

студентов предыдущий уровень успеваемости, отражающий их академические способности и отношение к учебе, а именно такие показатели как вступительный балл ЕНТ и предыдущий накопленный GPA, имеют гораздо большее значение, чем способ обучения (онлайн или обычный). Вместе с тем мы обнаружили, что определенные технические переменные, характеризующие «качество» Zoom® сессий, повлияли на академическую успеваемость студентов. В частности, использование смартфона вместо персонального компьютера на занятии, проводимом в Zoom®, негативно повлияло на их успеваемость. Некоторые другие характеристики также показали ожидаемые эффекты, хотя они оказались статистически незначимыми, возможно, из-за агрегации и небольшого используемого набора данных.

*Ключевые слова:* онлайн обучения во период COVID-19, академическая успеваемость, Казахстан.

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#### SOFT SKILLS OF BACHELOR DEGREE STUDENTS: ANALYSIS OF SOURCES BY GENDER FOR EMPLOYMENT

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#### ABSTRACT

*Purpose of research.* The aim of the research is to study the knowledge of students about soft skills (SS), the types and where SS are acquired. Determine necessary SS for employment, according to students.

*Methodology.* The research methodology consisted in conducting a questionnaire survey among bachelor's students of universities of the Republic of Kazakhstan. In total, 215 students from 9 universities. Based on the literature review, the main areas of soft skills formation were identified – family, school and universities. SPSS software and Excel were used to analyze student responses. The analysis was also carried out in terms of gender.

*Originality / value of the research* – the employment of students, directly depends on their professional and soft skills; therefore, it is important to know what soft skills students of Kazakhstan universities have.

*Research results* – showed that Responsibility and Politeness are continuously developed in students, which are more intensively established in the family and further developed more actively in universities, than at schools. The main results of the study showed that students have a general understanding of the importance of SS in employment. Therefore, it was recommended to conduct a more detailed analysis of the skills acquired by students in passing certain disciplines.

*Keywords:* soft skills, employment, bachelor student, university.

## INTRODUCTION

In a simple model of professional competencies, skills are divided into soft skills (flexible) and hard skills (tough). Soft skills – supra-professional skills that help solve life problems and work with other people. It includes the ability to organize teamwork, negotiate and negotiate with colleagues, creativity, and the ability to learn and adapt to changes. These skills are increasingly described as the skills of the future that will be in demand despite economic changes or another technological leap.

Knowledge is not particularly important at this time because it quickly becomes obsolete. Skills that can be used in different areas of life, work, etc. are important. These are soft skills because they can be used regardless of the field of activity.

Since the beginning of the 21st century, changes in the world have been proceeding rapidly. If earlier large companies belonged to the production or the mining industry, now the picture has changed due to digitalization and automation. For this reason experts talked about the importance of skills that will be required no matter what industry or field you work in.

In 2019, the International Economic Forum's manifesto on skills that will be in demand in 2020 was released [1]. Basically, it mentions comprehensive skills that cover several areas at once.

Regardless of the speciality, students will need at least a few "flexible skills". To be successful at work, you need to get along well with colleagues, clients, managers, and bosses. Soft skills cannot be taught in a training or course. Therefore, employers especially value people with well developed soft skills. They are useful in all areas, formed during childhood and are associated with emotional intelligence.

According to the results of a joint study by scientists from Harvard, Stanford and the Carnegie Endowment, soft-skills determine the success of a person in the profession by 85 %, and only 15 % depends on highly specialized skills [2]. In a study by the British Sutton Trust, 88 % of young people surveyed, 94 % of employers and 97 % of teachers responded that they consider non-professional skills to be as important or more important than professional skills. It is now important to pay attention to the development of flexible skills in the child to help cope with changes and not get lost in the future [3].

Such importance of supra-professional skills in the modern competitive conditions on the labor market forces young people to increasingly think about their formation, which, in turn, determines further educational and professional vector of development.

As was already mentioned, supra-professional skills are a trend in the modern labor market. Modern employers, especially large enterprises, give preference to the supra-professional skills that a candidate for employment possesses. On the one hand, this tendency is a consequence of the fact that employers still come to independently train a new employee with necessary professional skills, since education in many educational organizations is not focused on practical training. To increase competitiveness in the labor market, young people in the process of studying at a school / university must develop supra-professional competencies. On the other hand, such a situation has developed with a blurring of professional requirements for employees due to strong specialization, because in parallel with this phenomenon, over-professional skills are unique and are often poorly amenable to changes due to progress. Therefore, we can say that the formation of supra-professional skills by the youth of Kazakhstan develops the competitive advantages of youth.

**Literature review.** There is a significant difference between what is being fostered at universities and what is being required in practice form students. There is a mismatch from what or in what way students are usually required to perform during classes. Oral skills as communication is among those skills, which is not given, needed attention at universities. At this point students face difficulties in understanding of what subjects promote soft skills development [4]. This in the result develops other difficulties after graduation. As universities fail to coordinate the education process with existing requirements in the labor market in terms of a perfect candidate profile [5]. Due to this, there are many studies, which tried to identify the most important soft skills. Gallivan, Truex, and Kvasny defined six soft skills. Moreover, they defined not just single skills, but areas. The first one and the main among many scholars is communication. Then there are organizational, interpersonal and leadership skills. The last pair are self-motivation and creativity [6]. Therefore, it should be carried out in the process of a subject learning, when students learn and practice soft skills. Soft skills have become an in built tool for knowledge acquisition for students [7]. This way of soft skills approaching can help

to reduce the gap between universities fostered skills and skills, which are desired by employers. Interestingly, some studies show, that students with higher achievements in education goals do not value soft skills in terms of employment [8] and the preference goes to hard skills.

It is worth mentioning that soft skills is a combination people skills and career attributes. People skills are also divided into interpersonal traits and personal qualities [9; 10]. Soft skills talk more about personality rather than ability to do a job. In the study of Robles there were identified ten most important soft skills, which were rated by business executives. It showed the importance of interpersonal skills as benefiting to business promotions [11].

In 1990, the importance of soft skills started gaining attention, after series of studies, which put the importance of soft skills above cognitive skills in terms of employment. There were underlined following non-cognitive skills: motivation, communication, cultural awareness, positive attitude, teamwork ability, work ethic and flexibility, which is easy adaptation to the environment. Most importantly, adaptation was regarded as the ability to adjust to changes easily. Positive attitude and work ethics were regarded as responsible cognitive skills enhancement through non-cognitive ones. For instance, diligence at work or education as being on time, completing all tasks and duties were driven by such feelings as honesty and responsibility [12].

There are three groups, which are more concerned about developing soft skills. They are graduates of secondary and higher education and leaders. Therefore, the areas where soft skills are attained and required are education and workplaces. It is worth mentioning that lack of necessary soft skills is crucial both when getting a job and successful development, also for organizations itself [13]. Lack of necessary skills has resulted in the growing number of training professional courses, which are mixed with such skills as communication, teamwork etc.

Tholen et al. stressed that at time of job getting and doing job following groups of soft skills were identified as important: motivational (confidence, commitment, patience, determination and focus) and Interactional (empathy, charm, assertiveness, manners, calmness and presenting). Interestingly, that in their study it revealed that subject knowledge attained at universities is not always utilized. It mostly depended on the context of the workplace as location, industry etc. Whereas both soft and hard skills are taught at all levels of education (at schools and higher education) [14]. More over the core soft and hard skills are attained at secondary education, which defines future jobs. Lack of soft skills at universities depends on schools. Accordingly, educators and employers must cooperate for necessary soft skills fostering in youth [15].

The mismatch of expectations by employers and graduate is already apparent at the education level. Employers have higher significance in terms of soft skills development as creativity, teamwork and communication. Whereas students stick to the understanding that professional, skills are more important. Employers notice the gap in soft skills fostering at the level of universities through internship students pass and stress that they are not prepared to real conditions [16].

A wide range of studies on soft skills development is combined with youth economic development. Due to this importance of soft skills is high, as it affects employability of the youth. According to Lakshminarayanan education, system needs improvement to promote creativity, direct education to a wide variety of specialties in medicine, healthcare, agriculture etc. [17]. Tsirkas et al. they analyzed employability soft skills among university by gender and underlined following skills as important: teamwork, professional attitude, communication and work ethics. According to their study, above mentioned skills are more developed in girls than in boys. Therefore, boys are recommended to pass special trainings at work to develop necessary soft skills for work [18]. Even though the requirements of the employers match current soft skills of job seekers, it is studied that employees tend to overestimate own capabilities. However, soft skills perception analysis is a touchy moment and differs depending on the context. Nevertheless, universities are recommended to develop the application and development of employability soft skills at the same level as hard skills [19].

The aim of this study is to analyze general understanding of soft skills among students of Bachelor degree in Kazakhstan.

## MAIN PART

Majority of the research included survey among students of higher educational institutions. The surveys in general included about 20 question. The number of surveyed students would range from 20 to 70 respondents. Some studies identified appropriate professional soft skills, which we used in the survey.

The survey was based on the study of Robles [11], where there were used 12 soft skills (SS) attributes (Table 1). It was conducted among students of bachelor degree of universities in in the Republic of Kazakhstan.

Table 1 – Soft skills attributes

No	Soft skills attribute	Description
1	Communication	Capability in speaking, making speech, writing capabilities and manner of information presentation, listening capabilities.
2	Politeness	Behavior or behavioral manners, which includes business etiquette as well, manner of communication ( being polite)
3	Flexibility	Capability to adjust to changes, desire to change, learning capabilities, adaptability to new things,
4	Commitment to principles	honest, ethical, has high morals standards, has and follows values, tries to do everything right
5	Interpersonal Skills	nice, has good sense of humor, friendly, nurturing, empathetic, has high level of self-control, tolerant and patient, sociable, etc.
6	Positive Attitude	Motivating, optimistic, confident in personal abilities,passionate, encouraging, enjoys life
7	Professional attitude	businesslike, follows dress code, appearance, self-possessed
8	Responsibility	accountable, reliable, gets the job done, resourceful, self-disciplined, wants to do well, conscientious, common sense
9	Teamwork skills	cooperative, gets along with others, appealing, caring, supportive,
10	Work Ethic	hard working, willing to work, loyal, initiative, self-motivated, on time, good attendance
11	Motivational Skills	confidence, commitment, patience, determination and focus
12	Interactive skills	empathy, charm, assertiveness, calmness and self-control, courtesy
Note – complied by authors based on the source [11]		

In the survey there took part 215 students from different universities of Kazakhstan including 138 female students (FS) and 77 male students (MS). There was no specific selection of universities. Questionnaire was spread to different higher educational institutions, but only 9 universities took part (Table 2).

Table 2 – Universities participated in the survey

№	University	Number of respondents
1	Narxoz	1
2	L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University	2
3	Kazakh National Research Technical University named after K.I. Satpayev	95
4	University of International Business	8
5	Al-Farabi Kazakh National University	1
6	ALMAU	4
7	Suleyman Demirel University	17
8	Astana International University	58
9	Eurasian Technological University	28
Note – complied by authors		

The survey included 9 questions, where students had to choose softs skills appropriate to the question set. To provide the analysis of the questions coding was done with SPSS software. Further, graph building was done with Excel program. Some of the questions were paired/grouped. The analysis is not depicted into every skill; there were selected the most and least developed skills in each question/category.

In the first question the respondents were given three definitions with one correct definition of soft skills, the rest two had definition of hard skills and combined definition of soft and hard skills. The rest questions were analyzed, which allowed drawing conclusion of soft skills understanding of the respondents. The questions are:

*Current\_SS*. The respondents were asked to mark skills that they possess.

*Family\_SS*. The respondents were asked to mark skills they obtained/established in the Family

*School\_SS*. The respondents were asked to mark skills they obtained/established at School

*University\_SS*. The respondents were asked to mark skills they obtained/established at University

*Strong\_SS*. The respondents were asked to mark their skills, which they consider strong

*Weak\_SS*. The respondents were asked to mark their skills, which they consider weak

*Employment\_SS*. The respondents were asked to mark skills they consider important for employment

*Unimportant\_SS*. The respondents were asked to mark skills, which from their point of view are not important when applying for a job.

According to the survey out of 215 answers, 145 respondents gave correct answers which makes up 68,1 % of total respondents. 23,5 % respondents define hard skills as SS, 8,5 % have vague understanding about SS, 2 respondents did not answer this question. Therefore, it is possible to conclude that majority of the students are aware of SS. However, there are students who confuse SS with hard skills, and 32 % do not have a clear understanding of what SS are. The difference between FS and MS is ranging from about 2 % to 15 %.

*Currents Soft skills*. The students were asked to choose skills they already have developed (Figure 1).

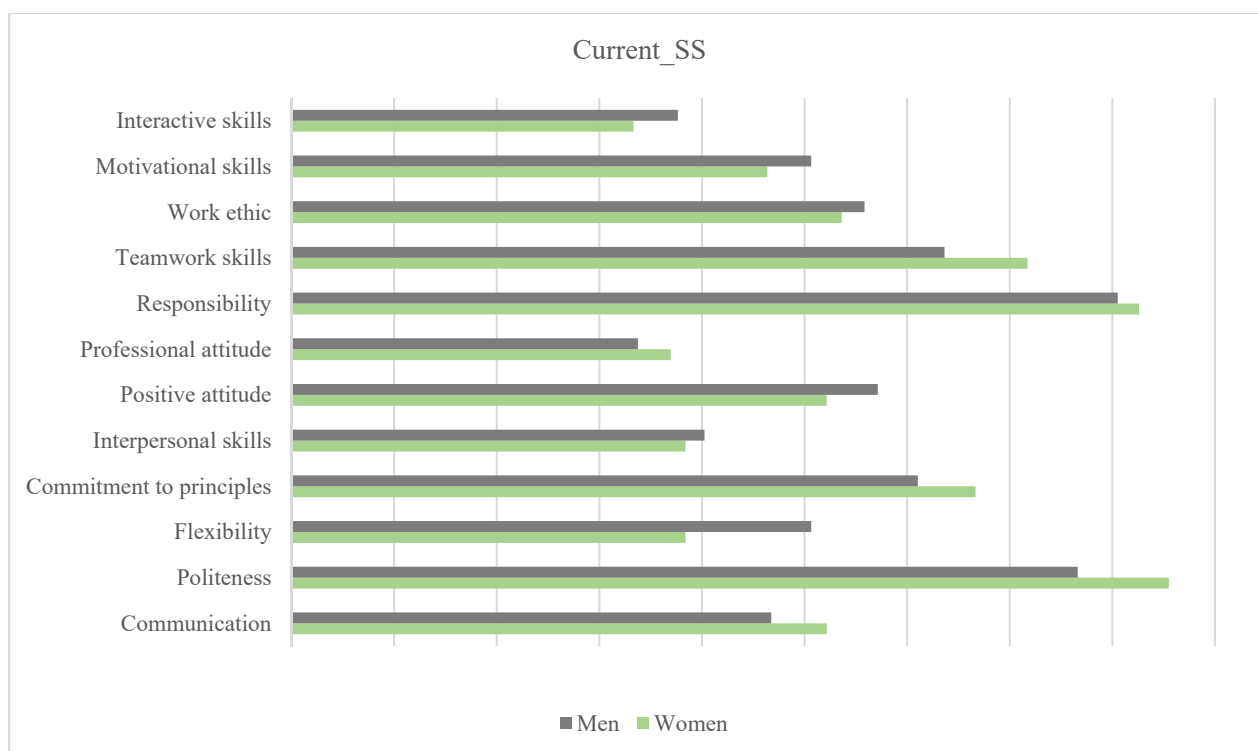


Figure 1 – Current Soft Skills, by gender, %

Note – compiled by authors

Responsibility, Teamwork and Politeness are the most developed and obtained by majority of the students. However, Politeness and Teamwork are more developed in FS than in MS, 85,5 % – 76,6 %, and 71,7 % – 63,6 % respectively. There is great difference in Flexibility, it is mostly marked by MS (50,6 %) that FS (38,4 %).

*School Soft Skills. University Soft Skills. Family Soft Skills.* Family, schools and universities are the main sources of SS development. Therefore, it is important to know where the students have acquired and will acquire soft skills (Figure 2).

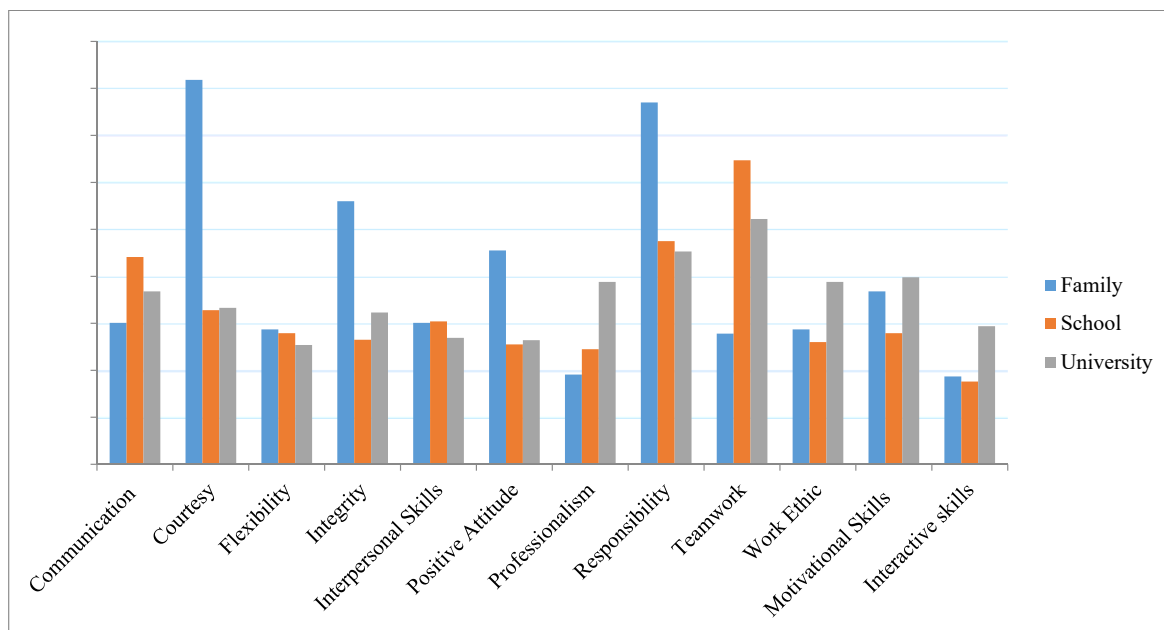
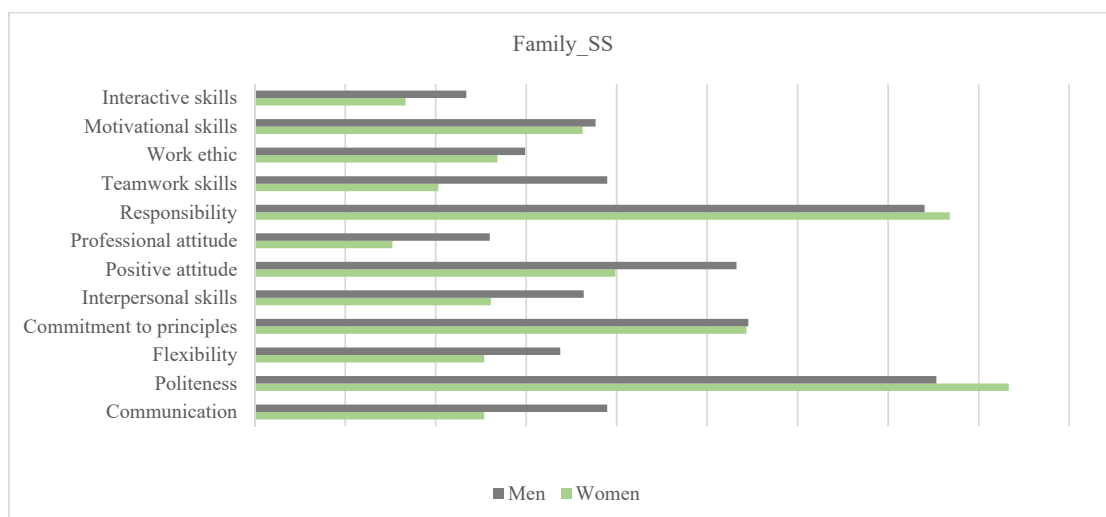


Figure 2 – Obtained Soft Skills by Family, School, and University, %

Note – complied by authors

*Family\_SS.* According to the respondents, such answers as responsibility (77 %) and politeness (81,8 %) were obtained in their families. The least popular in families are interactive and professional attitude. *School\_SS.* Based on the responses such skills as Teamwork (64,7 %), Responsibility (47,5 %) and Communication (44,1 %) are obtained at school. *University\_SS.* Teamwork (52.2 %) skill is strengthened and developed at university. It is the least developed skill in Family but it has great importance and developed at school and university.

According to the data next skills obtained in Family were was mostly brought up in MS than in FS Teamwork (39 % and 20,3 %), Professional attitude (53,2 % and 39,9 %), Interpersonal skills (36,4 % and 26,1 %), Communication skills (39 % and 25,4 %) respectively (see Figure 3). Interestingly that Politeness is one of the most important skills, by gender in the Family. It is mostly brought up in FS (83,3 %) than in MS (75,3 %). Although, at school the picture changes, Politeness is mostly established in MS (40,3 %) than in FS (26,8 %).





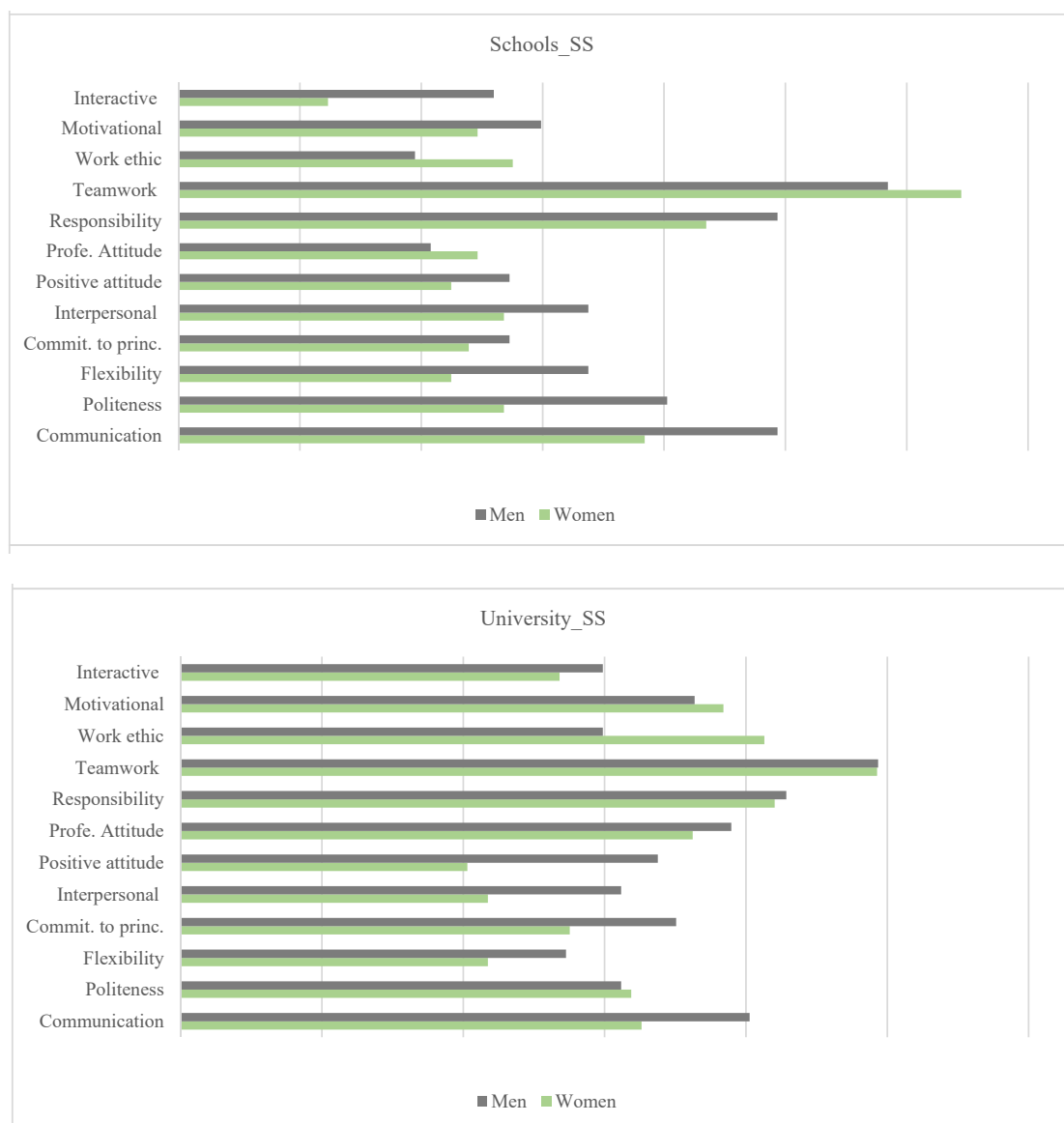


Figure 3 – Obtained Soft Skills in Family, School, and University, by gender, %

Note – complied by authors

Teamwork in the family among MS was almost two times more as much as FS 39 % and 20,3 % respectively. However, at school it increased for girls for 41,5 % and made up 64,5 %. Whereas for boys it increased for 19 % and made up 58,4 %. At university, Teamwork for both genders was almost the same MS 94,4 % and FS 49,3 %.

Soft skills development differs in all three categories family, school and university. However, figures for School are much lower than for the rest two. Family prepares children to education and build the fundamental of necessary for education soft skills. At university, students are getting prepared to start their professional path. Whereas school is an intermediate level between family and university.

*Strong\_SS. Weak\_SS.* Students also, need to develop the understanding of the level of their SS development in order to improve them in the future (Figure 4). However, it is also needed to be analyzed if students have the sense of skills they have.

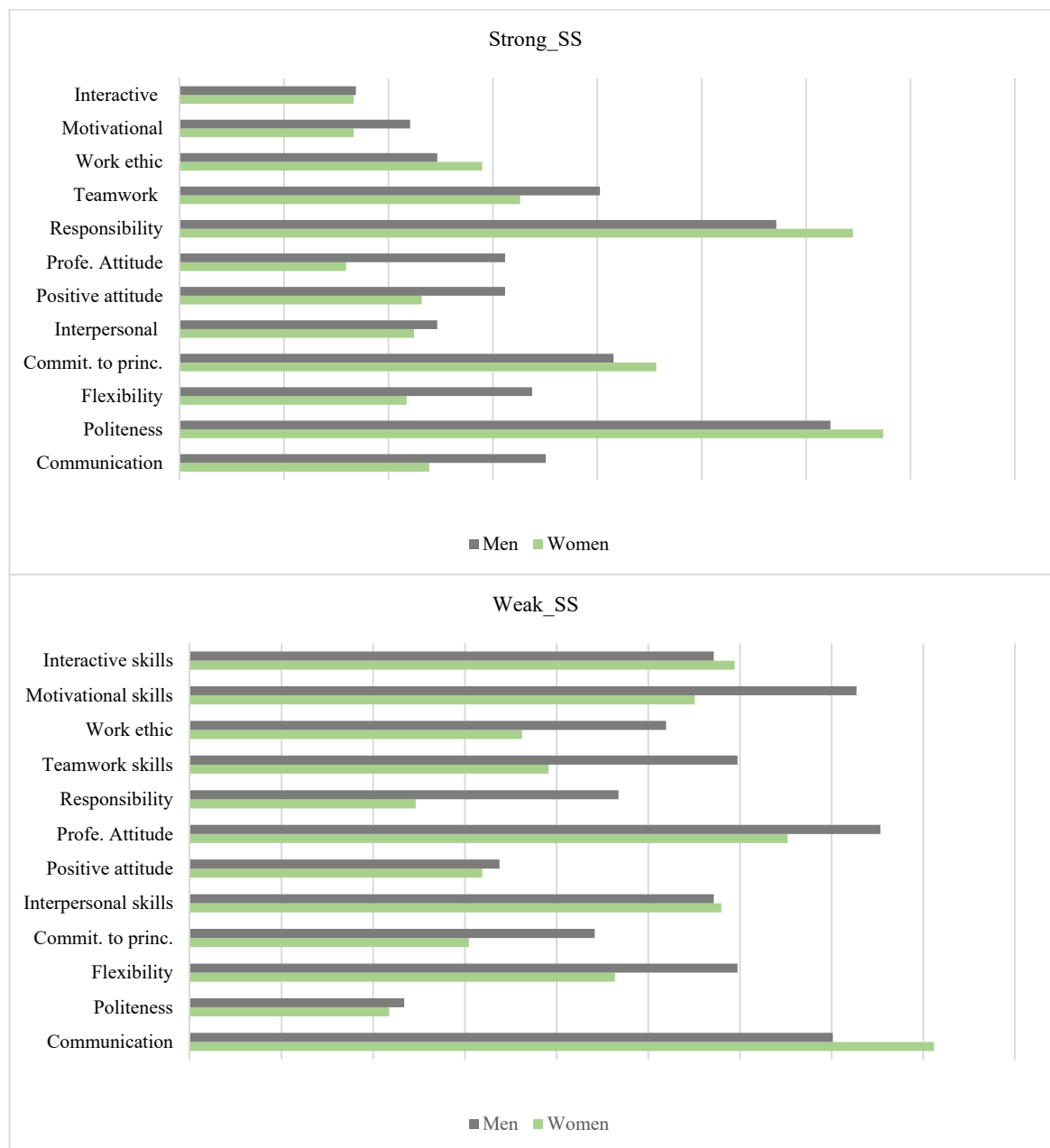


Figure 4 – Strong Soft Skills, Weak Soft Skills, by gender, %  
Note – compiled by authors

Soft Skills, which are initially obtained in the family, remained the strongest and sustainable to the development process of a person according to the answers of students. They consider Responsibility and Politeness as the strongest SS. Teamwork and Communication skills, despite they are obtained at school and developed at university they are still considered as weak skills, especially among MS than FS.

*Employment\_SS. Unimportant\_SS.* SS development must be accompanied with their application. Therefore, students by the time of their graduation must have awareness of what skill are necessary when applying for work, which are professionally favorable (Figure 5).



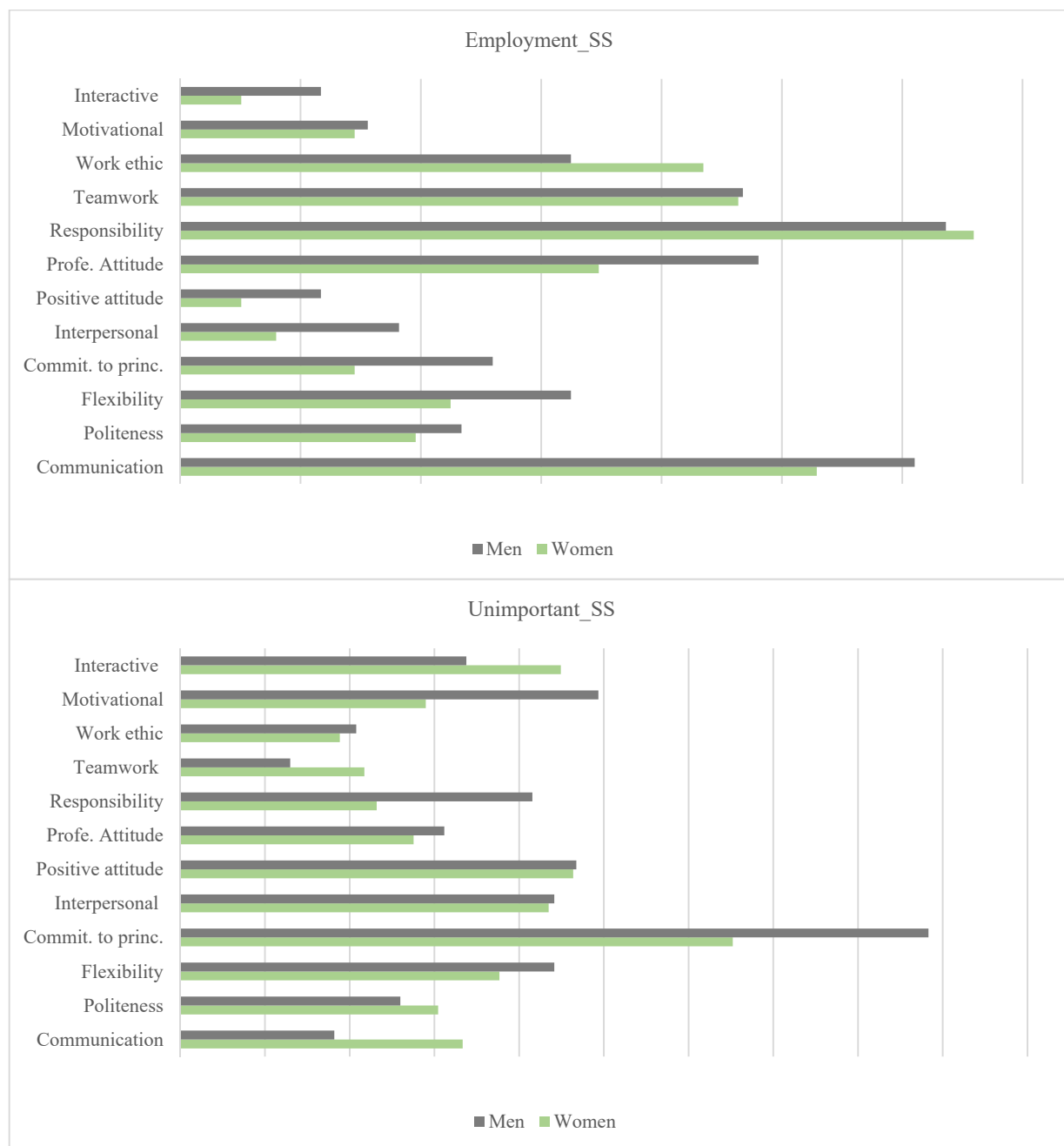


Figure 5 – Employment Soft Skills, Unimportant Soft Skills, by gender, %

Note – compiled by authors

According to the respondents, the most important SS for employment are Responsibility, Communication, Teamwork, Work Ethic, and Professional Attitude. In previous studies researchers came to the similar conclusion in terms of employment SS. There is difference in the answers between MS and FS in such skills and Communication (MS 61 %, FS 52,9 %) and Professional Attitude (MS 48,1 %, FS 34,8 %). For MS these skills are more important when applying for a job rather than for FS. According to Klotz (2014) women feel more comfortable working under supervision. This is partly due to the fact that women are afraid of being judged, they lack confidence and seek for support from colleagues [20]. Commitment to Principles does not have high importance for employment. 44,2 % of the majority are MS, 32,6 % are FS.

Summarizing results of the analysis we can conclude that majority of the respondents have understanding of what is soft skills. The main SS as Responsibility and Politeness are obtained in the Family and are the strongest skills of among the respondents. At School and University, students obtain Teamwork.

If the skills which are established in the family and school have a big gap between each other. At university, skills of low importance in the previous two fields become more important as they are used more often by the students during the educational process.

## CONCLUSION

Summing up the research, the following conclusion can be drawn. The majority of undergraduate students have an understanding of soft skills. Nevertheless, some confuse soft skills with hard skills. Therefore, it is important to explain to students what soft skills are and what soft skills students will have after completing a particular discipline. As a result of the questioning of students, most of them have the skills of Responsibility and Politeness, which were established in the family. Initially, any skills are established and obtained in the family, and then they are developed at school, university, at work and other social, economic, family relationships etc. Thus, for example, they study in a team at school and university. Interactive skills are more instilled in the university than in the family and school, as well as professional relationships. However, all 12 skills that are considered in the study are mainly acquired at the university.

On the issue of underdeveloped and highly developed skills, students noted that they have a strong skill of responsibility and politeness, as well as adherence to principles. Communication skills, professional attitudes and motivational skills are considered by students to be skills that need to be improved. Therefore, the university needs to think about this issue.

Female students need to develop communication skill in terms of professional application. At this stage communication changes from socializing to business communication. This includes business correspondence, establishing agreements and provision of negotiations etc. There is a great lack of professional attitude development among all respondents. Although it is evaluated at the initial stage of employment, for example, job interview. This can be the result of poor evaluation and practice of this skill while studying. Interestingly, that Work Ethic is more prioritized by FS, which is also given a great attention in the beginning of a career. SS should be developed equally in students regardless of gender and other fields of SS development. Which will favor equal employment. Therefore, SS development in higher educational institutions must also be evaluated as hard skills.

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## **БАКАЛАВРИАТ СТУДЕНТТЕРІНІҢ ЖҰМСАҚ ДАҒДЫЛАРЫ: ЖҰМЫСҚА ОРНАЛАСУ ҮШІН ҚАЛЫПТАСУ КӨЗДЕРІН ГЕНДЕРЛІК ТАЛДАУ**

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### **АНДАТПА**

*Зерттеу мақсаты* – студенттердің жұмсақ дағдылары (SS), олардың түрлері және қайда қалыптасатыны туралы білімдерін зерттеу. Жұмысқа орналасу үшін қандай қажетті дағдылар қажеттігі туралы студенттердің пікірін анықтау.

*Әдіснамасы.* Зерттеу әдіснамасы Қазақстан Республикасы Жоғары оқу орындарының бакалавриат студенттері арасында сауалнама жүргізу болды. 9 Жоғарғы оқу орнының (ЖОО) 215 студенті қатысты. Әдебиеттерді шолу негізінде жұмсақ дағдыларды қалыптастырудың негізгі бағыттары анықталды – отбасы, мектеп және ЖОО. Студенттердің жауаптарын талдау үшін SPSS және Excel бағдарламалары қолданылды. Талдау жыныс тұрғысынан жүргізілді.

*Зерттеудің бірегейлігі / құндылығы* – студенттердің жұмысқа орналасуы олардың кәсіби және бағдарламалық дағдыларына тікелей байланысты, сондықтан қазақстандық жоғары оқу орындары студенттерінің қандай бағдарламалық дағдыларға ие екенін білу маңызды.

*Зерттеу нәтижелері* көрсеткендей, жауапкершілік пен сыпайылық отбасында неғұрлым қарқынды қалыптасады, ары қарай оқу орындарында дамиды. Алайда, дағдылар жоғарғы оқу орындарында мектепке қарағанда белсендірек дамиды. Зерттеудің негізгі нәтижелері студенттердің жұмысқа орналасу үшін жұмсақ дағдылардың маңыздылығы туралы жалпы түсінікке ие екенін көрсетті. Сондықтан студенттердің белгілі бір пәндерді өту кезінде алған дағдыларына егжей-тегжейлі талдау жүргізу ұсынылды.

*Түйін сөздер:* жұмсақ дағдылар, жұмысқа орналасу, бакалавриат студенті, университет.

## МЯГКИЕ НАВЫКИ БАКАЛАВРА: АНАЛИЗ ИСТОЧНИКОВ ФОРМИРОВАНИЯ В ГЕНДЕРНОМ РАЗРЕЗЕ ДЛЯ ТРУДОУСТРОЙСТВА

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### АННОТАЦИЯ

*Цель исследования* – изучить знания студентов о мягких навыках и ответить на вопросы понимают ли студенты что такое софт скиллс и знают ли их виды, где приобретаются софт скиллс. Определить какие софт скиллс необходимы для трудоустройства, по мнению студентов.

*Методология* исследования заключалась в проведении анкетирования среди студентов бакалавра вузов Республики Казахстан. Всего приняло участие 215 студентов из 9 вузов Казахстана. На основе проведенного литературного обзора были определены основные сферы формирования мягких навыков – это семья, школа и вузы. Для проведения анализа ответов студентов применялась SPSS программное обеспечение и Excel. Анализ был также проведен в гендерном разрезе.

*Оригинальность / ценность исследования* – трудоустройство студентов, напрямую зависит от их профессиональных и мягких навыков, поэтому важно знать какими мягкими навыками обладает нынешний студент казахстанского ВУЗа.

*Результаты исследования* – показали, что такие навыки как Ответственность и Вежливость непрерывно развиваются в студентах, которые более усиленно прививаются в семье и в дальнейшем развиваются в образовательной среде. Тем не менее, в школе все навыки развивались и приобретались менее активно чем в вузе. Студенты имеют общее представление о важности мягких навыков при трудоустройстве. В таких целях было рекомендовано проведение более подробного разбора о приобретаемых навыка студентами при прохождении определенных дисциплин.

*Ключевые слова:* мягкие навыки, трудоустройство, студент-бакалавр, вуз.

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