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Analysing the researches on soft skills in Turkey

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This study aims to examine research on soft skills in Turkey. Soft skills complement technical skills and encompass personal and interpersonal knowledge and skills, such as communication, leadership, teamwork, critical thinking, problem-solving, and ethics. Theoretical information and research literature on hard and soft skills are provided. Document review, a qualitative research method, was employed. Books, theses, articles, and papers published in Turkey regarding soft skills were accessed from four sources: YÖK National Thesis Center, YÖK Academic Search, TÜBİTAK ULAKBİM TR Index, and Dergipark Academic. The obtained documents were analyzed using content analysis. The findings indicate a scarcity of studies on soft skills and that the concept of soft skills has not yet been conceptually established in Turkey. A holistic evaluation reveals a need for multifaceted research on the definition, importance, and development of soft skills. The study concludes with suggestions for new research and practices regarding soft skills based on the obtained results.

Key words: Hard skills, soft skills, soft skills research in Turkey.

INTRODUCTION

The modern business world has witnessed a significant shift in the needs profile of employees. While technical, academic, or professional knowledge in a specific discipline is essential, it no longer guarantees employment in a desirable position. In fact, academic knowledge alone may not be sufficient in today's competitive job market (Torun, 2018). With numerous individuals holding degrees in various disciplines, certain characteristics have become highly valued by employers.

Educators and educational institutions must acknowledge and address these characteristics, which are crucial for success in the business world. These attributes are categorized into two concepts: "hard skills"

and "soft skills" (Clarke, 2018; Isaacs, 2016; Klaus, 2008; Schulz, 2008). Hard skills encompass the academic knowledge required for a specific discipline or profession, such as accounting, engineering, nursing, cooking, or teaching biology, physics, chemistry, or mathematics. Soft skills, on the other hand, comprise intangible, personal, and interpersonal characteristics, including leadership, communication, reliability, teamwork, ethics, problem-solving, critical thinking, self-confidence, honesty, flexibility, and stress management (Katz, 1974; Phani, 2007; Schulz, 2008; Arat, 2014; Wheeler, 2016; Isaac, 2017; Pereira et al., 2019; Tureck and Tiorean, 2021; Scrimier et al., 2024).

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The importance given to "soft skills" training and research is increasing both in academic research and in the business world through educational activities such as seminars and courses. Despite this, it cannot be said that studies on "soft skills" have not yet gained the importance they

deserve in Turkey. When the national literature is examined, it can be said that there are very few studies on the concept of "soft skills" (Torun, 2019; Aksu, 2023). In addition, it can be seen that it has not yet even reached a terminological unity of use to meet its full meaning (Torun, 2019; Akbıyık, 2023). While concepts such as "teknik beceriler", "meslek beceriler", "profesyonel beceriler", "zor beceriler", "sıkı beceriler", are used instead of the concept of "hard skills", expressions such as "ılımlı beceriler", "yumuşak beceriler", "hassas beceriler", "ince beceriler", are used instead of the concept of "soft skills", which are far from fully explaining the concept. From this perspective, it is essential to establish a Turkish name that accurately corresponds to the concept, ensuring unity in national literature. This research aims to contribute to achieving a unified Turkish name that aligns with the concept.

Furthermore, in line with the research objectives, providing a detailed explanation of the "soft skills" concept and evaluating relevant studies conducted in Turkey will be beneficial for education and training activities at all levels in Turkey, as well as for the business world, including employers, companies, employment, and productive work.

Conceptual framework

Historically, the concept of "hard skills" has dominated education, training, and the business world. However, in today's modern landscape, it is well-documented that many individuals, including influential figures like Steve Jobs, have faced challenges in the workplace or even had their employment contracts terminated due to a lack of "soft skills" (Isaac, 2016). The competencies required from employees have undergone a significant shift with the transition from an industrial society to an information society. To meet the evolving demands of the business world, employees are expected to possess not only the "hard skills" relevant to their field but also essential "soft skills", such as:

- i) Organizing work independently
- ii) Making effective decisions under pressure
- iii) Resolving conflicts
- iv) Managing stress
- v) Working in teams
- vi) Thinking critically and creatively
- vii) Leadership
- viii) Effective communication

Considering these requirements, it is essential to

introduce, acquire, research, and develop personal and social characteristics that will enhance professional effectiveness, efficiency, and job satisfaction. The following explanations will serve this purpose.

Hard skills

Hard skills are defined as the technical skills required by a profession, discipline, or field. According to Arat (2014), these skills are concrete and learned at educational levels, and then applied in jobs such as teaching, engineering, accounting, firefighting, cooking, or sewing. Pereira et al. (2019) define hard skills as the skills necessary for performing tasks related to a profession. In international literature, "hard skills" are also referred to as "technical skills," "academic skills," "professional field-related skills," or "domain skills" (Katz, 1974; Mitchell et al., 2010; Kechagias, 2011; Alex, 2012; Arat, 2014; Rao, 2014; Balcar, 2016; Cimatti, 2016; Flack, 2016; Hendarman and Cantner, 2017; Ibrahim et al., 2017; Glaittli, 2018; Pereira et al., 2019; Mozgalova et al., 2021; Tureck and Tiorean, 2021; Nopiyanto et al., 2023; Scrimier et al., 2024).

The Turkish equivalents of "hard skills" include "teknik beceriler," "profesyonel beceriler," "mesleki beceriler," "akademik beceriler," "zor beceriler," "sıkı beceriler," "somut beceriler," and "sert beceriler" (Urhan Torun, 2018; YKC Grup Bilişim, 2018; Ted University, 2020; Afyon Kocatepe University, 2021; Kumcağız and Tombul, 2021; Boğaziçi Institute, 2022; Aksu, 2023; Bostan, 2023; Çetin, 2023; Çetin and Yavuz, 2023; Yılmaz, 2023; Dinçer, 2024; Manpower, 2024; Türkiye, 2024; Yamen and Aksu, 2024). This review reveals conceptual confusion in both national and international literature. However, the term "hard skills" is widely established in international literature. To eliminate confusion, this study proposes adopting "teknik beceriler" as the Turkish equivalent of "hard skills." This term will be used throughout the remainder of this research.

Soft skills

In today's competitive business landscape, technical skills alone are no longer a guarantee for employment. Employers seek candidates with additional personal and interpersonal skills that make them more desirable than others with similar technical expertise. To achieve a successful and fulfilling career, individuals must develop characteristics beyond their academic degrees (Guerra-Báez, 2019; Laker and Powell, 2011). The literature reveals that these characteristics are collectively referred to as "soft skills." Detailed explanations of this concept follow.

Soft skills are the abilities that complement or support technical skills, essential for performing a job or task. They create more competent, productive, and happy

environments and achievements. Berger (2016), notes that while technical skills vary by job, soft skills are necessary for every profession.

Individuals with strong soft skills have a significant advantage in employability compared to those with weaker skills. Katz (1974) coined the term "human skills" to describe soft skills, emphasizing their relation to an individual's self-perception and interactions with superiors, equals, and subordinates in the workplace.

Kantrowitz (2005) defines soft skills as personal and interpersonal abilities, such as effective adaptation and communication that facilitate the application of technical skills and knowledge. The most common terminological usage in the international literature is "soft skills". In addition, instead of "soft skills", "human skills", "non-technical skills", "general skills", "emotional competencies", "personal characteristics", "interpersonal skills", "thinking skills", "21st century skills", "non-cognitive skills", "emotional and social intelligence skills", "core skills", "life skills", "employability skills" (Katz, 1974; Singh and Singh, 2008; Mitchell et al., 2010; Kechagias, 2011; Alex, 2012; Robles, 2012; Arat, 2014; Rao, 2014; Balcar, 2016; Cimatti, 2016; Flack, 2016; Ibrahim et al., 2017; Hendarman and Cantner, 2017; Glaittli, 2018; Pereira et al., 2019; Rasipuram and Jayagopi, 2020; Mozgalova et al., 2021; Tureck and Tiorean, 2021; Nopiyanto et al., 2023; Podolchak et al., 2024; Scrimier et al., 2024).

A review of the national literature reveals that there is no unity in Turkish nomenclature even in the already scarce "soft skills" studies. In scientific studies and various individual and institutional websites, different terms have been used as the equivalent of "soft skills". It can be said that these are "insanibeceriler", "yumuşakbeceriler", "hassasbeceriler", "ılımlıbeceriler", "soft beceriler", "incebeceriler" (Sığı et al., 2014; Deveci, 2015; Giray and Uysal, 2017; Torun, 2018; YKC Grup Bilişim, 2018; Torun, 2019; Ted University, 2020; Kocatepe University, 2021; Kumcağız and Tombul, 2021; Boğaziçi Institute, 2022; Aksu, 2023; Bostan, 2023; Çetin, 2023; Çetin and Yavuz, 2023; Yılmaz, 2023; Dinçer, 2024; Hevedanlı and İnce, 2024; Manpower, 2024; Psikoloji Türkiye, 2024; Yamen and Aksu, 2024; Yılmaz and Urhan, 2024).

As seen in both international and national literature, there is confusion in the use of the term "soft skills" just like technical skills. Although "soft skills" has gained weight as a common usage in foreign studies, just like technical skills, no such unity has emerged in the national literature. When all the literature is evaluated together, it emerges that the "soft skills" expressed are the perception of oneself (psychological) and people outside oneself (sociological) and the environment, and showing/not showing these characteristics in behavior accordingly. In the studies evaluating the Turkish usage of the concept, the concepts of "soft beceriler" (Torun, 2019; Yılmaz, 2023; Hevedanlı and İnce, 2024),

"ılımlıbeceriler" (Çetin and Yavuz, 2023; Çetin, 2024; Yamen and Aksu, 2024) and "yumuşakbeceriler" (Aksu, 2023) and "hassasbeceriler" (Eroğlu and Aygün, 2024) come to the fore. The author prefers to use the Turkish term "soft beceriler" for the concept of "soft skills". As previously stated for technical skills, the concept of "soft beceriler" will be used instead of the concept of "soft skills" after this stage of the research.

Eliminating confusion in the field of interest is crucial. Achieving unity in terminology also facilitates literature searches by providing consistency in keywords. Keywords summarize scientific studies and simplify searches in academic databases and search engines (Tatar and Tatar, 2008; Üstüner and Cömert, 2008; Güven et al., 2014).

In international literature, the concepts of "hard skills" and "soft skills" are widely used and established. However, this consistency is lacking in Turkey. This study aims to contribute to linguistic unity in the field by promoting the use of "teknik beceriler" (hard skills) and "yumuşak beceriler" or adopting a standardized Turkish equivalent for "soft skills" eliminating the confusion is important for the field of interest. Because reaching a unity of use also provides convenience in terms of keywords when searching the literature. Because keywords summarize scientific studies and also provide convenience when the scientific subject of interest is searched in search engines (Tatar and Tatar, 2008; Üstüner and Cömert, 2008; Güven et al., 2014). In the international literature, it is seen that there is a widespread use of the concepts of "hard skills" and "soft skills" for the concepts that are the subject of this article. However, it does not seem possible to say the same in Turkey. It is hoped that this study will contribute to the linguistic unity in the field in terms of "teknik beceriler" and "soft beceriler".

A historical overview of soft skills

The concept of soft skills is theoretically linked to Bloom's Affective Domain Objectives, Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences, Goleman's Emotional and Social Intelligence Concepts (El-Soufi, 2020), and Bandura's Social Learning Theory (Galaittli, 2018). However, the origins of the term "soft skills" can be traced back to engineering education.

According to Tripathy (2020), a 1918 bulletin titled "Engineering Education Study" emphasized the importance of personal characteristics like advanced analysis, common sense, ethics, self-efficacy, and emotional intelligence for professional civil engineers, alongside technical knowledge and skills.

Tripathy's findings are complemented by Flack (2016), who notes that the term "soft skills" gained widespread use in military training in the USA during the 1970s. Following its extensive use in military training, the

concept of soft skills began to attract attention in other professional fields and workplaces (Tripathy, 2020). The concept of soft skills was first introduced academically in Katz's 1974 study, "The Skills of an Effective Administrator." Katz proposed the "three-skill approach," emphasizing that managers require technical, human, and conceptual skills to succeed (Katz, 1974).

As the second millennium drew to a close, the expectations of employers and businesses underwent significant changes, driven by advances in science and technology, an increase in diploma-holding individuals, and heightened competition in the job market. Katz's research and these global developments paved the way for the incorporation of diverse soft skills in business environments and a renewed focus on educational research in this area (Ayodele et al., 2021).

What are soft skills?

The concept of soft skills, unlike the concept of technical skills, is a multidimensional concept. It is based on the perception of oneself, others and one's environment. Soft skills are needed in every disciplinary field. Soft skills are therefore an interdisciplinary concept (especially economics, education, psychology and sociology). Moreover, it is quite difficult to define soft skills when individual differences, different geographies, cultures and religions are taken into consideration. For this reason, unfortunately, there is no agreed scientific definition in the literature. Cinque (2016) attributes this to two reasons. The first is that different countries have different methods and approaches in teaching soft skills. The second, which Cinque finds more effective, is the lack of a common language. Schulz (2008) states that what constitutes soft skills can vary from context to context. As an example, he clarifies this idea by comparing the possible skills of an electrical engineer with a civil engineer and a chemist with a human resources specialist. Project management skill is considered a soft skill for an electrical engineer while it is a technical skill for a civil engineer.

Similarly, cultural awareness may be useful for a chemist but it is a necessity for a human resources professional. As can be seen, some skills may be considered as technical skills in one field, but soft skills in another. For all these reasons, it seems difficult to agree on a universal definition, diversity and classification of soft skills. The author believes that different definitions, variations and classifications beyond the meaning of the term are necessary at some point. One could agree on a term meaning of what soft skills are in a basic sense ("hard skills" and "soft skills" in English, which seem to be established terms; "teknik beceriler" and "soft beceriler" in Turkish). However, the author believes that the different definitions, diversity and classifications of soft skills at the conceptual level can also be advantageous for research and practice. Aksu (2023) summarized

different definitions in the form of a table after drawing attention to these differences (YB: In this study, Aksu translated soft skills into Turkish as "Yumuşak Beceriler").

The concept of soft skills is multidimensional, encompassing self-perception, interpersonal relationships, and environmental awareness. Unlike technical skills, soft skills are essential across various disciplines, making them an interdisciplinary concept, particularly relevant to economics, education, psychology, and sociology. Defining soft skills is challenging due to individual differences, cultural variations, and geographical disparities. Consequently, there is no universally accepted scientific definition in the literature. Cinque (2016) attributes this to differences in teaching methods and approaches across countries and the lack of a common language.

Schulz (2008), notes that the concept of soft skills can vary depending on the context. For instance, project management skills are considered soft skills for electrical engineers but technical skills for civil engineers. Similarly, cultural awareness may be beneficial for chemists but essential for human resources professionals. Given these complexities, agreeing on a universal definition, diversity, and classification of soft skills seems challenging. However, acknowledging different definitions, variations, and classifications beyond the basic meaning of the term can be beneficial for research and practice.

A basic understanding of the term "soft skills" can be established ("hard skills" and "soft skills" in English, and "teknik beceriler" and "yumuşak beceriler" or "soft beceriler" in Turkish). Aksu (2023) compiled various definitions into Table 1, highlighting these differences and translating "soft skills" into Turkish as "Yumuşak Beceriler".

When Table 2 is analyzed, it can be seen that within these different definitions and diversity of soft skills, there are also issues on which there is consensus. For example, that soft skills are personal and interpersonal skills, complement technical skills, and are necessary for career success and effective performance.

Soft skills have become increasingly crucial in today's fast-paced work environment. The World Economic Forum's (WEF) 2023 report underscores their importance, highlighting 26 skills that businesses believe will rise between 2023 and 2027. These skills, in order of priority, include analytical thinking, creative thinking, artificial intelligence and big data, leadership and social impact, resilience, flexibility, and agility, among others. Notably, the majority of these skills are soft skills.

Numerous international studies have explored and defined soft skills (Katz, 1974; Phani, 2007; Kechagias, 2011; Weber et al., 2011; Robles, 2012; Kyllonen, 2013; Arat, 2014; Cobb et al., 2015; Khanna, 2015; Troung et al., 2015; Balcar, 2016; Cinque, 2016; Flack, 2016; Isaacs, 2016; Wheeler, 2016; Ali et al., 2017; Hendarman and Cantner, 2017; Isaac, 2017; Urhan Torun, 2018;

Table 1. Definitions of soft skills.

Rainsbury et al. (2002)	YB are skills related to the acquisition of interpersonal, human or behavioral skills in the work place.
Kantrowitz (2005)	YB is a number laterm referring to interpersonal work skills that facilitate thea pplication of targeted technicalskills and knowledge, including skills such as communication skills, problem solving, teamwork, and personal qualities andwork ethics.
Klaus et al. (2007)	YB are the non-technical traits and behaviors that are essential for a successful career path.
Weber et al. (2009) and Weber et al. (2013)	YB is "the interpersonal, human, people or behavioral skills needed to apply technical skills and knowledge at work".
Kechagias (2011)	YB are intrapersonal and interpersonal socio-emotional skills that are critical for personal development, social inclusion and work and academic success.
Laker and Powell (2011)	YB is "intrapersonal skills, such as the ability to manage oneself, and interpersonal skills, which show how one interacts with others".
Ahmed et al. (2012)	ICareindividualcharacteristicsthathaveamajorimpactonaperson'sbehaviorwhen interacting with others in the work environment.
Kamaruddin et al. (2012)	YB is asociologicaltermrelatedtotraitsthatcharacterizerelationshipswithotherpeople, suchas personality traits, social grace, communication, language, personal habits, friendliness and optimism.
Robles (2012)	YB are character traits, attitudes and behaviors rather than technical skills or knowledge.IC are intangible, non-technical, personality-specific skills that determine one's strengths as a leader, facilitator, mediator and negotiator.
Heckman and Kautz (2012)	YB is the ability of employees to adapt to a work place with attributes related to individual personality, traits, flexibility, motivation, goals and preferences.
Jain and Anjuman (2013)	YB encompasses who the employee really is, how they live, their attitudes, habits and how they interact with other people in a work environment.
Kautz et al. (2014)	YB is "the personality traits, goals, character, motivations and preferences that are valued in the labor market, at school and in many other areas".
Kaushik and Bansal (2015)	YB is abstract, non-technical, intrapersonal, and concerned with personal and interpersonal qualities rather than technical skills or knowledge.
Lippman et al. (2015)	YB are behaviors and personal qualities that help people to relate well with others, perform well and achieve their goals.
Cimatti (2016)	YB are transversal competencies that are not directly linked to a specific task but are necessary in any position, referring mainly to relationships with other people in the organization.
Stewart et al. (2016)	YB are "non-technical competences associated with one's personality, attitude and ability to interact effectively with others (that is, to be optimally employable)".
Rima et al. (2017)	YB is the sum of competencies-personality traits, positive qualities, social attractiveness and communication skills - that improve an employee's relationships and performance at work.
Wesley et al. (2017)	YB is a combination of personal qualities, interpersonal skillsandadditional skills/knowledge that help an employee to do their job better.
Gruzdev et al. (2018)	YB is a set of personal characteristics that facilitate effective interaction and collaboration among employees involved in business processes.
Ahmad et al. (2021)	YB are character traits, behaviors and attitudes that enhance employee interactions, career prospects and job performance.
Al Asefer and Abidin (2021)	YB are personal qualities that enhance an individual's interactions, work performance and hard skills that tend to be specific to a particular type of task or activity.

Source: Aksu (2023).

Guerra-Báez, 2019; Succi and Canovi, 2020; Tripathy, 2020; Malykhin et al., 2021; Aksu, 2023; Çetin, 2024; Wikipedia, 2024). This provides an in-depth discussion of a few of these studies, illustrating the diversity of soft skills.

Wikipedia provides examples of soft skills in a narrower scope than the literature. After pointing out the different names of soft skills, it gives critical thinking, problem solving, public speaking, professional writing, teamwork, digital literacy, leadership, professional attitude, work ethics, career management and intercultural fluency as

examples (Wikipedia, 2024). In the research titled "Skills of an effective manager" (Katz, 1974), which is accepted as the first academic study in the related literature, soft skills were named as "people skills". Katz (1974) functionally exemplified soft skills in effective managers, highlighting leadership, collaboration, self-awareness, awareness of others' attitudes, assumptions, and beliefs, expressive skills, encouragement skills, and the ability to foster an environment of free expression.

Phani (2007), a career management consultant,

identified 60 essential soft skills for employees in the workplace. These skills, collectively referred to as the "Workforce Profile," are considered indispensable for any job, regardless of the profession. The 60 soft skills required by employers are outlined in Table 2.

Majid et al. (2012), in their research titled "The importance of soft skills for educational and career success" on students studying business management, revealed 14 soft skills that are most important to these students. These are communication skills, leadership

Table 2. Top 60 soft skills in the work place (Phani, 2007).

1. Mathematics	21. Not using drugs	41. Basic Spelling and grammar
2. Safety	22. Good attendance	42. Reading and comprehension
3. Courtesy	23. Personal energy	43. Ability to comply with regulations
4. Honesty	24. Work experience	44. Desire to be accountable
5. Language Knowledge	25. Measure mentability	45. To be able to apply for a job
6. Reliability	26. Personal integrity	46. Ability to make production quotas
7. Flexibility	27. Goodwork history	47. Basic production skills training
8. Teamskills	28. Positive work ethics	48. Awareness of how business works
9. EyeContact	29. Interpersonal skills	49. Staying at work until it's over
10. Cooperation	30. Motivation skills	50. Ability to read and follow instructions
11. Adaptability	31. Valuing education	51. Willingness to work second and third shifts
12. Following rules	32. Personal chemistry	52. Caring to see the company succeed
13. Self-management	33. Willingness to learn	53. Understanding what the world is about.
14. Positive attitude	34. Common sense	54. Ability to listen and document what you hear.
15. Writing skills	35. Critical thinking skills	55. Commitment to continuing education and training.
16. Driver's License	36. Fractions knowledge	56. Willingness to take instruction and responsibility.
17. Dependability	37. Reporting to work on time	57. Ability to build relationships with colleagues in a close environment.
18. Advanced math	38. Use of rulers and calculators	58. Not expecting to be come an auditor in the first six months.
19. Self-monitoring	39. Good personal appearance	59. The desire to be a good worker and to go beyond the traditional eight-hour work day.
20. Good references	40. Desire to get a good job	60. Communication skills with the public, employees, supervisors and customers.

skills, persuasion skills, negotiation skills, conflict management, time management, problem solving, teamwork spirit, creative problem solving, personal effectiveness, strategic thinking, positive work attitude, willingness to learn and passion for work. Khanna (2015) explained 21 soft skills in his research titled "Soft skills key to professional excellence". These are: meaningful communication skills, decision making, commitment to work, flexibility in actions, time management, leadership skills, ability to work in a team, accept and assume responsibility, ability to work under pressure, computer and technical literacy, interpersonal skills, project management skills, problem solving skills, strong work ethics, emotional intelligence, soft skills development and networking skills. In addition to these soft skills, Khanna, in the aforementioned study, adds growth mindset, self-awareness, emotion regulation, self-confidence, stress management, resilience, forgiveness and forgetting skills, perseverance and determination, patience and understanding skills under the heading of "self-management skills".

Similar to the studies given above, Issac (2017) explained soft skills as oral communication, interpersonal skills, writing, problem solving and critical thinking, active

listening, active learning, organizational, time management, teamwork, attitude, self-confidence, professionalism, reading comprehension, flexibility and adaptability, personal motivation, leadership skills, teamwork, integrity and work ethics, showing commitment, accepting responsibility and ability to work under pressure. In addition, according to Succi and Canovi (2020), soft skills include being committed to work, having professional ethics, being tolerant to stress, creativity/innovation skills, learning skills, life balance skills, self-awareness skills, conflict management and negotiation skills, and networking skills, culture adaptation skills, leadership skills, teamwork skills, adaptation to change skills, analysis skills, continuous improvement skills, customer/user orientation skills, decision-making skills, management skills, result orientation skills.

Classification of soft skills

A review of the literature reveals that there is no consensus among researchers, personal development specialists, and human resources experts on the classification of soft skills. Katz's (1974) seminal study,

"The Skills of an Effective Administrator," categorized skills into three groups: technical skills, people skills, and conceptual skills. Katz's classification defines technical skills as profession-specific knowledge and skills, while people skills (self-perception and interpersonal relationships) and conceptual skills (organizational awareness) encompass soft skills. Since Katz's pioneering work, various scholars have proposed alternative classifications. The following overview presents some notable research that categorizes soft skills chronologically: Stevens and Campion (1994) divided knowledge, skills, and abilities into two primary categories in their study, "Knowledge, Skill, and Ability Requirements for Teamwork: Implications for Human Resource Management": interpersonal and self-management. Interpersonal skills include conflict resolution, collaborative problem-solving, and communication, while self-management encompasses goal-setting, performance management, planning, and task coordination. These knowledge, skills, and abilities are all examples of soft skills.

According to Malykhin et al. cited in Klaus et al. (2007), soft skills are self-awareness, reliability, conscientiousness, adaptability, critical thinking, attitude, initiative, empathy, trust, honesty, self-control, organizational awareness, likability, influence, risk taking, problem solving, leadership, time management. These soft skills are categorized into four classes: personal, social, communication and self-management (cited in Malykhin et al., 2021).

Schulz (2008), in his frequently cited study "The importance of soft skills: Education beyond academic knowledge", Schulz (2008), after explaining many soft skills, categorically divides them into three categories: personal qualities, interpersonal skills and additional skills/knowledge. Shakir (2009) categorizes soft skills into seven classes according to their characteristics. He groups soft skills under separate subheadings as communication, critical thinking and problem solving, teamwork, lifelong learning and knowledge management, entrepreneurship, ethics and professional ethics, and leadership skills. Entrepreneurship skills are noteworthy in Shakir's study. This is because in the literature, soft skills are mostly expressed as the skills of employees' in the sense of performing a job or a task in full meaning. Here, a different perspective from other studies is presented in terms of the ability to start a business. The skills expressed under the heading of entrepreneurial skills are the ability to start a business, risk awareness, and the ability to recognize and evaluate business opportunities. It talks about the individual's ability to discover a business with these skills, make preparations and make plans that lead to the establishment of a business and self-employment.

Kaushik and Bansal (2015), while acknowledging that it is not comprehensive, but considering that it will contribute to a clearer understanding, categorize soft

skills into the following nine groups: (1) communication, presentation and language skills, (2) soft skills, (3) interpersonal and behavioral skills, (4) emotional regulation skills and intelligence, (5) argumentation, persuasion and negotiation skills, (6) influencing skills and leadership, (7) critical thinking skills, (8) self-management skills. They also add a 9th group as personality-specific attributes.

According to Cinque (2016), there is no agreed classification of soft skills. In his study, after giving the names, definitions and classifications used by different European countries and different organizations for soft skills, the author obtained results through quantitative and qualitative analyses covering many European countries and different participants on the most desired soft skills in the labor market. The groups formed as a result of the quantitative analysis and the soft skills included in these groups are as follows:

- i) Personal skills: Seven skills: learning skills, ability to tolerate stress, professional ethics, self-awareness, commitment, life balance and creativity/innovation.
- ii) Soft skills: Seven skills: communication skills, teamwork, networking, negotiation skills, conflict management, leadership and cultural adaptability
- iii) Content-related/Methodological skills: Eight skills: customer/user orientation, continuous improvement, ability to adapt to change, results orientation, analytical skills, decision making, management skills, research and knowledge management skills.

According to the results of the qualitative analysis, according to the statements of the participating business representatives and higher education instructors, the soft skills that should be completed in students are presented in four groups below which are:

- i) Social skills: Teamwork, communication, flexibility, openness to constructive feedback and humility.
- ii) Personal skills: Empathy, honesty, commitment and motivation, openness to learning, curiosity, patience, perseverance, ability to learn from one's mistakes.
- iii) Self skills: Ability to self-evaluate, consequently self-regulate the learning process, capacity to make an informed career choice
- iv) Learning skills: Synthesis, arithmetic skills, assimilation ability, in-depth knowledge of a subject, presentation skills

Cimatti (2016), in his study "Definition, development and assessment of soft skills and their role for the quality of businesses and organizations", divides soft skills into two categories: self-oriented/intrapersonal and other-oriented/interpersonal skills. Ali et al. (2017), after expressing the dimensions of soft skills (discipline, honesty, trust, ethics, leadership, commitment, responsibility, kindness, creativity, communication, cooperation, organization and entrepreneurship) and values (honesty, responsibility, fairness, ability to work

together, ability to adapt, ability to communicate, tolerance, respect for others, decision-making ability, problem-solving skills, etc.), they include these values in two soft skills groups: personal and interpersonal. Personal soft skills include time management, stress management, changing management, transforming beliefs, transforming character, creative thinking processes, goal setting and life purpose, accelerated learning techniques. Interpersonal soft skills are motivational skills, leadership skills, negotiation skills, presentation skills, communication skills, relationship building, public speaking skills, and self-marketing skills.

Gruzdev et al. (2018), in their research to identify the soft skills of university graduates based on the views of employers, defined eight classes: systems and critical thinking; project development and implementation; teamwork, leadership, communication, intercultural interaction; self-organization and self-education; healthcare and health and safety. In a separate study conducted by Guerra-Báez (2018), soft skills were categorized into three distinct groups:

- i) Interpersonal skills: assertive communication, negotiation, trust, cooperation, and empathy.
- ii) Cognitive skills: problem-solving, decision-making, critical thinking, self-evaluation, analysis, and understanding of consequences.
- iii) Emotional control skills: emotional recognition and management skills in situations of stress and intense emotions, such as anger, sadness, and frustration.

Additionally, Chiara Succi conducted two studies (Succi and Wieant, 2019; Succi and Canovi, 2021) with two different academics, categorizing soft skills into three groups using 20 soft skills.

- 1) Personal skills
 - i) Being committed to work
 - ii) Professionally ethical
 - iii) Tolerating stress
 - iv) Creativity/Innovation skills
 - v) Learning skills
 - vi) Life balance skills
 - vii) Self-awareness skills

- 2) Social skills
 - i) Communication skills
 - ii) Conflict management and negotiation skills
 - iii) Networking skills
 - iv) Culturally adaptive skills
 - v) Leadership skills
 - vi) Teamwork skills

- 3) Methodological skills
 - i) Adapting to skill change
 - ii) Analysis skills
 - iii) Continuous improvement of skills

- iv) Customer/user orientation skills
- v) Decision-making skills
- vi) Management skills
- vii) Result orientation skills

As evident from the various studies, despite the extensive range of soft skills and research on their development, there is no consensus on the classification of soft skills, mirroring the lack of unity in their definition and diversity. As previously mentioned, this diversity stems from individual differences, geographical, cultural, and religious variations, as well as differences in research methods and purposes. Given these factors, it was believed that diverse soft skills categories can be beneficial for research, employees, and businesses. Recently, Scrimieri et al. (2024) introduced a quadruple soft skills classification by incorporating "sustainability/green" literacy skills into Succi et al.'s classification.

To further advance this field, a new quadruple classification was proposed in the 2024 study (Hevedanli, 2024), titled "Literacy." This classification transforms Scrimieri et al.'s "Sustainability/Green" category into "literacy skills" and introduces a broader category encompassing "sustainability/green" aspects, offering a revised framework for understanding soft skills.

The importance of soft skills

According to Katz (1974), who pioneered the academic study of soft skills, "these skills are important because they are primarily concerned with working with people?" An individual's weakness in soft skills, despite their technical expertise, can jeopardize their personal success, career advancement, and business prospects. Therefore, it is essential for formal programs at all educational levels, in-service training, courses, trainers, education managers, enterprises, employers, total quality management officers, and policymakers in education, economy, and work to prioritize soft skills development.

The increasing competitiveness of the labor market (Schulz, 2008; Khanna, 2015; Flack, 2016; Succi and Wieandt, 2019; Tripathy, 2020; Forrest and Swanton, 2021; Tureck and Tierean, 2021; Heller and Kessler, 2022; Rua and Maia, 2023; Akbiyik, 2023; Yilmaz and Urhan, 2024), employment and career advancement (Schulz, 2008; Klaus, 2010; Sabri, 2014; Balcar, 2014; Khanna, 2015; Flack, 2016; Isaac, 2017; Guerra-Báez, 2019; Succi and Wieandt, 2019; Tripathy, 2020; El Messaoudi, 2021; Tureck and Tierean, 2021; Costantino and Rodvinka, 2022; Akbiyik, 2023; Akdemir and Aygün, 2024; Mohammed and Ozdamli, 2024; Romanenko et al., 2024; Yilmaz and Urhan, 2024), employer expectations (Schulz, 2008; Cobb et al., 2015; Khanna, 2015; Flack, 2016; Isaac, 2017; Dean and East, 2019; Tripathy, 2020; El Messaoudi, 2021; Tureck and Tierean, 2021; Akbiyik, 2023; Bob et al., 2024; Saraç, 2024; Yilmaz and Urhan,

2024), holistic success of businesses (Katz, 1974; Flack, 2016; Tripathy, 2020; Ağçam and Doğan, 2021; Tureck and Tierean, 2021; Akbiyık, 2023; Özdoğan and Yereli, 2023; Yılmaz and Urhan, 2024), employees' personal success and happiness (Kyllonen, 2013; Sabri, 2014; Balcar, 2014; Cobb et al., 2015; Khanna, 2015; Flack, 2016; Isaac, 2017; Guerra-Báez, 2019; Succi and Wieandt, 2019; Tripathy, 2020; El Messaoudi, 2021; Tureck and Tierean, 2021; Akbiyık, 2023; Akdemir and Aygün, 2024; Yılmaz and Urhan, 2024), and entrepreneurship (Shakir, 2009; Cimatti, 2016) all underscore the significance of soft skills.

In today's competitive business world, possessing only technical skills may not be sufficient for a successful career. Many prospective employees hold degrees or certificates, having acquired necessary technical skills from formal or non-formal education institutions. To stand out in this crowd, it is crucial for candidate employees to develop soft skills that will make them more attractive to employers and businesses. As Schulz (2008) emphasizes, prospective employees should possess soft skills that will give them a competitive edge over others with similar technical skills. Soft skills have become the key to securing a good job and achieving success in that role (Torun, 2018).

Research highlights the significance of soft skills, revealing that they contribute 85% to an individual's success, while technical skills contribute only 15% (Klaus, 2010). Moreover, long-term success in the workplace depends 75% on soft skills and only 25% on technical knowledge (Watts and Watts, 2008, cited in John, 2009). Soft skills also play a vital role in individual development, personal satisfaction, and social effectiveness. Individuals who are aware of their potential and can create a positive atmosphere in social and business environments tend to experience inner happiness and have a more positive impact on their surroundings. Given the proven positive effects of soft skills on personality, social dimension, business life, and productivity, it is essential to prioritize their development in education and training.

Soft skills training

The foundation of soft skills is laid in the family, which plays a significant role in shaping human personality (Schulz, 2008). Individuals from families with a strong emotional and social foundation, characterized by open communication, influential leadership, kindness, trustworthiness, assertiveness, sense of responsibility, and a learning-conducive environment, are more likely to develop soft skills at educational levels. The education of soft skills, therefore, begins in the family.

Research on soft skills training, acquisition, and development has been extensively explored in the literature. Studies have investigated the contribution of

various methods to soft skills development and their integration with technical skills training. Katz's (1974) seminal study, the first academic research in the field, introduced the "three-skill approach," categorizing skills into technical, human, and conceptual. Katz emphasized that executive development training should focus on developing soft skills, which he referred to as human and conceptual skills, rather than merely transferring knowledge. He advocated for training managers to acquire the soft skills necessary for their positions, highlighting the importance of soft skills development in achieving satisfactory results.

Research suggests that various teaching methods and techniques can contribute to the development of soft skills. These include active learning (Nealy, 2005; England et al., 2020; Sharma and Shekhawat, 2020; Chakraborty, 2021; Green-Weir et al., 2021; Malykhin et al., 2021; Dziob, 2022; Gruber et al., 2022; Adhvaryu et al., 2023; Damnayant et al., 2023; Rakowska, 2023; Villazon Montalvan et al., 2024), embedded models (Ngang et al., 2015), e-learning (Nathan and Rajamanoharane, 2016), learning modes (Ahmad et al., 2017), self-directed learning (Şimşek and İlhan, 2019), and mixed reality technology (İdris et al., 2024).

Schulz (2008), notes that soft skills can be acquired and developed through formal education and self-education. Formal education programs focusing on presentation skills, foreign languages, and rhetoric can contribute to soft skills development. Arat (2014) identifies various university activities, such as long-term apprenticeships, sports, volunteer work, and art projects, as opportunities for acquiring soft skills.

Studies have also explored the role of universities in developing soft skills. Giray and Uysal (2017) examined the importance of non-technical skills in software engineering education programs. Succi and Wieandt (2019) suggest that soft skills can be developed through formal or informal activities, including university programs with workshops, laboratories, and projects. However, Majid et al. (2019) found that higher education institutions often fail to provide adequate soft skills training, leading students to seek alternative sources, such as self-study or mentorship.

A recent study by Bataklar and Toy (2023) analyzed the curricula of engineering faculties in Turkey and found a significant gap in soft skills acquisition. The authors propose a multifaceted course design to address this gap.

The literature emphasizes that soft skills training is an ongoing process, encompassing both formal education and lifelong learning through individual efforts (Fernandes et al., 2021; Coelho and Martins, 2022; Schislyaeva and Saychenko, 2022; Podolchak et al., 2024). Effective soft skills training programs should provide an environment conducive to personal growth and development (John, 2010). This is particularly important for individuals who are unaware of their skills or face obstacles in developing

existing skills and acquiring new ones.

Torun (2018) suggests that soft skills training can be achieved through two primary methods: self-education using various tools and formal education with the guidance of trainers. Individuals can cultivate self-awareness by evaluating themselves and others, and then develop lacking skills independently using books, visuals, and applications. Conversely, social skills development with instructor support can occur through academic programs or courses at educational levels, as well as workshops or training programs in business environments.

Differences between technical skills and soft skills

Tulgan (2015), in his book "Closing the soft skills gap", says that people are hired because of their technical skills but fired because of their lack of soft skills. Of course an employer would not hire someone who lacks technical skills. However, employers prefer people with a high level of soft skills among the multitude of candidates with technical skills. In addition to the technical skills required by the job that the individual aspires to, he/she should also have soft skills that will increase personal success and business efficiency (Urhan Torun, 2019). Technical skills are skills that people acquire later. They include skills and knowledge that enable a task or a job to be done properly. Soft skills are natural human skills. They are emotional and social skills that can be developed through study and practice and are complementary to technical skills. While technical skills include skills and knowledge for each job separately, soft skills are supportive skills that are necessary for every job (Berger, 2016) without discriminating between jobs. Finally, according to Ali et al. (2017), let us complete this subtitle by writing the differences between technical skills and soft skills. In their study analyzing soft skills on university students, the differences between technical and soft skills were explained under 3 items.

Tulgan (2015) emphasizes in his book "Closing the Soft Skills Gap" that individual are often hired based on their technical skills but fired due to their lack of soft skills. While technical skills are essential for a job, employers tend to prefer candidates with high levels of soft skills among those with similar technical expertise. As Torun (2019) notes, in addition to the technical skills required for a job, individuals should also possess soft skills that enhance personal success and business efficiency. Technical skills are acquired skills that enable individuals to perform tasks or jobs effectively, whereas soft skills are natural human skills that encompass emotional and social abilities.

According to Berger (2016), soft skills are complementary to technical skills and are essential for every job, regardless of the specific technical requirements. Soft skills are supportive skills that can be

developed through study and practice.

Ali et al. (2017) highlight the differences between technical and soft skills in their study on university students. They outline three key distinctions:

- 1) Technical skills use IQ (intellectual intelligence) while soft skills use EQ (emotional intelligence). In other words, the left half of the brain, the logical center of the brain, is active in the former, while the right half, the emotional center of the brain, is active in the latter.
- 2) Technical skills are such skills that the rules are the same for all workers and all situations. The organization sets these rules. In soft skills, on the other hand, the rules vary according to the organizational culture and the employees, and the skills are focused on personality and character.
- 3) Technical skills can be learned in educational institutions, from books or from experts in the field. Soft skills can be developed through one's inner desire and environment.

Research problem

The purpose of this study is to define soft skills and to examine the studies on the concept of soft skills in Turkey. In the light of this purpose, answers to the following sub-problems were sought.

Sub problem

- i) What is the distribution of books, theses, articles, papers, etc., in the field of soft skills in Turkey?

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a document analysis design, a qualitative research method. Document analysis involves identifying, collecting, examining, analyzing, and evaluating documents (written and digital) to achieve research objectives (Bowen, 2009; Mogalakwe, 2006; Sönmez and Alacapınar, 2013; Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2021). The document analysis process consisted of accessing documents, verifying their originality, analyzing data, and utilizing the data (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2021, citing Foster, 1995).

Data collection and analysis

To achieve the research objectives, relevant studies were accessed through the YÖK National Thesis Center, YÖK Academic Search, TÜBİTAK ULAKBİM TR Index, and Dergipark Academic. The study group comprised documents aligned with the research purpose, model, and design. Documents were selected using purposive sampling. A survey was conducted using keywords such as "soft skills," "soft beceriler," "insanibeceriler," and others. The search was performed between November 1 to 30, 2024. After eliminating duplicates and inaccessible studies, 30 documents were examined, including 2 books, 3 theses, 22 articles, and 3 papers. The obtained

Table 3. Type and number of studies on the concept of soft skills in Turkey.

Book	Mater's degree	PhD	Article	Proceeding	Total
2	2	1	22	3	30

Table 4. Content analysis of books on the concept of soft skills in Turkey.

Book	Name	Year	Publisher	Contents	Page
1 Book	Soft skills Effective Communication Leadership	September 2019	Gazi bookstore Ankara	<p>There is a “moment” thing begins the greatest iscovery of the future</p> <p>1) What are soft skills or What are they not?</p> <p>2) Why do we need soft skill?</p> <p>3) Essential soft skills for success</p> <p>-Effective communication skills</p> <p>-Emotional iIntelligence (EQ/IQ)</p> <p>-Teamwork skills</p> <p>-Problem solving skills</p> <p>-Effective presentation skills</p> <p>-Abilityto adapt</p> <p>-Creativity</p> <p>-Business ethics</p> <p>-Time management</p> <p>-Stress management</p> <p>4) Leadership and soft skills</p> <p>-How will what learn be useful in daily life?</p>	218
				References	
1 Book Chapter	Leadership approaches in global hospitality and tourism	January 2023	IGI Global	Crucial role of soft skills in challenging times: Conceptual analysis leaderships skills	16

documents were interpreted, and their authenticity was verified since they came from official sources. The data were then analyzed using content analysis techniques (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2021) and categorized according to the research sub-problems.

Validity and reliability

To ensure the validity and reliability of the data, the

research process was clearly presented from start to finish.

FINDINGS

The findings resulting from the analysis of the collected data, aligned with the research objectives, are presented below and interpreted in relation to the research sub-problems. An analysis

of Table 3 reveals that there are 30 studies on soft skills in Turkey, comprising 5 books and theses, and 25 articles and papers. As shown in Table 3, two books have been written on soft skills in Turkey, based on the search conducted using the sources. One of these books is a research-based publication, while the other is a book chapter. The findings derived from the analysis of these books are presented in Table 4.

Table 5. Characteristics of the authors of books related to the concept of soft skills in Turkey.

Book	Author's title	University	Faculty	Department
Book	Dr. Lecturer	Public University	Faculty of communication	Public relations
Book chapter	Asst. Prof. Dr	Public University	Faculty of communication	Public relations

Table 6. Distribution of graduate theses on the concept of soft skills in Turkey.

Thesis	Year	University	Institute	Department	Language
Master's degree	2023	Akdeniz University	Social science	Public relations	Turkish
Master's degree	2023	İstanbul Bilgi University	Graduate programs	Organizational psychology	English
PhD	2024	Dokuz Eylül University	Educational science	Educational management and supervision	Turkish

Table 7. Distribution of graduate theses related to the concept of soft skills according to research model and design.

Research model	Research design
Mixed	Multiple research design
Qualitative	Case study
Quantitative	Survey design (relational survey)

Table 8. Distribution of graduate theses on the concept of soft skills in Turkey by study group, sample size and sampling method.

Study group	Sample size	Sampling method
Employers and university students	516	Convenience sampling and criterion sampling
Professional educator	7	Not specified
Instructor	403	Criterion sampling

Table 9. Distribution of data collection processes of graduate theses on the concept of soft skills in Turkey.

Data collection tools	Data analysis methods
Interview, scale, open-ended questions	Descriptive analysis, frequency, percentage, t-test, anova, correlation
Open-ended questions, personal information forms	Thematic analysis
Scale, personal information form	Descriptive statistics, t-test, anova

An analysis of Table 4 reveals that there are two book studies on the concept of soft skills in Turkey, consisting of one research book and one research book chapter. Notably, both studies were published within the last five years. As evident, both book studies provided a comprehensive overview of the fundamental skills in the field of soft skills. The distribution of the authors of these books is presented in Table 5. Upon examining Table 5, it is observed that only one lecturer from the public relations department of a state university has conducted a book-level study on soft skills. The distribution of postgraduate theses on soft skills, categorized by their characteristics, is presented in Table 6. An examination of the data reveals that postgraduate theses related to the concept of soft skills were conducted in the last two years across three distinct institutes and departments. The distribution of these postgraduate theses in Turkey,

categorized by research model and research design, is presented in Table 7.

An analysis of Table 8 reveals that research on soft skills employed a combination of qualitative, quantitative, and mixed research models. The research designs utilized in these studies comprised multiple research designs, case studies, and relational surveys. The distribution of the relevant theses according to the study group (sample level), sampling size, and sampling method is presented in Table 8.

As shown in Table 8, the study groups comprised students, educators, and employers. The sampling methods employed were convenience and criterion sampling, while one study did not provide information on the sampling method used. The distribution of data collection processes for the theses is presented in Table 9.

Table 10. Distribution of articles related to the concept of soft skills in turkey according to years of publication.

Year of publication	Frequency	Percentage
2014	1	4
2016	1	4
2018	1	4
2019	1	4
2020	3	12
2021	2	8
2022	3	12
2023	8	32
2024	5	20

Table 11. Distribution of articles on the concept of soft skills in Turkey by language of publication.

Publication language	Frequency	Percentage
Turkish	9	36
English	16	64

Table 12. Distribution of those who conducted studies on the concept of soft skills according to their titles.

Variable	Professor	Asst. Professor	Dr. Lecturer	Instructive	Research assistant	Other
Study	12	9	9	4	6	9

Table 9 indicates that multiple data collection tools were utilized in all three theses. The predominant data analysis methods employed were descriptive analysis and descriptive statistics.

The distribution of various characteristics, including year of publication, language, journals, keywords, titles, universities, and authors' titles and affiliations, for a total of 25 studies (22 articles and 3 papers) related to the concept of soft skills in Turkey, are presented in the following tables.

An examination of the publication timeline reveals that the first article on soft skills was published in 2014. Notably, the highest number of articles (32%) was published in 2023. The distribution of the language of publication for these studies is presented in Table 10. According to Table 10, the majority of the studies on soft skills (64%) were published in English.

Table 11 presents the distribution of academic staff working in the field of soft skills in Turkey, categorized by their titles.

An analysis of Table 11 reveals that professors have conducted the most studies on soft skills in Turkey, with a total of 12 studies. Associate professors and assistant professors follow closely, each having conducted 9 studies. Research assistants have contributed 6 studies, while lecturers have conducted 4 studies. Additionally, 9 studies were conducted by masters and doctoral students,

or individuals interested in soft skills, categorized under "Other" in Table 10. Table 12 presents the distribution of universities where scientists working on the concept of soft skills in Turkey are affiliated.

An examination of Table 12 reveals that scientists working on the concept of soft skills in Turkey are affiliated with 28 different universities. Notably, only four universities - Akdeniz, Dokuz Eylül, Hacettepe, and Istanbul universities - have each contributed two studies, while the remaining universities have each contributed one study.

The distribution of departments/divisions/programs where scientists working on the concept of soft skills in Turkey are employed is presented in Table 13.

Table 13 shows that English language and education, accounting and finance, and classroom teaching are the departments/departments/programs in which the scientists working on the concept of soft skills in Turkey, with three studies each. There are two studies in five departments/divisions/programs and one study in the others. In total, studies were conducted in 24 different departments/divisions/programs. The distribution of the articles in which studies on soft skills were published in Turkey according to the keywords used is shown in Table 14.

An analysis of Table 14, which presents the distribution of keywords, reveals that 13 English-language articles utilized the concept of "soft skills" as a keyword.

Table 13. Distribution of scientists working on the concept of soft skills in Turkey according to the universities where they work.

University	Frequency	Percentage
Akdeniz University	2	6.250
Ankara Hacı Bayram Veli University	1	3.125
Ankara Yıldırım Beyzî University	1	3.125
Atatürk University	1	3.125
Aydın Adnan Menderes University	1	3.125
Bartın University	1	3.125
Başkent University	1	3.125
Cumhuriyet University	1	3.125
ÇanakkaleOnsekiz Mart University	1	3.125
Dokuz Eylül University	2	6.250
FMV Işık University	1	3.125
Gazi University	1	3.125
Hacettepe University	2	6.250
İstanbul Aydın University	1	3.125
İstanbul Kültür University	1	3.125
İstanbul University	2	6.250
Kahraman Maraş University	1	3.125
Kırıkkale University	1	3.125
Kırşehir Ahi Evran University	1	3.125
Maltepe University	1	3.125
Manisa Celal Bayar University	1	3.125
Marmara University	1	3.125
Mersin University	1	3.125
SağlıkBilimleri University	1	3.125
Selçuk University	1	3.125
Süleyman Demirel University	1	3.125
TokatGaziosmanpaşa University	1	3.125
Yalova University	1	3.125

However, the keywords for two articles could not be accessed. One article employed both "soft skills" and "social skills" as keywords. In contrast, Turkish-language articles utilized seven distinct concepts as keywords. The distribution of the analyzed articles on the concept of soft skills in Turkey, categorized by the journals in which they were published, is presented in Table 15.

As shown in Table 15, each study on the concept of soft skills in Turkey was published and presented in a separate journal or congress.

The methodological steps of the studies on the concept of soft skills in Turkey are presented in the tables below. According to Table 16, the qualitative research model (48%) was the most commonly used research approach in studies on soft skills in Turkey, followed by quantitative research (24%) and mixed research models (12%). Two theoretical studies did not specify a research method, and two literature review studies provided only theoretical explanations about soft skills. The distribution of research designs used in the articles is presented in Table 17.

According to Table 17, the qualitative research model

(48%) was the most commonly used research approach in studies on the concept of soft skills in Turkey, followed by quantitative research (24%) and mixed research models (12%). Two theoretical studies did not specify a research method, and two literature reviews provided only theoretical explanations about soft skills.

The distribution of research designs used in the articles is presented in Table 18. An examination of Table 18 reveals that 11 different research designs were employed in articles related to the concept of soft skills. The most frequently used research design was the relational survey design (17.86%). Additionally, the study design was not specified in five articles. The sample level (study group) of the studies on the concept of soft skills in Turkey is presented in Table 19.

Table 19 indicates that more than half (60%) of the studies on the concept of soft skills in Turkey comprised participants, primarily undergraduate students and employees. In contrast, 20% of the articles focused on documents as their study group. The study groups were not specified in five articles. The distribution of studies on

Table 14. Distribution of researchers working on the concept of soft skills in Turkey by department/division/program affiliation.

Department/Division//Program	Frequency	Percentage
Pediatric surgery	1	2.857
Child health and disease	1	2.857
Pharmacy management	1	2.857
Curriculum and instruction	1	2.857
Education management	2	5.714
Economics and finance	1	2.857
Industrial engineering	1	2.857
Informatics	1	2.857
Public Relations and publicity	2	5.714
Fundamentals of nursing	1	2.857
English language education	3	8.571
Human resources and management	1	2.857
Business	2	5.714
Accounting and auditing	1	2.857
Accounting and finance	3	5.714
Classroom education	3	8.571
Social science education	1	8.571
Vocational high school of social science	1	2.857
Sociology	1	2.857
Sport sciences	1	2.857
Medical education and informatics	2	5.714
Foreign language	1	2.857
Teaching Turkish to foreigners	1	2.857
Management and organization	2	5.714

Table 15. Distribution of keywords used in articles related to the concept of soft skills in Turkey.

Keywords	Frequency
Soft skills	13
İnsaniBeceriler	1
Social skills	1
Non-Technical skills	1
YönetimBecerileri	1
Teknik OlmayanBeceriler	2
YumuşakBeceriler	1
SosyalBeceri	1
İlimliBeceriler	2
Hassas Beceriler	2

the concept of soft skills in Turkey according to sample size is presented in Table 18.

An analysis of Table 18 reveals that the majority of the sample sizes ranged from 1 to 50. However, most articles featured larger samples consisting of individuals or documents. Additionally, eight studies did not specify their sample size, and one study examined two distinct

samples.

The distribution of studies on the concept of soft skills in Turkey according to sampling method/type is presented in Table 20.

As shown in Table 20, 38.46% of the analyzed studies on soft skills did not specify the sampling method. Among the studies that did specify the sampling method,

Table 16. Distribution of the articles on the concept of soft skills in Turkey according to the journals in which they were published.

Journals	Frequency
AIP Conference Proceedings	1
Alanya Akademik Bakış Dergisi (Alanya Academic Review Journal)	1
Anadolu Eğitim Liderliği ve Öğretim Dergisi (Anatolian Journal of Educational Leadership and Instruction)	1
Anadolu Journal of educational Science International	1
Ankara Eczacılık. Fakültesi. Dergisi. (Journal Faculty Pharmacy	1
Aydın Adnan Menderes Üniversitesi, Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi 1	1
Buca Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi (The Journal of Buca Faculty of Education)	1
E3S Web of Conferences 295, 05005 (2021) WFSDI 2021	1
Global Business Research Congress (GBRC), May 26-27, 2016, Istanbul, Turkey	1
Global Business research Congress, June 4-5, 2020	1
Interactive Learning Environments	1
International Journal of Progressive Education	1
International Journal of Social Sciences and Education Research	1
İstanbul Üniversitesi Sosyoloji Dergisi	1
İşletme Araştırmaları Dergisi (Journal of Business Research-Turk)	1
Journal of Defense Resources Management	1
Journal of Industrial Engineering	1
Journal of the International Society for Burn Injuries	1
Lisansüstü Öğretmen Çalışmaları Kongresi (LOCK) / 09-12 Mayıs 2024 Güzelyalı/Çanakkale	1
OPUS © Uluslararası Toplum Araştırmaları Dergisi (International Journal of Society Researches)	1
Pedagogical Journal of Kazakhstan	1
Review of Contemporary Business, Entrepreneurship and Economic Issues	1
Social Sciences Studies Journal	1
Süleyman Demirel Üniversitesi İktisadi ve İdari Bilimler Fakültesi Dergisi	1
Trakya Üniversitesi İktisadi ve İdari Bilimler Fakültesi e-Dergi	1

Table 17. Distribution of the articles on the concept of soft skills in Turkey according to research models.

Research model	Frequency	Percentage
Qualitative	12	48
Qualitative	6	24
Mixed	3	12
Theoretical	2	8
Comprehensive literature review	1	4
Systematic literature review	1	4

convenience sampling and criterion sampling were each used in 7 studies (26.92% each), while purposive sampling and stratified sampling were each employed in 1 study (3.85% each). The distribution of data collection tools used in the articles is presented in Table 21.

Table 22 indicates that document analysis (29.03%) was the most preferred data collection tool in studies on soft skills in Turkey, followed by scales (16.13%), questionnaires (12.90%), and interviews (9.68%). Other data collection tools were employed once or twice each.

The distribution of data analysis techniques used to analyze the collected data is presented in Table 21. As

shown in Table 23, studies on soft skills in Turkey employed 21 different data analysis techniques. The most commonly used techniques were content analysis (11.32%), frequency (13.21%), and percentage calculation (11.32%). Other techniques were used less frequently. Furthermore, seven studies did not specify the data analysis technique used.

DISCUSSION

This study aimed to examine research on soft skills in

Table 18. Distribution of the articles on the concept of soft skill sinTurkey according to research designs.

Research design	Frequency	Percentage
Case study	3	10.714
Relational survey	5	17.857
Document analysis	4	14.285
Descriptive phenomenology	1	3.571
Descriptive survey	2	7.142
Experimental	2	7.142
Content analysis	1	3.571
Descriptive analysis	2	7.142
Focus group research	1	3.571
Exploratory phenomenology	1	3.571
Comprehensive literature review	1	3.571
Unspecified	5	17.857

Table 19. Distribution of the articles on the concept of soft skills inTurkey by sample level.

Sample level		Frequency	Percentage
Document	Human skills and self-directed model	5	20
	Precisionskills, jobpostings, engineering programs		
	Audit firms' programs		
	Linkedin pages of audit firms		
	Engineering degree programs		
Participant	Employee (member of military)	15	16
	Employee (research assistant)		
	Undergraduate students (business administration)		
	Undergraduate students (not specified)		
	Undergraduate students (pre-services teachers)		
	Undergraduate students (engineering)		
	Employee (Pediatric team)		
	Employee (pre-primary-secondary-high school teachers		
	Undergraduate students (health)		
	Employee (Civilaviation cabin crew)		
	Manager (University)		
	Parent (who is a primary school student)		
	Undergraduate student (Pre-service teachers)		
Employee (Teachers)			
Employer and undergraduate student			
Unspecified		5	20

Turkey. The findings are discussed, and implications for future research are explored. The results reveal a scarcity of studies on soft skills in Turkey, comprising only 2 books, 3 theses, and 25 articles and papers. Despite the first study being conducted ten years ago (Sıgı et al., 2014), there has been limited research in the last decade. In contrast, the concept of soft skills has been explored internationally for over a century, with

the first academic study dating back to 1974 (Katz, 1974).

Soft skills play a crucial role in employment and career advancement (Schulz, 2008; Damayanti RA, Yuliati Y, Kholifah S (2023) Klaus, 2010; Sabri, 2014; Balcar, 2014; Khanna, 2015; Flack, 2016; Isaac, 2017; Guerra-Báez, 2019; Succi and Wieandt, 2019; Tripathy, 2020; El Messaoudi, 2021; Tureck and Tierean, 2021; Costatino and Rodzinka, 2022; Akbıyık, 2023; Akdemir and Aygün,

Table 20. Distribution of the articles on the concept of soft skills in Turkey according to sample size.

Sample size	Frequency	Percentage
1-50	8	30.769
51-100	4	15.384
100 +	6	23.076
Unspecified	8	30.769

Table 21. Distribution of the articles on the concept of soft skills in Turkey according to the sampling method.

Sampling method	Frequency	Percentage
Convenience sampling	7	26.923
Criterion sampling	7	26.923
Purposive sampling	1	3.846
Stratified sampling	1	3.846
Unspecified	10	38.461

Table 22. Distribution of the articles on the concept of soft skills in Turkey according to data collection tools.

Data collection tools	Frequency	Percentage
Structured interview	1	3.225
Scale	5	16.129
Document review	9	29.032
Survey	4	12.903
Interview form	2	6.451
Check lists	1	3.225
Semi-structured interview	2	6.451
Interview	3	9.677
Pre-application	1	3.225
Focus group interview	1	3.225
Unspecified	2	6.452

2024; Mohammed and Ozdamli, 2024; Romanenko et al, 2024; Yılmaz and Urhan, 2024). They provide a competitive advantage in the labor market (Schulz, 2008; Khanna, 2015; Flack, 2016; Succi and Wieandt, 2019; Tripathy, 2020; Forrest and Swanton, 2021; Tureck and Tierean, 2021; Rua and Maia, 2023; Akbiyik, 2023; Yılmaz and Urhan, 2024), meet employer expectations (Schulz, 2008; Cobb et al, 2015; Khanna, 2015; Flack, 2016; Isaac, 2017; Tripathy, 2020; El Messaoudi, 2021; Tureck and Tierean, 2021; Akbiyik, 2023; Bob et al, 2024; Yılmaz and Urhan, 2024), and significantly impact businesses' holistic success (Katz, 1974; Flack, 2016; Tripathy, 2020; Tureck and Tierean, 2021; Akbiyik, 2023; Saraç, 2024; Yılmaz and Urhan, 2024). Soft skills also enhance employees' personal success and happiness levels (Kyllonen, 2013; Sabri, 2014; Balcar, 2014; Cobb

et al, 2015; Khanna, 2015; Flack, 2016; Isaac, 2017; Guerra-Báez, 2019; Succi and Wieandt, 2019; Tripathy, 2020; El Messaoudi, 2021; Tureck and Tierean, 2021; Akbiyik, 2023; Akdemir and Aygün, 2024; Yılmaz and Urhan, 2024).

Despite the growing recognition of soft skills' importance, they have not received the attention they deserve in Turkey. However, the fact that more than half of the studies in Turkey have been conducted in the last two years suggests a nascent interest in this field. This study's findings suggest that the increasing research on soft skills in Turkey will highlight their importance, leading to their integration into education programs and the creation of environments where individuals can intentionally and deliberately acquire these skills.

In Turkey, two books, one of which is a book chapter,

Table 23. Distribution of the articles on the concept of soft skills in Turkey according to data analysis techniques.

Data analysis techniques	Frequency	Percentage
Content analysis	6	11.320
Reliability analysis	1	1.886
Factor analysis	3	5.660
Regression analysis	2	3.773
Descriptive phenomenology analysis	1	1.886
Frequency	7	13.207
Percentage calculation	6	11.320
Independent sample t-test	3	5.660
Analysis of variance Tukey HSD	1	1.886
χ^2	1	1.886
Descriptive analysis	2	3.773
Independent groups Mann Whitney test U	2	3.773
Spearman non-parametric correlation	1	1.886
Variation	1	1.886
Arithmetic mean	2	3.773
Minimum/maximum values	1	1.886
Median	1	1.886
Standard deviation	2	3.773
Kruskal Wallis	1	1.886
Correlation	1	1.886
Skewness and kurtosis coefficients	1	1.886
Unspecified	7	13.207

have been written as research books in the field of soft skills. Additionally, there are three thesis studies, two of which are master's theses, and one is a doctoral dissertation.

The book and book chapter, the only resources of their kind in Turkey on soft skills, provide a detailed explanation of what soft skills are (Tulgan, 2015), their importance (Klauser, 2008; Traipathy, 2020), and their basic examples (Kyllonen, 2013). Compared to international counterparts, this book and book chapter can be seen as a foundational resource in the field of soft skills, covering primary topics and content. This book is considered a primary source on soft skills in Turkish. The Turkish equivalent of "soft beceriler" is used to refer to the concept of "soft skills," as suggested by the book's author. The author of the book and book chapter introduced the concepts of "hard skills" and "soft skills" by referencing computer terminology "hardware" and "software." However, to better align with Turkish language usage, "teknik beceriler" is proposed as the Turkish equivalent for "hard skills."

Notably, the first research book on soft skills in Turkey was written by an expert in public relations and promotion. This is remarkable, as the acquisition, training, and development of soft skills should ideally be provided by educational experts in educational settings (Fernandes et al., 2021; Coelho and Martins, 2022; Schislyaeva and Saychenko, 2022; Podolchak et al.,

2024; Torun, 2018), in addition to self-education within the scope of personal development (Schulz, 2008; Torun, 2018). The fact that the first step in this field was not taken by educational experts is a finding worthy of criticism.

Although the concept of soft skills has been studied as a research topic in Turkey since 2014, the limited number of publications, comprising only two books and three thesis studies (two master's and one doctoral), indicates that soft skills have not yet been fully conceptualized in Turkey. This situation reveals a significant deficiency in the field of soft skills, highlighting the need for a substantial number of books and thesis studies to be conducted. Such research would elucidate the effects of soft skills through diverse studies, making a considerable contribution to the field. Notably, master's and doctoral theses on soft skills have been conducted in the last two years. The findings show that one master's thesis was conducted in the Department of Public Relations and Promotion, another in the Department of Organizational Psychology, and the doctoral study in the Department of Educational Administration and Supervision. Given the interdisciplinary nature of soft skills, studying this concept in various departments at the thesis level and evaluating the results would greatly contribute to the field.

The existing theses have focused on business people, final-year students of a faculty, trainers, and university administrators. Future thesis studies examining the level,

acquisition, and development of soft skills at all educational levels (Galittli, 2018), across various industries, with parents, employers, and managers, and exploring educational programs and textbooks from different perspectives, would make invaluable contributions to the field.

In Turkey, 25 studies on soft skills exist at the article and paper level, with 16 written in English and 9 in Turkish. Over the last two years, 13 studies have been published, with the first study dating back to 2014. Considering the first academic study was conducted half a century ago (Katz, 1974) and research intensified towards the 2000s (Flack, 2016), it is clear that Turkish studies began relatively late, with still limited intensive research. These studies involved 30 faculty members, 10 lecturers and research assistants, and 9 graduate students or individuals interested in soft skills. Despite the limited number of studies, the wide range of participating faculty members is notable in terms of academic interest in soft skills. Furthermore, the findings indicate that these studies were conducted across 28 different universities and 24 distinct departments, with publication in 25 various journals.

Although the number of studies is small, the diverse range of research conducted is considered a sign that the concept of soft skills will reach the level of widespread research it deserves in the next few years. An examination of the studies' keywords reveals 10 different keywords, with "soft skills" being the most frequently used due to the English abstracts of articles published in Turkish. Given the importance of keywords in literature usage (Tatar and Tatar, 2008; Üstüner and Cömert, 2008; Güven et al., 2014), these finding warrants attention.

While the concepts of "hard skills" and "soft skills" are prevalent in foreign literature, this is not yet the case in domestic literature. As proposed earlier, this study suggests using the terms "teknik beceriler" and "soft beceriler" as Turkish equivalents. This research aims to contribute to a unified language usage in domestic literature.

An examination of the research model findings of studies conducted on soft skills in Turkey reveals that all three research models - qualitative (48%), quantitative (24%), and mixed (12%) - were employed. Two studies were theoretical, and two were literature reviews, which did not provide details on the research model. In general, the findings suggest that the stages of the determined research model were applied in these studies. However, the same cannot be said for research designs, as a total of 10 different designs were used across the three research models. The most frequently used designs were relational survey and document analysis. Notably, the research design of 5 studies was not specified, which is a critical finding in terms of research validity. A researcher should be guided by the stages of a research study, following the determined scientific method level, to reveal

scientific knowledge in a valid and reliable manner (Sönmez, 2013; Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2021).

An analysis of the sample level findings reveals that the majority of studies (60%) focused on participants. Document analysis was used as a data source in 20% of the studies, while 20% did not specify the sampling level. In line with the essence of the soft skills concept, the overwhelming majority of participants were employees and undergraduate students, which is consistent with international literature (Khanna, 2015; Flack, 2016; Isaac, 2017; Succi and Wieandt, 2019; Tripathy, 2020; El Messaoudi, 2021). Studies that employed document review as the study group primarily examined the definition of soft skills and their inclusion in various programs. An increase in such studies is likely to raise awareness among stakeholders and accelerate the integration of soft skills into curricula or workplace training programs.

The sample size in the studies was influenced by the research model. The most common sample size was between 1-50 (30.796%), which is an expected finding given the predominance of qualitative and mixed models. As quantitative studies typically involve larger sample sizes (Sönmez, 2013; Karasar, 2020; Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2021), this finding is not surprising. Convenience sampling (26.923%) and criterion sampling (26.923%) were the most commonly used sampling methods. Notably, 20% of the studies did not specify the sample level, size, or method, highlighting the importance of explicit expression of research method information for research quality.

An analysis of the data collection tools used in the studies examined reveals that document analysis is the most frequently employed method (29.032%). This is an expected finding, given that soft skills research is still a relatively new field in Turkey. Document analysis is essential for understanding the fundamental concepts, importance, and inclusion of soft skills in programs, which aligns with the existing literature (Phani, 2007; Schulz, 2008; Arat, 2014; Berger, 2016; Cinque, 2016; Issac, 2017; Ali et al., 2017; Succi and Canovi, 2020; Aksu, 2023; Akbıyık, 2023; Akdemir and Aygün, 2024; Yılmaz and Urhan, 2024). Document analysis is followed by scales (16.129%), questionnaires (12.903%), and interviews (9.677%). Other data collection tools, such as structured interviews, interview forms, checklists, semi-structured interviews, pilot studies, and focus group interviews, were used only once or twice.

These findings indicate that research on soft skills in Turkey is primarily focused on general determination and in-depth research. Future studies examining the development of soft skills, their effects on programs, and the consequences of lacking or possessing soft skills in the business world will significantly contribute to the field. The research models applied in accordance with the research objectives typically dictate the data collection tools and analysis techniques (Sönmez, 2013; Karasar, 2020;

Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2021). An examination of the studies conducted in Turkey reveals that the data were mostly analyzed using frequency, percentage calculation, content analysis, factor analysis, and independent groups' t-test techniques. Other analysis techniques were employed only once or twice. Additionally, 7 studies did not specify the data analysis technique used.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This study aimed to provide a comprehensive overview of research on soft skills in Turkey. By presenting a holistic analysis of existing studies, this research intends to serve as a guide for future investigations on soft skills. Based on the overall evaluation of this study, the following recommendations were proposed for future research and practice:

- i) The research focuses on studies on soft skills in Turkey. For a holistic approach to soft skills, a wider range of studies on a global scale can be suggested.
- ii) In institutes of education as well as other institutes, research books, theses, dissertations, articles and papers on soft skills can be done in departments such as curriculum, guidance and psychological counseling, measurement and evaluation, field education, educational administration.
- iii) It is recommended that the scientific method stages of the studies to be carried out should be expressed more clearly and clearly.
- iv) In Turkey, studies can be conducted on the level of inclusion of soft skills in the curricula of all levels of education.
- v) Studies on soft skill levels of education and training stakeholders and employees regardless of profession are recommended.
- vi) In particular, studies on the soft skill levels of educational administrators' on organizational efficiency and employee performance can be recommended.
- vii) Studies can be conducted on employers' expectations from employees in terms of soft skills.
- viii) The effects of teaching methods on soft skills can be examined.
- ix) The effects of parents' soft skills levels on the development of children's soft skills can be examined
- x) In terms of practices, it can be suggested that parents should create rich environments in the family where their children's soft skills can develop
- xi) It can be suggested that teachers should include sociopsychological and methodological diversity in their lesson plans in order to develop students' soft skills.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The author has not declared any conflict of interests.

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