

The Role of Support Subjects in Enhancing the Employability Competencies of Vet-Trainees: Cases from Morogoro and Dar ES Salaam Regions in Tanzania

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ABSTRACT: This study investigated the role of support subjects in enhancing the employability competencies of Vocational Education and Training (VET) trainees: Cases from Morogoro and Dar Es Salaam Regions in Tanzania. The study applied a cross-sectional research design, involving a sample size of 102 respondents. Data was collected by the use of interviews and questionnaires and after that analysed by the use of descriptive statistics. The content validity was assured by expert judgement by lecturers of the Jordan University College the Constituent of St. Augustine University College of Tanzania, and the instrument validity and reliability were ensured by the test-retest method and yielded the reliability of $r = 0.87$. Findings revealed an adverse rapport between the support subjects and the employability of VET Graduates. The findings established a need for another study to establish the employability variables complementing soft skills.

Key Words - Employability, Soft/Hard Skills, Support subjects

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Technical and Vocational Education Training (TVET) is perceived broadly as a tool for providing transferable skills which graduates need to make them 'employable' (Colley et al., 2003; Eichhorst et al., 2015; Harden et al., 1999; Jabarullah & Iqbal Hussain, 2019; Oketch, 2007). Within the period from the 1970s to 1990s, many countries invested in the acquisition of relevant knowledge, skills, and attitudes for gainful employment in different fields of TVET programmes including metalwork, motor vehicle maintenance, domestic electrical wiring, woodwork and fitter mechanics which were popular trade areas (Ali Asadullah, 2019; Bhatta, 2021; Sultana, 2017).

The adopted training approach was a knowledge-based approach where teachers imparted knowledge to learners. The development of sophisticated technologies and automation of machines in early 2000 challenged the TVET graduates' ability to operate efficiently in the new industrial machines (Munishi, 2016). Factors such as greening, the ability to adapt new skills demands of technological advancement, knowledge transferability, and entrepreneurial skills were identified as major complaints of employers globally (Andrews & Higson, 2008a; Chell & Athayde, 2011; Heckman & Kautz, 2012). Hence in early 2000 Tanzania introduced Competence - Based

Education (CBET in the Tertiary and non-university education and training sector to enable the education and training system to produce hands-on graduates with the skills (Rutayuga, 2014).

This paradigm shift from Knowledge-Based Education and Training (KBET) to Competency-Based Education Training (CBET) was in line with various Development Visions of various countries. In Tanzania for example CBET was conceived as a tool for the operationalization of instruments of Trade Policies in line with Tanzania Development Vision 2025 which envisions Tanzania with a high level of educated people who are well equipped with the requisite skills and competencies to meet the demands of the labour market locally and internationally (URT, 2000). The introduction of support subjects in Vocational Education and training curriculum was precipitated by a vision that a good curriculum must support learners in achieving requisite learning experiences by developing the whole person through integrating technical, life skills and other related subjects as noted by John Preston we are in the CBET 3.0 where we need to demonstrate what we can do to survive in the uncertain and unpredictable world (Preston, 2017)

The nascence of TVET is associated with responding to the needs of labour by providing necessary technical skills for someone to perform vocational activities (M.L. & A, 2017; Otero, 2019; Preston, 2017; UNESCO-UNEVOC, 2012), However, the need for soft skills arose as the graduates engaged in applying the skills, they acquired in the work environment. Different from Robotization (World Economic Forum (WEF) et al., 2018) in line with Dewey who suggests that education is something more than rote learning or skill acquisition (Dewey, 2022), rather it has to contribute something better for the future, in terms of the cognitive development of people in the community, their social functioning, source of earnings, economic growth, competitiveness, social cohesion, to mention but a few (Borenstein et al., 2009; Card, 1999; Cuñado & de Gracia, 2012; Kuratko, 2005; Rivkin et al., 2005). It was found that graduates need to possess real-world problem-solving skills to cope with the advancement in technology and survive in the market (Stuart, 2012; Techanamurthy et al., 2015). Some studies have shown that for a graduate to meet employability standards, s/he needs to possess skills such as the ability to solve problems, skills in conflict resolution, and effective communication (Andrews & Higson, 2008b, while most employers rank communication skills highly on the list of required qualifications. Some scholars attribute personal qualities such as patience, perseverance, empathy, and teamwork qualities which make someone a compatible co-worker and a good employee (Benedict et al., 2005; Fuller & Marler, 2009; Tims et al., 2012). Also, a survey conducted by VETA in the Oil and Gas and Construction Sectors in 2016 and 2019 respectively indicated that employability skills in terms of soft skills or behavioural skills among VET graduates are 60% and below which is not encouraging; in the study, the survey investigated various skills which include: communication Skills (62%); Health and Safety awareness (65%); Innovation and Creativity (53%); Ability to cope with environments (56%); Teamwork (54%); Trustworthy (66%); Entrepreneurial skills (61%); Problem-solving skills (62%) (VETA, 2019). This study intends to answer the question "Is adopting support subjects appropriate in cherishing the soft skills needed by employers?"

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The unemployability of VET graduates is a lampard outcry of employers from both the public and private sectors. In South Africa for example, 60% of graduates fail to meet the expectations of their employers (Powell, 2012) Similarly, a survey of the best practices in Kenya exhibited that 8 out of 10 VET graduates could not fit for internship posts in industrial firms due to the lack of the minimum skills requirement (Ponge, 2013). In Tanzania, a growing corpus of literature on graduates' employability has identified barriers to employment ranging from skills mismatch to lack of soft skills (Chrysostome, 2014; Ishengoma & Vaaland, 2016; Kalimasi & Herman, 2016; Mtebe et al., 2020; Ponge, 2013). The introduction of Support subjects in the VETA learning system intended to answer the query of employers that graduates were not producing enough, and more, they were not fitting to compete in the global labour market (Mtebe et al., 2020). To meet that end Vocational Education and Training in Tanzania introduced support subjects and integrated them with the core subject with the assumption of enhancing the competencies of the VET trainees. Regrettably, after a decade of introducing Soft Skills,

unemployability is prevalent. A study by Mwita for example, indicates that an average of 2.8 out of 5 graduates do not meet the requirements of the labour.

Market (Mwita, 2018). A similar study was done by Munishi, and it revealed that 7 out of 10 graduates lack the minimum competencies to work in the selected production industries (J. Munishi, 2022). Furthermore, the National Bureau of Statistics 2015 has indicated that 68% of young people aged between 15 and 35 years lack employable skills and thus under-employment (Mgaiwa, 2021). It is in this regard that this study was designed to establish the impact of the paradigmatic shift that led to the introduction of support subjects to the VETA learning system to the competencies and employability of the respective graduates.

1.3 Research Objectives

The purpose of this study was to understand the roles played by Support Subjects in enhancing the employable competencies of Vocational Education and Training (VET) trainees. Specifically, the study intended the following.

- i. To find out the skills required by employers of VET Graduates in Morogoro and Dar es Salaam Regions.
- ii. To examine the roles played by support subjects in inculcating Soft Skills of VET trainees in Morogoro and Dar es Salaam regions.
- iii. To explore the remedial Measures for VET trainees to acquire skills required by the employers.

2 THE RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 Conceptual Definitions

This part gives in a nutshell the elucidation of terms and concepts that will repeatedly appear in this study, i.e., Support Subjects; Employability; and Soft Skills.

Support Subjects

Vocational Education and Training Syllabi pertain to both, vocational and support subjects. The first pertains to the core subjects aiming to prepare learners for jobs that are based on practical activities (that some scholars such as Jennings name it nonacademic (Jennings et al., 2012)) which are related to a specific vocation, whereas the latter pertains to any subject that a learner takes to promote related attributes to the world of work. The concepts shall be used to mean those subjects which were introduced by VETA in 2000 to the curriculum to promote employable skills among trainees and graduates.

Employability

The term employability is broadly perceived as a set of achievements, skills, understandings and personal attributes that make graduates more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations, which benefits themselves, the workforce, the community and the economy at large (Römgens et al., 2020). This definition is very close to the perception of employers on the concept; i.e., the ability of a graduate to gain initial employment, and maintain through the contractual agreement. In this vein, employability skills shall pertain to aspects such as communication Skills, Health and Safety awareness, Innovation and Creativity, Ability to cope with environments, Teamwork, Trustworthiness; Entrepreneurial skills, and Problem-solving skills.

Soft Skills Vs Hard Skills

Principally soft skills stand for the abilities and traits that pertain to personality, attitude and behaviour rather than to formal or technical knowledge (Andrews & Higson, 2008c). Other authors have, however, revealed that soft skills are more than simply individual traits and dispositions, to include interpersonal and intrapersonal abilities to facilitate mastery of performance in a particular context (Römgens et al., 2020). Andrews and Higson use the concept to mean Professionalism; - Reliability; - The ability to cope with uncertainty; - The ability to work under pressure; - The ability to plan and think strategically; - The capability to communicate and interact with others, either in teams or through networking; - Good written and verbal communication skills; - Information

and Communication Technology skills;- Creativity and self-confidence;- Good self-management and time-management(Andrews & Higson, 2008c). The VETA use the concept for facets such as computer skills, knowledge of diagnostic Machines, Life skills, Safety and occupational health, customer care, preventive maintenance, communication skills and teamwork; professionalattitudes, professional and ethical responsibilities, and online booking (VETA, 2009). This study shall use the conceptof soft skills in the aforementioned regard.

2.2 Graduates' Employability and Marketability

Scholars of employability theory hold that investments in human capital increase individuals' productivity and marketability in the labour market (Hayes, 2023; Keynes, 1937). This framework has beenadopted in employability studies, the general idea being that employability is acquired through investments in movement capital strengthening individuals' labour market positions and making them more independent of the current employment relationship. The return on investment takes the form of positive outcomes for the individual. Employability is a promise to employees that they will have the skillsto find new jobs quickly if their jobs end unexpectedly. An individual's skills could have a considerable bearing on a particular student's success in the employability stake. Recent studies have indicated an increased fluctuation in the labour market situation, in terms of emerging new sectors, changing the nature of work and the way employers perceive the workplace. Such a trend has resulted in rethinking the process of preparing the graduates in the education systems.

The job market is rapidly changing with new sectors emerging, changing the nature of work and the way employees perceive the workplace. Employers are looking to recruit graduates who fit into the organizational culture and utilize their abilities and skills to transform the company by facilitating innovative teamwork (Andrews & Higson, 2008c; Zaharim et al., 2009; Zaharim & Yusoff, 2009). Graduatesneed to be flexible and have the personal capabilities to manage changing and challenging work situations.They urge that it is the soft skills which determine graduates' employability in terms of possessing the appropriate level of skills and attributes and being able to use them to gain and remain in appropriate employment. Individual employability is defined as graduates being able to demonstrate the attributes toobtain jobs. Employability skills is an umbrella term for a set of highly desirable, transferable skills that turn youth into a very attractive candidate or employee. They can be defined as a set of skills employers want from a potential employee. They include problem-solving, oral communication, adaptability, collaboration, resource management, organizational skills, technological use, information use, and personality traits(Ong et al., 2022; University of Kent, 2015). The concept remains complex and employersexhibit different descriptors to it, while they agree on the fact that the transferable soft skills and competencies are integral to graduate employability. Such skills add up to employees' professionalism; reliability; ability to cope with uncertainty;- the ability to work under pressure;- the ability to plan and think strategically; the capability to communicate and interact with others, either in teams or through working; good written and verbal communication skills; information and communication technology skills;- creativity and self-confidence; good self-management and time-management skills;- a willingness to learn and accept responsibility (Crossman & Clarke, 2010).

3.RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Approach

The research employed both qualitative and quantitative research approaches which intended to understand a complex reality and the meaning of action in the given context, it also allows the researcher to be the subject and the object of the research at the same time. Being an object, the researcher will be involved in providing in-depth and illustrative information to understand various correlations between skills and graduates' employability in VET institutions of Tanzania.

3.2 Sample, sample size, Sampling Technique

The sample of the study was drawn from the VET centres of Dar es Salaam and Morogoro. A total of 102 respondents were involved in the study. Respondents were picked conveniently to allow the researcher to get only the needed information from the well-informed respondents. Targeted respondents included the

employers, VET graduates, vocational teachers and VET Centre administrators. The research used questionnaires and interview data collection instruments. Questionnaires were administered to VET graduates, vocational teachers and VET Centers administrative staff in the study area. The information asked includes; the skills required by employers of VET graduates; the roles of support subjects in soft skills competencies of the VET trainees and lastly, the remedial measures for VET graduates to acquire soft skills required by employers. The face-to-face interview was conducted with Vocational teachers, employers and VET Centre administrators to solicit information on the research problem.

3.3 Data Analysis

The research data were schematized, coded and analyzed by using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS 2020 version) and Frequency distribution and percentages were used to describe some variables, to squeeze the data to be small enough for the researcher to get a pretty good idea at a glance how the scores are distributed. Qualitatively, the collected data were analyzed through thematic analysis methods, description, interpretation and explanation. Tabulation and classification were utilized as the major methods for data analysis.

4 FINDING AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Gender of the Respondents

The current research study established the gender of the respondents. Table 4.1 presents the summary of the distribution of the respondents as per their gender.

Table 4.1 Gender of the VET graduates as reported by the respondents (n=27)

Gender	F%
Male Female	20 (74.07%)
Total	07 (25.55%)
	27 (100%)

Table 4.1 shows that the number of male students who took part in the study was 20 (74.07%). They were followed by their female counterparts who were 7 (26%).

4.2 Age of the REspondents

The current research study was set to find out the age of the respondents. Table 4.2 presents the summary of the distribution of the VET graduates' respondents as per their age brackets.

Table 4.2 Age of VET graduates as reported by respondents (n=27)

Age	F %
15 -20 years	3(11.1%)
21 -37 years	22(81.5%)
38 - above years	02(7.4%)
Total	27(100%)

Table 4.2 above shows that 22(81.5%) who took part in the study were aged between 21-37 years old. Followed by 3(11.1%); only two (2) VET graduates (7.4%) were aged between 38-above years.

4.3 Educational Qualification of VET Graduates

The current research study was set to find out the level of educational qualification. Table 4.3 presents the summary of the distribution of the level of educational qualification of the VET graduates.

Table 4.3 Educational qualification of VET graduates as reported by respondents (n=27)

Education reached	F %
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Standard seven Form Four	4 (14.81%)
College – Diploma	22 (78.57%)
Total	01 (3.70%)
	27 (100%)

Table 4.3 above shows that 22(78.57%) had form four levels of education. Followed by 4(14.81%) who had standardseven education and one student 1(3.7%) had a diploma education qualification.

4.4 Vocational Qualification of VET Graduates

The current research study was set to find out the vocational qualifications of VET graduates. Table 4.4 presents the summary of the distribution of the vocational qualifications of the VET graduates.

Table 4.4 Vocational qualification of VET graduates as reported by respondents (n=27)

VET qualification	F %
Short courseLevel II	11 (40.74%)
Level III	10 (37.03%)
Above level three	05(18.51%)
Total	01(3.70%)
	27 (100%)

Table 4.4 above shows that 11(40.74%) of employees studied short courses and 10(37.03%) of employees reachedlevel two, while five (5) employees (18.51%) reached level three and one (3.70%) had above level three.

4.5 Main Occupation of VET Graduates

The current research study was set to find out the main occupation of the VET graduates. Table 4.5 presents the summary of the distribution of the main occupations of the VET graduates.

Table 4.5 Main occupation of VET graduates as reported by respondents (n=27)

Occupation	F %
Electrical Installation	10 (37.0%)
Hospitality and Tourism	8 (29.6%)
Mechanical, Textile and Fashion Design	04 (14.8%)
Civil and Building Construction	04 (14.8%)
Total	27 (100%)

Table 4.5 above shows that 10(37.0%) studied electrical Installation occupations. Followed by 8(29.6%) who studied Hospitality and Tourism occupations, Mechanical and Textile and Fashion Design 4 (14.8%) and 1 graduate (3.7%) who studied Civil and Building construction.

4.6 Methods of Acquiring Employment of VET Graduates

The current research study was set to find out the methods of acquiring employment for VET graduates. Table 4.6 presents the summary of the distribution of the methods of acquiring employment of the VET graduates.

Table 4.6 Methods of acquiring employment of VET graduates (n=27)

Methods/ways	F %
Through interview	11 (40.74%)
Through internship	12 (44.44%)
Volunteering	04 (14.81%)
Total	26 (96.29%)

Table 4.6 above shows that 12(44.44%) of employees got their employment through the internship. Followed by 11(40.74%) employees who got employed by attending interviews and four (4) (14.81%) employees who got

employed through volunteering at the company which then employed them. It is probable that apart from apprenticeship, field attachment exposed the graduates to employment opportunities.

4.7 Support Subjects and Employability

The current research study was set to find out whether the VET graduates studied support subjects during their course of study and if the subjects added value to their employment. Table 4.7 presents the response from VET graduates on the matter.

Table 4.7 The VET graduates studied support subjects and if the subjects are valuable to employment (n=27)

Statement	F %
Yes, I studied support subjects and the subjects are valuable to my employment	21(77.77%)
No, I did not study support subjects but I can see that support subjects are valuable for our employment	06 (22.22%)
Total	27 (100%)

Table 4.7 above shows that 21(77.77%) of VET graduate employees studied support subjects, while 06 (22.22%) of the VET graduate employees did not study support subjects. The findings are supported by the findings of Thapa, Mwanjamwale et al., who state that employability cutters for both soft and hard skills, and that soft skills leverage more in employability to hard skills(Ayanwale et al., 2023; Thapa, 2024).

4.8 Vocational Teachers' Teaching Experiences

The current research study was set to find out the teaching experience of vocational teachers in recognition of the role of support subjects in enhancing the competency of support subjects. Table 4.8 presents the response from Vocational teachers on the matter.

Table 4.8 Vocational teachers' teaching experience and provision of information on the role of support subjects to

VET graduates (n=55)	
Years of experience	F %
3 - 15 years	46 (83.6%)
16 - 29 years	05 (9.1%)
30 - 42 years	04 (7.3%)
Total	55 (100%)

Table 4.8 above shows that 46(83.6%) of Vocational teachers had teaching experience of 3-15 years, while 05 (9.1%)of the Vocational teachers had experience of 16-29 years and 4 (7.3%) had 30-42 teaching experience. The researchstudy indicates that most of the respondents had teaching experience of 3-15 years which is enough for the respondents to be able to provide his/her knowledge and information on the questionnaires issued about the rolesof support subjects in enhancing the competence of VET trainees.

4.9 The Subjects Taught in VET Institutions

The current research study was set to find out the ratio of the number of teachers who were teaching support subjects and those who were teaching core subjects to balance their views on the value of support subjects in enhancing the competence of VET trainees. Table 4.9 presents the responses from Vocational teachers on the subjects they teach.

Table 4.9. The subjects which Vocational teachers are teaching in VET Centers (n=55)

Statement	F %
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Core subjects (trades)	Support subjects only	23 (41.8%)
Core and Support subjects		16 (29.1%)
Total		16 (29.1%)
		55 (100%)

Table 4.9 above shows that 23(41.8%) of Vocational teachers were teaching core subjects; while 16 (29.1%) were teaching support subjects only and 16 (29.1%) were teaching both core and support subjects. Therefore, 59% of all vocational teachers had enough knowledge and awareness of support subjects. Assumptively, enough has been done in terms of capacity building to align the policy change and demands of the labour market on soft skills(VETA,2009).

4.10 Skills Required by Employers of VET Graduates

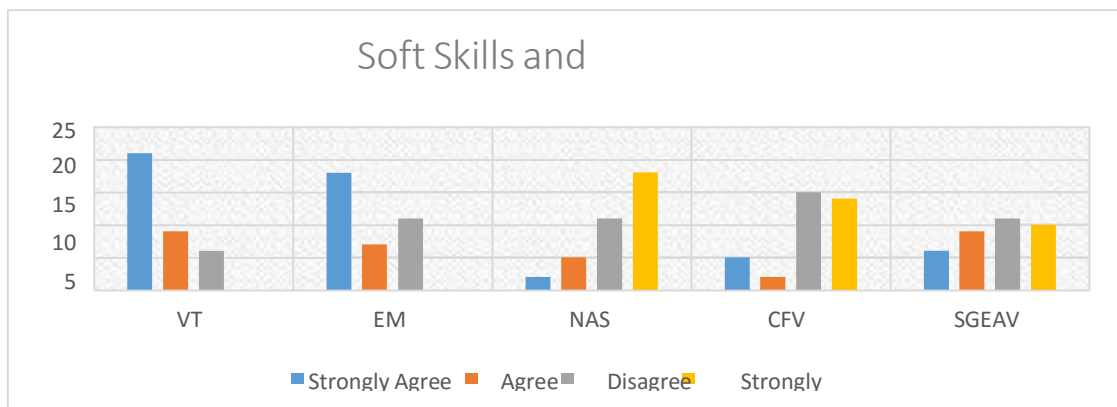
The second objective of the current research study was to find out the skills required by employers for VET graduates to be able to work in their employment. Parameters of competencies included hard skills, numeracy, measurements, communication skills, teamwork, critical thinking, health and safety awareness, punctuality, trustworthiness, self- confidence, creativity innovativeness and problem-solving. According to Thapa these soft skills are both important to employers’ recruitment and enhance an individual’s ability to secure a job, retain employment and move flexibly in the labour market as well as engage in lifelong learning(Thapa, 2024)

Data was collected through questionnaires which were administered to 36 respondents and thereafter coded thematically and tabulated for ease of narration. The questions were coded for easy schematization and analysis Q1. Compulsory Support Subjects (CSS)

Q2. Whether VET graduates can acquire both Hard and Soft skills at the exit level EM1

Q3. Negative attitude to support subjects (NASS)

Q4. Challenges of Integrating Support Subjects in the VET Process (CFVG) Q5. A skills gap exists among VET graduates (SGEAVG)



Q1 1 intended to find out whether support subjects are given priority in the VET process, hence, whether they are compulsory or optional subjects. Answers were set on a ranking scale from strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree and Strongly disagree. According to the results, 56% of the respondents strongly agreed with the proposition 27% agreed and 17% disagreed. In a similar vein, the interview results from vocational teachers and VET Centre administrators show that a VET graduate cannot go to the next level of study unless he/she has passed all the compulsory subjects.

In Q2 the assumption was that both technical and soft skills are crucial to make an employee fit the requirements of the labour market EM1. The results indicate that 52% of the respondents strongly agreed with it 19% agreed 27%disagreed and there was no respondent with a strong negative perception. This view was supported by the scholarson “engineering employability skills (Zaharim et al., 2009; Zaharim & Yusoff, 2009)

The researcher further intended to find out the attitude of students towards support subjects Q3. The findings show that 51% of the respondents strongly disagreed that students have a negative attitude towards support subjects, 31% disagreed while only cumulatively 18% agreed and strongly agreed to the proposition. With these results, it could be interesting to find out the drivers towards students' preference for the support subject, that this study overlooked.

The researcher was also interested in finding out whether the VET teachers find some difficulties in integrating support subjects while implementing the curriculum Q4. Interestingly, 42% disagreed with it and 39% of them strongly disagreed. 14% of the respondents strongly agreed and 0.5% agreed. These results are not very far from the findings of Q1 and Q2 and it justifies the rationale for integrating support subjects in a technical-oriented learning curriculum.

Then the last question intended to find out whether they are aware of the skills gap as established by different studies; (Ref: Ishengoma & Vaaland, 2016; Mtebe et al., 2020) etc. In the results; 30% of the respondents disagreed; 27% strongly disagreed and only 42% were on the positive side. These results fail to connect the efforts of the institution to real work life. The polarity that exists between the learning process and the learning outcomes needs justification. Regardless of the assertion of some scholars that VET students have poor backgrounds (KAJUNA, 2009; OLOMI & SINYAMULE, 2009; Roy, 2013; Zaharim & Yusoff, 2009) the findings on Qns1-3 would suggest a change in attitude and expected performance standards of the respective VET graduates.

4.11 Soft Skills' and Competences for the VET Trainees

The first objective was to find out the roles of soft skills in enhancing the competence of the VET trainees. The researcher intended to explore the changes in VET trainees' behaviour and attitudes as a result of integrating support subjects in the VET Curricula for inculcating soft skills in vocational education and training graduates which will be portrayed in the employment areas. The qualitative data collected through the interview and open-ended questionnaire were coded thematically to allow for data organization and retrieval. Questions on this objective were as follows:

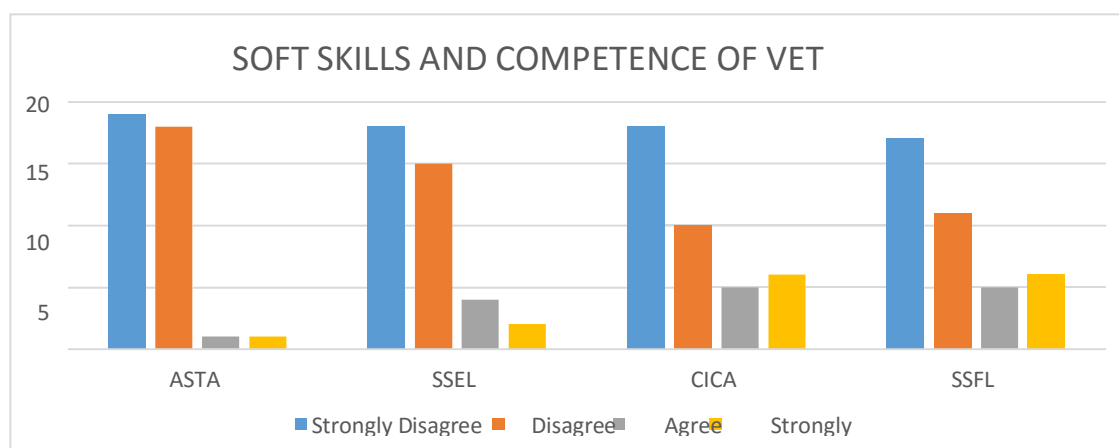
Q1. *Trainees who studied support subjects stand out to be more adaptive to situation and task accomplishment* **ASTA**

Q2. *Soft skills enhance the employment longevity of VET graduates* **SSEL**

Q3. *Graduates with soft Skills portray a good command of customer care skills, interpersonal relationships, communication skills and analytical skills* **CICA**

Q4. *Support subjects develop soft skills that enhance VET trainees to fit in Prevailing Labour markets* **SSFL**

A total of 39 respondents were involved in this question. The Linkert scale was established to enable the respondents to rank the magnitude of their answers from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree. The 14 below portrays the answers.



In Q1; on whether support subjects contribute to employees' adaptability to tasks, ASTA 87% of the respondents had a positive perception, of whom 48% strongly agreed with the assertion and a very small number of the respondents asserted it. These results concur with the previous findings which indicated a positive correlation

between soft skills and the performance of employees(Succi & Canova, 2020). We then posed another question to find out whether Soft Skills built by support subjects correlate to employees' longevity and job embeddedness SSEL2, the answer was nothing different from Q1. 84% of the respondents agreed it while only 16% rejected to it. We posed the third question Q1 to find out whether soft skills built by support subjects enable graduates to portray a *good command of customer care skills, interpersonal relationships, communication skills and analytical skills CICA3*. Responses were still interesting in that 71% of the respondents had a positive perception of it though different from the previous answers the number of those with negative perception was as big as 31%. Thereafter the researcher wanted to know if all respondents perceive that Soft Skills make employees fit for the prevailing labour Market *SSLF4*. Interestingly even on this question, the answers were not somewhat different. 43% of the respondents strongly agreed and 28% agreed, making a cumulative 71% with a positive perception while 0.12% disagreed and 0.15 strongly disagreed to it.

The findings of this objective are closely in line with some scholars such as Chrysostom, Ishengoma and Vaaland, Kalumasi, Herman and others who hold that, the problem of VET unemployability does not lie in lack of Soft Skills as it was proposed by employers; rather on Skills mismatch (Ishengoma & Vaaland, 2016; Kalumasi & Herman, 2016, 2016). Another study on the kind of soft skills to mitigate the challenge of VET unemployability would complement this knowledge gap.

4.12 Conclusion & Recommendation

This study has unleashed the concern of scholars and practitioners of the academic industry on the contributions of support subjects which Vocational Education and Training Authority decided to integrate in its curriculum in enhancing the competencies of VET graduates, particularly in reducing unemployability status. While a significant number of surveyed studies perceived soft skills which are mostly built up by support subjects as an integrating factor to the employability gap, this study has revealed that it is true. Graduates with both soft and hard skills tend to be fit for the employment and labour market requirements. In this regard, it is necessary to design another study to unleash the factors for the unemployability of VET graduates.

5 DECLARATION OF CONFLICTING INTERESTS

The authors declare no potential conflicts of interest concerning the authorship and publication of this article.

7 DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data and supporting findings of this research study are available within the article and its supplementary materials.

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