i0.2975> for more information.

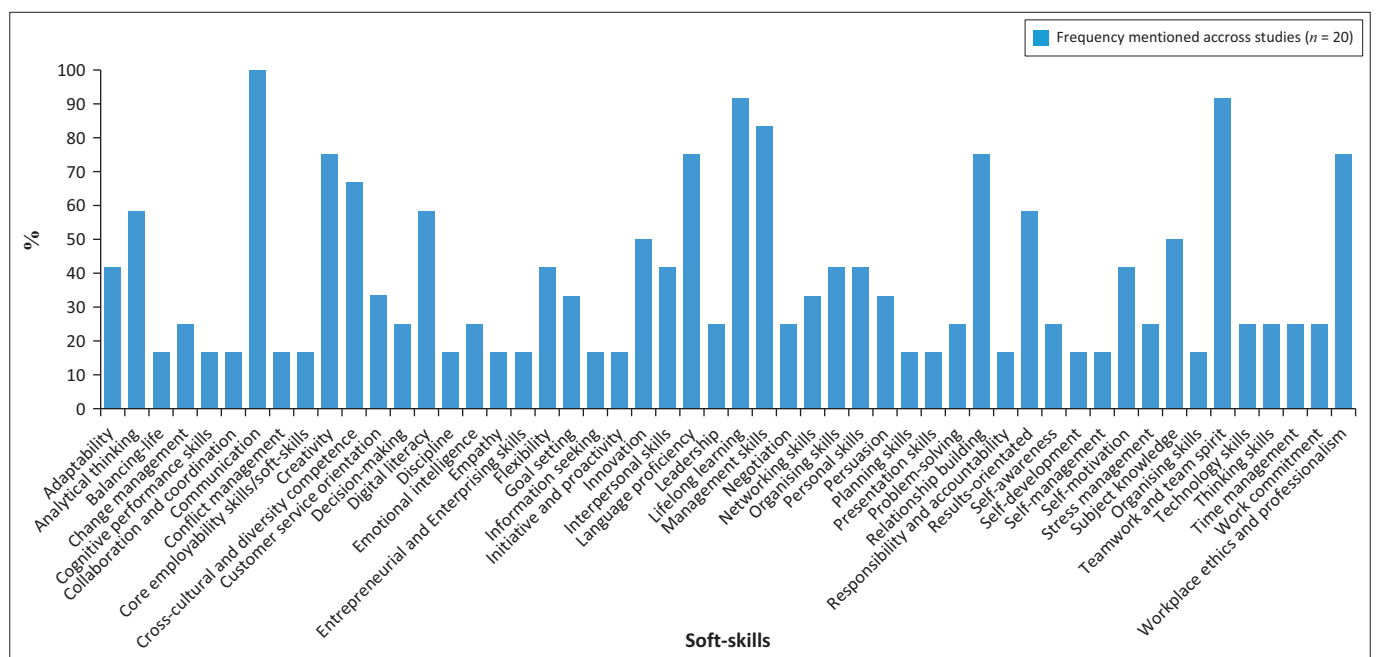


FIGURE 3: The reduced list of 52 soft-skills.

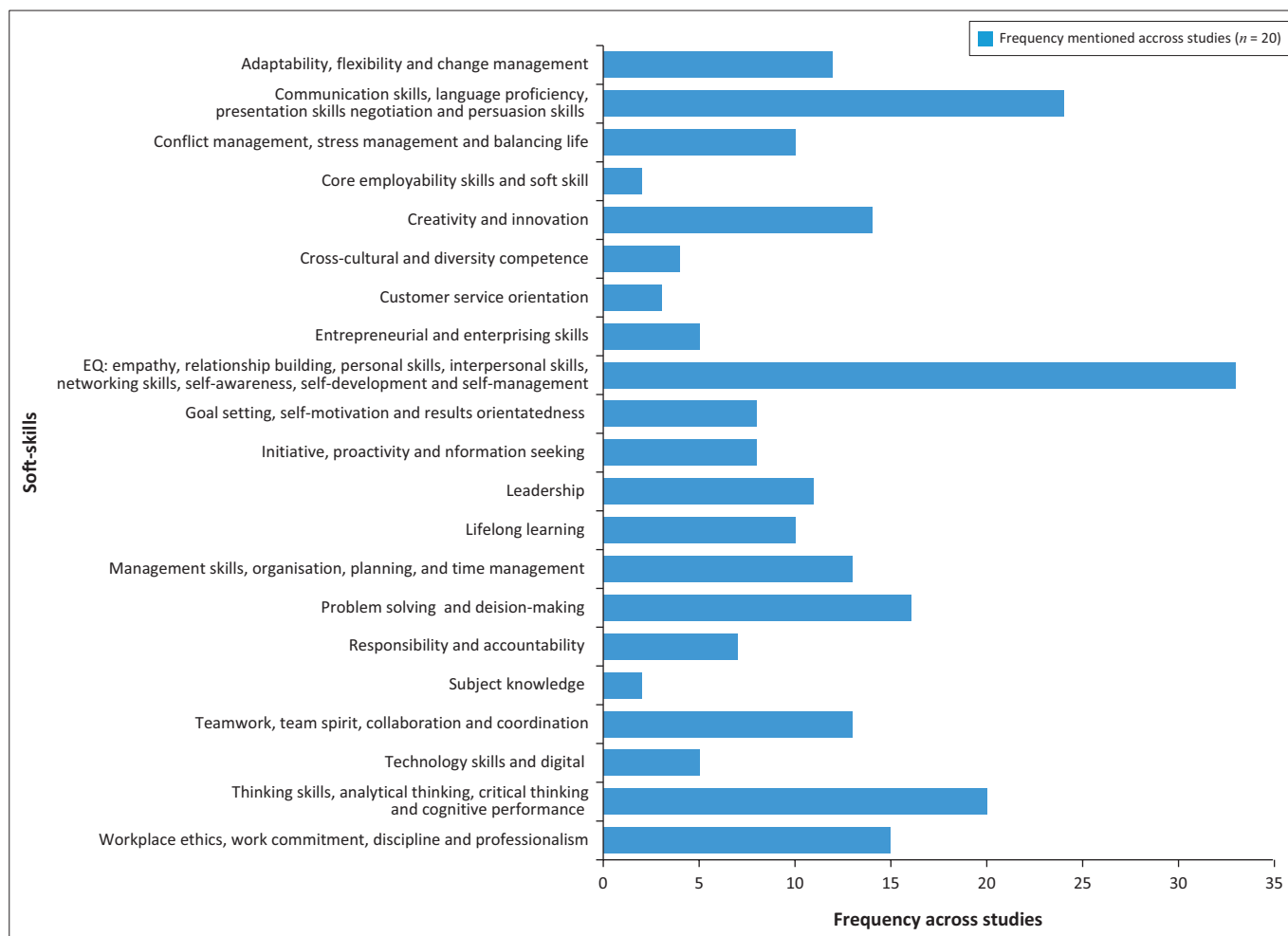


FIGURE 4: The core list of 21 soft-skills categories.

TABLE 3: A summary of the findings in Phase 2.

Soft-skills	Soft-skills most valued by Gen Z professionals				Soft-skills	Soft-skills deficiencies of Generation Z professionals				Soft-skills	Soft-skills strengths of Generation Z professionals			
	Employers (n = 12)	Industry experts (n = 7)	Gen Z employees (n = 2)	Total: (n = 21)		Employers (n = 5)	Industry experts (n = 2)	Gen Z employees (n = 3)	Total: (n = 10)		Employers (n = 4)	Industry experts (n = 1)	Gen Z Employees (n = 1)	Total: (n = 6)
Teamwork and team spirit	11	5	2	18	Teamwork and team spirit	-	2	2	4	Communication skills	1	-	1	2
Communication skills	10	5	2	17	Communication skills	1	2	2	4	-	-	-	-	
Interpersonal skills	8	3	-	11	Interpersonal skills	1	1	2	4	-	-	-	-	
Work ethics and professionalism	6	2	2	10	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	

least important soft-skills for Generation Z employees (Appendix 1: Table 5-A1).

The uneven population sample distribution made it difficult to compare results because of their different sample size and voting patterns. For example, employers and industry experts rated analytical thinking and interpersonal skills highly, yet the Gen Z employees’ sample did not mention them. Conversely, employers and industry experts rated creativity and work ethic low to moderate, yet Gen Z employees rated it highly.

Soft-skills deficiencies of Generation Z employees: The data analysis revealed a list of 31 soft-skills Generation Z employees lack in the workplace (Appendix 1: Table 5-A1).

The list was compiled by calculating the frequency of times a sample population mentioned each soft-skill deficiency. The sample population comprised five employers, two industry experts and three Gen Z employees. The results showed communication skills were by far the most deficient soft-skills in the Gen Z working cohort, followed by teamwork and interpersonal skills, as well as leadership and negotiation skills.

Soft-skills strengths of Generation Z employees: A list of 24 soft-skills strengths was identified among Generation Z employees (Appendix 1: Table 5-A1). The items were gathered from a small sample size, with only six participants across all the evidence sources mentioning Gen Z professionals’ soft-

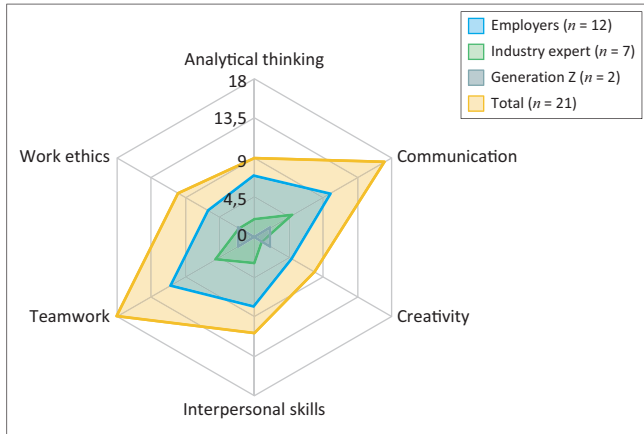


FIGURE 5: Graphical illustration of the most valued soft-skills.

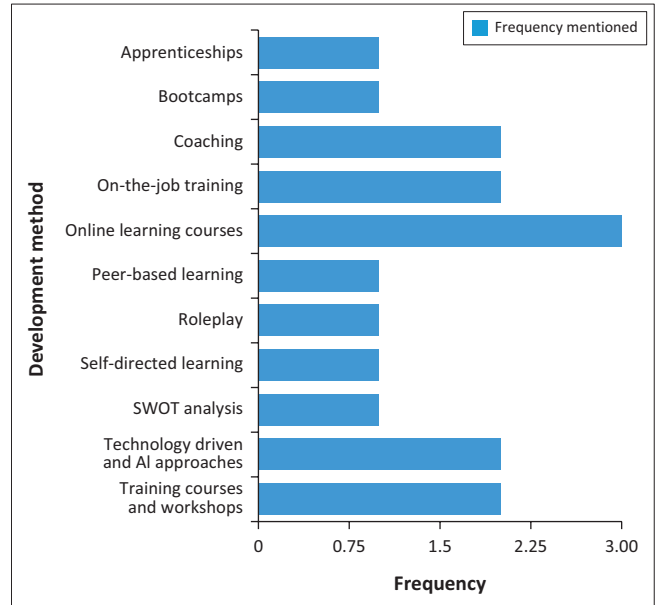
skills strengths. The participant sample comprised four employers, one industry expert and one Gen Z employee.

A frequency count revealed little consensus among the evidence sources on Gen Z employees' soft-skills strengths, except one soft-skill mentioned twice: communication. Ironically enough, communication was highlighted in the scoping review as the most valued soft-skill for Gen Z employees, their most pertinent soft-skills deficiency in the workplace and a strength. This contradiction can be attributed to the fact that one of the two samples rated communication as a strength in the Gen Z participant sample. Many authors argue that Gen Z are not conversant of their soft-skills deficiencies and rate these skills as strengths (Noah & Aziz, 2020; Stewart et al., 2016; Succi & Canovi, 2020).

The other 23 soft-skills strengths were mentioned only once by the evidence sources, indicating that no discernible soft-skill strength could be attributed to Gen Z employees. Also, some skills listed as soft-skills strengths did not fall under this scoping review's taxonomy of soft-skills, which again illustrates the blurry boundary of conceptual definitions and what constitutes soft-skills.

Phase 3

Methods for developing soft-skills in the workplace: The scoping review revealed 11 soft-skills development methodologies used to develop Gen Z employees. Figure 6 shows a frequency count of the most popular soft-skills development methodologies in the workplace. Online learning courses emerged as the most popular development methodology, followed by coaching, on-the-job development, technology-driven and AI approaches, development courses and workshops. There is no detail regarding any of these development methodologies, but evidence suggests that combining AI technology and coaching in the format of an AI coaching chatbot would satisfy Gen Z's strong propensity towards technology and experiential learning (Lattie et al., 2019; Mai et al., 2022). Thus, an AI coaching chatbot would encapsulate all the soft-skills development methods mentioned in the evidence sources, namely, online learning, on-the-job development, collaborative and self-directed learning,



SWOT, strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats; AI, artificial intelligence.

FIGURE 6: Methods for soft-skills development in Generation Z employees.

roleplay, SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) analysis and in-depth development (Figure 6).

Discussions

The scoping review was conducted to clarify the conceptual definition of soft-skills, explore the research available on Gen Z professionals' soft-skills characteristics and discover how companies develop their youngest working cohort in soft-skills.

Phase 1: Definition and classification of soft-skills

Definition of soft-skills

The scoping review revealed a disparity in the conceptual definition of soft-skills and that its interpretations vary widely. This aligns with a literature review by Ismail et al. (2023), which suggests that the concept of soft-skills is interpreted differently by various experts and stakeholders. The systematic literature review findings of Marin-Zepata et al. (2021) show that there needs to be a more solid theoretical foundation on soft-skills and more consensus on its definition. According to the authors, the conceptual disparity of soft-skills stifles the development of the field.

Categorisation of soft-skills

The conceptual disparity in defining soft-skills is equally evident in their classification, as sources vary widely in what they regard as soft-skills. Each evidence source had lengthy lists of skills categorised as soft-skills. Touloumakos (2020) argues that the term soft-skills and its infinite categories have expanded so considerably that their meaning has become vague and ambiguous, ultimately impacting the design of development curricula for soft-skills.

Thus, after reducing the list of 108 soft-skills to 52 and grouping related concepts, a reduced list of 21 soft-skills was

identified. In the taxonomy of soft-skills, emotional intelligence, communication and critical-analytical thinking were the skill categories most mentioned across all the evidence sources. Soft-skills related to EQ were mentioned considerably more across evidence sources than any other. This is because EQ and soft-skills proficiency are interwoven concepts, and research consistently shows a strong correlation between these two concepts (Sahar, 2024; Troshina et al., 2019). In fact, soft-skills overlap extensively with various models of EQ, including the mixed-models approach (Bar-On, 1997; Boyatzis, 2018; Goleman, 2001) as well as the trait model (Petrides, 2009; Petrides & Furnham, 2001). According to Wheeler (2016), this interrelationship is because EQ forms the basis of soft-skills.

The scoping review reiterated previous researchers' findings of conceptual and theoretical dispersion (Marin-Zepata et al., 2021). It revealed little consensus between evidence sources on the conceptual interpretation of soft-skills and its parameters. The volume of skills classified as soft-skills bears testimony to the permeability and blurriness of its boundaries and the need to define and demarcate soft-skills. Moreover, the study revealed that soft-skills overlap considerably with EQ, reiterating previous studies highlighting the lack of a clear conceptual definition and theoretical foundation of soft-skills (Marin-Zepata et al., 2021) and its interrelatedness with EQ (Kiel, 2016; Sahar, 2024).

Phase 2: Exploring the soft-skills characteristics of Generation Z professionals

Valued soft-skills in Generation Z professionals

According to the scoping review, communication, teamwork and interpersonal skills are the top-ranking soft-skills rated by employers, industry experts and Generation Z employees. These findings correlate with a previous systematic review by Noah and Aziz (2020), which states that communication, teamwork and interpersonal skills are the most in demand when recruiting and appointing Gen Z candidates. The review findings also support a study by Lubis and Dalimunthe (2019), which asserts that the types of soft-skills necessary for the Z Generation include interpersonal skills, communication skills, work ethic and leadership skills.

Even though the sample sizes differed considerably between the three participant groups, all three agreed that communication and teamwork are essential. However, the Generation Z employee sample did not recognise interpersonal skills as necessary; instead, they rated creativity and work ethic as valuable soft-skills. Nonetheless, it can be deduced that social skills are valuable for Generation Z professionals because they enable them to connect with others, communicate effectively and work well with colleagues in a team. Communication skills were ranked consistently high across all evidence sources, indicating that it is the most sought-after skill in Generation Z professionals. Communication skills are an extensive concept. None of the evidence sources expressly indicated what aspect of

communication they valued, except for Yen et al. (2023), who mentioned the ability to communicate in English, which showed that good communication skills referred to fluency in English as a foreign language.

Soft-skills deficiencies of Generation Z employees

Communication, teamwork and interpersonal skills were found equally lacking in Gen Z employees. Again, this scoping review's results are consistent with Noah and Aziz's (2020) findings. Leadership and negotiation skills ranked equally deficient. Besides the data obtained from the scoping review, there is a lack of evidence supporting the notion that Gen Z professionals must develop their leadership and negotiation skills.

Soft-skills strengths of Generation Z employees

The scoping review's findings on Generation Z employees' soft-skills strengths contradict the findings on their soft-skills deficiencies. Communication skills are listed as a soft-skill deficiency and a soft-skills strength in Generation Z employees, even though the sample population differed widely. Also, only two respondents mentioned communication skills as a strength, as opposed to 18 voting it as deficient.

Phase 3: Methods for developing soft-skills in the workplace

The research evidence shows employers value and invest in the social and emotional education of Gen Z employees. This work reiterates previous studies' findings that Generation Z enjoys non-traditional teaching and learning methods (Cimatti, 2016). As a generational cohort, they prefer visual learning (Rothman, 2016), which is self-directed and experiential (Riley & Nicewicz, 2022; Sharvari & Kulkarni, 2019) and where they can set their own pace of learning (Seemiller & Grace, 2017).

The scoping review reveals that Gen Zers prefer online learning, coaching, on-the-job development, AI technology and workshops to develop their soft-skills at work. Digital technology is useful for teaching Gen Z soft-skills in the workplace because it conforms to their learning preferences. Cimatti (2016) concurs that digital technology is an effective tool in teaching soft-skills to young people, in addition to experts' seminars, coaching and tutoring. The six evidence sources that stated the development methodologies used to advance soft-skills in Gen Z employees did not clearly differentiate whether the development methodologies were employers' development preferences or Gen Z's development preferences. To avoid negative outcomes in today's competitive global market, businesses must create effective soft-skills training programmes to address the skills deficit of Gen Z (Dean & East, 2019) and align with their unique needs for continuous professional development and flexibility (Kraght & Brøndum, 2025).

Future research

The scoping review highlighted the conceptual disparities among the 20 evidence sources in defining soft-skills and

their underlying skill categories of working Generation Z professionals. Future researchers must investigate the soft-skills of Gen Z employees from an industry perspective to help clarify its conceptual and categorical disparity and differentiate it from closely related concepts such as EQ. Generation Z has only recently entered the job market, which presents an opportunity for further studies on Gen Z working professionals (Benitez-Marquez et al., 2022). More studies are needed on working Gen Z professionals' soft-skills characteristics, strengths, potential contribution of their unique skill set and how companies train soft-skills in their youngest working cohort.

The scoping review reiterated Noah and Aziz's (2020) findings that communication, teamwork and interpersonal skills are the most desirable soft-skills in Gen Z employees, yet simultaneously the most lacking skills in Gen Z professionals. Future research is necessary to ascertain whether developing these soft-skills helps to narrow the soft-skills gap. Future researchers can employ a mixed-methods approach, incorporating a qualitative study to provide a deeper understanding of soft-skills, alongside quantitative research with a larger sample of employers and Gen Z that would objectively indicate the soft-skills required for Gen Z employees and what they entail.

Furthermore, the scoping review highlighted that there is limited research on how companies cultivate soft-skills in Gen Z professionals and which training methodologies are best suited to the needs of this youngest working cohort. The scoping review's evidence sources highlighted the significance of investing in social and emotional education or described the types of soft-skills development offered to their youngest working cohort without elaborating on the format, structure, duration or presentation methods of such development. This opens the door for prospective researchers to investigate the efficacy and format of such development, what content it would cover, the optimal time and the delivery method. Also, researchers must investigate employers' soft-skills development preferences versus Gen Z's preferences to evaluate whether they align and, if not, where and how preferential development discrepancies can be bridged.

Finally, data from the scoping review revealed that corporates prefer to use digital technology, specifically online learning and AI technology, to cultivate soft-skills in Gen Z professionals, which corresponds with their innate propensity towards technology (Bornman, 2019; Deluliis & Saylor, 2021). However, the data also revealed that organisations keenly employ in-person coaching, workshops and experiential-based development to develop their soft-skills. Prospective researchers must investigate the need to combine digital soft-skills development, such as online development and AI technologies, with in-person development, such as coaching and workshops.

A technology-driven tool, such as an AI coaching chatbot, can combine the benefits of both development modalities

and adhere to the learning preferences of Gen Z professionals. Coaching meets Gen Z's unique learning requirements (Kastberg et al., 2020) and has been successfully used to enhance social and emotional skills (Boyatzis, 2018; Schaap & Dippenaar, 2017). A digital coaching platform, such as an AI coaching chatbot, can circumvent the challenges of in-person coaching, as it is scalable, more affordable and less stigmatised (Chatterjee et al., 2021; Venkatesan et al., 2020). Artificial intelligence coaching presents a promising opportunity to develop the soft-skills of Gen Z professionals; however, there are very few studies on this topic. Therefore, research is needed to investigate whether an AI coaching chatbot can advance the level of soft-skills in Gen Z employees and, by doing so, bridge the soft-skills gap and optimise their career trajectory. Future researchers have tabula rasa to explore and experiment with such digital tools, as they will be breaking new ground in the field.

Study limitations

All the evidence sources were selected based on their adherence to the inclusion criteria, determined mainly by Generation Z professionals' soft-skills. Therefore, the research evidence sample was smaller and less representative than an evidence sample that would only investigate soft-skills regardless of the generational cohort or employment status. Moreover, the unequal distribution and representation of the three participant samples made it difficult to compare results because some were underrepresented, and others were over-represented in several categories of investigation.

Conclusion

This scoping review underlined the conceptual disparity documented by previous scholars and the extensive list of skills it encompasses. The evidence sources cited 105 soft-skills, which were whittled down to 22 core categories. Emotional intelligence emerged as the most prominent and frequently mentioned soft-skills category.

Communication skills emerged as the second most cited category of soft-skills, followed by cognitive performance and thinking abilities. Similarly, communication skills were cited as the most sought-after soft-skills for Gen Z employees and their most significant deficiency. Interestingly, some authors contradicted this perspective, citing communication as a strength of Gen Z employees. This conflicting finding can be attributed to the limited number of sources providing evidence of Gen Z employees' soft-skill strengths, coupled with the fact that one of the two participant samples consisted of Gen Z members who rated themselves positively.

The findings presented 11 ways companies develop soft-skills in their youngest working cohort. The most popular methods to develop Gen Z workers' soft-skills are online learning, coaching, on-the-job development, technology-driven and AI approaches, and workshops. The use of digital technology to develop soft-skills in Gen Z professionals has

become very popular and has replaced traditional didactic development methods. The rapid technological advances in AI can be utilised to employers' advantage to develop soft-skills in the Gen Z workforce and meet them where they are most comfortable and proficient.

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Competing interests

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Authors' contributions

C.V. did the scoping review. N.T. supervised the research and contributed to the writing of this manuscript.

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Data availability

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author, N.T., upon reasonable request.

Disclaimer

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Appendix 1

TABLE 1-A1: Summary of the scoping review evidence resources.

Title	Author(s), publication year, country and type	Study aim(s) and purpose	Research design, study type, and research method	Participants, industry, sample size and sampling method	Key findings and limitations
Skills Gap: The Perceptions of Importance of Soft-Skills in Graduate Employability Between Employers and Graduates	Yong, B.P.P., and Ling, Y. L. 2023, Malaysia, Journal article	To investigate soft-skills perceptions among employers and graduates in Malaysia	Quantitative, descriptive questionnaires	Employers and Gen Z employees, various industries, 425, purposive sampling	The skills gap is because of disparities between graduates' and employers' perceptions Study limitations not mentioned
Employers Expectations and Requirements. Case Study: Employers of Schools of Economics and Business Graduates in Romania	Staiculescu, C., Lacatus, M.L., and Livinti, R. 2021, Romania, Conference paper	To identify employers' expectations of future employees and whether ASE graduates meet these expectations	Quantitative other questionnaires and surveys	Employers, higher educational institutions, 80, convenience sampling	Employers want employees to behave ethically and responsibly, desire to learn and develop professionally and organise and plan their activities. Study limitations not mentioned
Skills of Future Workforce: Skills Gap Based on Perspectives from Academicians and Industry Players	Noor, N.N.M., Rodzalan, S.A., Abdullah, N.H., Saat, M.M., Othman, A., and Singh, H. 2024, Malaysia, Journal article	To identify the soft-skills of the electrical and electronic (E and E) industry based on the perspectives of academicians and industry players	Quantitative descriptive questionnaires	Employers and industry experts, higher educational institutions and E and E, industries, 81, sampling not mentioned	Key findings and study limitations not mentioned
Perspectives of Employers on Graduate Employability Skills: A Case of Malaysia	Yen, W.T.M., Yen, Y.Y., Choy, C.S., Nee, T.W., and Ming-Li, T. 2023, Malaysia, Journal article	To determine employers' perceptions of graduates' employability skills and examine if there is a gap between perceptions and skills level	Quantitative descriptive questionnaires and surveys	Industry experts, manufacturing, 63, purposive sampling	Employers' expectations of graduates' soft-skills are higher than their level of satisfaction. The small sample size is not representative, and the study focusses on only eight skills
Perceived Difference Among the Employers and Graduates of Arunachal Pradesh Regarding the Essential Employability Skills	Sebastian, B., and Thappa, S. 2024, India, Journal article	To examine the perception of both employers and graduates regarding employability skills	Mixed methods, descriptive questionnaires and secondary analysis	Employers, manufacturing and finances, 20, sampling not mentioned	Key findings and study limitations not mentioned
Graduates' Employability Skills in East Africa	Guàrdia, L., Mancini, F., Jacobetty, P., and Maina, M. 2021, East Africa: Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda, Journal article	To investigate the perceptions of academicians, employers and civil servants regarding graduates' employability skills in East Africa	Mixed method, exploratory questionnaires, surveys and focus groups	Employers, various industries, 89: 18 from Kenya, 44 from Tanzania, 25 from Uganda and 2 who withheld their origin, convenience sampling	Key findings and study limitations not mentioned
Perspectives of Asian Employers on Graduates' Soft-Skills: A Systematic Review	Pazil, A.H.M., and Razak, R.C. 2019, Malaysia, Journal article	To explore employers' soft-skills expectations of graduates	Qualitative, systematic literature review: Secondary analysis and PRISMA statement	Employers, systematic literature review, various industries, 21 articles, purposive sampling	The soft-skills graduates' need is classified into 11 major domains. Only the major domains of graduates' soft-skills are classified
Competencies for Fresh Graduates' Success at Work: Perspectives of Employers	Pang, E., Wong, M., Leung, C.H., and Coombes, J. 2019, China, Journal article	To investigate what employers, deem vital skills for graduates to succeed in the workplace	Quantitative, descriptive questionnaires and surveys	Employers, various industries, 260, purposive sampling	Key findings not mentioned. It is based on a cross-sectional survey methodology covering a relatively small sample size
Soft-skills for Sustainable Employment of Business Graduates of Bangladesh	Nusrat, M., and Sultana, N. 2019, Bangladesh, Journal, article	To determine if employers' soft skill requirements are like the workplace needs and whether business school faculties' and recruiters' perceptions align about business graduates	Quantitative, descriptive and inferential questionnaires and secondary analysis/ documentary analysis	Employers and industry experts, recruitment and academics, 81, purposive sampling	Both recruiters and faculty agreed on the importance of the soft-skills listed yet disagreed on four soft-skills. There is a gap between business curriculum and industry expectations The paper concentrates on the skills gap and not on how to address it
The Impact of Employability Skills on Employers' Satisfaction: A Conceptual Model for Fresh Graduates of Engineering	Sjawie, F., and Ardi, R. 2021, Indonesia, Journal article	To build an employability skills model for engineering graduates based on employers' hiring intention, to identify graduates' employability skills and skills employers value	Quantitative, descriptive questionnaires and secondary analysis/ documentary analysis	Employers, engineering and manufacturing, 30, purposive sampling	Key findings and study limitations not mentioned
Employers' Perception of Young Workers' Soft-Skills	Horváth-Csikós, G., Juhász, T., and Gáspár, T. 2023, Hungary Journal article	Examining which soft-skills employers believe their employees possess and how they would develop these skills to align with their employees' and company's goals	Quantitative, correlational questionnaires and surveys	Employers, various industries, 416, snowball	Employers know their employees' soft-skills needs and most employers support such efforts. The study limitation is that the survey is not representative

Table 1-A1 continues on the next page →

TABLE 1-A1 (Continues...): Summary of the scoping review evidence resources.

Title	Author(s), publication year, country and type	Study aim(s) and purpose	Research design, study type, and research method	Participants, industry, sample size and sampling method	Key findings and limitations
Soft-skills and Their Importance in the Labour Market under the Conditions of Industry 5.0	Poláková, M., Suleimanová, J.H., Madzík, P., Copuš, L., Molnárová, I., and Polednová, J. 2023, Slovakia, Journal article	To describe soft-skills' significance, to categorise it and to investigate the demand for it	Quantitative descriptive secondary analysis/ documentary analysis and PRISMA statement	Employers and industry experts, various industries, 35 articles, purposive sampling	In technologically driven domains, employers constantly demand interpersonal skills The geographical location is predominantly confined to a specific region and the study only spanned one year
Literature Review: Soft-skill Needed by Gen Z in the Era RI 4.0 and Society 5.0.	Ismail, D.H., Nugroho, J., and Rohayati, T. 2023, Indonesia, Journal article	To identify the soft-skills Gen Z needs to succeed as they enter the world of work and business in the era of Industry 4.0 and Society 5.0	Qualitative exploratory secondary analysis/ documentary analysis	Industry experts, industry not mentioned, sample size not mentioned, purposive sampling: literature review of international journal publication and accredited journals published from 2019	Generation Z needs ten essential soft-skills to succeed in Industry 4.0 and Society 5.0. Study limitations not mentioned
Understanding Generation Z: Recruiting, Training and Leading the Next Generation	McCrinkle, M., and Fell, A. 2019, Australia, Industry report	To benchmark survey findings of Gen Z against the older generations	Quantitative correlational surveys	Gen Z employees, various industries, 200, sampling not mentioned	Key findings and study limitations not mentioned
Kahoot! ZetaPulse Gen Z Workforce Study: Empowering Employee Voices, Fostering Teamwork, and Unlocking the Future of Learning and Work	Kahoot!, 2023, United States of America, Industry report	To provide insight for companies into Gen Z	Quantitative other surveys	Gen Z employees, various industries, 200, sampling not mentioned	Key findings and study limitations not mentioned
On the Road to Consensus: Key Soft-Skills Required for Youth Employment in the Service Sector	Singh, A., and Jaykumar, P. 2019, India, Journal article	To identify the soft-skills required for entry-level employees and to identify if any literature gaps exist	Mixed method, other questionnaires and secondary analysis	Employers and industry experts, tourism and hospitality industry, 100–150, Purposive sampling	There is a gap between the soft-skills companies expect from entry-level employees and the soft-skills they have. Study limitations not mentioned
What will Generation Z CEOs look like?	The Adecco Group, 2019, Country not stated, Industry report	To gauge Gen Z's opinion on what the future of the C-suite looks like	Quantitative other surveys	Gen Z employees, Human Resources provider and temporary staffing firm, 5146, purposive sampling	Most Gen Z believe soft-skills will be more important than hard skills for future C-Suite leaders. Study limitations not mentioned
The Soft-Skills Gap: A Bottleneck in the Talent Supply in Emerging Economies	Singh Dubey, R., Paul, J., and Tewari, V. 2021, India, Journal article	To identify the soft-skills necessary for the information technology (IT) sector	Mixed method, descriptive questionnaires and secondary analysis	Industry experts, 53 documents, 269 IT industry experts, purposive sampling	Key findings not mentioned. The study was performed in only one country, which makes it difficult to generalise it across countries
Soft-skills to Enhance Graduate Employability: Comparing Students and Employers' Perceptions	Succi, C., and Canovi, M. 2020, Italy, Germany (Europe), Journal article	To show the growing importance of soft-skills in the continuously changing working environment	Mixed method, descriptive surveys, interviews, focus groups and secondary analysis	Employers, various industries, 300, purposive sampling: A business school was selected for the data collection	The results reveal an increased emphasis on soft-skills over the last decade and that companies consider soft-skills more important than graduates. Study limitations not mentioned
Improving Graduateness: Addressing the Gap between Employer Needs and Graduate Employability in Palestine	Nabulsi, N., McNally, B., and Khoury, G. 2021, Palestine, Journal article	To explore various perceptions on graduates' skills level and requirements	Mixed method, exploratory surveys and interviews	Employers, various industries, 7, non-probability, convenience sampling	There is a key shortage of soft-skills Government officials were excluded because they could not be interviewed

TABLE 2-A1: Definitions and taxonomy of soft-skills.

Title and Author(s)	Definition of Soft-skills: RQ 1	The taxonomy of soft-skills: RQ 2
Skills Gap: The Perceptions of Importance of Soft-Skills in Graduate Employability Between Employers and Graduates. Yong et al. (2023)	Not mentioned	Goal setting, work commitment, organisational skills, self-care, balancing-life, self-awareness, ethics, creativity and innovation, self-presentation, communication, critical thinking, social enterprising, networking, leadership, team spirit, empathy, global awareness, adaptability, analytical thinking, lifelong learning, decision-making, management skills, productivity, collaboration and proactivity
Employers Expectations and Requirements. Case Study: Employers of Schools of Economics and Business Graduates in Romania. Staiculescu et al. (2021)	There are mainly two main types of skills: professional skills or so-called hard skills, which are required to effectively perform different professions and transversal skills or soft-skills that help people to be adaptable, open to change, able to mobilise their internal resources in order to successfully cope with challenges of any kind (p. 186).	Critical thinking, creativity and innovation, problem-solving, self-knowledge, self-development, adaptability, responsibility, teamwork, ethics and communication
Skills of Future Workforce: Skills Gap Based on Perspectives from Academicians and Industry Players Noor et al. (2024)	This study defines soft-skills as abilities relating to individuals' characteristics and behaviour in everyday life in the era of Industry 4.0 (p. 775).	Cognitive skills: Analytical thinking, creative thinking, critical thinking, decision-making, innovative thinking, and problem-solving Interpersonal skills: Agility, adaptability, autonomous leadership, communication, coordination, EQ, flexibility, intercultural skills, negotiation, networking, project management, and teamwork Personal skills: Discipline, driving change, entrepreneurial skills, ethics and professionalism, language proficiency, lifelong learning, proactive, responsibility, self-development, self-management, stress management, and time management
Perspectives of Employers on Graduate Employability Skills: A Case of Malaysia. Yen et al. (2023)	Not mentioned	English communication skills, thinking skills, positive attitude, teamwork, work planning skills, work discipline, self-motivation and technology skills.
Perceived Difference Among the Employers and Graduates of Arunachal Pradesh Regarding the Essential Employability Skills. Sebastian and Thappa (2024)	Not mentioned	Communication skills, interpersonal skills, self-management skills, critical thinking, personal attributes, resource management skills, technical competence, analytical skills, leadership skills, teamwork, digital literacy, workplace ethics, adaptability, willingness to learn, networking, problem-solving, decision-making, subject knowledge, market awareness and personal integrity
Graduates' Employability Skills in East Africa. Guàrdia et al. (2021)	Employability skills is used in this study to designate the attributes that graduate students possess and which are valued by employers, that is, attributes which make graduates worth employing (p. 170).	Knowledge economy skills: Foreign Language, cross-cultural and diversity competence, subject-specific skills, results-orientated performance, digital skills and teamwork Uncertainty management skills: Stress management, conflict management, coping with change and self-management Leadership skills: Problem-solving, communication, interpersonal skills and decision-making. Cognitive performance skills: Creative thinking, analytical thinking and learning to learn.
Perspectives of Asian Employers on Graduates' Soft-Skills: A Systematic Review Pazil and Razak (2019)	Not mentioned	Communication skills, entrepreneurial skills, interpersonal skills, lifelong learning skills, management skills, numeracy skills, problem-solving skills, professional ethics and moral skills, self-management skills, technological skills and thinking skills
Competencies for Fresh Graduates' Success at Work: Perspectives of Employers. Pang et al. (2019)	Not mentioned	Ability and willingness to learn, achievement orientation, concern for order, quality and accuracy, creativity, innovation and change, customer service orientation, developing others, directiveness, flexibility, hard and willingness to take on extra work, impact and influence on others, information seeking, initiative, interpersonal understanding, organisational commitment, relationship building, self-confidence, self-control, team leadership, teamwork and cooperation
Soft-skills for Sustainable Employment of Business Graduates of Bangladesh. Nusrat and Sultana (2019)	Not mentioned	Communication, interpersonal skills, ability to work under pressure, self-motivation, deadline and target orientation, analytical ability, decision-making, teamwork, leadership skills, problem-solving, critical thinking, creativity, proactive personality, responsibility and accountability, work ethics, persuasiveness and influence, presentation skills and overall soft-skills
The Impact of Employability Skills on Employers' Satisfaction: A Conceptual Model for Fresh Graduates of Engineering. Sjawie and Ardi (2021)	Not mentioned	Communication skills, professional skills, thinking skills, core employability skills, interpersonal skills, computing skills, enterprise and entrepreneurial skills
Employers' Perception of Young Workers' Soft-Skills. Horváth-Csikós et al. (2023)	Soft-skills are often viewed as personality traits and behaviours that individuals either possess or do not possess (p. 2).	Communication skills, negotiation, non-verbal communication, persuasion, presentation, public speaking, reading body language, creativity, critical thinking, problem-solving, curiosity, adaptability, critical observation, planning, the desire to learn, flexibility, innovation, resourcefulness, tolerance of change and uncertainty, decision-making skills, sense of responsibility to society and ability to handle conflicts, leadership, delegate tasks, facilitation, mentoring, giving clear feedback, inspiring colleagues, managing meetings, project management and talent management, positive attitudes, confidence, cooperation, courtesy, enthusiasm, honesty, humour, patience, respect, teamwork, work ethic, arrive at work on time, complete tasks on time, stay focussed and stay organised

Table 2-A1 continues on the next page →

TABLE 2-A1 (Continues...): Definitions and taxonomy of soft-skills.

Title and Author(s)	Definition of Soft-skills: RQ 1	The taxonomy of soft-skills: RQ 2
Soft-skills and Their Importance in the Labour Market under the Conditions of Industry 5.0. Poláková et al. (2023)	In our study, soft-skills are viewed as the constituent elements of competencies (p. 5).	Problem-solving skills, communication skills, organisational/ managerial skills, teamwork, leadership skills, creativity, analytical and critical thinking, value orientation, flexibility, initiative and engagement, learning skills, well-being focussed, taking responsibility, EQ and persistence
Literature Review: Soft Skill Needed by Gen Z in the Era RI 4.0 and Society 5.0. Ismail et al., (2023)	Soft-skills are an individual's personal resilience in the work process, self-management (intrapersonal skills), interpersonal interactions (interpersonal skills), and wisdom/well-being, enabling the maximum development of personal and organisational performance (p. 123).	Interpersonal skills: Motivation skills, leadership skills, negotiation skills, presentation skills, communication skills, relationship building, public speaking skills, self-marketing skills and marketing skills Intrapersonal skill: Time management, stress management, change management, transforming character, creative thinking, goal orientation and accelerated learning techniques for rapid learning
Understanding Generation Z: Recruiting, Training and Leading the Next Generation. McCrinkle and Fell (2019)	Not mentioned	Not mentioned
Kahoot! ZetaPulse Gen Z Workforce Study: Empowering Employee Voices, Fostering Teamwork, and Unlocking the Future of Learning and Work. Kahoot! (2023)	Not mentioned	Not mentioned
On the Road to Consensus: Key Soft-Skills Required for Youth Employment in the Service Sector. Singh and Jaykumar (2019)	In broad terms, we can say that soft-skills comprise concepts such as skills, disposition, attitudes, beliefs and values (p. 14).	Communication, work ethic, teamwork, organisational skills, planning skills, information and knowledge application, cultural sensitisation and adaptability, interpersonal skills, customer service, professionalism and self-management, critical and analytic thinking
What will Generation Z CEOs look like? The Adecco Group (2019)	Not mentioned	Not mentioned
The Soft-Skills Gap: A Bottleneck in the Talent Supply in Emerging Economies. Singh Dubey et al., (2021)	Not mentioned	Personal skills, leadership skills, interpersonal skills, team skills, enterprise skills, organisational skills, ready to face challenges, inquisitiveness, detail orientated, result orientated, resilience, diligence, stress management, ability to work under pressure, knowledge application, responsible, customer-orientated, professionalism, proactive, critical thinking, ethics/honesty, leadership skill, self-motivated, listen actively to others, problem-solving, flexibility, non-verbal communication skills, decision-making, communication skills, charismatic personality, persuade/negotiate, presentation skills, accepting compliments, giving feedback constructively, tackling unpleasant situations, empathy, etiquette, asking for assistance, willingness to learn, respectful, disciplined, entrepreneurial, creativity, innovative, independent worker, competency in locating vital information, good writing skills, cultural awareness, multitasking, a good social network and punctuality/time management
Soft-skills to Enhance Graduate Employability: Comparing Students and Employers' Perceptions. Succi and Canovi (2020)	Not mentioned	Personal: Commitment to work, professional ethics, stress tolerance, creativity/innovation skills, learning skills, life balance skills and self-awareness Social: Communication skills, conflict management, negotiation skills, network skills, culture adaptability and leadership Methodological: Teamwork, adaptability to change, analysis skills, continuous improvement skills, customer orientation skills, decision-making skills, management skills and results-orientation skills
Improving Graduateness: Addressing the Gap between Employer Needs and Graduate Employability in Palestine. Nabulsi et al. (2021)	Not mentioned	Not mentioned

TABLE 3-A1: The full taxonomy of soft-skills and frequency mentioned across evidence sources.

Soft-skills	Frequency mentioned across studies (n = 20)	Soft-skills	Frequency mentioned across studies (n = 20)	Soft-skills	Frequency mentioned across studies (n = 20)	Soft-skills	Frequency mentioned across studies (n = 20)	Soft-skills	Frequency mentioned across studies (n = 20)
Accepting compliments	1	Customer service orientation	3	Impact and influence	1	Market and global awareness	1	Quality and accuracy	1
Achievement orientation	1	Deadline and target driven	1	Independent	1	Marketing skills	1	Facing challenges	1
Adaptability	5	Dealing with unpleasant situations	1	Information/knowledge application	1	Motivation skills	1	Relationship building	2
Agility	1	Decision-making	7	Information seeking	2	Multi-tasking	1	Resource-management skills	1
Analytical thinking	7	Detail orientated	1	Initiative and proactivity	6	Negotiation	4	Respectful	1
Applying knowledge	1	Developing others	1	Innovation	5	Networking skills	5	Responsibility and accountability	7
Asking for assistance	1	Digital literacy	2	Inquisitive	1	Non-verbal skills	1	Results-orientated	3
Balancing-life	2	Diligent	1	Interpersonal skills	9	Numeracy skills	1	Self-awareness	2
Change management	3	Directiveness	1	Intrapersonal skills	1	Organising skills	5	Self-care	1
Charismatic personality	1	Discipline	3	Language proficiency	3	Persistence	1	Self-confidence	1
Cognitive performance	2	Driving change	1	Leadership	11	Personal Integrity	1	Self-control	1
Collaboration and coordination	2	Emotional intelligence	2	Lifelong learning	10	Personal skills	4	Self-development	2
Communication	12	Empathy	2	Listening to others	1	Persuasion	2	Self-knowledge	1
Computing skills	1	Entrepreneur and Enterprising	5	Management skills	3	Planning skills	2	Self-management	5
Conflict management	2	Etiquette	1	Market and global awareness	1	Positive attitude	1	Self-marketing	1
Coping with setbacks	1	Flexibility	4	Marketing skills	1	Presentation skills	3	Self-motivation	3
Employability/Soft-skills	2	Giving feedback	1	Motivation skills	1	Problem-solving	9	Self-presentation	1
Creativity	9	Global awareness	1	Multi-tasking	1	Productivity	1	Social enterprising	1
Critical thinking	8	Goal setting	2	Listening to others	1	Project management	1	Stress management	6
Cross-cultural and diversity competence	4	Hardworking and taking on extra work	1	Management skills	3	Public speaking skills	1	Subject knowledge	2
Stress management	6	Technology skills	3	Transforming character	1	Well-being focussed	1	-	-
Subject knowledge	2	Thinking skills	3	Uncertainty management skills	1	Work commitment	3	-	-
Teamwork and team spirit	11	Time management	3	Value orientation	1	Workplace ethics professionalism	9	-	-

TABLE 4-A1: Data extraction form.

Author(s) and Soft-Skills development methodology: RQ 6	Soft-skills valued in Generation Z professionals: RQ 3			Soft-skills deficiencies of Generation Z professionals: RQ 4			Soft-skills strengths of Generation Z professionals: RQ 5		
Authors mentioning development methodology (n = 6)	Employers (n = 12)	Industry experts (n = 7)	Gen Z employees (n = 2)	Employers (n = 5)	Industry experts (n = 2)	Gen Z employees (n = 3)	Employers (n = 4)	Industry experts (n = 1)	Gen Z employees (n = 1)
Yong et al. (2023) On-the-job development and e-learning courses.	Proactivity, job commitment, organisational skills, self-presentation, communication, adaptability, empathy, team spirit, decision-making, ethics and creativity	-	Balancing life, communication skills, self-care, creativity, self-presentation, ethics, organisational skills, lifelong learning and team spirit	-	-	-	-	-	-
Staiculescu et al. (2021) Development methodology not mentioned	Communication, teamwork, proactive attitude, ethical behaviours, responsibility, desire to learn, professional development, organisational and planning skills, teamwork, analytical skills, initiative, flexibility, EQ, confidence, sociability, stress management, self-awareness, risk management, decision-making and creativity	-	-	Oral presentations, situation analysis, patience and delayed gratification	-	-	Enthusiasm, desire for self-improvement, motivation, practicality, and fluency in a foreign language	-	-
Rodzaian et al. (2022) Development methodology not mentioned	Cognitive skills: Decision-making, analytical thinking, and problem-solving skills Interpersonal skills: Teamwork skills, communication skills Personal skills: Discipline, driving and managing change, decision-making, teamwork and discipline	Cognitive skills: Analytical thinking skills, decision-making Interpersonal skills: Communication skills, teamwork, agility and adaptability Personal skills: Discipline, time management, ethics and professionalism	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Yen et al. (2023) Development methodology not mentioned	-	Positive attitude, English communication skills, technology skills, self-motivation, teamwork, work planning skills and thinking skills	-	-	English communication skills, self-motivation, thinking skills, positive attitude, teamwork, work planning skills and technology skills and work discipline skills	-	-	-	-
Sebastian and Thappa (2024) Development methodology not mentioned	Interpersonal skills, integrity, self-management skills, teamwork, (technical skills) and personal integrity	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Guàrdia et al. (2021) Development methodology not mentioned	Interpersonal skills, communication skills, teamwork, creative thinking, problem-solving, decision-making, adaptability and analytical thinking	-	-	Foreign language, cross-cultural competence, positive attitude, conflict resolution and change management	-	-	Results oriented performance, digital skills, and teamwork	-	-

Table 4-A1 continues on the next page →

TABLE 4-A1 (Continues...): Data extraction form.

Author(s) and Soft-Skills development methodology: RQ 6	Soft-skills valued in Generation Z professionals: RQ 3			Soft-skills deficiencies of Generation Z professionals: RQ 4			Soft-skills strengths of Generation Z professionals: RQ 5		
	Employers (n = 12)	Industry experts (n = 7)	Gen Z employees (n = 2)	Employers (n = 5)	Industry experts (n = 2)	Gen Z employees (n = 3)	Employers (n = 4)	Industry experts (n = 1)	Gen Z employees (n = 1)
Pazil and Razak (2019) Development methodology not mentioned	Communication skills, interpersonal skills, lifelong learning, self-management skills, thinking skills, problem-solving skills, management skills and entrepreneurial skills	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Pang et al. (2019) Development methodology not mentioned	Ability and willingness to learn, teamwork and cooperation, hardworking, willingness to take on extra work, self-control and analytical thinking	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Nusrat and Sultana (2019) Development methodology not mentioned	Communication skills, ability to work under pressure, interpersonal skill, self-motivation, deadline and target-orientation, analytical ability, teamwork, problem-solving skills, proactive personality, responsibility/accountability, and work ethic	Communication skills, decision-making ability, stakeholder management, analytical skills, teamwork, time management, stress management, self-confidence, positive attitude, and open-minded	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Sjawie and Ardi (2021) Development methodology not mentioned	Core employability, communication skills, thinking skills, interpersonal skills, enterprise and entrepreneurial skills, professional skills and computing skills	-	-	Professional skills and interpersonal skills	-	-	Core employment skills and willingness to learn.	-	-
Horváth-Csikós et al. (2023) On-the-job development, online courses, coaching, swot analysis, and roleplay.	-	-	-	Leadership skills and responsibility	-	-	Communication skills, compassion, and facing challenging tasks	-	-
Poláková et al. (2023) Development methodology not mentioned	Interpersonal, communication skills, analytical thinking, critical thinking, problem-solving, taking responsibility, flexibility, creativity, organisational/managerial skills, well-being focussed, teamwork, adaptability, time management and EQ	Persistence, EQ, online communication, and leadership skills	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Ismail et al. (2023) Generation Z prefers a technology-driven approach during soft-skills development.	-	Complex problem-solving, EQ, critical thinking, creativity, people management, coordinating with others, decision-making, service orientation, negotiation and cognitive flexibility	-	-	Social intelligence, independent decision-making, interpersonal communication, socialisation, social competence, EQ, and teamwork	-	-	Inclusivity of diversity, ambitious, future orientated	-

Table 4-A1 continues on the next page →

TABLE 4-A1 (Continues...): Data extraction form.

Author(s) and Soft-skills development methodology: RQ 6	Soft-skills valued in Generation Z professionals: RQ 3			Soft-skills deficiencies of Generation Z professionals: RQ 4			Soft-skills strengths of Generation Z professionals: RQ 5		
	Employers (n = 12)	Industry experts (n = 7)	Gen Z employees (n = 2)	Employers (n = 5)	Industry experts (n = 2)	Gen Z employees (n = 3)	Employers (n = 4)	Industry experts (n = 1)	Gen Z employees (n = 1)
McCrindle and Feil, (2019) On-the-job coaching/ mentoring, and in-house or outsourced development courses.	-	-	-	-	-	People skills, leadership, teamwork, collaboration skills, presentation skills and public speaking	-	-	-
Kahoot! (2023) Gen Z is leveraging AI for skill development, AI chatbot and ChatGPT. Peer-based and self-directed learning, workshops or development led by colleagues.	-	-	-	-	-	Soft-skills, peer-peer learning, communication skills, negotiation and leadership	-	-	-
Singh and Jaykumar (2019) Internal development	Communication, work ethics, teamwork, interpersonal skills, customer service, professionalism, self-management, critical and analytic thinking	Communication, work ethics, teamwork, interpersonal, and customer service skills.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
The Adecco Group (2019) Development methodology not mentioned	-	-	People management, leading teams, EQ, curiosity, communication, creativity, critical thinking, adaptability, ethics, problem-solving, cross-cultural and intergenerational awareness, negotiation, resilience, self-awareness and service orientation	-	-	Critical thinking, Self-awareness, people skills, teamwork, cross-cultural and inter-generational awareness, problem-solving, negotiation, decision-making, and agile project management	-	-	Curiosity, learning agility, adaptable, resilience, creativity, service orientation, communication, ethics and EQ
Singh Dubey et al., (2021) Development methodology not mentioned	-	Problem-solving, willingness to learn, active listening, self-motivation, team, knowledge application, personal, leadership, enterprising, interpersonal and organisational skills	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Succi and Canovi (2020) Development methodology not mentioned	Communication, teamwork, work commitment, adaptability to change, professionally ethical, customer orientation skills, and creativity/innovation	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Nabulsi et al. (2021) Development methodology not mentioned	-	-	-	Written and verbal communication, problem-solving skills, negotiation skills, and conflict resolution	-	-	-	-	-

TABLE 5-A1: The numerical summary of the data extraction form Table 4-A1.

Soft-skills	Soft-skills valued in Generation Z professionals				Soft-skills deficiencies of Generation Z professionals				Soft-skills strengths of Generation Z professionals			
	Employers (n = 12)	Industry experts (n = 7)	Gen Z employees (n = 2)	Total: (n = 21)	Employers (n = 5)	Industry experts (n = 2)	Gen Z employees (n = 3)	Total: (n = 10)	Employers (n = 4)	Industry experts (n = 1)	Gen Z employees (n = 1)	Total: (n = 6)
Active listening	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Adaptability	4	1	1	6	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
Ambition	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1
Analytical thinking	7	2	-	9	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
Balancing-life and well-being	1	-	1	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Change management	1	-	-	1	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
Cognitive performance	1	1	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Collaboration and coordination	1	1	-	2	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-
Communication	10	5	2	17	1	2	2	4	1	-	1	2
Confidence	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Conflict resolution	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	2	-	-	-	-
Creativity	5	1	2	8	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
Critical thinking	2	1	1	4	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-
Gross-cultural and diversity skills	-	-	1	1	1	-	1	2	-	1	-	1
Curiosity	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
Customer service orientation	2	1	-	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Decision-making	5	3	-	8	-	1	1	2	-	-	-	-
Delayed gratification	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
Discipline	2	1	-	3	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	-
Earning potential	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
Emotional and social intelligence	2	2	1	5	-	1	-	1	-	-	1	1
Empathy and compassion	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1
Employability/soft-skills	1	-	-	1	-	-	1	1	1	-	-	1
Entrepreneurial and enterprising	2	1	-	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Flexibility	2	1	-	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Foreign language	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1
Future orientated	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1
Initiative and proactivity	3	-	-	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Innovation	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Integrity	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Interpersonal/people skills	8	3	-	11	1	1	2	4	-	-	-	-
Leadership	-	2	1	3	1	-	2	3	-	-	-	-
Lifelong learning	3	1	1	5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Management skills	3	1	-	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Negotiation	-	1	1	2	1	-	2	3	-	-	-	-
Organisational skills	3	1	1	5	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
Patience	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
Peer-to-peer learning	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
People management	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Personal skills	1	2	-	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Table 5-A1 continues on the next page →

TABLE 5-A1 (Continues...): The numerical summary of the data extraction form Table 4-A1.

Soft-skills	Soft-skills valued in Generation Z professionals			Soft-skills deficiencies of Generation Z professionals			Soft-skills strengths of Generation Z professionals		
	Employers (n = 12)	Industry experts (n = 7)	Total: (n = 21)	Employers (n = 5)	Industry experts (n = 2)	Total: (n = 10)	Employers (n = 4)	Industry experts (n = 1)	Total: (n = 6)
Planning skills	1	1	2	-	1	1	-	-	-
Positive attitude and enthusiasm	-	2	2	1	1	2	1	-	1
Practical thinking	-	-	-	1	-	1	1	-	1
Presentation skills	-	-	-	1	-	1	-	-	-
Problem-solving	5	3	9	1	-	2	-	-	-
Project management	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
Professional development	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Resilience	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
Resolve challenging tasks	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1
Responsibility and accountability	3	-	3	1	-	1	-	-	-
Results-orientated	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1
Risk management	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Self-awareness	2	-	3	-	-	1	-	-	-
Self-control	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Self-management	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Desire for self-improvement	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1
Self-motivation	1	2	3	-	1	1	1	-	1
Self-presentation skills	1	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-
Service orientation	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
Sociability	1	-	1	-	1	1	-	-	-
Stress management	2	1	3	-	-	-	-	-	-
Subject knowledge	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Teamwork and team spirit	11	5	2	18	2	4	1	-	1
Technology skills	2	1	3	-	1	1	1	-	1
Thinking skills	2	1	3	-	1	1	-	-	-
Time management	1	2	3	-	-	-	-	-	-
Willingness to learn	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1
Work commitment	3	-	3	-	-	-	-	-	-
Work ethics and professionalism	6	2	2	10	-	-	-	-	1