



MESTRADO EM GESTÃO DO POTENCIAL HUMANO

**Soft skills' influence on career development:
exploring performance appraisal as a mediating mechanism**

Andreia Filipa Grilo Dias

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Orientadora: Professora Doutora Rosa Isabel Rodrigues

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Resumo

Num contexto de trabalho cada vez mais dinâmico e competitivo, as *soft skills* emergem como elementos cruciais para o sucesso profissional. Esta investigação explorou a importância dessas competências no desenvolvimento de carreira, tendo a avaliação de desempenho como mecanismo de mediação. A amostra é constituída por 262 trabalhadores por conta de outrem. O estudo foi operacionalizado através de uma metodologia quantitativa. Os dados foram recolhidos através do *Short Skills Inventory*, do *Career Growth Scale* e da *Performance Management Scale*. Os resultados demonstraram quanto mais desenvolvidas se encontram as *soft skills* maior é a tendência para os colaboradores progredirem na carreira. Apurou-se, ainda, que a avaliação de desempenho exerce uma influência significativa na trajetória profissional dos colaboradores. Os dados também revelaram que ao mediar a relação entre as competências transversais e a progressão de carreira, a avaliação de desempenho permite orientar e fundamentar as decisões estratégicas da organização.

Palavras-chave: *Soft skills*, desenvolvimento de carreira, avaliação de desempenho, contexto de trabalho.

Abstract

In a progressively dynamic and competitive work environment, soft skills emerge as crucial elements for professional success. This investigation delved into the significance of these competencies in career development, employing performance appraisal as a mediating mechanism. The sample comprised 262 employed individuals. The study was operationalized through a quantitative methodology. Data were collected using the Short Skills Inventory, the Career Growth Scale, and the Performance Management Scale. The results demonstrated that the more developed the soft skills, the greater the likelihood of career progression for employees. Furthermore, it was found that performance appraisal significantly influences the professional trajectory of employees. The data also revealed that, by mediating the relationship between cross-functional skills and career advancement, performance appraisal enables the guidance and substantiation of strategic decisions within the organization.

Keywords: Soft skills, career development, performance appraisal, workplace context.

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List of acronyms and abbreviations

AVE	-	Average Variance Extracted
CD	-	Career development
CFA	-	Confirmatory factor analysis
CR	-	Composite Reliability
M	-	Mean
MSV	-	Maximum Shared Variance
PAR	-	Performance appraisal results;
SD	-	Standard-deviation
SS	-	Soft skills
VUCA	-	Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, Ambiguity

Introduction

Soft skills play a crucial role in an individual's career development, and as such, they should be periodically assessed (Ramírez-Vielma & Nazar, 2019). These cross-cutting competencies are valuable in any work environment, enabling individuals to communicate, collaborate, problem-solve, exhibit flexibility, handle stress, and demonstrate leadership ability (Guerra-Báez, 2019). When soft skills are assessed appropriately and fairly, the results can inform workers about their behavioral competencies and areas that need improvement (Vuong et al., 2020). According to Stewart and Brown (2020), performance appraisal can also influence career development and progression opportunities. Therefore, organizations must ensure that evaluation criteria are clear, measurable, and relevant to the skills intended for assessment. By providing feedback on workers' soft skills, organizations can promote personal growth and create career progression opportunities (Dangol, 2021).

This research focused on this theme and aimed to analyze the mediating role of performance appraisal results in the relationship between soft skills and career development.

1. Theoretical framework

1.1. Soft skills

Globalization is altering the dynamics of the job market, making it more volatile, uncertain, competitive, and ambiguous (VUCA: Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, Ambiguity; Damoah et al., 2021). In response to market demands, organizations need professionals who commit to organizational goals and implement changes that contribute to gaining a competitive advantage (England et al., 2019).

Technical expertise alone is no longer sufficient to secure a prominent position, and organizations are increasingly seeking professionals who demonstrate attitudes, skills, and behaviors that set them apart (Short & Keller-Bell, 2021). These competencies, commonly referred to as soft skills, are crucial for organizational success and play a decisive role in the selection of one candidate over another (Eva & Afroze, 2021). In this context, Lepeley et al. (2021) add that these cross-cutting competencies not only complement technical abilities but are also essential for the development of strong and effective interpersonal relationships within work teams. Consequently, Arghode et al. (2020) suggest that soft skills contribute to improving professional performance, which, in turn, reflects in career development.

The significant changes occurring in the job market and the value attributed to new qualifications and skills are reflected in the performance of employees (Tamrat, 2018). Sopa et al. (2020) support this idea and assert that if a worker demonstrates a wide range of skills,

behaviors, and attitudes that are applicable across various work contexts, they are unlikely to succeed professionally. These competencies are crucial for the employee's performance from the moment they join the organization (Kačamakovic & Lokaj, 2021).

In the era of digital transformation, soft skills are increasingly valued. As automation and artificial intelligence take over routine tasks, unique human skills such as creativity, empathy, and critical thinking become significant differentiators (Poláková et al., 2023). Transversal competencies empower professionals to excel in dynamic work environments. Therefore, while hard skills ensure technical competence, soft skills drive leadership, productivity, and resilience, which are crucial for success in an ever-evolving business world (Rodrigues, 2021).

1.2. Career development

The ongoing transformations in the current workplace environment and the emergence of new organizational structures have significantly impacted how work is perceived (Straub et al., 2019). These changes are also reflected in the concept of career, which has shifted its focus from easily measurable factors (e.g., promotions, salaries) to valuing learning in the context of work and identification with tasks performed (Bocciardi et al., 2017).

In the recent past, it was common for an employee to stay with the same organization for extended periods. Nowadays, professional paths are marked by mobility and flexibility, contributing to personal and professional development and fulfillment (Ingusci et al., 2019). These shifts underscore the importance attributed to career development, now seen as a path that individuals must navigate based on their choices to achieve their professional goals (Loyarte-López et al., 2020).

Career development involves both vertical and horizontal movements, providing opportunities for growth and professional expansion. These movements are fundamental strategies for advancing an individual's professional trajectory (Lingham, 2020).

Vertical movements refer to advancements within the organizational hierarchy, which may include promotions to positions of greater responsibility (Rodrigues et al., 2019). These movements offer the opportunity to lead teams, manage more complex projects, and make strategic decisions (Nardes et al., 2020). Vertical movements are often associated with the desire to progress in one's career, gain recognition, and increase remuneration (Infante-Perea et al., 2021).

On the other hand, horizontal movements involve lateral changes within the organization or between different organizations (Kost et al., 2020). This may include transitioning to a different department, shifting to a role that requires a different set of skills, or even exploring

distinct sectors. Horizontal movements are valuable for expanding experience, acquiring new competencies, and diversifying knowledge (Nienaber et al., 2020). Although there may not be an immediate hierarchical advancement, horizontal movements often contribute to a more comprehensive professional development (Kremen & Kremen, 2020).

More effective career development often integrates both vertical and horizontal movements. This hybrid approach can result in a more robust and adaptable professional profile (Hong et al., 2022). The ability to balance vertical and horizontal movements is essential in a dynamic job market, providing continuous opportunities for learning, growth, and professional satisfaction (Kharadze et al., 2022).

1.3. Influence of soft skills on career development

Soft skills, also known as interpersonal or behavioral skills, play a crucial role in career development (Eva & Afroze, 2021). While hard skills are essential, soft skills often serve as the differentiator that propels professional success because they are fundamental in facing the challenges of the ever-evolving work environment (Short & Keller-Bell, 2021). Investing in the development of these skills can result in a more well-rounded and competitive professional in the job market. Such skills enable individuals to assume necessary roles in managing conflicts, coordinating their work, and performing in a more cooperative and integrated manner with peers, superiors, and clients (Kačamakovic & Lokaj, 2021).

Cross-cutting competencies significantly contribute to career management as they not only account for it but also reflect decisions related to its development (Tripathy, 2020). Loyarte-López et al. (2020) argue that career development involves some flexibility and adaptability to the professional context, with soft skills being refined and shaped to the transformations occurring in the organizational setting. Therefore, it is important to develop analytical skills that allow individuals to assess various options and make informed decisions (Robertson et al., 2020).

Adaptability also holds a significant place during the career development process, as organizations increasingly consist of multidisciplinary workgroups. Thus, it is crucial to respect differences, embrace new ideas, demonstrate intercultural awareness, emotional control, and, above all, handle setbacks and criticisms effectively (Bocciardi et al., 2017).

Support and cooperation play a fundamental role in fostering team spirit, translating into an understanding and recognition of others' work and communication style, demonstrating a certain ease in interpersonal relationships, which is currently one of the most valued skills by employers (Tejan & Sabil, 2019). Furthermore, interpersonal interaction and relationships

facilitate the creation of networking, which is extremely relevant for career development. Through a network of contacts, employees gain deeper insights into market trends and access information about job opportunities and developments in their field of activity (Nadermann & Eissenstat, 2018). Career development is an effort individual make to better understand and be aware of their skills, interests, values, opportunities, and choices that enable them to achieve their goals (Tang, 2020). Consequently, Tripathy (2020) mentions that refining soft skills can open doors, create career development opportunities, and contribute to long-term success. In light of these findings, the first research hypothesis was formulated:

Hypothesis 1: Soft skills positively influence career development

1.4. Performance appraisal

Performance appraisal plays a crucial role in human resource management as it has a significant impact on the organization's strategic objectives (Naeem et al., 2017). Rubin and Edwards (2020) add that through this evaluation process, organizations motivate their employees, encouraging them to achieve high-quality performance, which is why its importance in the workplace is steadily increasing. According to Memon et al. (2019), in addition to facilitating goal setting and identifying training needs, performance appraisal allows for comparing employees' performance with their peers and/or their own past performance. Furthermore, it aligns employees' performance with organizational strategy and justifies decisions related to other human resource management practices, particularly compensation management and career progression (Stewart & Brown, 2020). Thus, it is important to align expectations with reality and precisely define: (i) task characteristics; (ii) competencies required for adequate job performance; (iii) training needs; (iv) and career development prospects (Al-Jedaia & Mehrez, 2020).

Therefore, we can assert that performance appraisal is an effective process where employees are assessed to help improve their performance (Iqbal et al., 2019). According to Brown and Heywood (2020), the performance appraisal process positively influences employees' productivity in organizations.

1.5. Influence of performance appraisal on career development

Performance appraisal significantly influences career development as it has a strong impact on the professional trajectory of employees (Memon et al., 2019). Providing feedback on performance allows individuals to identify strengths and areas that need improvement (Dangol, 2021). When people have a clear understanding of their competencies, they can more

precisely define goals and determine what contributes to advancing their careers (Fahmi & Ali, 2022). Going further, Sugiarti (2022) suggests that consistently high-performing employees are more likely to ascend to higher positions, translating into career advancement. Therefore, it is crucial to invest in continuous learning strategies to strengthen the knowledge and skills most valued by organizations, helping individuals gain a competitive advantage over their peers (Ali & Anwar, 2021).

Recognition for work done can increase engagement and job satisfaction, as employees perceive their evaluation results as fair, accurate, and impartial, leading to positive reciprocation (Diamantidis & Chatzoglou, 2019). Career development is a path influenced by both the individual and the organization, emphasizing the importance of understanding influencing factors (Weng, 2018). In this context, Weng and Zhu (2020) suggest that when organizations define career development plans, employees tend to grow professionally and enhance their individual performance. Okolie et al. (2020) complement this idea, stating that career progression and professional success depend on the quantity and quality of the skills and knowledge possessed by the employee. Therefore, it is important that their performance be periodically assessed. Considering the mentioned literature, the second hypothesis was developed:

Hypothesis 2: Performance appraisal influences career development.

1.6. Mediating role of performance appraisal in the relationship between soft skills and career development

Performance appraisal plays a crucial mediating role in the complex interaction between soft skills and career development (Ramola & Rangnekar, 2021). This practice provides a comprehensive view of workers' competencies and directly influences their professional trajectories (Thuy & Trinh, 2020). Through performance appraisal, organizations have the opportunity to recognize and value employees' skills during the performance of their duties (Dangol, 2021).

By mediating the relationship between soft skills and career development, performance appraisal provides an objective basis for strategic decision-making. The results of these assessments can guide individual development by identifying specific areas for soft skills improvement, which, in turn, positively impact career progression (Niati et al., 2021). The evaluation process serves as a communication channel between management and team members, fostering the exchange of constructive ideas about the role of soft skills in

professional performance. This dialogue facilitates mutual understanding and promotes alignment of expectations regarding career development (Silva et al., 2020).

An effective performance appraisal system also contributes to creating a work environment that values skills and recognizes their importance for individual and collective success (Rodrigues et al., 2023). Thus, employees are motivated to enhance their skills, knowing that, in addition to contributing to their personal development, they are crucial for advancing in their careers (Thuy & Trinh, 2020).

In light of the above, it is evident that performance appraisal acts as a crucial mediator in the relationship between soft skills and career development, providing valuable insights to strengthen employees' competencies and thereby driving continuous growth at both individual and organizational levels (Niati et al., 2021). The studies reviewed throughout the literature review led to the formulation of the third research hypothesis:

Hypothesis 3: The relationship between soft skills and career development is positively mediated by performance appraisal.

2. Method

The research was conducted using a quantitative methodology based on the hypothetical-deductive approach. Data were collected through a questionnaire provided on the Google Forms platform, and the link was shared on the researchers' professional networks. After obtaining the data, statistical analysis was performed using SPSS and AMOS software (version 29).

2.1. Sample

The study involved the participation of 262 salaried workers, 63.7% of whom are female. Table 1 describes the sample characteristics.

Table 1*Sample characterization*

Sociodemographic variables	n (%)
Sex	
Male	95 (36.3%)
Female	167 (63.7%)
Age group ($M = 42.6$; $SD = 12.4$)	
30 years old and below	57 (21.8%)
Between 31 and 40 years old	38 (14.5%)
Between 41 and 50 years old	92 (35.1%)
51 years old and over	75 (28.6%)
Education level	
Less than bachelor's degree	108 (41.2%)
Bachelor's degree	120 (45.8%)
Higher than bachelor's degree	34 (13.0%)
Sector where functions are performed	
Public	159 (60.7%)
Private	103 (39.3%)
Role played	
Operational	56 (21.4%)
Administrative	54 (20.6%)
Technical	84 (32.1%)
Leadership	68 (26.0%)
Seniority ($M = 14.7$; $SD = 11.9$)	
5 old and below	91 (34.7%)
Between 6 and 15 years	57 (21.8%)
Between 16 and 25 years	52 (19.8%)
26 years and over	62 (23.7%)

2.2. Measures

Short Skills Inventory. Developed by Rodrigues (2021), the Short Skills Inventory consists of 24 items that assess eight dimensions: (i) Leadership and decision-making (e.g., *I often take the initiative*); (ii) Support and cooperation (e.g., *My co-workers can always count on me*); (iii) Interaction and interpersonal relations (e.g., *I find it very easy to relate to people*)

of all hierarchical levels); (iv) Analysis and interpretation (e.g., *I usually compare information to check similarities, differences, and congruities*); (v) Creation and conceptualization (e.g., *I see new situations as challenges to overcome*); (vi) Organization and execution (e.g., *I perform my tasks in an organized manner*); (vii) Adaptability (e.g., *I am able to adjust my behavior to different contexts*); and (viii) Entrepreneurship and performance (e.g., *I am always alert regarding any opportunities for personal development*). Responses can be provided using a seven-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Never) to 7 (Always), depending on the frequency with which the behaviors occur. The results obtained through various studies (e.g., pilot, exploratory, confirmatory) demonstrate that the inventory exhibits highly satisfactory psychometric properties, making it a valid and reliable tool for assessing the skills of university students.

Career Growth Scale. Career development was assessed using the four items developed by Weng et al. (2010; e.g., *My promotion speed in the present organization is fast*), which evaluates how quickly individuals are promoted within the organization. The internal consistency of the questionnaire was examined using Cronbach's alpha, and the values proved to be quite suitable ($\alpha = .80$). Statements can be responded to using a seven-point Likert scale, ranging from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (7).

Performance Management Scale. The performance appraisal results were measured through the questionnaire developed by Rodrigues et al. (2017; e.g., *I am assessed based on the desired performance goals*). The items were responded to using a seven-point agreement scale, where one corresponds to Strongly Disagree and seven to Strongly Agree.

Sociodemographic questionnaire. Participants also responded to a set of questions about their sociodemographic characteristics (e.g., sex, age, educational level).

Control variables. Age and sex were used as control variables. According to Steindórsdóttir et al. (2022), younger individuals are more motivated to expand their horizons, acquire knowledge, strive for professional success, and develop skills that promote their career development. Gender was also used as a control variable. According to Infante-Perea et al. (2019), men and women experience their careers differently. Generally, women encounter more professional barriers than men, which are perceived as obstacles hindering career progression (Infante-Perea et al., 2021).

2.3. Procedures

The data were collected online through questionnaire surveys. The link was sent via email to the professional contacts of the researchers. The email included a brief description of the

study, information about informed consent, and a commitment to preserving the anonymity and confidentiality of the data. Statistical analysis was conducted using the SPSS and AMOS software (version 29).

3. Results

3.3. Preliminary analyses

Multivariate normality was assessed using Mardia's statistics (Mardia, 1970) through the Web Power tool available at <https://webpower.psychstat.org/models/kurtosis/>, which provides information on skewness and kurtosis coefficients along with the p-value. The data were considered normally distributed as the standardized Mardia's coefficient was greater than 5% ($p > 0.05$; Chowdhury et al., 2020).

Harman's single-factor test, including all items, revealed that the unrotated solution explained 30.3% of the total variance. This analysis suggested that the results were not affected by Common Method Bias, as it was below the recommended 50.0% threshold by Enomoto et al. (2020).

It was also observed that skewness (ranging between -0.75 and 0.15) and kurtosis (ranging between -0.87 and 1.27) values for the variables under study fell within the range of -2 to 2, as recommended by Lam and Zhou (2020).

Furthermore, Composite Reliability (CR) and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values for all variables exceeded the threshold of 0.70 and 0.50, respectively (Hair et al., 2019), supporting the convergent validity of the measures. The Maximum Shared Variance (MSV) was analyzed, and the results were lower than AVE, ensuring discriminant validity. Table 2 reports descriptive statistics and correlations among the variables. The results indicated significant associations among all variables. Additionally, age and gender were found to be not significantly associated with the main variables.

Table 2*Descriptive statistics*

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	CR	AVE	MSV	1	2	3	4
1. SS	6.10 ¹	0.56	0.93	0.69	0.12	(0.91)			
2. PAR	5.12 ¹	1.31	0.92	0.67	0.25	0.301**	(0.91)		
3. DC	3.41 ¹	1.64	0.81	0.60	0.30	0.188**	0.517**	(0.84)	
Age	42.62	12.47	-	-	-	0.042	-0.068	-0.177	-
Sex	-	-	-	-	-	-0.124	0.034	0.107	-0.215**

Note. $N = 262$; ** $p < 0.001$; SS = Soft skills; PAR = Performance appraisal results; CD = Career development; *M* = Mean; *SD* = Standard-deviation; CR = Composite Reliability; AVE = Average Variance Extracted; MSV = Maximum Shared Variance

¹Scale ranging from 1 to 7; Cronbach's Alpha are in brackets

²Sex codes: 0 = female; 1 = male

Subsequently, a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted to test whether the measured variables adequately represent the latent factors responsible for the behavior of the observed variables (Alavi et al., 2020). The results demonstrated that, after covarying the errors indicated by modification indices in AMOS, the model was found to be well-fitted to the sample data [$\chi^2_{(478)} = 1.87, p < 0.001, CFI = 0.90, TLI = 0.89; SRMR = 0.05, RMSEA = 0.05, LO90 = 0.05, HI90 = 0.06$]. In the next step, the research hypotheses are tested according to the proposed model.

3.2. Validation of research hypotheses

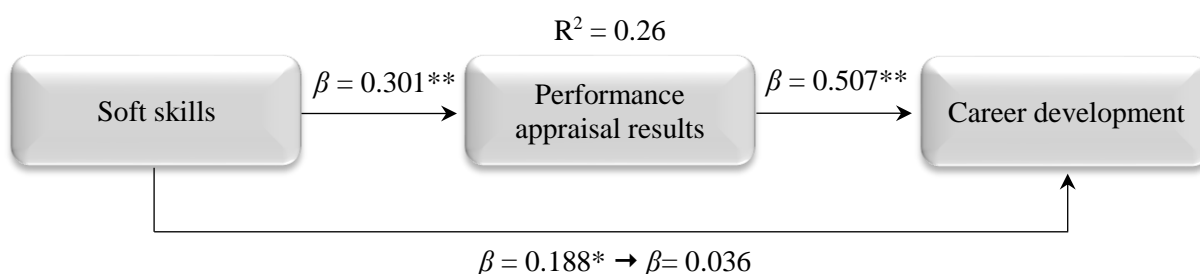
The first hypothesis, assuming that soft skills positively influence career development, was confirmed. The results of the linear regression showed a direct and statistically significant relationship between the predictor variable and the criterion variable ($\beta = 0.188, t = 3.093, p < 0.05$). It was also determined that the model is linear and significant ($F_{(1, 260)} = 9.467, p < 0.05$). The obtained coefficients indicate that the more developed the soft skills are, the greater the tendency to progress in one's career.

It was also found that career development is favorably influenced by the performance appraisal results, supporting the second study hypothesis ($\beta = 0.517, t = 9.749, p < 0.001$). The results suggest that 26.8% of the possibility of progressing in the career is explained by the performance appraisal results.

Finally, the causal model of soft skills in career development, mediated by the performance appraisal results, was assessed using Model 4 of the PROCESS macro in SPSS (Hayes, 2018). The results demonstrate that with the entry of the mediator variable into the model (Figure 1), the influence of soft skills on career development becomes non-significant ($\beta = 0.036$, $t = 0.640$, $p > 0.05$), indicating complete mediation. Next, 5,000 bias-corrected bootstraps were estimated with 95% confidence intervals. After bootstrapping, it was found that the total effect of performance appraisal results on the relationship between soft skills and career development is significant (95% CI [0.20, 0.90], $p < 0.05$).

Figure 1

Mediation model



Performance appraisal represents an opportunity to provide constructive feedback to employees (Rodrigues et al., 2023). This allows professionals to identify areas that need improvement and to establish a career development plan (Nuraeni et al., 2022). The results from performance appraisal serve as a critical link between soft skills and career development. By incorporating effective assessment of these skills, organizations can create a work environment that values both technical and interpersonal competencies, thereby fostering long-term professional success (Febrian et al., 2023).

4. Discussion

The assessment of soft skills provides valuable insights into individual behavioral competencies, contributing to career development and progression (Thuy & Trinh, 2020). This research explores the mediating role of performance appraisal outcomes in the relationship between soft skills and career development, underscoring that clear and relevant evaluation criteria contribute to fostering personal and professional growth (Niati et al., 2021). A well-conducted performance appraisal offers employees the opportunity to address gaps and

advance in their careers, motivating them and encouraging more effective performance, thereby contributing to organizational success (Rubin & Edwards, 2020).

Data analysis revealed that the more developed soft skills are, the greater the tendency for employees to progress in their careers, validating Hypothesis 1. These results align with findings by Short and Keller-Bell (2021), emphasizing the crucial role of transferable skills in professional development across sectors and professions. These skills complement technical and field-specific abilities, forming the foundation for short-term, medium-term, and long-term professional success (Eva & Afroze, 2021). Consistent with this research, Tripathy (2020) demonstrated that behavioral competencies can unlock new opportunities and drive growth in a workplace context.

Furthermore, it was found that performance appraisal significantly influences the professional trajectory of employees, supporting the validation of Hypothesis 2. By identifying areas of excellence and those that can be improved, performance appraisal contributes to setting goals and objectives that guide career choices and developing strategies to achieve them (Memon et al., 2019). Diamantidis and Chatzoglou (2019) add that rigorously assessed workers have more opportunities for career advancement. Additionally, self-reflection during the evaluation process contributes to self-awareness (Dangol, 2021). This understanding is valuable for encouraging professionals to seek continuous improvement of their skills (Fahmi & Ali, 2022). Rodrigues et al. (2023) complement this idea, asserting that only through performance appraisal is it possible to measure workers' competencies and how they contribute to organizational success.

The third hypothesis was also validated, as it was observed that the relationship between soft skills and career development is positively mediated by performance appraisal, aligning with the work of Ramola and Rangnekar (2021). Similarly, Niati et al. (2021) suggest that by mediating the relationship between transferable skills and career progression, performance appraisal guides and informs organizational strategic decisions. Therefore, workers are motivated to enhance their skills, knowing that these not only contribute to their personal development but are also crucial for advancing in their careers (Thuy & Trinh, 2020). Sugiarti (2022) adds that by providing valuable insights to strengthen competencies, performance appraisal drives the growth of both the individual and the organization.

4.1. Theoretical and Practical Contributions

This research underscores the significance of soft skills in the workplace and their influence on professional success and career progression. It is crucial to alert organizations to

the development of an organizational culture that fosters the enhancement of soft skills through continuous learning practices. Furthermore, it contributes to drawing the attention of human resources professionals to the relevance of performance appraisal, as it constitutes a fundamental tool for providing feedback to employees regarding their strengths and areas requiring improvement.

It is noteworthy that the mediating role of performance appraisal in the relationship between soft skills and career progression facilitates the decision-making process and propels the development of training initiatives that contribute to achieving both the employees' and the organization's objectives. By offering a holistic view of performance, the evaluation process guides employees in enhancing their interpersonal skills, thus propelling their professional development.

4.2. Limitations and Suggestions for Future Studies

This research presents several limitations, notably the fact that over 60.0% of participants are female, thus emphasizing the relevance of balancing group sizes. Additionally, the self-evaluative nature of the questionnaires may have introduced bias to the results, given that, in general, employees tend to overvalue their competencies and perceive themselves as capable of assuming higher positions. It is not uncommon for performance evaluation results to be deemed inappropriate and unjust, as they may not accurately reflect the work performed. Therefore, it is recommended that future studies collect data from direct supervisors and peers to assess potential differences in results.

It could also be insightful to evaluate the impact of training on enhancing soft skills. In this context, the suggestion is made for a longitudinal study to ascertain whether results vary over time and to identify whether career development and performance appraisal are influenced by training initiatives.

Furthermore, it is advised to include more control variables (e.g., tenure in the position, sector of employment) to analyze them alongside those already included in the study (e.g., gender, age) to understand whether the results are affected by these factors. Beyond performance appraisal, it is crucial to consider other factors that may mediate the relationship between soft skills and career development, such as motivation, supervisor support, and organizational culture.

It is considered pertinent to investigate whether the impact of soft skills on career progression varies across different sectors or industries, considering the specific nuances of each workplace environment.

Conclusion

In an increasingly dynamic and competitive work environment, soft skills emerge as crucial elements for professional success. This research delved into the significance of these competencies in career development, with performance appraisal serving as a mediating mechanism. The findings underscore that cross-cutting skills are fundamental for the construction of robust and sustainable professional trajectories, and it is through performance appraisal that these skills are acknowledged and validated.

The evaluation process not only benefits individual contributors but also constitutes a source of strategic advantage for any organization. When individuals believe they will be treated fairly during their performance appraisal, they develop positive sentiments towards the organization and commit to its objectives, fostering a more collaborative and productive work environment. In light of the foregoing, it is evident that soft skills exert a significant influence on career development, and performance appraisal emerges as a valuable means to recognize and promote these competencies.

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-----Mensagem original-----

De: Australian Journal of Career Development <onbehalf@manuscriptcentral.com>

Enviada: 25 de janeiro de 2024 23:05

Para: andreiaafgdias@gmail.com; rosa.rodrigues@isg.pt

Assunto: Australian Journal of Career Development AJCD-24-0009

Dear Prof. Rodrigues:

Your manuscript entitled "Soft skills' influence on career development: exploring performance appraisal as a mediating mechanism" has been successfully submitted online and is presently being given full consideration for publication in Australian Journal of Career Development.

Your manuscript ID is AJCD-24-0009.

You have listed the following individuals as authors of this manuscript:

Dias, Andreia; Rodrigues, Rosa

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