

# THE IMPACT OF SOFT SKILLS TRAINING ON EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP

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### BIO

**Her Excellency Dr. Theresa A. Moseley** is a distinguished US Army Veteran, Wolmi United Nations Peace Ambassador, and award-winning educator with a legacy of inspiring and empowering others. As the Owner and CEO of TAM Creating Ambassadors of Peace LLC, she dedicates her efforts to promoting global peace and leadership. Dr. Moseley has been recognised for her exemplary contributions to education and continues to influence communities worldwide through her work. An international keynote speaker, she shares her passion and wisdom, encouraging individuals to become ambassadors of peace and make a positive impact on the world.

**Theme of the Article:** Soft Skills and Leadership

**Research Objectives:** This study evaluates the effect of non-technical soft skills on leadership development, particularly in dynamic and culturally diverse workplaces.

### Abstract

This research paper investigates the impact of soft skills training on effective leadership, highlighting the role of frontline leaders who bridge the gap between management and staff. Leadership, characterised by personal skills, competencies, and values, is essential for organisational success. However, traditional approaches to leadership often neglect the significance of soft skills such as communication, collaboration, and emotional intelligence. This study evaluates the effect of these non-technical skills on leadership development, particularly in dynamic and culturally diverse workplaces.

Using a systematic literature review and bibliometric research from databases including CAPES Theses, Web

of Science, and ProQuest, the study explores the interplay between soft skills and leadership practices. The findings reveal a strong correlation between soft skills training and improved leadership effectiveness, but they also highlight the need for ongoing development and contextual adaptability in leadership roles. The research further emphasises the importance of empathy, emotional intelligence, and creativity in guiding teams and promoting organisational health. It concludes that investing in soft skills training equips leaders to better manage relationships, adapt to change, and foster innovation, ultimately leading to more resilient and successful organisations.

**Keywords:** Soft Skills Training, Leadership Effectiveness, Emotional Intelligence, Collaboration Skills, Organisational Development

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## 1. Introduction

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Business leaders, managers, and supervisors shape the organisational climate. By influencing the performance of those who work for them, these frontline leaders, or what the current literature refers to as “immediate leaders,” serve as the pivotal link between management and staff. In this connection, the manner in which leadership practice plays out is not lost on those who conclude that the decisions these leaders make, and their day-to-day practice, are manifestations of their personal skills, competencies, characteristics, and values (Chang et al., 2021). As evidence of their day-to-day practice, frontline leaders play a fundamental daily role in setting goals, making decisions, solving problems, allocating resources, and inspiring vision. Research on managerial effectiveness has not been extensive, although recent research in this area signifies the potential relevance of oversight functions (Sangal et al., 2021).

The importance of frontline leaders to management is illustrated efficiently when referring to senior executives and the way they talk about the leadership of their organisations. Part of their role requires close attention to how

senior managers make sense of the strategic challenges that confront them and how they talk about the quality of their organisations’ leadership as a very big part of sustaining and renewing performance. Yet, they recognise that it is the few hundred individuals churning purposefulness into action. Senior managers cannot do this on their own (Dewar et al., 2022). They need the organisation’s senior touch to capture the presence of hundreds of small initiatives and decisions and to nurture the confidence and alignment that reinforce the whole picture. With a lack of supportive research focusing on understanding effective leadership characteristics, they find a critical gap in understanding professional shortcomings. Those who could greatly enhance this purposefulness into action are identified and from whom they expect the most. This serial and increasing concern about the role of “IL” is connected to the current worldwide search for innovative means to build leadership behaviour and skills (Kouzes & Posner, 2023).

### Aim

This study aims to evaluate the impact of soft skills training on developing effective leadership practices. The study explores the focus and preferences of senior management staff.

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## 2. Method

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This study relies on a systematic literature review, which is a method largely used in the academic environment, mainly to comprehend the research subject based on articles, theses, and other studies. Through the literature review and the bibliometric research, the scientific production within the main development areas and their direct impacts on scientific, academic, and organisational works is analysed. Descriptive research carries out a bibliometric survey through research done in previous studies. On account of this, the bibliometric research takes the academic articles on soft skills as a foundation to present and analyse the behaviours and decisions, the drivers, the doubts, the recommendations, the implications, the gaps between the searches, and the possible future lines of investigation. For the purpose of the research, it was carried out in three phases. In the first phase, studies on soft skills were found from the following bases: CAPES Theses, Web of Science, Scopus, ProQuest, ScienceDirect, Social SciSearch, and Scielo. In all cases, the keyword combinations and/or thesauruses used were: ‘formation in soft skills’.

‘development in soft skills’, ‘learning’, ‘skills of the future’, and ‘organisational learning’. In the abstracts and the entire article, in any language, other keywords from this base were included in the less theoretical (challenges, implications, conduction, social skills, individual skills, general skills).

For identifying the potential studies to be included in this review, we conducted a systematic database search. From 2020 to 2024, the following databases were searched using a combination of related terms: Education Resources Information Center, PsycINFO, ProQuest, Medline, PubMed, and Web of Science. Different search terms were used in order to ensure comprehensive inclusion criteria. Firstly, the combination of “leadership”, “soft skills”, “interpersonal skills”, “oral communication”, “verbal communication”, “written communication”, “people skills”, “personal effectiveness”, “teamworking”, “conflict management”, and “self-management” was used, in addition to the synonyms and words denoting them.

Inclusion criteria are justified based on what is relevant to this review’s research question. The search strategy is comprehensive and makes an attempt to diversify inputs. The year criterion is clearly justified. Collaboration with a

librarian in database searches is conducted. Following the database search, the process of identifying and removing duplicated records is systematically documented.

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### 3. Results/Discussion

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It is important to determine whether those who participated in leadership and soft skills training were already more effective leaders prior to participating, or if it was only the training that accounted for their leadership effectiveness. There is no clear relationship between participation as trainees in soft skills training and training that prepares individuals to become leaders. Furthermore, in relation to participation in other Army Leader Development programs, leaders with such previous training had higher mean leadership effectiveness ratings across all feedback providers. This, in part, adds to the perpetual development of leaders in the U.S. Army and the importance of continual professional development to succeed as a leader (Hoffman & Tadelis, 2021).

The importance of the effective use of the soft skills learned from the Full-Range Leadership Model is crucial. These are considered

imperative when leading others. Although the literature indicates the importance of emotional intelligence in effective leadership, the results across feedback providers differ regarding the importance of the different types of soft skills. Factors such as age, gender, and race/ethnicity can all have an impact on the increase or decrease in the use of these needed skills. Developments of policies in organisations and their differing purposes inform a contingent approach, melding the approach of trait theories versus situational leadership to encompass the broader aspect of what is needed in effective leadership. Future research into the development and effectiveness of soft skills as they apply to effective leadership should consider the multilevel, contextual, and culturally influential frameworks (Armstrong & Taylor, 2023).

#### 3.1. Importance of Soft Skills in Leadership

At the most basic level, a leader is someone who leads, someone who guides or influences the conduct of others. The definition sounds elemental and simple, but leadership is elusive and hard to measure, primarily because it is a complex quality, containing both physical and abstract aspects.

Certainly, a core function of leaders is to impact the behaviours and performance of their followers, yet there is little debate that intelligence and business skills are not practical to satisfy what is required on how to effectively handle people. Consequently, effective leadership is more than smarts, as traditionally defined. Leadership emerges from people who have acquired such non-technical skills termed soft such as understanding oneself, setting the right expectations, communication and influence, role-modelling, and last but not least, integrity (Rouco and de., 2024).

The importance of soft skills has been overlooked because of the increasing emphasis on business and technical disciplines. These are subjects that are important and are not to be neglected. However, the development of leaders who will be capable of creating and maintaining successful organisations requires the integration of courses that stress the development of leadership behaviours (Somani, 2021). Additionally, business and technical programs can lack the courses necessary for preparing students with competencies specifically for leading. Finally, the need to address these soft skills rests with the fact that leadership effectiveness is essential for the future

success of any business or governmental organisation, since the lack of leadership can often be directly attributed, and is more than many realise, to the decline of productivity, profitability, job satisfaction, and the overall success of an organisation (De Bruyn., 2023).

Figure 1 compares leadership effectiveness before and after soft skills training in various organisational settings, demonstrating a significant increase in leadership scores post-training.

### 3.2. Communication Skills

Communication is the

health, growth, and success. In organisations whose members frequently converse with each other and with leadership, workers are more aware of company goals and changes, and more productive. The messages created during the process of communication have no absolute or fixed meanings; although they do have relative or shifting meanings that affect organisational effectiveness and leadership. In the new economy, communication between the employee and the company

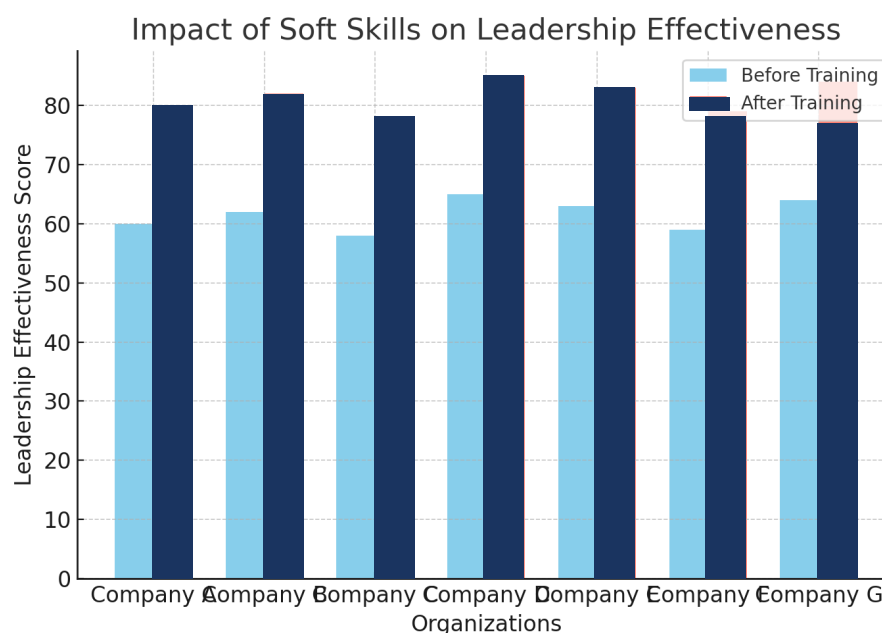


Figure 1 (Kouzes & Posner., 2023)

lifeblood of an organisation. The ability of people at all levels to communicate and discuss company leadership, policies, and practices plays a crucial role in determining organisational morale,

is so important that the creation of a two-way contract between companies and their employees is suggested. This contract would allow employers to encourage all staff members to speak up,

raise questions, and express concerns. This is done to ensure that the intrinsic worth of the employee is maximised (Asamoah, 2021).

### 3.3. Collaboration Skills

Collaboration skills reflect the ability of a leader to promote leadership and teamwork to achieve the balance between collaboration and competition and to consider the potential implications associated with individual and collective leadership. Our participants reported valuable systems thinking imposed through collaborative tasks and exercises as a result of getting a better sense of what it takes to build solid teams, have the collective leadership needed to keep the focus, work through the problems, and offer the customer or leader what they need. As they put it, “We had a task that included electing leaders, developing compelling visions, and receiving direction through sub-goals. So envisioning where you want to go, then holding similar people to the vision, and offering guidance that will help them reach the final mission is very important. It means understanding the big picture from a systems perspective,” and, “Project work allowed us to transition towards a total systems leadership paradigm.” Leaders need to understand the

existing principles, standards, and models that drive team development and reflect the diverse innovative issues and interdisciplinary components that produce meaningful, effective contributions that relate to higher-level outcomes reflected through productive teams and decision-making (Hessari et al., 2024).

### 3.4. Creativity

Creativity is another important soft skill that every effective leader should have. It means the ability to be innovative and to come up with new and different ideas about how things might be done in a different way or showing a new approach to solving a problem. Knowledge of creativity and its improvement is important for sectors such as research and development, where specific creativity management is introduced and has been implemented. In today's businesses, creativity and innovation are essential, and businesses expect that employees bring their knowledge, different ideas, and new concepts. Especially in global businesses and in a world of competition, innovation is crucial for building effective business leadership and team success. In the absence of a leader's ability to be creative and to guide the team in the desired direction, a leader can cause

economic decline if tides are not in favour of external economic trends (Zhou & Shalley, 2024).

The concept of creativity at work has had an evolving history in several research fields. Related to work and business, creativity and business leadership are often limited by most of the business literature to the parts related to products or services, how to improve processes, and how to build businesses. We can consider innovation and business strategy to bring final products and services to the market, the promotion of new ideas as a foundation of some ideologies or marketing strategies, and the culture of free expression or unrestricted dialogue (Acciarini et al., 2023). All sorts of organisations need innovation as leverage to build creativity. Government and for-profit businesses, non-profit organisations, schools and universities, religious institutions, and many others are committed to the discipline of innovation in order to fulfil their missions and goals. In addition utilising the internet of all things (IoT) ‘enables automated decision making without human intervention’ (Surao, 2021) making human skills more vital.

An essential characteristic of effective leadership, specifically within dynamic, 21st-century organisations, is the ability to adapt. This study revealed



that adaptability within interpersonal relationships was an important category. Becoming adaptable can take various forms, such as learning how to initiate and establish relationships. Leaders should also develop the ability to listen to others, have conversations that benefit all parties, and facilitate relationships and communication. This means that the leader should create organisational climates that encourage a give-and-take atmosphere, as well as rewarding cooperation and collaboration. Leaders should be able to access the emotions of others by actively participating in their experiences, understanding them, and communicating feedback. Furthermore, they should also be able to understand group dynamics and identify the stages of group development. It is important to determine the socio-emotional processes that are associated with the majority of group problems and effectively handle dysfunctional group processes. It will also be beneficial to study how enabling followers to identify their default interaction styles creates a positive team dynamic (Lee, 2021).

### 3.6. Emotional Intelligence

A great part of the effort is

put in by leadership and organisational behaviour researchers in order to comprehend why some people are perceived to be better leaders than others and why some leaders excel when faced with stressful situations. Various skills and traits are demonstrated as effective correlates of leadership emergence and leader performance. By now, a significant body of evidence exists linking emotional intelligence to performance in leader roles (Gómez-Leal et al., 2022).

The seminal work on the crucial significance of the role of emotional expression in work in tribal and bossless organisations describes that happiness, sincerity, anger, and sadness are crucial to work productivity and

social interaction. Concerns of managing emotions are also present at the core of several psychologists and organisational behavior researchers since the beginning of the 20th century. For example, research discovered positive correlations between workers' performance and their positive attitudes. Additionally, there are two somewhat opposed standpoints and research areas dealing with work emotions (Kosec et al.2022).

Figure 2 illustrates the correlation between emotional intelligence levels and leadership performance across different industries, showing a positive relationship.

### 3.7. Empathy

Empathy is the ability

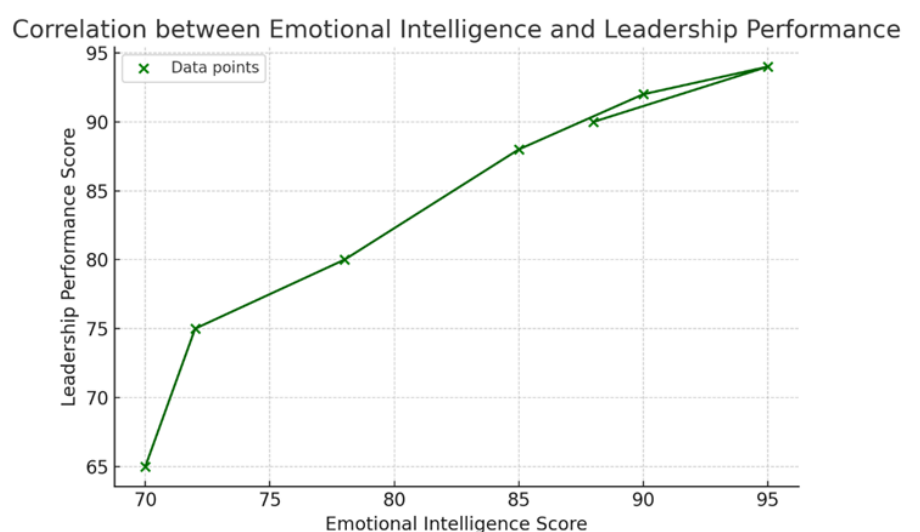


Figure 2 (Gómez-Leal, et al., 2022)

to step into the shoes of another person, aiming to understand their feelings and perspectives, and to use that understanding to guide one's actions. It is about being able to understand and share the feelings of others. It is about fostering a sense of belonging with the ultimate goal of creating community and making people feel at ease (Lara & Rueda, 2021). Key concepts of empathy include altruism, understanding, compassion, skill, perception, and support among others. Sympathy, pity, compassion, and empathy are not synonyms. Empathy is the only one of these terms that is non-evaluative.

Empathy training allows individuals to identify, express, and understand authentic feelings and concerns of others. Empathy activates the anterior insula, the anterior cingulate cortex, and deactivates the frontoparietal network of the brain, subjective to attentional and cognitive regulation and awareness. These findings help to explain the connection between feeling what others feel and our ability to understand and monitor such feelings. Such feelings can be uncomfortable, or the problems associated with these feelings seem insurmountable (Woolrych et al., 2024). Individuals who demonstrate empathy

acknowledge that the experience of feeling is not an inherent threat. They can address difficult conversations with demonstrable care for the beliefs, values, and character of the people involved.

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## 4. Conclusion

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To conclude, it is easy to see the importance of soft skills in effective leadership. Being an effective leader in a business context is about more than just technical prowess. While this is not intended to suggest that soft skills are the only skills that a leader requires, it does emphasise the value such skills hold in understanding and impacting the leadership process. Emphasising the role of soft skills in public relations and in-depth communication assists in understanding the interaction between effective leadership and relationships. Generating that understanding and the competence to apply it comes from empowered learning and integration into a person's makeup. The advantage to business in developing the soft skills dimension is the development of the organisation's most important asset for future growth – its people (Caeiro-Rodríguez et al., 2021).

Investing time and resources in soft skills training allows

leaders and business owners to master relationship building, communication, and negotiation, and hone emotional intelligence traits to perform better and create new opportunities for innovation in a constantly changing business environment. This, in turn, enables them to better adapt to change, develop skills that machines can't beat, and effectively relay and impart these necessary skills to employees, customers, and suppliers. The underlying principle remains true – without effective people, businesses do not work. It is, therefore, of utmost importance that leaders of businesses and organisations looking toward the future and aspiring to optimise performance across all aspects of their business model develop and demonstrate these soft skills.

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## 5. Recommendations

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Some potential areas for exploration by educators and employers who have begun incorporating soft skills into leadership training or development programs include: What is the impact of formal training aimed at soft skills development on leader behaviours? What changes, if any, in individual-level leader

behaviours result from this sort of training? What levels of success, if any, do training participants report from their soft skills development in terms of applying insights, knowledge, and awareness in their lives, as well as changes in behaviours, and their eventual impact on the participants themselves, as well as on the participants' respective audiences? How can training be designed and delivered to maximise these successes? What impact does follow-up and coaching of training experiences have on the success and sustainability of this skill development process? First of all, it is important for both educators and employers to realise that the available pool of soft skills resources is greater than simply incorporating some classes on communication or interpersonal skills, but encompasses a wide array of additional dimensions. The simple act of recognising the importance and potential for improvement in soft skills is the first and most important step for educators and employers. It is also highly recommended that the successful application of educational theory in adult and organisational learning in both training design and delivery are acknowledged and recognised. Finally, it is important to understand that change in soft skills can take time. Ongoing coaching and

mentoring are key elements in adequately supporting training programs and the participants in meeting their individual and collective objectives.

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