UNLEASHING ACADEMIC POTENTIAL IN SAUDI ARABIA: THE IMPACT OF SOFT SKILLS ON FEMALE UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS' LEARNING OUTCOMES

[1]SIDDIQUA AAMIR, [2]LAURA MARGARET STRACHAN

Assistant Professors, Core Humanities & Social Science, Prince Mohammad Bin Fahd University, Al Khobar 31952, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
E-mail: [1]saamir@pmu.edu.sa, [2]lstrachan@pmu.edu.sa

Abstract - The present study explored the impact of a soft skills-oriented core curriculum on female undergraduate students at a Saudi Arabian university. Drawing from the Core Humanities and Social Science foundational program where the first two years of all degree plans focus on communication, critical thinking, teamwork, leadership, professionalism, and technical competencies courses. This study seeks to understand how these skills affect the students' overall academic development especially in light of STEM oriented majors. Data was collected using qualitative and quantitative methods. The findings from a thematic analysis of key informant interviews and a comprehensive survey suggest that soft skills significantly enhanced overall student achievements not only during their freshman and sophomore years, but into the terminal years of their major. In conclusion, the combination of soft skills with hard skills is essential for fostering a rounded approach to higher education.

Keywords - Higher Education, Soft Skills, Humanities & Social Sciences, Saudi Arabia