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Soft Skills: Important People-Centered Resilience Tools

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Date of submission: 16 Mar. 2026

Date of acceptance: 01 Apr. 2026

Letter to the Editor

Keywords: Resilience; Soft Skills; People-Centered.

How to cite this article. Pourmohamad A. Soft Skills: Important People-Centered Resilience Tools. *Sci J Rescue Relief* 2026; 18(1):1-2.

Dear Editor,

This letter is going to address this question of what is the average time interval between the onset of a critical situation and the initiation of response phase. Furthermore, which psychological factors are associated with accelerating the transition from crisis onset to the commencement of adaptive and effective responses in individuals? Crises, at both individual and societal levels, are defined as situations that disrupt the normal flow of life, exposing individuals and communities to intense psychosocial pressures and critical decision-making processes (1).

According to the World Health Organization, a crisis is an event characterized by damage and destruction that creates needs exceeding a community's response capacity and severely disrupt public health and necessitate the provision of essential healthcare services to victims, particularly vulnerable groups, who are more predisposed to harm and injury due to their specific circumstances during crises and disasters. However, it can be argued that the time interval between the onset of a crisis and the initiation of an effective response is not constant; rather, it is significantly influenced by individuals' psychological and social capacities. The time pattern of crisis response varies among individuals: some rapidly enter a phase of instability, while others exhibit delayed responses or initial denial (2).

In crisis conditions, possessing specialized knowledge or physical resources is insufficient for an effective response. Instead, cognitive processes, emotion regulation, crisis decision-making, and social interactions play a decisive role in determining the quality and speed of individual reactions. In 2025, digitalization, the emergence of Artificial Intelligence (AI), and hybrid management are reshaping workplace priorities. The role of a manager in a constantly evolving work environment has never been more ambiguous. While hard skills remain essential, it is soft skills that fundamentally support effective team management. Indeed, 80% of business leaders assert that these skills are the key drivers of success (3).

Life in the twenty-first century requires people to be prepared to fill a variety of roles—as workers, parents, citizens, and consumers—in which they will need to apply their knowledge effectively to rapidly changing situations. Recognizing this need, business, political, and educational leaders are increasingly asking schools to teach students the competencies they will need to navigate a changing world—skills such as problem-solving, critical thinking, and collaboration. Such skills are often referred to as "twenty-first-century skills", "soft skills", or "deeper learning" (4).

"Soft skills" is a broad term referring to a complex set of personal attributes that enable an individual to become a positive and effective member of any organization. They encompass interpersonal and personality traits that allow people to interact effectively with others and

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navigate complex social environments. Unlike hard skills, which consist of specific technical abilities, soft skills are more nuanced and highly transferable across various roles and industries (5).

Soft skills are non-technical, industry-agnostic competencies applicable to a wide range of tasks across many professions. These include interpersonal or "people skills" that enable effective functioning within groups and organizations. Examples of soft skills include critical thinking, emotional intelligence, collaboration, creativity, problem-solving, time management, adaptability, conscientiousness, and various communication skills. In contrast, hard skills comprise specific knowledge and abilities tailored to particular professions or roles (6).

There exists a core set of personality traits and soft skills essential for success in crisis management. While these attributes are inherent to varying degrees in all individuals, they can—and should—be strengthened through conscious effort and practice (7).

Soft skills are defined as a set of non-technical behavioral and interpersonal competencies that enable individuals to communicate effectively, manage emotions and stress, make appropriate decisions under complex and difficult conditions, and act with flexibility and creativity. These skills comprise a constellation of cognitive, emotional, and interpersonal capacities that play a pivotal role in achieving success in personal and professional life, and particularly in providing more adaptive responses during crises. Hence, it can be said that individuals possessing higher levels of soft skills transition more rapidly from the initial shock of a crisis toward active and goal-oriented engagement. Soft skills can play a direct role in reducing the time interval between the onset of a crisis and the initiation of an effective response. Unlike hard skills, which are technology-dependent, soft skills are rooted in individuals' attitudes, perceptions, and behavioral patterns. In the field of crisis management, developing these skills is an essential requirement for empowering the general public and enhancing people-centered resilience. Investing in the training of these skills not only increases the effectiveness of specialized interventions but also plays a crucial role in reducing vulnerability and promoting sustainable societal resilience.

In their systematic literature review, Brown and Lozmore (2023) found that while the term 'soft skills' is widely used, there is no universally accepted definition or a definitive list of the skills it encompasses. Nonetheless, soft skills are generally described as transversal skills, meaning they can be applied across various professional contexts and occupations. This distinguishes them from hard skills, which are specific to particular tasks or roles. They identified more than forty significant soft skills within the reviewed literature which is listed in order of frequency in the literature including self-awareness, emotion management, stress management, problem-solving and decision-making, time management, adaptability, effective and constructive communication, teamwork, critical thinking, and creative thinking (8).

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