

## Employability Skills of TVET Hotel Graduates in Hotel Sector: Qualitative Study

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To Link this Article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARBSS/v14-i1/20106>

DOI:10.6007/IJARBSS/v14-i1/20106

**Published Date:** 12 January 2024

### Abstract

This study explores the key employability skills that are considered vital for the future resilience of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) hotel graduates, based on the perspectives of hotel employers in the post-pandemic environment. The research emphasises the growing importance of soft skills and non-technical proficiencies in assessing the employability of individuals for employment, especially in the hotel industry. It highlights the necessity of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in preparing individuals for such employment. The study seeks to explore the specific areas of employability skills that are crucial for the future success of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) hotel graduates in the hotel sector of Malaysia, using qualitative interviews. The research underscores the industry's support for effective communication, teamwork, leadership, adaptability, and the importance of interpersonal skills, problem-solving abilities, intrapersonal talents, emotional intelligence, professionalism and ethics, occupational health and safety skills, and entrepreneurship abilities. Moreover, industry leaders emphasise the crucial significance of critical and inventive thinking in tackling developing difficulties. During the period following the pandemic, there is a recognition of the essential qualities of intrapersonal skills, emotional intelligence, and professionalism. There is also a growing emphasis on workplace health and safety. The study emphasises the importance of including these skills in TVET programmes to equip graduates with the ability to succeed and adapt in the competitive and constantly changing hotel industry.

**Keywords:** Employability Skills, Soft-Skills, Hotel Industry, Hotel TVET Graduates, Covid-19.

### Introduction

Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) is an education and training process that leads to employment and emphasizes industry practices in various related fields (Choi, 2021). United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has defined TVET as education, training and skills development relating to a wide range of occupational fields, production, services and livelihoods (UNESCO General Conference 38th, 2015). To

continue to progress in economic development, TVET contributes to the development of a society with specific basic skills that will enable a country to meet its specific labor market needs and prepare a skilled and semi-skilled workforce for the future (Minghat and Yasin, 2020). In the pursuit of national development, the Malaysian government has identified TVET as a catalyst for innovation and progress, particularly under the Eleventh Malaysia Plan (11MP). This strategic focus aims to cultivate a highly skilled workforce capable of meeting industry demands amid dynamic job markets and technological advancements (Economic Planning Unit, 2015). The labor-intensive nature of the hospitality industry links it to TVET because this industry relies on well-trained workers for effective operation (Olowoyo et al., 2020). Moreover, this industry a significant contributor to Malaysia's GDP, plays a pivotal role in the TVET landscape. Accordingly, hospitality courses are one of the training areas available in TVET programs or skills at Public Institutes of Higher Learning (IPTA) such as Polytechnics, Community Colleges and other Public Skills Training Institutions. TVET programs are available in the hospitality field because this industry requires highly skilled workers due to its labor-intensive nature (Rahimi et al., 2018). Employees also need to have practical skills involved in hard and soft skills to able to work and have a better chance of succeeding in the ever-changing hospitality industry (Adeyinka-Ojo, 2018). As the tourism and hospitality sector is one of the important sectors influencing economic growth, hence a workforce equipped with knowledge and skills is essential to be produced to drive inclusive and sustainable economic growth.

As reported by the Ministry of Higher Education (2023) noting that there is a high demand especially with Community College and Polytechnic graduates being the leading at rates of 94.8% and 93.7% respectively in 2022, however, challenges still exist in aligning industry expectations with skills that owned by graduates, causing dissatisfaction among hotel employers (Frances, 2021). Input from the industry states that TVET graduates lack soft skills such as teamwork skills, adaptation skills, leadership, critical thinking, and communication skills (Ministry of Higher Education, 2020). Moreover, Abdullah (2018) also claimed most graduates lack confidence, knowledge, technical skills and communication skills, especially in the English language. This statement is also supported by Kenayathullah et al (2019) found that the bakery students in TVET institutions perceive that they are not given adequate exposure to possess skills such as teamwork, information technology skills, ethical, technical and vocational skills. Interms of culinary student, the findings showed that teamwork, working with others, ethical, technical and vocational skills gained by students is lower than the importance perceived by them. Meanwhile, Radwan et. al (2022) mentioned hospitality graduates lack in term of interpersonal skills, innovative skills, leadership and management skills, operational skills, technical skills and basic personal skills.

Although numerous studies have connected employability skills with the hospitality industry for instance Abdullah's study illustrates that graduates from leading public universities exhibit lower skills than anticipated by employers, highlighting a gap in labor industry readiness. Mcgunagle and Zizka's findings reveal a similar employability gap among STEM graduates in the manufacturing industry, despite numerous studies addressing this issue. Eldeen et al (2018) study underscores employers' ongoing dissatisfaction with graduates' employability skills, emphasizing the need for higher institutions to enhance these skills throughout students' academic journeys. Therefore, it is essential to investigate employer perspectives on employability skills, particularly in 4-star and 5-star hotels in Malaysia, given the substantial impact of the pandemic on the tourism and hospitality industry, a crucial component of the Malaysian economy. As industry expectations evolve,

new studies are imperative to align with industry demands.

This study offers practical and knowledge-based contributions, providing policymakers with valuable insight into the employability skills needed for hotel employers to hire TVET hospitality graduates. It also aims to drive advancements in management and curriculum development, enhancing the marketability of TVET graduates in the hospitality sector. Additionally, it seeks to equip TVET graduates with a comprehensive understanding of necessary employability skills, empowering them to attain industry-specific competencies for success in the current market.

### **Literature Review**

Employability is defined as a measurement that is often used by employers on graduates' marketability (Azmi et al., 2018). Meanwhile, Mushi (2020) defines employability as the ability of graduates to adapt and use their skills from personal and academic perspectives. Soft skills form an important aspect of graduate management employability in dealing with competitive situations effectively. Before this, good academic qualifications were enough to place students in a career of interest, but nowadays, students need to assess the professional landscape and prepare themselves technically as well as hone their employability skills to acquire and maintain their work.

There are different names for employability skills, such as generic skills, employability skills, key skills, core skills, and others, but basically, they all have the same core idea, which is the skill that is more likely to lead to non-technical skills, where this skill is to ensure that someone has the opportunity to acquire the necessary employability skills, job retention, and work efficiency (Nugraha et al., 2020). Arranging the accomplishments skills, understanding and individual properties make graduates more prone to be selected and be fruitful in their picked occupations which benefits themselves, the workforce, the group and the economy (Ahmad et al., 2017).

Many researchers have concluded from their research those soft skills were the most important criteria that influence in recruit applicants rather than those with hard skills they believe the applicant can be taught about the company's technical skills and enhance their knowledge from time to time but it quite hard to develop and teach soft skills because this thing should be instilled since in higher education institution (Dass et al., 2018; Fowler et al., 2013; Balaji and Somashekar, 2009; Singh, 2008) because they tend to hire people with a wide range of employability skills rather than technical skills. Moreover, the nature of work is constantly changing which requires for employees to be able to continue learning to support effective lifelong learning systems (Ra et al., 2019). In addition, employees must be able to recognize and solve problems with creativity, as well as create the most effective solution possible for the whole organization (Greenwood et al., 2015).

This study found several skills that have been perceived as important by hotel employers which are basic skills, learning-to-learn skills, presentation skills, analytical thinking skills, critical and innovative thinking skills, decision-making skills, planning and organizing skills and problem-solving skills, digital and technology skills, communication skills, teamwork skills, leadership skills, adaptability, empathy, flexibility, independent skills, initiative and enterprise skills, intrapersonal skills, multitasking, time-management skills, mental well-being skills, emotional intelligence, spiritual intelligence skills, professionalism and ethics skills, occupational safety and health skills and entrepreneurship skills.

**Methodology**

This is a qualitative study, in which an interview has been carried out. Qualitative research was chosen in this study as it offers deep insights and comprehension into the employer's world, placing significant importance on the experiences and perspectives within this context. The objective of this study is to explore the employability skills necessary for the future resilience of TVET hotel graduates as perceived by hotel employers. The interviews were conducted to identify the domains of employability skills required by employers for the future resilience of TVET hotel graduates. In addition, it aims to gather as much input as possible from the panel that has been formed by the researcher to list the domains of employability skills. The researcher conducted online interviews with each participant of an expert panel that has been formed to collect qualitative data on employability skills that should be possessed by TVET hotel graduates for their future resilience in the hotel industry based on the Malaysian context.

**Result and Findings**

The purpose of this study is to find out how a research panel which is industry representatives views and understands the current employability skill requirements in the hotel industry. The goal is to comprehend how these abilities might help new graduates position themselves and thrive in the hospitality industry. The researcher's curiosity about the panelists' experiences with this occurrence derives from gaps in previous studies and literature. This study used a qualitative framework, with data collection and analysis guided by phenomenological research methods. The result is a synthesis of the panelists' points of view, providing a vivid and organised portrayal of their lived experiences. The descriptions of panelists are described as textured because they provide a clear comprehension of their experiences, and structured because they show how the panelists personally encountered them (Creswell, 2007). The researcher created a research design with research questions to evaluate how panelists experience and interpret employability skills for TVET graduates which is to explore employability skills for the future resilience of TVET hotel graduates from the perspective of hotel employers.

The initial interview method with the industry panel was conducted to address the preliminary research questions. This section offers a comprehensive explanation of the analysis undertaken, presented in a narrative format and supported by detailed excerpts from selected interviews. The industry panel for this study consists of ten hotel employers from the human resource department who possess expertise in employability skills. In the exploration of employability skills required for TVET hotel graduates, seven domains have emerged from the collected data which are foundational skills consisting of basic skills, learning-to-learn skills and presentation skills. The second domain is cognitive skills which consist of analytical thinking skills, critical and innovative thinking skills, decision-making skills, planning and organizing skills and problem-solving skills. The third domain is functional work skills which comprise digital and technology skills and Interpersonal skills including communication skills, teamwork skills and leadership skills. The fourth domain is personal attribute skills comprised of adaptability, empathy, flexibility, independent skills, initiative and enterprise skills, intrapersonal skills, multitasking and time-management skills. The fifth domain is spiritual and mental well-being skills consisting of emotional intelligence and spiritual intelligence skills. The sixth domain is professionalism and ethics skills including occupational safety and health skills. The last domain is entrepreneurship skills. Industry panels' valuable ideas and insights

have greatly contributed to the researcher's efforts in identifying employability skill domains for the future resilience of TVET hotel graduates, as depicted in Figure 4.1.

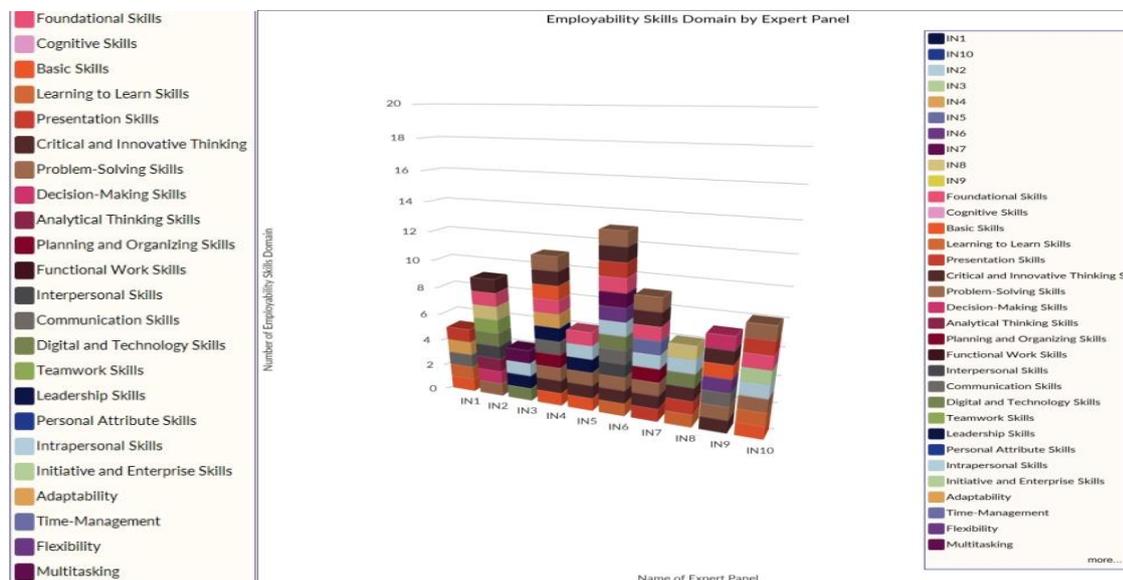


Figure 4.1 Employability Domain by Industry Panel

### Foundational Skills

Foundational skills, particularly basic skills, are indispensable for hospitality TVET graduates, highly regarded by employers in the industry. The industry panels define these fundamental skills as technical competencies and job-specific basic academic abilities, including reading, writing, speaking, science, math, oral communication, and listening. Emphasizing these skills at the educational level is critical, as industry expectations require graduates to promptly apply these skills in the workplace. Learning to learn skills emerged as crucial, promoting continuous improvement and adaptability to new concepts, fostering individual and organizational growth. The industry panels collectively affirmed the relevance of these skills for TVET hospitality graduates, enabling them to thrive in an industry characterized by rapid change in response to market demands.

Industry panel 5 (IN5) emphasizes that basic skills are the foundation which required before starting a job. It is considered the most crucial part, and lacking these skills can pose challenges. The need for a strong basic skill set is underscored as an integral prerequisite for efficiency in the workplace. Meanwhile, industry panel 10 (IN10) highlights the importance of service-oriented skills which stating that individuals entering the hotel industry must possess a fundamental understanding of service. Customer orientation and people skills are deemed essential, emphasizing the need for a service-centric mindset in potential candidates (IN10). Subsequently, Industry Panel 7 (IN7) underscores the significance of being presentable which emphasizes grooming and appearance. This implies that a professional and well-groomed demeanor is considered a basic skill that contributes to creating a positive image in the hospitality industry. This statement is in line with what has been mentioned by industry panel 8 (IN8) that the vital role of presentation skills is not only in the act of presenting but also in the creation of one's professional image. This skill is seen as crucial for TVET students, as it plays a significant role in how they present themselves to others. Last but not least, Industry Panel 1 (IN1) and Industry Panel 6 (IN6) emphasize the importance of the ability to learn,

especially the ability to adapt to new cultures and ways of learning. They stress that in a constantly evolving business landscape, particularly in the dynamic hotel industry, continual learning is essential for staying abreast of market trends and meeting customer needs effectively.

Therefore, all the panels collectively assert that basic skills form the foundation for success in the hotel industry. This foundation includes a service-oriented mindset, professionalism in presentation and appearance, and the adaptive learning ability necessary for continuous growth in a rapidly evolving industry. These skills are deemed not only important but indispensable for individuals aspiring to excel in the hotel sector.

### **Cognitive Skills**

Cognitive skills, including critical and innovative thinking, play a crucial role in the contemporary hospitality industry. The industry emphasizes an increasing focus on innovation to meet market demands, highlighting the need to integrate creativity into daily routines to enhance customer service. Additionally, the industry requires individuals capable of problem-solving, analytical thinking, and making efficient decisions to address various challenges and ensure guest satisfaction. Planning and organizing skills are also considered essential, not only for managerial roles but also for new employees as they navigate daily tasks. While these skills may be required in a limited capacity for TVET graduates, they are universally recognized as highly valuable assets for success in the industry.

IN5 emphasizes the importance of critical and innovative thinking skills, highlighting their crucial role in providing exceptional service in the hospitality industry. The ability to think creatively and innovatively is seen as vital for exceeding expectations and efficiently solving problems. This aligns with the views of IN6, emphasizing the need for individuals to think outside the box, particularly in the current era. The necessity for creative, innovative, and initiative-driven thinking to propose and implement new ideas is stressed. Additionally, these skills can be utilized proactively to solve problems without continuous supervision, as suggested by industry panel 9 (IN9). Meanwhile, industry panel 4 (IN4) and IN5 emphasize the importance of problem-solving skills for TVET hotel graduates, as it is crucial in various aspects of job tasks. The ability to swiftly address issues without continuous supervision is vital, and problem-solving is seen as an integral part of daily work in overcoming challenges.

IN6 connects problem-solving skills with leadership skills and planning and organizing, suggesting that individuals with strong problem-solving skills may require less management intervention. Decision-making is still considered necessary, especially when critical decisions need to be made. Additionally, Industry Panel 2 (IN2) acknowledges the continual need for decision-making skills, albeit to a lesser extent. The ability to make informed decisions when necessary is seen as valuable for employees in the hospitality industry. IN2 also emphasizes the importance of analytical skills, especially in understanding any electronic media or communication that may pose potential risks to the organization. Awareness and analytical thinking are crucial to identify potential risks and protect the organization from fraud or security threats. Finally, IN4 and IN7 emphasize the importance of planning and organizing skills, considered as the foundation for effective job performance. The ability to plan, organize, and control processes is crucial for efficient task completion and meeting deadlines.

All the panels collectively affirm that cognitive skills play a pivotal role in the success of individuals in the hospitality industry. Critical and innovative thinking, problem-solving, analytical skills, decision-making, and planning and organizing skills are deemed indispensable

for navigating the complexities of the industry, ensuring efficient operations, and contributing to individual and organizational success.

### **Functional Work Skills**

In the context of the hospitality industry, robust interpersonal skills are essential for TVET graduates, enabling them to adeptly handle the complexities and daily responsibilities within this dynamic environment. These skills empower graduates to effectively engage and comprehend others, both personally and professionally. Employers in the hospitality industry actively seek individuals with strong interpersonal skills, valuing the ability to collaborate, communicate effectively with colleagues, and provide exceptional service to guests. The study's industry panel categorized interpersonal skills into communication, teamwork, and leadership skills, underscoring their significance within the industry. Additionally, the hospitality industry places significant emphasis on digital skills, particularly in the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic. The industry panel highlights the necessity for proficiency in a range of digital tools and platforms, as hotel employers actively seek technologically skilled workers. Proficient use of digital technology is now considered essential for all personnel, regardless of their role or position within the organization, contributing not only to individual success but also to the overall triumph of the organization. Furthermore, leveraging digital technology for communication, collaboration, and data analysis has the potential to significantly enhance the productivity and competitiveness of organizations as a whole.

IN1 emphasized the critical importance of communication skills in the hospitality industry as it involves interacting with people at all levels of the organization, providing feedback and using polite customer service communication when dealing with customers and team members. IN6 also agreed with interpersonal and communication skills which are considered important criteria in the hospitality industry, emphasizing the need to be able to communicate and interact in a dynamic and social environment. After that, IN2 underlines teamwork as another important skill, because the lack of this ability can cause conflicts with colleagues and team members, making it challenging to work effectively in any organization. Furthermore, the nature of the hospitality industry puts people first, having interpersonal skills is emphasized because effective communication is a fundamental aspect of connecting with other people in the industry as mentioned by industry panel 9 (IN9).

Next, leadership skills as mentioned by panel 3 (IN3) are considered important, especially in situations where superiors are not present, and someone has to take over the task and manage subordinates. Having this leadership trait can help the individual to ensure the smooth functioning of the department. Therefore, as emphasized by IN4, TVET graduates should start learning about leadership skills to understand how top management thinks and operates in the industry to enable them to continue to survive and be resilient in this industry. Furthermore, in response to the current technological shift in hotel operations, IT and technology skills are identified as important. IN2 and IN3 argue, that the demand for technological skills is not limited to management staff but extends to operational staff, highlighting the importance of technological competence to run various systems in the hotel. The ability to adapt quickly to technological advances is also emphasized as a valuable skill in the rapidly evolving landscape of the hospitality industry as noted by IN6.

### **Personal Attribute Skills**

Personal attributes play a vital role in shaping and enhancing an individual's soft skills within the hospitality industry. These inherent personality traits contribute to an individual's

distinctiveness and greatly influence their effectiveness in performing specific tasks or roles. Employers within the hotel industry often prioritize personal attributes and soft skills that align with the industry's work culture. The industry panel unanimously affirmed the critical importance of personal qualities in the hospitality sector, emphasizing attributes such as intrapersonal skills, initiative and enterprise skills, adaptability, time management, flexibility, multitasking, empathy, and independence as key factors sought after by employers.

IN7 and IN10 emphasized the significance of intrapersonal skills, including cultivating the right attitude and effectively serving customers, particularly in luxury establishments. Meanwhile, IN1 and IN6 indicated that adaptability is a mandatory skill for industry entrants. Graduates should be open to learning from team members, and swiftly absorbing knowledge to navigate the dynamic nature of the industry. Additionally, IN7 stressed the vitality of time management, crucial not only in the workplace but also in personal life, highlighting the importance of balancing work and personal responsibilities.

Flexibility and knowledge, as mentioned by IN6, were underscored as vital across various departments. TVET graduates were encouraged to possess practical knowledge beyond their specific field, enabling them to navigate environmental changes, and emergencies, and adapt during crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Another critical skill highlighted is multitasking, essential for handling multiple tasks simultaneously and adapting to different situations. The ability to cross-departmentally perform tasks was emphasized, especially during periods of reduced staff, as noted by IN3 and IN6.

Furthermore, IN2 and IN8 underscored empathy as a critical skill for hoteliers. Understanding and empathizing with guests' experiences are deemed indispensable for providing quality service, particularly in the current landscape of the hotel industry. Lastly, IN9 highlighted the importance of independence in today's world. TVET graduates were advised to be prepared to navigate the industry independently, emphasizing the need to develop a self-reliant approach to work. Therefore, the identified skills collectively contribute to creating well-rounded and effective professionals in the hospitality sector, ensuring they not only meet industry standards but also thrive in the dynamic and ever-evolving nature of the field.

### **Spiritual and Mental Well-Being Skills**

In the hotel industry, the provision of hospitality to guests necessitates a seamless blend of care and attentiveness, aptly conveyed through the application of emotional intelligence (EQ). This skill involves understanding and managing emotions and utilizing awareness to engage in social interactions with empathy and caution. The industry panel unanimously affirmed the importance of emotional intelligence skills for TVET graduates, particularly in the hospitality sector, empowering graduates to understand and respond to guests' emotions, creating positive experiences, and enhancing overall guest satisfaction and hotel reputation.

Additionally, the panel emphasized the potential for conflicts within the industry and highlighted the importance of emotional intelligence in effectively navigating and resolving these issues, maintaining healthy relationships, and safeguarding the hotel's brand. The panels emphasized the importance of emotional intelligence (EI) and spiritual skills in the hospitality industry. Emotional intelligence, as highlighted by IN2, IN4, IN5, and IN10, is crucial for managing emotions effectively, particularly in guest interactions and handling complaints. The ability to control emotions, remain calm, and present a positive demeanor, even in challenging situations, is considered essential for maintaining professionalism.

Furthermore, the industry panel suggested the significance of spiritual-work intelligence skills. Spiritual intelligence involves comprehending and connecting with deeper significance,

worth, and purpose in one's life. In a professional setting, it encompasses deriving meaning from one's job, establishing a connection with a broader objective, and understanding how work contributes to individual and collective aspirations. The industry panel recommended emphasizing these skills due to the escalating complexity of the hotel sector and the demanding work environment. Possessing these abilities enables TVET graduates to better handle stress, maintain balance between work and personal life, and cultivate a sense of purpose and spiritual well-being, ultimately leading to increased job satisfaction, engagement, and dedication to professional responsibilities. Thus, spiritual intelligence indirectly fosters resilience and empowers TVET graduates to overcome difficulties and problems.

In light of this, spiritual knowledge was underscored by IN4 and IN9 as a significant addition, especially in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Spiritual skills were linked to building self-esteem, confidence, and inner strength. The ability to hold onto spiritual beliefs was seen as a source of resilience, helping individuals navigate uncertainties in the hotel industry, where stability is not as assured as before. IN9 stressed the importance of spiritual skills in maintaining mental and physical strength, considering the fluctuating nature of business in the hospitality sector. Therefore, the panels collectively emphasized the importance of emotional intelligence for effective guest interactions and complaint handling, while also highlighting the significance of spiritual skills in building resilience, self-esteem, and coping with the dynamic challenges of the hotel industry.

### **Professionalism and Ethics Skills**

The industry panel collectively stresses the critical importance of professionalism and ethics skills within the hospitality industry, encompassing a wide range of behaviors, attitudes, and values essential for interactions with guests, colleagues, and stakeholders. The unanimous endorsement from the panel supports the integration of these skills into the education and training of all TVET graduates aspiring to enter the hospitality sector. The possession of professionalism and ethics skills is deemed indispensable, playing a pivotal role in enhancing the guest experience, nurturing a positive work environment, and safeguarding the hotel's reputation.

Accordingly, IN1 emphasized the important role of ethics and professionalism skills in personal and professional development in the hospitality industry. The focus is on the importance of these skills in working with people, fostering teamwork, and managing human interactions effectively. In addition, IN1 thinks that these skills are important to display trust and values. Meanwhile, IN6 emphasizes the need for a professional manner when handling information and interacting with customers. The importance of dealing with various stakeholders professionally, including important guests and managing transactions, is highlighted. Professionalism is seen as important in various aspects of hotel operations. IN10 also voiced sentiments regarding the importance of Ethics and Professionalism Skills. IN10 asserts that regardless of one's position, continued ethical practice is essential. The emphasis is on consistently doing the right thing and refraining from actions that are not in line with ethical principles.

Additionally, the study highlights the significance of occupational health and safety skills for hotel staff to provide a secure and conducive work environment. The recent challenges posed by the COVID-19 outbreak have amplified the demand for this skill, as noted by the industry panels. The possession of occupational health and safety skills is seen as a crucial factor enabling TVET graduates to actively contribute to establishing a safe and healthy environment, ensuring the well-being of guests, and maintaining the hotel's reputation.

Accordingly, IN2 emphasizes the ongoing importance of safety and health measures even in a post-pandemic scenario, stressing the need for TVET graduates to possess in-depth knowledge beyond the basics. This includes knowing how to take care of themselves and what actions to take in case of untoward incidents. Moreover, IN7 specifically addresses fire hazards and the importance of TVET graduates being aware of safety and health measures. The panel underscores the significance of self-awareness, advising graduates not to show up to the workplace if not in good health. Last but not least, IN9 highlights the unpredictability of accidents and stresses the readiness required by TVET graduates. The panel emphasizes the importance of equipping oneself with basic knowledge and skills related to occupational safety and health, as accidents can occur at any time.

### **Entrepreneurship Skills**

Entrepreneurial skills are increasingly recognized as a vital asset for hotel employees, contributing significantly to the overall effectiveness and success of hotels. The panels emphasize the importance of these skills as essential employability attributes for TVET graduates, given their positive impact on innovation, customer focus, profit generation, and various aspects of hotel management. Furthermore, the fostering of entrepreneurial skills is seen as a strategy to enhance competitiveness and strengthen a hotel's brand.

Accordingly, IN4 indicates that entrepreneurship skills are crucial as they enable individuals to understand the business perspective, from which leadership often stems. Leaders, consequently, need to comprehend how to run a business effectively, and entrepreneurs possess the knowledge to manage even small companies. In a similar vein, IN6 emphasizes that entrepreneurship skills play a significant role in customer service and the hotel industry, where revenue generation is a central focus. Individuals entering a company should possess these skills, as organizations aim to maximize revenue and reduce costs.

Meanwhile, IN7 highlights that understanding the hotel's operations as a business entity is vital for students entering the hotel industry, even in non-business roles like HR. Entrepreneurship skills play a crucial role in helping individuals make decisions based on business goals rather than personal considerations. Adding to this perspective, IN10 notes that the sales aspect of a hotel involves everyone, necessitating individuals to have entrepreneurship skills. Employees should actively contribute to promoting the hotel brand through word of mouth and recommendations, underscoring the importance of entrepreneurship skills.

Therefore, all panels underscore the significance of entrepreneurship skills in different aspects of the hotel industry, emphasizing their role in understanding business operations, leadership, revenue generation, cost management, and brand promotion.

### **Discussion and Recommendations**

Industry experts value interpersonal skills encompassing communication, teamwork, leadership, and adaptability. Thus, hands-on training prioritizing these abilities is essential. Additionally, TVET educators should encourage collaborative assignments and exercises to foster interpersonal growth among TVET students. Meanwhile, proficiency in problem-solving, including critical thinking and innovation, is vital for navigating the ever-changing hotel sector. Therefore, by incorporating case studies and real-life situations into the educational program is crucial for efficient skill enhancement to TVET students.

Next is adaptability and flexibility are the essential intrapersonal talents for success across various divisions within the hospitality industry. Therefore, TVET institutions should

offer ample opportunities for students to gain practical knowledge in different industry domains. Meanwhile, the ability to regulate emotions, known as emotional intelligence, is crucial for delivering outstanding guest service. Including training in emotional intelligence within the curriculum ensures that graduates possess this capacity. In the hospitality sector, professionalism and ethics are non-negotiable. Establishing a set of ethical principles and integrating practical ethical challenges into TVET educational process is imperative. Additionally, in the post-pandemic world, there's a significant shift towards occupational health and safety, now considered crucial. Enhancing health and safety education and ensuring students are well-informed on the latest safety measures is vital. Moreover, TVET graduates in the hospitality business greatly benefit from entrepreneurship abilities. Implementing courses focused on relevant business principles and promoting entrepreneurial endeavors is essential.

Several suggestions can contribute to this study. Firstly, industry collaboration is crucial to ensure the curriculum remains relevant, securing internships, apprenticeships, and continuous professional development. Secondly, introducing ongoing professional development programs is essential to keep TVET educators and industry experts updated on the latest trends and capabilities in the hospitality business. Thirdly, incorporating technology-centred courses is essential to equip TVET graduates with the necessary skills to meet the digital requirements of the hospitality sector. Lastly, acquiring soft skills is crucial, and TVET institutions should provide specialized workshops and training programs to improve communication, emotional intelligence, and flexibility. Implementing these suggestions conscientiously, TVET programs can successfully equip TVET graduates with the comprehensive skills required to thrive in the fast-paced and competitive hotel sector.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the research findings from this study underscore the multifaceted employability skills deemed crucial by industry professionals for the resilience and success of TVET hotel graduates. The identified key domains encompass a comprehensive set of skills, including interpersonal skills, problem-solving skills, intrapersonal skills, emotional intelligence, professionalism and ethics, occupational health and safety skills, and entrepreneurship skills. The emphasis on interpersonal skills, as unanimously highlighted by the industry panels, underscores the significance of effective communication, teamwork, leadership, and adaptability. These skills are not only essential for creating positive guest experiences but also for fostering a harmonious work environment within the dynamic and competitive hospitality sector. Moreover, the study identifies problem-solving skills as vital, placing a specific emphasis on critical and innovative thinking. The ability to think creatively, make informed decisions, and adapt to the fast-paced nature of the hotel industry is crucial for addressing challenges effectively. Intrapersonal skills, encompassing adaptability, flexibility, and knowledge in various departments, are considered indispensable. The ability to manage time effectively, remain open to learning, and demonstrate independence is highlighted as crucial for navigating the diverse and ever-changing nature of the industry. The study also underscores the importance of emotional intelligence as a key competency. Managing emotions when dealing with guests and colleagues is deemed essential, contributing significantly to providing high-quality service and maintaining professionalism. Professionalism and ethics are identified as non-negotiable attributes in the hospitality industry. These skills, which encompass a range of behaviors, attitudes, and values, contribute to positive guest experiences, foster a favorable work environment, and safeguard the hotel's

reputation. In the post-pandemic landscape, the prominence of occupational health and safety skills is emphasized. The industry panels stress the importance of TVET graduates being well-versed in safety protocols and possessing an in-depth understanding of health and safety measures to ensure a secure work environment. Entrepreneurship skills are recognized as valuable assets for TVET graduates, instrumental in understanding the business perspective, contributing to revenue generation, cost management, and promoting the hotel brand. These skills are considered crucial for students entering various roles within the hotel industry. In essence, the overall consensus from the industry panels is that a holistic set of employability skills, extending beyond technical competencies, is essential for TVET hotel graduates to thrive in the dynamic and competitive hospitality sector. Developing and integrating these skills into the education and training of TVET graduates is deemed crucial for their success and resilience in the ever-evolving landscape of the hotel industry.

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