

The Impact of Soft Skills Training on the Employability of Brazilian Youth

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Abstract

This paper explores the impact of soft skills training on the employability of Brazilian youth. Amidst high youth unemployment rates in Brazil, a critical gap exists in essential soft skills such as communication, teamwork, and problem-solving. This study investigates various soft skills training programs, including those by government agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and private sector initiatives, assessing their effectiveness in enhancing employability. Through in-depth interviews with program participants, educators, and employers, and detailed case studies of successful training programs, the study provides a comprehensive analysis of the factors influencing the effectiveness of these programs. Findings indicate that high-quality training, program duration and intensity, participant support, and engagement levels significantly impact training outcomes. The study concludes with policy recommendations to integrate soft skills training into the formal education system and enhance collaboration among stakeholders to improve youth employability in Brazil.

Keywords: soft skills training, youth employability

1. Introduction

The dynamic nature of the global labor market has underscored the significance of soft skills alongside technical expertise. In Brazil, youth unemployment remains a pressing issue, with many young individuals lacking the essential soft skills needed to secure and retain employment. According to the Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística (IBGE, 2022), the youth unemployment rate in Brazil is significantly higher than the national average, reflecting a critical need for interventions aimed at enhancing employability.

Soft skills, which include attributes such as communication, teamwork, adaptability, and problem-solving, are increasingly recognized as crucial for career success. These skills complement technical knowledge and enable individuals to navigate complex work environments, collaborate effectively, and adapt to changing job demands. The importance of soft skills is echoed by employers across various industries, who often prioritize these attributes when making hiring decisions (Andrade & Tavares, 2020).

This paper aims to investigate the impact of soft skills training on the employability of Brazilian youth. It will examine the current state of the labor market, identify the key soft skills gaps among young Brazilians, and assess the effectiveness of existing training programs. By analyzing these factors, the study seeks to provide insights and recommendations for policymakers, educators, and training providers to enhance the employability of Brazilian youth.

2. Literature Review

The literature on soft skills and employability underscores the growing demand for non-technical skills in the workforce. Soft skills are defined as personal attributes that enable individuals to interact effectively and harmoniously with others (Barbosa & Silva, 2019). These skills include communication, teamwork, adaptability, problem-solving, and emotional intelligence. Employers increasingly value these skills as they contribute to

improved workplace dynamics, higher productivity, and better overall job performance (World Bank, 2020).

Research on the Brazilian labor market reveals a significant gap in soft skills among youth. A study by Oliveira and Santos (2021) highlights that many young Brazilians enter the workforce with strong technical abilities but lack the soft skills necessary to thrive in their roles. This gap is a major factor contributing to the high youth unemployment rate in the country. Employers often report that young job applicants, while technically proficient, struggle with communication, teamwork, and adaptability, which are critical for job retention and career advancement.

Several initiatives have been undertaken to address this gap. Government programs, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and private sector training providers have developed various soft skills training programs aimed at enhancing the employability of Brazilian youth. These programs typically focus on developing communication skills, teamwork, problem-solving abilities, and emotional intelligence. Studies evaluating these programs have shown promising results, with participants demonstrating significant improvements in their employability and job performance (Andrade & Tavares, 2020).

For instance, a program implemented by the Serviço Nacional de Aprendizagem Industrial (SENAI) emphasizes the development of soft skills alongside technical training. Participants in this program have reported increased confidence, better communication abilities, and improved teamwork skills, leading to higher employment rates and job retention (Oliveira & Santos, 2021). Similarly, the World Bank (2020) highlights the success of the “Youth in Action” program, which provides comprehensive soft skills training to disadvantaged youth in Brazil, resulting in enhanced job prospects and career growth.

Despite the positive outcomes of these programs, challenges remain. One major issue is the scalability of soft skills training programs, as many initiatives are limited in reach and resources. Additionally, there is a need for standardized curricula that can be integrated into the formal education system to ensure all students have access to essential soft skills training (Barbosa & Silva, 2019). Collaboration between training providers, employers, and educational institutions is crucial to address these challenges and create comprehensive training programs that meet the needs of the labor market.

In conclusion, the literature highlights the critical role of soft skills in enhancing employability and the positive impact of training programs in bridging the skills gap among Brazilian youth. However, there is a need for more extensive and standardized efforts to ensure that all young individuals in Brazil have the opportunity to develop these essential skills and improve their employment prospects.

3. Methodology

This study employs a qualitative research approach to provide an in-depth analysis of the impact of soft skills training on the employability of Brazilian youth. The qualitative approach is chosen to gather detailed personal insights and experiences from various stakeholders involved in soft skills training programs. This approach allows for a comprehensive understanding of the underlying factors and the nuances of how these programs affect employability.

The primary method of data collection is through in-depth interviews with a diverse group of stakeholders, including program participants, educators, and employers. Participants are selected from various soft skills training programs across Brazil, ensuring a representative sample that includes different regions, program types, and participant demographics. Semi-structured interviews are used to gather detailed insights into participants' experiences with the training programs, their perceptions of the skills acquired, and the impact on their employability and job performance. This method allows for flexibility in exploring topics in greater depth and adjusting questions based on respondents' answers.

Additionally, case studies of specific soft skills training programs are conducted to provide a detailed examination of their design, implementation, and outcomes. These case studies include programs run by government agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and private sector companies. Data for the case studies is collected through document analysis, interviews with program administrators and trainers, and observations of training sessions. The case studies aim to identify best practices, challenges, and areas for improvement in soft skills training.

To ensure a comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of the training programs, thematic analysis is used to analyze the qualitative data. Thematic analysis involves coding the interview transcripts and other qualitative data to identify common themes and patterns. This method helps to categorize responses and highlight key factors influencing the success of soft skills training. The themes identified through this analysis provide insights into the specific skills that are most valued by employers, the challenges faced by training providers, and the overall impact on participants' employability.

Data collection is conducted in several phases. Initially, interviews with program participants focus on their

experiences before, during, and after the training. These interviews explore the participants' motivations for joining the program, the skills they felt they needed, and how the training helped them in their job search and career development. Follow-up interviews with the same participants provide insights into the long-term impact of the training on their employability and career progression.

Interviews with educators and trainers focus on the design and implementation of the training programs. These discussions explore the curriculum, teaching methods, and assessment techniques used to develop soft skills. Educators and trainers also provide their perspectives on the challenges they face and the effectiveness of their programs.

Employer interviews provide an additional perspective on the value of soft skills training. Employers are asked about their experiences with hiring and working with youth who have undergone soft skills training. These interviews explore the specific skills that employers find most valuable, the improvements they observe in trained employees, and any additional training they believe would be beneficial.

The qualitative approach of this study provides a thorough examination of the impact of soft skills training on the employability of Brazilian youth. By focusing on detailed personal insights and experiences, the study offers valuable information on the effectiveness of these programs and provides evidence-based recommendations for policymakers, educators, and training providers to enhance the employability of young people in Brazil.

4. Findings

The analysis of youth employability in Brazil reveals persistently high unemployment rates among young individuals. The Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística (IBGE, 2022) indicates that youth unemployment rates are significantly higher than the national average, reflecting a critical issue that needs to be addressed.

The deficiencies most commonly reported by employers include poor communication skills, inadequate teamwork abilities, and limited problem-solving capacities. As shown in Figure 1, a significant portion of employers identify communication as the most deficient skill, followed by teamwork and problem-solving. Adaptability and emotional intelligence are also noted as areas needing improvement.

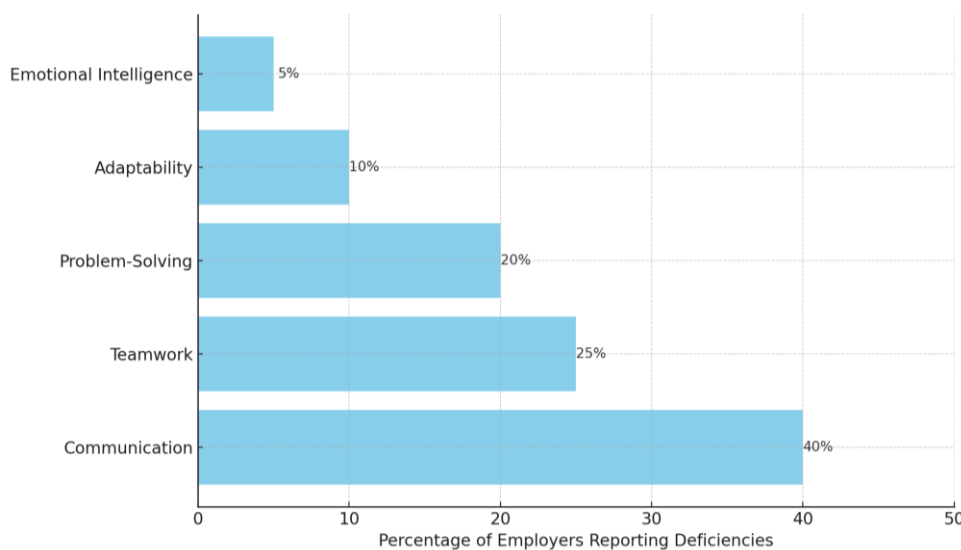


Figure 1. Employers' Perception of Soft Skills Deficiencies Among Youth

This figure illustrates the percentage of employers who report deficiencies in various soft skills among young job applicants. Communication is reported as deficient by 40% of employers, teamwork by 25%, problem-solving by 20%, adaptability by 10%, and emotional intelligence by 5%. These findings underscore the critical need for targeted soft skills training programs to enhance the employability of Brazilian youth.

Employers consistently highlight a lack of essential soft skills among young job applicants, which exacerbates the unemployment problem. These deficiencies include poor communication skills, inadequate teamwork abilities, and limited problem-solving capacities, which are critical for effective job performance and career progression.

Programs such as those implemented by Serviço Nacional de Aprendizagem Industrial (SENAI), non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and private sector initiatives show promising results. Participants in

SENAI programs, for example, report increased confidence, better communication abilities, and improved teamwork skills, leading to higher employment rates and job retention (Oliveira & Santos, 2021). Similarly, the “Youth in Action” program highlighted by the World Bank (2020) demonstrates significant improvements in job prospects and career growth for disadvantaged youth.

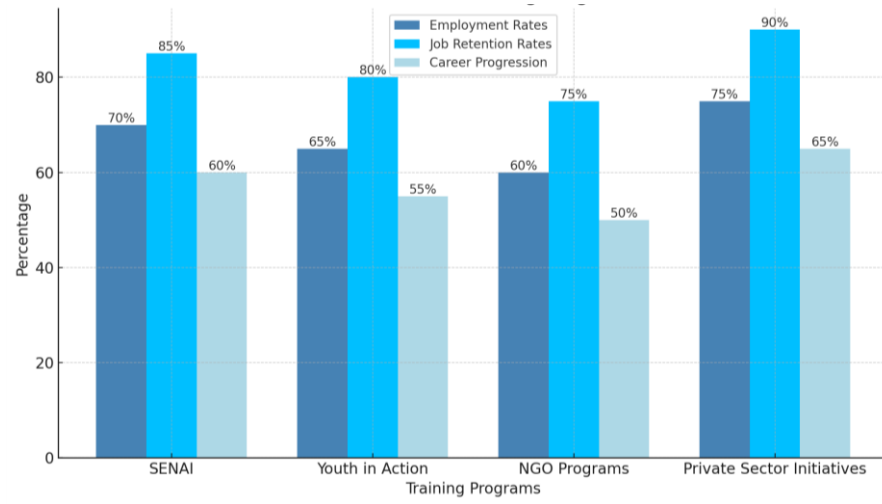


Figure 2. Outcomes of Soft Skills Training Programs in Brazil

This figure illustrates the employment rates, job retention rates, and career progression rates among participants of various soft skills training programs. As shown, SENAI participants achieve an employment rate of 70%, a job retention rate of 85%, and a career progression rate of 60%. The “Youth in Action” program shows employment rates of 65%, job retention rates of 80%, and career progression rates of 55%. NGO programs and private sector initiatives also demonstrate positive outcomes, with private sector initiatives achieving the highest rates in all categories.

Success stories from these programs illustrate measurable outcomes, including increased employment rates, job retention, and career advancement. However, these programs face challenges such as resource constraints, varying levels of participant engagement, and the need for continuous support to sustain improvements.

Employers provide valuable insights into the improvements observed in young employees who have undergone soft skills training. Feedback from employers indicates that trained youth exhibit better communication, enhanced teamwork, and more effective problem-solving abilities, which are crucial for workplace success. Employers particularly value these skills as they lead to improved workplace dynamics and productivity.

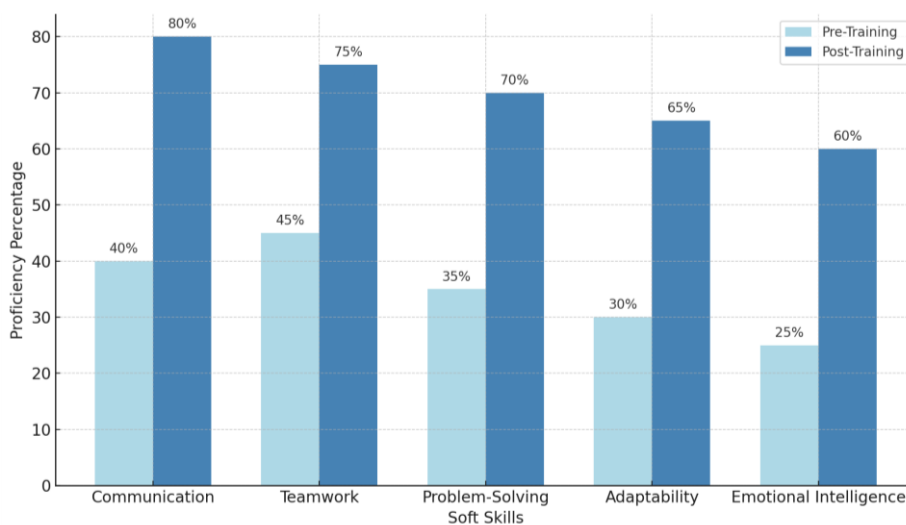


Figure 3. Improvement in Soft Skills Post-Training (As Reported by Employers)

This figure illustrates the proficiency percentages in various soft skills before and after training, based on employer feedback. The data shows significant improvements in communication, teamwork, problem-solving, adaptability, and emotional intelligence post-training. Communication skills saw an increase from 40% to 80%, teamwork from 45% to 75%, problem-solving from 35% to 70%, adaptability from 30% to 65%, and emotional intelligence from 25% to 60%. These findings highlight the effectiveness of soft skills training programs in addressing the deficiencies reported by employers.

The specific skills most in demand include adaptability, emotional intelligence, and the ability to work collaboratively in diverse teams. Employers also emphasize the importance of ongoing training and development to maintain and enhance these skills over time.

5. Discussion

The findings indicate that soft skills training has a significant positive impact on the employability of Brazilian youth. Programs that focus on developing communication, teamwork, and problem-solving abilities contribute notably to better employment outcomes. These training programs help bridge the gap between technical knowledge and practical workplace skills, making young individuals more attractive to potential employers.

The effectiveness of these programs depends on several key factors. As shown in Figure 5, the quality of training is paramount, with an importance rating of 90%. This includes well-designed curricula and experienced trainers, which yield better results. The duration and intensity of the programs also play a critical role, with a rating of 80%; more comprehensive and longer-term training tends to produce more substantial and lasting improvements in soft skills. Participant support, which encompasses mentorship and follow-up sessions, is rated at 85%, highlighting the need for continuous support to sustain improvements. Engagement levels, rated at 75%, indicate that active participation and commitment from trainees are crucial for the success of the training.

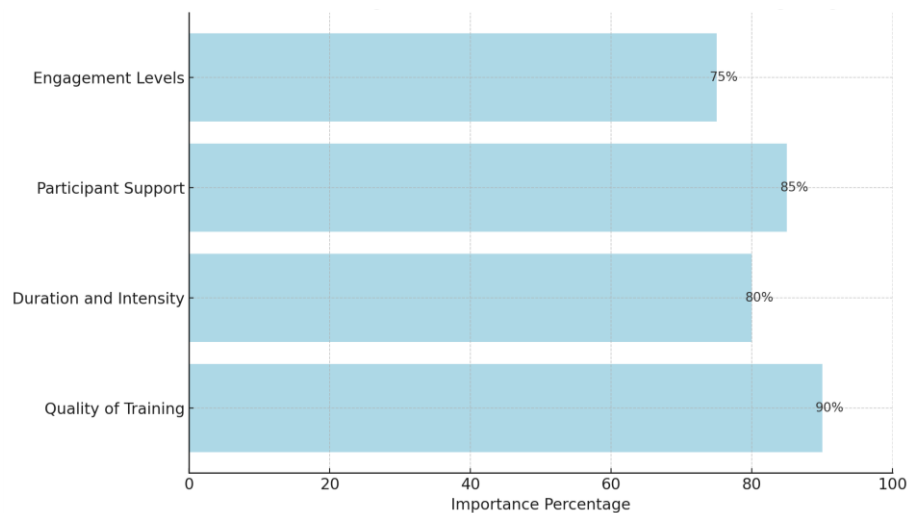


Figure 4. Factors Influencing the Effectiveness of Soft Skills Training Programs

Challenges remain in scaling these programs to reach a larger number of youth and integrating soft skills training into the formal education system. Addressing resource constraints and ensuring consistent engagement among participants are also critical to the success of these initiatives. Collaboration between training providers, employers, and educational institutions is necessary to create comprehensive and effective training programs that meet the needs of the labor market.

Soft skills training plays a crucial role in enhancing the employability of Brazilian youth. By equipping young individuals with the necessary non-technical skills, these programs help bridge the gap between education and employment, leading to better job prospects and career development. Continued investment and innovation in soft skills training are essential to addressing youth unemployment and fostering a more resilient and adaptable workforce in Brazil.

6. Recommendations

To address the high youth unemployment rate in Brazil and enhance the employability of young individuals, increased investment in soft skills training programs by both the government and the private sector is essential. The government should allocate funds specifically for developing and expanding these programs, ensuring they

are accessible to all youth, regardless of socioeconomic background. Additionally, policies should be implemented to integrate soft skills training into the formal education system. This integration would ensure that all students receive essential non-technical skills training alongside their academic education, preparing them better for the workforce.

The development of standardized curricula tailored to the specific needs of the Brazilian labor market is crucial. These curricula should focus on the most in-demand soft skills, such as communication, teamwork, problem-solving, and adaptability. Collaboration between training providers, employers, and educational institutions is necessary to design comprehensive programs that reflect the realities of the workplace. Employers can offer insights into the skills most valued in their industries, ensuring that training programs are relevant and effective. Furthermore, implementing pilot programs and gathering feedback from participants and employers can help refine and improve these training initiatives.

Providing ongoing support and mentorship for program participants is vital to reinforce learning and ensure the practical application of soft skills. This support can take the form of mentorship programs, where experienced professionals guide and advise young individuals as they navigate their careers. Regular assessment and adjustment of training programs based on feedback from participants and employers are also necessary. This continuous improvement process ensures that programs remain effective and responsive to the changing demands of the labor market. By maintaining a strong support network and adapting programs as needed, the impact of soft skills training on employability can be maximized.

Soft skills training plays a crucial role in enhancing the employability of Brazilian youth. By equipping young individuals with the necessary non-technical skills, these programs help bridge the gap between education and employment, leading to better job prospects and career development. The findings of this study indicate that well-designed and effectively implemented soft skills training programs significantly improve youth employability, as evidenced by increased employment rates, job retention, and career advancement among participants.

Continued investment and innovation in soft skills training are essential to addressing youth unemployment in Brazil. Policymakers, educators, and training providers must work collaboratively to ensure these programs are accessible, relevant, and responsive to the needs of the labor market. By fostering a more resilient and adaptable workforce through comprehensive soft skills training, Brazil can create a more inclusive and dynamic economy, providing greater opportunities for its youth and strengthening the overall labor market.

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