

Soft skills and academic performance of Professional School's students of Accounting at the National University of Cañete, 2023

[Habilidades blandas y rendimiento académico de los estudiantes de la Escuela Profesional de Contabilidad de la Universidad Nacional de Cañete, 2023]

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Resumen

El estudio tuvo como objetivo determinar si existe correlación significativa entre Habilidades blandas y rendimiento académico. Por este motivo, se realizó la investigación en la educación superior. El tipo de investigación es aplicada, siendo el nivel de investigación descriptiva y correlacional. La investigación fue transversal; puesto que se realizó una sola vez la encuesta mediante la técnica del cuestionario y notas. La muestra es aleatoria simple 52 estudiantes del primer y segundo ciclos matriculados en el semestre 2023-1, que constituyen el estudio. Se demostró que uso de habilidades blandas y el rendimiento académico en los estudiantes predomina en el nivel medio, es decir, representado por el 61,54% (32). Por lo tanto, es necesario que los docentes apliquen en sus clases las habilidades blandas. El promedio de encuestados con respecto al uso de las habilidades blandas es favorable. Se determinó que más del 50% de los encuestados son mayores de 3, 06128, o sea, tienen una posesión favorable. En promedio los sujetos tienen un rango de 3,5000 (favorable). Además, la desviación promedio fue 1, 06128. La puntuación mínima fue de 1 y el máximo de 5. Por lo tanto, el Uso de las habilidades blandas beneficia al estudiante. Se concluye que, sí existe una adecuada relación significativa entre el uso habilidades blandas y el rendimiento académico de los universitarios, debido a una correlación moderada de 0, 819.

Palabras clave: Habilidades blandas, rendimiento académico, comunicación, resolución de problema.

Abstract

The objective of the study was to determine if there is a significant correlation between soft skills and academic performance. For this reason, the research was carried out in higher education. The type of research is applied, with the level of research being descriptive and correlational. The research was transversal; since the survey was carried out only once using the questionnaire and notes technique. The sample is simple random, 52 students from the first and second cycles enrolled in the 2023-1 semester, who constitute the study. It was shown that the use of soft skills and academic performance in students predominates at the middle level, that is, represented by 61.54% (32). Therefore, it is necessary for teachers to apply soft skills in their classes. The average of respondents regarding the use of soft skills is favorable. It was determined that more than 50% of the respondents are older than 3,06128, that is, they have a favorable possession. On average, subjects have a rank of 3.5000 (favorable). Furthermore, the average deviation was 1.06128. The minimum score was 1 and the maximum was 5. Therefore, the Use of soft skills benefits the student. It is concluded that there is an adequate significant relationship between the use of soft skills and the academic performance of university students, due to a moderate correlation of 0.819.

Keywords: Soft skills, academic performance, communication, problem resolution.

I. Introduction

The present study was carried out considering the importance of responding to the possible deficiencies that students may present in the Professional School of Accounting at the National University of Cañete, in terms of the use of soft skills and academic performance, since it has been observed that a high percentage of students fail to develop their basic skills and expected abilities, obtaining unsatisfactory results, presenting difficulties in problem solving, communication and doubts, which has had an impact on academic performance.

Currently there is a transition towards a knowledge economy, for which students are required to possess competencies or soft skills to promote innovation, competitiveness through their intellectual potential and the use of technology as well as the development of crowdsourcing strategies. open collaboration to externalize a problem and give way to creative ideas for problem solving, business management, among others, in organizations. The challenge is to develop strategies for learning soft skills in a difficult scenario for students, since contact with technology for virtual education establishes a difference between face-to-face and distance education, so the challenge lies in how to develop these skills among students, mainly critical thinking, communication and teamwork. The humanistic sense of soft skills allows students to be better human beings, citizens, collaborators and leaders capable of transforming their environment and their community. The present study is open to new lines of research that allow us to discover new ways to take advantage of the learning of soft skills (Vázquez et al., 2022, p.14).

University students do know about humanistic training and soft skills, however, studies carried out by prestigious institutions indicate that graduates do not have "soft" skills, such as ethical sense or adaptability. Students think that the knowledge and practice of humanistic training and soft skills is not their problem, but rather the lack of specialized knowledge, and they do not realize that this humanistic training exists to prevent reductive and simplistic visions from forming. of reality. (Sotelo and Spirit, 2017, p.10). This implies that the student has the culture of security for mutual learning in the digital identity owned by digital content to develop their soft skills in empathy, being able to communicate, and motivating teamwork (Humpiri, 2022, p.27).

It should be noted that soft skills are considered a fundamental axis in the employability process, and for this reason it is considered that higher education institutions must adopt and evaluate teaching-learning processes that are articulated with their potentialization. Students have a great

responsibility with the development of these skills, since many of them are developed from early childhood; and therefore, it is imperative that the added value that these can generate in your resume is recognized. The vast majority of students in both programs show a deficit in the ability to ask questions, which is directly related to communication processes, and for this reason it is relevant to generate strategies that enhance this skill in future graduates. The prevalence of 90% of the non-cognitive skills evaluated in the study subjects is evident, this set comprising the skills of listening, presentation, self-confidence, influence, leadership, support, initiative, organization and teamwork. (Fuentes et al., 2021, p.11). From the findings found, it is derived that as students make greater use of ICT, they may also be developing important soft skills such as effective communication, teamwork, problem solving, creativity, among others. This information can be useful for educators and university institutions when designing training programs that seek to improve students' soft skills through the strategic use of ICT (Sánchez et al., 2023, p.215).

From the results obtained, the following conclusions can be drawn: 1. The level of soft skills in university students is low, it is required to strengthen their development, either through curricular reformulation or transversal courses. Likewise, it reflects the need for the educational sector to carry out a critical analysis of the current training needs associated with the skills required for the IV industrial revolution. Likewise, this reflection must include different sectors: business, communities and students, since Skills should not only be oriented towards employment but also towards training for life. 2. A higher stage of vocational training does not imply higher scores in soft skills tests; these scores may be mediated by individual, social, cultural factors, among others. 3. The reform of the educational system is a need for modern societies, to break industrialized and capitalist schemes, through greater emphasis on the development of the human being and the strengthening of hard and soft skills as a comprehensive model (Moreno and Quintero, 2021, p.8).

Based on the results of this work, it is suggested to also identify the different devices that university students use and to what extent they do so in formal contexts to promote their learning. Greater efforts are required to validate the designed instrument and apply it in other public and private university contexts, since as indicated by UNESCO (2014) it is necessary to improve public policies and the quality of teaching-learning, so that practices are based on evidence. (Lara and Hernández, 2019, p.15). On the other hand, research on academic performance through the specific analysis of the variables social skill and self-control, with which opens a space for reflection on evaluation and curricular design for educational institutions, as well as an opportunity to carry out carried out studies in the area of construction of technique and instruments for its prediction. And integrated understanding inductively and deductively through a holistic perspective (Navarro, 2003, p.14).

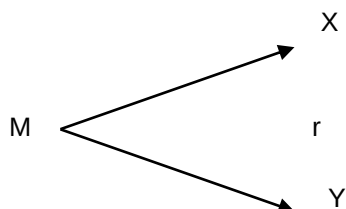
For this reason, research on Soft Skills was carried out to improve academic performance in higher education. The objective was to determine if there is a significant correlation between soft skills and academic performance. It is also necessary to mention the purpose of this research is to promote soft skills in classes to improve the academic performance of university students.

II. Materials and Methods

Type of research

The type of research is applied (since existing theoretical approaches have been applied), with the level of research being descriptive and correlational (since the behavior of the analyzed variables has been described and then correlated). The research was transversal; since it was carried out only once and applied the mixed method for interpretation and analysis.

It responds to the following scheme:



Where:

M: sample

X: Collaborative learning

Y: Teaching performance

r: Correlation

Population

In the study Hernández et al. (2014) indicated about this section “that it refers to the group of cases consistent with a row of clarifications, and that are accommodated in relation to their contents, place, characteristics and time” (p.174). It consists of 400 students enrolled in the 2023-1 semester, that constitute the study population of students of the Professional School of Accounting at the National University of Cañete.

Sample

To determine the sample that reflects a high degree of reliability and a low percentage of error, the following statistical formula was used:

$$n = \frac{\left[\frac{z - \alpha/2}{d} \right]^2 \cdot p (1 - p)}{1 + 1/N \cdot \left[\frac{z - \alpha/2}{d} \right]^2 \cdot p (1 - p) - 1/N}$$

Where:

n = sample size

N = population size, total number of students = 400 (enrolled, 2023-1)

z = value corresponding to the Gaussian distribution = 1.96 for $\alpha = 0.05$

p = expected prevalence of the parameter to be evaluated. As in this case it is unknown, applying the most unfavorable option ($p = 0.5$), which makes the sample size larger.

q = 1-p ($p = 50\%$, $q = 50\%$)

d = precision error (in this case we want 14.5%)

α = significance level of 0.05

$$n = \frac{\left[\frac{1.96 - 0.05/2}{0.145} \right]^2 \cdot 0.5 (1 - 0.5)}{1 + 1/400 \cdot \left[\frac{1.96 - 0.05/2}{0.145} \right]^2 \cdot 0.5 (1 - 0.5) - 1/400}$$

The number of students is:

$$n = 59.9076 / 1.147269 = 52.2175706 \quad n = 52$$

Data Collection Techniques

For data collection, survey techniques were applied, a Jacinto questionnaire (2022) and student notes for soft skills to improve the student academic performance in higher education, 2023-1.

Statistical analysis

For the analysis of the data, descriptive and inferential statistics were used to test the hypotheses, the Pearson's Correlation. Then, they were prosecuted. Subsequently, frequencies and percentages were tabulated and found and presented in corresponding tables and graphs. The statistical analyzes were carried out with the SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) computer program version 24; which is an instrument developed by the University of Chicago, which is the most widely disseminated and used among researchers in Latin America. For this, the Excel program was used, which allowed the results to be presented in a clear and objective manner.

Procedures

The evaluations were carried out as follows:

- 52 students were taken from the first and second cycles of the Professional School of Accounting at the National University of Cañete, 2023-1.
- A survey of 26 questions with five distractors was developed (see Annex 1).
- The investigation was carried out on days 01 to 07-30-2023-1, where the survey was applied and the notes of the taught course were considered for comparison.
- 15 women and 37 men participated, with an average age of 18 to 23 years, corresponding to the first cycles.
- Once the data was obtained through the survey and notes, it was processed using basic and inferential statistics and tables were prepared for interpretation and analysis.
- Finally, the Pearson Correlation hypothesis test was carried out to measure the relationship of both study variables

III. Results

The frequency analysis of the scores achieved after applying the instruments in students was tabulated and then a scale was obtained to be able to interpret the charts and graphs as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Age and sex of respondents

General table					
Age	Sex				Total
	Male		Female		
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	
18	5	9.62%	1	1.92%	6
19	6	11.54%	3	5.77%	9
20	11	21.15%	5	9.62%	16
21	8	15.38%	3	5.77%	11
22	3	5.77%	2	3.85%	5
23 and over	4	7.69%	1	1.92%	5
Total	37	71.15%	15	28.85%	52/100%

Interpretation

In table 1, it is observed that of the total number of respondents (52 students), the male sex predominates 71.15% (37), where it is observed that they are 20 years old, 21.15% (11) are older and the minimum is 22. years 5.77% (3); while in the female sex 28.85% (15), where 20 years is observed, 9.62% (5) is older and the minimum is 22 and 23 or more years 1.92% (1).

Finally, it can be considered that, within this unstable, as well as globalized, world, the development of soft skills in relation to university teaching performance is essential because it must adapt, in coherence with the social and emotional aspects, to the new realities (Rodríguez et al, 2021, p. 8).

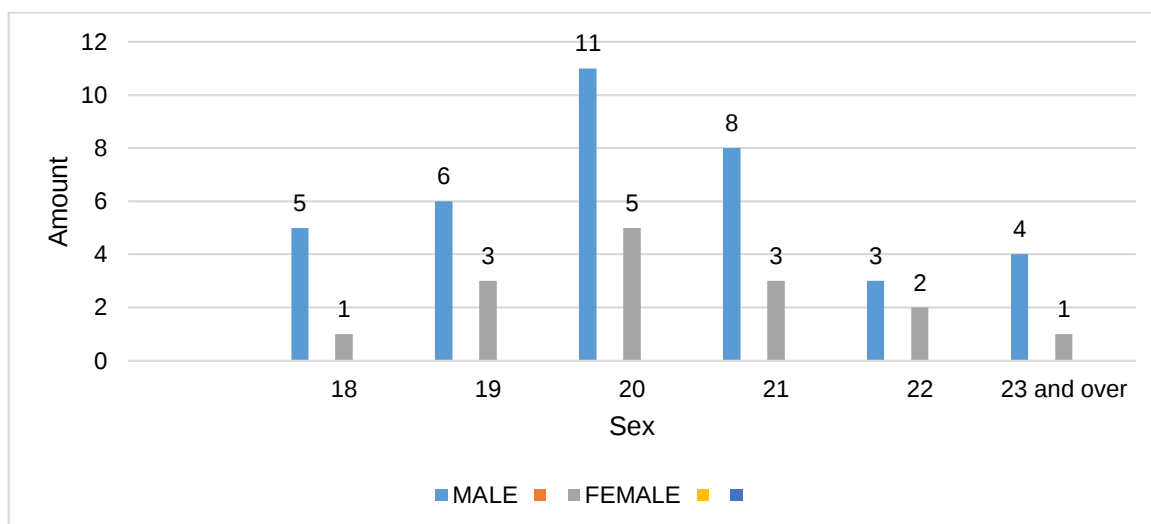


Figure 1. Age and sex of respondents

Table 2. Levels of collaborative learning application

			Frequency	Percentage	Valid percentage	Accumulate percentage
Valid	Low	<= 16	8	15,38	15,38	15,38
	Half	17 -34	32	61,54	61,54	76.92
	High	35 - 50	12	23,08	23,08	100
	Total		52	100,0	100,0	

Interpretation

In table 2, it is observed that of the total number of respondents (52 students), the medium level predominates, that is, represented by 61.54% (32) perceive that the use of soft skills occupies 23.08% (12) at the high level and the lowest level ranges 15.38 (8). Corroborating with soft skills, they are very important in the workplace, since many employers today look for people who have these skills, but these are not developed throughout their university training, since the interest of many of universities is to train students only in knowledge and not to develop skills that the market requires for their effective performance. From the research carried out, I can conclude that soft skills should be formed at the beginning of the individual's life so that they become a habit, in the same way that universities should have a close relationship with companies, to form the competencies that they demand. in order to facilitate the labor insertion of students in them (Lopez, 2021, p.27).

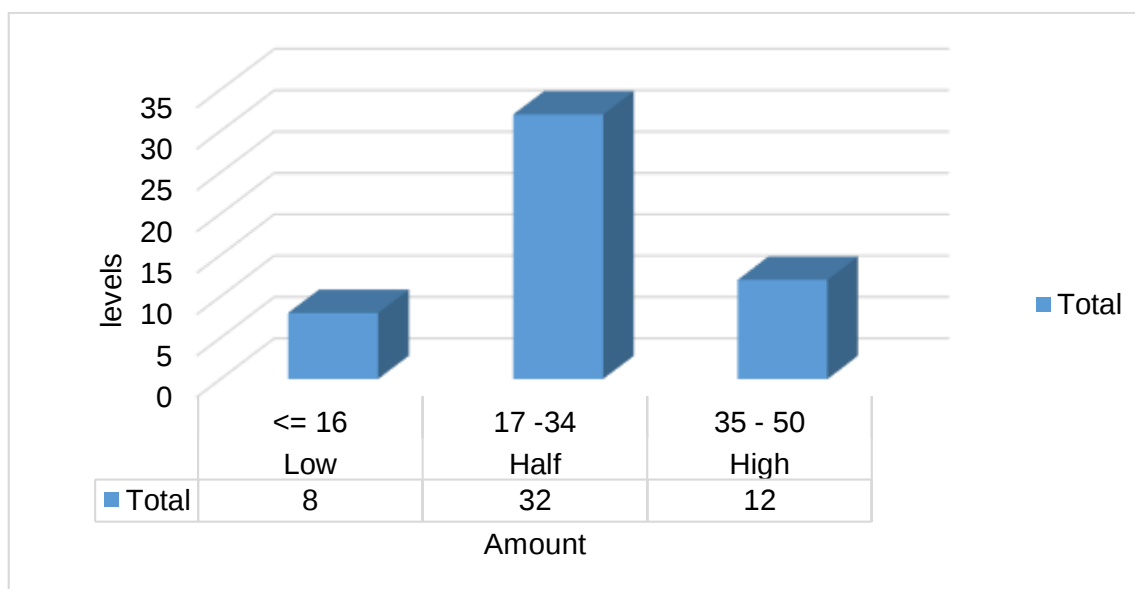


Figure.2. Use's levels of soft skills

Measures of central tendency to use of soft skills and academic performance according to students

Table 3. Use's levels of soft skills

N°	Valid	52
Mean		3,06128
Median		3,5000
Mode		4,00
Std. Deviation		1,06128
Minimum		1,00
Maximum		5,00

Interpretation

The attitude of the respondents towards the use of soft skills is favorable. The most repeated value being 4 (favorable). More than 50% of the respondents are above 3.06128, that is, they have a favorable attitude. On average, the subjects are located at 3.5000 (favorable). Likewise, 1.06128 scale units deviate from the average. A minimum score of 1 and a maximum of 5 was observed.

According to the data obtained in the search and analysis of the information, it can be stated that soft skills, also considered as socio-emotional skills, non-cognitive skills, emotional intelligence, employability skills, work skills, relational or transversal skills (Rodríguez et al, 2021, p. 8). Furthermore, they feel integrated, relevant and accepted by the rest of the team. The majority of students fulfill their obligations within the team and this is how it is perceived by their peers. And when faced with a problem, university students are capable of detecting it, anticipating it and finding a consensus solution (Paris et al., 2016, p.10).

Analysis of the independent and dependent variables

Table 4. Use's level of soft skills and academic performance

	Interval	Use's level of soft academic performance skills			
		fi	fi%	fi	fi%
Deficient	00 - 05	5	9,62	2	3,85
Regular	06 - 10	19	36,53	9	17,31
Well	11 - 12	21	40,4	18	34,61
Very good	13 - 16	6	11,53	23	44,23
Outstanding	17 - 20	1	1,92	0	0
Total		52	100,0	52	100,0

Interpretation

Based on table 4, on the level of the variables use of soft skills and academic performance, there is the following data: 40.4% (21) used soft skills, they have obtained grades between 11 and 12 points, this indicates that They are within the Good rating; 44.23% (23) for academic performance, students have obtained grades between 13 and 16 points, this indicates that they are within the Very good rating; 962% (5) for use of soft skills; 3.85%(2) for academic performance, the students have obtained grades between 00 and 05 points (both), this indicates that they are within the poor rating; because the students are somehow informed about the issues related to the "use of soft skills" before starting treatment. On the other hand, it is highlighted that satisfaction with the use of digital tools will also be related to the level of complexity of the component; as well as the contribution that the tool makes in the development of the activity. The use of technological tools in higher education has been studied and opens new perspectives of study, which lead to expanding the population and including new variables (Pardo et al., 2020, p.10). Likewise, despite the complexity perceived by university students in the team work carried out during the "good practice", the satisfaction and recognition of learning, coexistence and cooperation in processes as important as organization, making agreements, Conflict resolution, responsibility, assumption of consequences and personal maturation were, without a doubt, highly formative issues for students, and indeed, essential in the training of a good professional during the university period (Dieste et al., 2019, p.14).

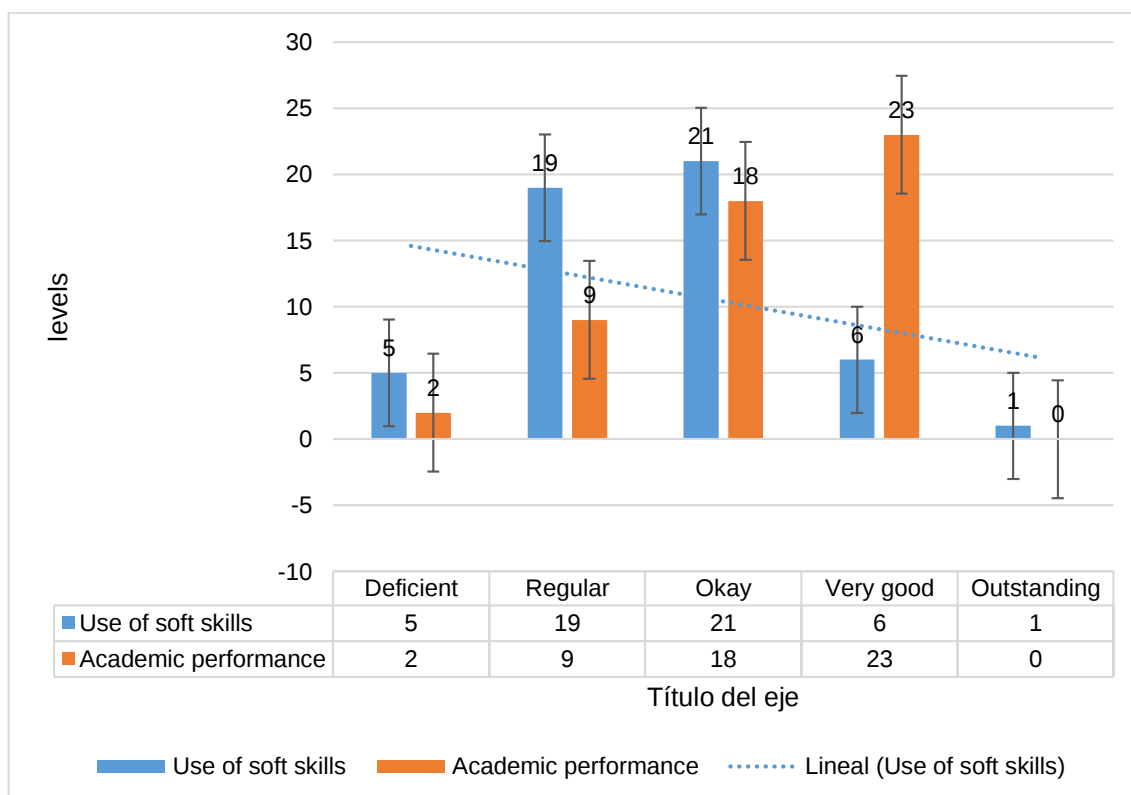


Figure.3. Use's level of soft skills and academic performance

Table 5. Dimensions of academic performance

Dimensions	Arithmetic average
Ability to teamwork	3,3269
Communication skills	3,5769
Problem solving skills	3,7692
General average of the variable	3,5576666

Interpretation

The results obtained from the average values of the use of soft skills in students according to the instrument applied are shown in Table 4, where it is seen that the dimensions analyzed are above the general average, which indicates that Students have more developed problem-solving skills and communication skills. Of the two dimensions of the use of soft skills, it is the most developed problem solving with 3.7692 and the next one is communication skills with 3.5769 and the ability to work as a team is present at a low level of 3. 3269, according to the established scale; In that sense, the remaining dimension is in the medium range accompanied by others that reached means above 3. As for the general average of the variable, this resulted in 3.5576666, which indicates that the students' learning has a medium level of development. The results obtained in both groups under study are satisfactory and show that, with this research, the students have

acquired soft skills that are essential to develop their talent and their employability options in the current work scenario, marked by uncertainty and new environmental challenges. Regardless of whether students decide to become future entrepreneurs or not, the soft skills acquired with this project will provide them with a clear competitive advantage in their job search. Specifically, the students who have taken the Business Creation subject have acquired higher levels in some of the skills analyzed, which reflects that it would be interesting to expand the content and tools on entrepreneurship taught in the experimental group (Aledo 2022, p. 9).

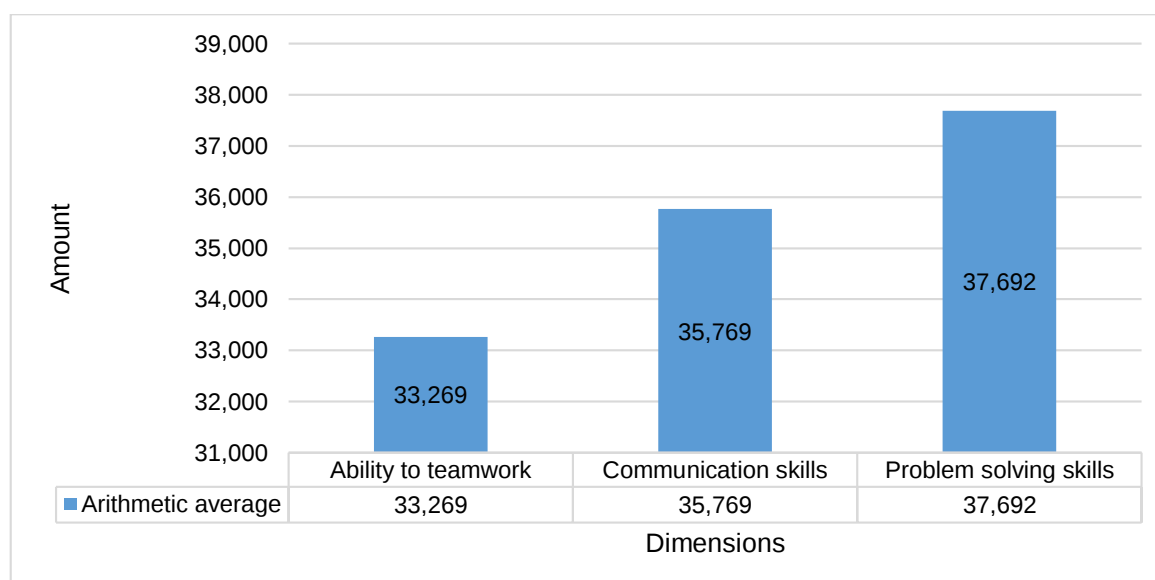


Figure 4. Dimensions of soft skills

Normality Test

Before carrying out the respective hypothesis test, we will first determine if there is a normal distribution of the data (parametric statistics) or not, that is, a free distribution (non-parametric statistics). For this purpose, we will use the Kolmogorov Smirnov normality test ($n > 50$).

Table 4. Normality Test

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistics	df	Sig.	Statistics	df	Sig.
soft skills	,237	52	,000	,884	52	,000
academic performance	,303	52	,000	,761	52	,000

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

Interpretation

The normality test shows that both variables are not distributed according to a normal law, since the sig. asymptot of both variables is 0.000, that is, for the collaborative learning group, it is below the preset alpha significance level (0.05); Therefore, for the teaching performance variable it is 0.000, it is below the preset alpha significance level (0.05). Which means that, to analyze the relationship between these two variables, non-parametric tests were chosen. Therefore, the data do not come from normal populations, since they present a percentage of less than 5%.

General hypothesis

a) Statement of the hypothesis

There is a significant relationship between the use of soft skills and academic performance of the students of the Professional School of Accounting at the National University of Cañete.

Statistical hypothesis

H1: Yes, there is a significant relationship between the use of soft skills and academic performance of Professional School's students of Accounting at the National University of Cañete.

Ho: There is no significant relationship between the use of soft skills and academic performance of Professional School's students of Accounting at the National University of Cañete.

b) Establishes the confidence level

95% confidence level

c) Establishes the level of significance

5% (p-value < 0.05).

d) Choice of statistic

$$r = \frac{n\sum xy - (\sum x)(\sum y)}{\sqrt{n\sum x^2 - (\sum x)^2} \cdot \sqrt{n\sum y^2 - (\sum y)^2}}$$

Using the SPSS v 22.0 software, the calculation was made, obtaining:
value_ Sig. (2-tailed)

Table 7. Pearson correlation hypothesis test Correlations

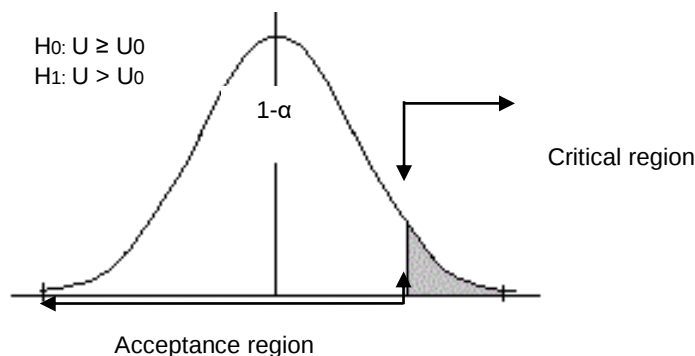
		soft skills	academic performance
soft skills	Pearson Correlation	1	,033
	Sig. (2-tailed)		,819
	N	52	52
academic performance	Pearson Correlation	,033	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,819	
	N	52	52

** . La correlación es significativa en el nivel 0,01 (bilateral).

Interpretation:

A moderate correlation of 0.819 is observed.

e) Graphic representation

**f) Decision**

Since the p-value (sig. =0.000) is less than the significance level (0.05), then we make the decision to reject the null hypothesis and accept the general hypothesis.

g) Conclusions

It is concluded that there is an adequate significant relationship between the use of soft skills and academic performance in students, as demonstrated with the results of the contrast of the hypothesis test. Regarding their teamwork skills, students reported high capacity for team planning (80.9%), communication (68.8%) and low capacity for collaborative problem solving (25.5%). The proposed hypotheses were contrasted with the results obtained in the survey taken from students and teachers of the Faculty of Economic Sciences of the UNMSM, where consistency statistics (Cronbach's alpha) and Spearman's correlation coefficient for class intervals were used. Likewise, descriptive statistics were used through mode, median and quartiles. (Huamán, 2019, p.7). It is true that it is not just a matter of attitudes, it would be necessary to delve deeper into the characteristics that accompany groups of university students to complete their profile, at the level of strategies they use, learning approaches, self-concept, etc. (López et al., 2007, p.10).

IV. Conclusions

- It was shown that the use of soft skills and academic performance in students predominates at the medium level, that is, represented by 61.54% (32), at the highest level. Therefore, Use of soft skills and academic performance of students; However, it is necessary for teachers to apply soft skills in their classes, as it is demonstrated in the results.
- It was determined that more than 50% of the respondents are older than 3,06128, that is, they have a favorable possession. On average, subjects have a rank of 3.5000 (favorable). In addition, 1.06128 scale units deviate from the average. The minimum score was 1 and the maximum was 5. Therefore, the Use of soft skills benefits the student.
- Finally, it is concluded that there is an adequate significant relationship between the use of soft skills and the academic performance of university students, due to a moderate correlation of 0.819.

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Annex 1. Questionnaire**INSTRUMENT TO MEASURE COLLABORATIVE LEARNING**

The instrument has been taken from Jacinto Castro, María Elvira

Dear students, the following survey is part of a research study titled: "Soft skills and collaborative learning in students at a university in Lima provinces, 2022", exclusively for academic purposes. The confidentiality of the information is guaranteed.

Thanking you in advance for your kind participation in answering the following questions.

INSTRUCTIONS: We ask you to read carefully and mark only one alternative in response to each statement.

Mark an (x) in the box your answer according to the following scale of values:

Never	1
Hardly ever	2
Sometimes	3
Almost always	4
Always	5

Soft skills

N°	Dimensions/Items	Scale				
Ability to teamwork		1	2	3	4	5
1	I identify with my team for the development of the task assigned by the teacher.					
2	I easily integrate into a group during class work.					
3	I talk with another person about topics that are of interest to both when developing group work.					
4	I easily explain my ideas for developing the work to the group members in the classroom.					
5	I support my arguments for the advancement of the collaborative task proposed by the teacher with reliable sources.					
6	I am tolerant and respectful of the opinions of the group members during the development of the work proposed by the teacher.					
7	It commits me to carry out the assigned tasks within the deadlines established by the team for collaborative work					
8	I participate with enthusiasm in fulfilling the tasks assigned by my work group in the course					
9	Motivate the team to achieve the goals set during the development of the case granted by the teacher					
10	I feel motivated by learning better collectively than individually.					

Communication skills					
11	I ask questions to clarify doubts regarding the group work assigned in the course.				
12	I appropriately question my colleagues' arguments during the development of collaborative work.				
13	I debate properly until reaching a consensus regarding the collaborative task proposed by the teacher.				
14	I share relevant information with my colleagues in the collaborative work group.				
15	I communicate assertively with my classmates during the development of the work assigned by the teacher.				
16	I continually communicate with my colleagues to develop the collaborative task				
17	I believe that the collaborative work assigned by the teacher contributes to assertive communication in the classroom				
18	I listen carefully to the proposals of my classmates during the development of collaborative work in the classroom.				
19	I exchange reliable information with my work team during the development of the task proposed by the teacher.				
Problem solving skills					
20	I identify a problem in the context of my professional training.				
21	I investigate possible solutions by accessing various reliable sources for the collaborative work assigned by the teacher.				
22	I propose innovative and creative solutions for collaborative tasks.				
23	I contribute to the ideas presented by my teammates for collaborative work.				
24	I analyze the alternatives to solve a problem, selecting the most convenient one.				
25	I participate in the development of collaborative work with ethical principles typical of my professional training.				
26	My team respects authorship, citing and referencing sources in the development of collaborative work.				

;Thank you for your collaboration!