



The Journal of *News Science*

Vol. 14, No. 1, Ser.53, Spring 2025, P. 42-47

Journal homepage: <https://www.mjourcom.ir/>

DOI : <http://doi.org/10.22034/lrsi.2025.506967.1331>

Open Access

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Students' Ability and Desire for Teamwork as a Component of Soft Skills in the Digital Era and its Role in Learning

Kaveh Bazargan^{1✉} 

1. Corresponding author, Assistant Professor in Communication Studies, Faculty of Communication Sciences, Allameh Tabataba'i University, Tehran, Iran. E-mail: kbazargan@atu.ac.ir

Received: February 16, 2025

Accepted: May 15, 2025

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Introduction:

We live in an era where societies, institutions, and individuals increasingly use digital technologies. But most societies are not yet fully digital. The transition from the pre-digital to the digital age, which has occurred in the past few years, is an area of research that has attracted the attention of researchers on how it happened. Furthermore, the impact of digital technologies on societies, especially in the field of media and communications, has been such that it has facilitated access to data and information for citizens in various fields, including political affairs, health, social communications, etc. However, this access can be accommodated by biased or incorrect data and information. This is why it has become essential for citizens, especially teachers and students, to be familiar with media and information literacy. In this regard, employers complain not only about the inadequacy of professional skills of graduates but also about the lack of their

soft skills, and point out the gap between the desired and existing state of their soft skills. Whichever list of soft skills we consider, teamwork ability is one of the major components and is considered as an important skill. Teamwork is important not only in the workplace but also in educational settings. The ability and willingness to work in a team helps students achieve higher academic performance in the learning process. Considering the above points, the general question is: to what extent do students have the ability and willingness to work in a group? And is this ability related to their achievement of learning outcomes?

Method:

Towards answering the above-mentioned questions, a research project was prepared and conducted through descriptive-analytical design. The objective of the research project was to answer two research questions: What is the ability and desire of students to the teamwork? And, is there a relationship between the teamwork ability of students and their achievements of learning outcomes? The population and sample studied were undergraduate students in Communication Sciences at one of the country's research universities. The number of students observed was 30. These students completed the teamwork questionnaire. After initial reviews of the completed questionnaires, it was determined that one person had not answered the questions with the necessary accuracy. Therefore, one person was removed from the set of students and the collected data was summarized. Therefore, the sample size of the study was reduced to 29 students. To measure the readiness and desire of students to teamwork, a standardized scale was used and the necessary data was collected and analyzed. In addition, a formative assessment approach was used to measure students' achievement of learning. It was a continuous assessment of learning and included an end of course test as well. These data were combined to form the achievement score for each student.

Findings:

In general, soft skills include the following: communication, adaptability, problem-solving, emotional intelligence, creative thinking, critical thinking, time management, leadership ability, and teamwork. To form a team for teaching and learning activities, six characteristics are required. These characteristics may be listed as follows: 1) leadership, 2) communication skills, 3) coordination, 4) decision-making, 5) interpersonal skills, and 6) flexibility. With regard to outcome-based teaching-learning approach, the expected knowledge, attitudes, and skills that students should achieve at the end of the course or at the end of the lesson should be first stated. Then the course materials and materials for the student to achieve them should be specified. Based on the results, it can be concluded that in the sample studied, 38% of the individuals had relatively low ability and inclination towards teamwork. However, 27.5% had an average ability and inclination towards teamwork, and 34.5% had above-average ability and inclination towards teamwork. In other words, more than 60% of students, in the sample, had the ability and desire to do teamwork.

The results of continuous assessment of students' achievement of learning outcomes were also analyzed. The frequency distribution of scores (on a scale of 0 to 20) was such that the minimum score was 14 and the maximum was 19.5. The average score was 17.39 and the standard deviation was 1.3. According to the collected data, the distribution of scores has a left-skewed composition. Also, using Pearson's correlation coefficient, the relationship between the ability and desire to teamwork and learning outcomes achievement was analyzed which was positive.

Conclusion:

The results of this study showed that teamwork, as a component of soft skills, is correlated with student learning. The statistical test of significance showed there is a positive relationship between the ability and desire of students to teamwork and the achievement of learning outcomes ($P < 0.01$). Based on this, suggestions for developing the ability of students in teamwork in educational environments have been delineated to promote students learning.

In this respect, in the era of generative artificial intelligence, students through teamwork can achieve a higher level of learning. However, by using new technologies and interacting with each other, the quality of learning would be increased. Of course, this requires that the instructor adopt an active learning approach in the teaching-learning process. Towards developing teamwork skills there is need for strengthening skills such as: leadership, communication skills, coordination, decision-making, interpersonal skills, and flexibility. A student-centered teaching-learning approach facilitates the development of these skills and prepares the setting for teamwork.

Data Availability Statement

Data available on request from the authors.

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank anonymous reviewers.

Ethical considerations

Not applicable.

Funding

Not applicable.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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Cite this article: Bazargan, K. (2025), Students' Ability and Desire for Teamwork as a Component of Soft Skills in the Digital Era and its Role in Learning, *News Science*, 14 (1), 42-47. DOI: <http://doi.org/10.22034/lrsi.2025.506967.1331>



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