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# Influence of limiting beliefs in soft employability skills: An analysis for the hospitality sector

## Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to identify the main soft skills demanded by the hospitality industry, under the perception of master´s degree students and the influence of limiting beliefs in skills development. After a literature review, we lead a fieldwork based on workshops in which we conducted two questionnaires and we analyze the behaviour of students through the method of tutor observation. The results show a relationship between their soft-skills, and a significative negative correlation between perceived skills and the limiting beliefs. With this exploratory paper, we try to contribute to the better knowledge of new factors that may be hindering the development of the soft skills demanded in postgraduate students in the hospitality sector. These preliminary conclusions can be useful for both postgraduate schools and companies in their selection and training processes.

**Key words:** employability; soft skills; limiting beliefs; postgraduate; hospitality industry

## 1. Introduction

In a highly competitive and volatile employment market, immersed in the VUCA context, postgraduate students must be aware of employability skills to maximize their potential for a successful career. The debate between the needs of the industry and the educational offer lies behind this statement. How do the master programs develop those skills demanded by the industry, and how do they bring them closer to the students?

Is the development of these skills the responsibility of universities, employers or students? In which extend cognitive factors may be helping or limiting the development of these capabilities? These should be the general research question, concerning both the academic world and industry representatives.

The purpose of this study is, firstly, to identify the student's perception of primary demanded skills in the hospitality industry. Then, we want to analyze what beliefs can constrain students from being engaged in regard to soft skills the industry required, and also the empowering beliefs that encourage students to be involved.

This paper initially presents the central current literature debates about employability and skills in the hospitality management industry. Then we analyze the relevance of empowering and limiting beliefs, and how these affect the soft skills development. Following we present the methodology that we use in this research and finally, the main results, conclusions, contributions and limitations.

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## 2. Review of literature

### 2.1. Postgraduate students' soft skills in the hospitality industry

Within the hospitality management sector exists a long tradition in the study of these skills that began in the 1920s with the establishment of the Cornell University hotel management program (Kay & Russette, 2000). Hospitality management higher education has faced some difficulties in establishing itself as an academic field within academia. It has been pointed out (e.g. Barrows & Johan, 2008) that one of these difficulties is due to the tendency for hospitality management educators to argue that the field should be kept distinct due to its "uniqueness"as opposed to other fields of management. It may be said that hospitality management higher education is still immature when compared with more traditional fields, and has yet to establish its identity as an academic subject. However, there has been a growing academic interest in competencies related to hospitality (Perdue, Ninemeier, & Woods, 2002; Valachis, Christou, Sigala, & Maroudas, 2009) and specifically for hospitality managers at different organizational levels (Kay & Russette, 2000). These skills have been studied among other countries in the United Kingdom (Baum, 1990), Spain (Agut, Grau, & Peiro, 2003), and Australia (Dimmock, Breen, & Walo, 2003).

The identification of competencies needed by hospitality managers has been investigated since the 1980s. Tas (1988) reported a list of 36 competencies required for management trainees. Among these, he considered six essential competencies, all related to soft skills needed to develop good working relationships with customers and employees. In 1994, food and beverage management competencies were reported by Okeiyi, Finley, and Postel, identifying soft skills as essential competencies for F&B managers. More recently, a study to determine competencies needed by hospitality and tourism graduates, found that communication skills and the ability to manage and motivate subordinates were ranked as two of the most important skills (Mayo & Thomas-Haysbert, 2005). Sisson and Adams (2013) compile in a substantial literature review the results of studies from 1994 to 2011 in relation to the more relevant soft skills for managers of the hospitality industry (Table 1).

In the tourism and hospitality sector, these skill debates are particularly pertinent given the importance of attitude and appearance in the service industries (Nickson, Warhurst, & Dutton, 2005). Grugulis, Warhurst, and Keep (2004) identify the changing nature of skills: One of the fundamental changes that have taken place in the last two decades has been the growing tendency to label what in earlier times would have been seen by most as personal characteristics, attitudes, character traits or predispositions as skills (Grugulis et al., 2004, p. 6). Warhurst, Grugulis, and Keep (2004) noted that corporate image and brand are of growing importance and that employers increasingly place emphasis on a different range and types of skills required from their employees. Consequently the challenge of developing employable graduates is regarded as one of the most significant challenges facing contemporary higher education in hospitality management (Moolman & Wilkinson, 2014).

Weber, Crawford, Lee, and Dennison (2013) asked human resource (HR) professionals to rate the relative importance of soft skill competencies found in the literature and to determine their importance. These authors wanted to propose a soft skill competency tool to be used by hospitality HR professionals. Going into depth on this topic, they identify five competencies explained in a much more modern and current language: Team developer— Build trust, rapport, and cooperation; Coach—Provide training, evaluate, provide recognition; Destroyer— Micromanage and aggressive management; Problem handler—Respond to customer problems and Influencer—Provide feedback to improve performance (Weber et al., 2013).

In order to respond to changing industry needs, hospitality degree programs must have a clear understanding of the industry and employer expectations of the competencies that graduates should possess. Educational institutions have a responsibility to ensure that students master the required competencies (Moncarz & Kay, 2005). Previous studies have shown that there are differences between educators and industry professionals in what constitute the essential competencies (e.g. Sigala & Baum, 2003). Furthermore, Fu (2015) studies the relevance of the development of intercultural competence in different contexts.

Recently, the paper by Jian and Alexakis (2017) presents an analysis of empirical data with the essential management competencies for entry-level management positions. These authors nevertheless appeal in their paper the need for new studies in which the perceptions of students, academics and the hospitality industry are collected. This reason has led us to study soft kills in this paper from the students' perspective, and it leads us to explore the question of whether students' perceptions coincide with those developed in the literature or not.

Table 1.
**Literature review: Soft competences in the hospitality industry**

| Author(s) | Soft skills |
|---|---|
| Brownell & Brownell (1994) | • Listening, group leadership skills |
| Okeiyi et al. (1994) | • Leadership, communication, customer relations, and professional conduct |
| Tas, LaBrecque, & Clayton (1996) | • Interpersonal skills, leadership, and conceptual-creative domains |
| Su, Miller, & Shanklin (1997) | • Interpersonal communication, management information systems, financial management, employal considerations, and management of personnel |
| Cho & Connolly (1999) | • Problem solving, analytical abilities, IT skills |
| Chung (2000) | • Directing and supervising the work of others, interpersonal relationships with employees, maintaining professional appearance and poise |
| Kay & Russette (2000) | • 18 competencies were critical to all functional areas and management levels: 12 leadership, 4 interpersonal, 1 technical, 1 conceptual/creative, and 0 administrative |
| Breiter & Hoart (2000) | • Skills and concepts pertaining to labour cost, sales, and cost of goods sold were rated most important |
| Wilson, Murray, & Black (2000) | • 15 competencies were determined to be essential from within all five competency areas. The two most important: health and safety, and food hygiene |
| Mandabach, VanLeeuwen, & Bloomquist (2001) | • Familiarity with the top four general application software programs. Technology skills, such as purchasing and inventory, than with entry-level skills |
| Lin (2002) | • Communication skills and adaptation to environmental changes. Operational knowledge and analytical techniques, problem identification and management of employees, and management of jobs competencies |
| Chung-Herrera, Enz, & Lankau (2003) | • Self-management, including ethics and integrity, time management, flexibility and adaptability, and self-development |
| Kay & Moncarz (2004) | • KSAs in HR and IT may be required for all managers but are more important for lower level managers |
| Gursoy & Swanger (2004) | • Ethics and leadership were ranked as the two most important subject areas |
| Gursoy & Swanger (2005) | • Oral communication and leadership skills, clear understanding of profit-and-loss statements, good work habits, customer service skills, development of personal and professional ethics, written communication, team building, conflict/dispute resolution skills, and setting goals/objectives |
| Lowry & Flohr (2005) | • Discipline-specific knowledge and general management skills must be included in the curriculum |
| Tesone & Ricci (2006) | • To work as part of a team, effective listening, verbal and written communication skills, the ability to project a professional image, and knowledge of grooming and professional image standards |
| Raybould & Wilkins (2006) | • Managers rated skills associated with problem solving, interpersonal, and self-management skill domains as most important. The conceptual/analytical and information management skill groups were least important |

Table 1 **Continued**

| Author(s) | Soft skills |
|---|---|
| Whitelaw, Barron, Buultjens, Cairncross, & Davidson (2009) | • Communication skills, attitude, and motivation |
| Spowart (2011) | • Customer service and the ability and willingness to learn |

Source: Summarize of Literature review, based on Sisson & Adams (2013).

## 2.2. The irrational limiting beliefs

Over the past 25 years, one popular form of psychotherapy has been Albert Ellis' Rational Emotive Therapy (RET; Bernard & DiGiuseppe, 1989), that is based on the A-B-C model of psychological disturbance and therapy. "A" is some activating stressful life event (e.g., frustration, failure, rejection), "B" refers to irrational beliefs, and "C" refers to the psychological and behavioural consequences of these irrational beliefs—i.e., psychological disturbance and maladaptive behaviours.

Belief is an essential topic within the framework of current cognitive therapy models (Segal & Shaw, 1988; Paez & Carbonero, 1993; Bortolotti, 2010). However, the relationship between beliefs and other critical cognitive variables has hardly been studied, and the concept of belief is the basis of models such as Becks (1976) and Ellis' (1962). Most of the instruments designed to evaluate beliefs have been based precisely on the model of the latter author. In 1962, Ellis developed his Rational Emotive Therapy model that postulated the existence of a series of irrational beliefs in the development and maintenance of emotional disorders. These beliefs are classified in (a) false, as not being supported by evidence, (b) being orders or mandates and (c) leading to inadequate emotions such as anxiety or depression, that unconsciously limit individuals achieving their goals. The beliefs we hold about ourselves or others, can either limit who we can be or what we can accomplish.

Frogatt (2005) defined irrational beliefs when they prevent someone from achieving his goals, harming one and others, when they distorts reality and when they contains illogical ways of evaluating oneself, others and the world.

Our beliefs can provide a window of opportunity, where others see no possibility. Based on these beliefs, and our perception of the world, all our actions have a purpose. Beliefs may be characterized as irrational depending upon the extent to which they are not based on objective reality and cause significant intrapersonal and interpersonal conflict (Maultsby, 1971).

Literature reviews (Kendall & Korgeski, 1979; Mahoney, 1974) reveal little progress in development of validated cognitive assessment procedures. The only systematic attempt to develop a measure of irrational belief processes is reported by Jones (1968). Jones wrote a large number of belief (attitude) statements, each of which intuitively reflected one of the 10 irrational beliefs in Ellis's system (Table 2).

Table 2
**Irrational or limiting beliefs**

| Belief | Idea |
|---|---|
| Belief 1 | • The idea that it is a dire necessity for adults to be loved by significant others for almost everything they do |
| Belief 2 | • The idea that we must have certain and perfect control over things |
| Belief 3 | • The idea that certain acts are awful or wicked, and that people who perform such acts should be severely damned |
| Belief 4 | • The idea that it is horrible when things are not the way we like them to be |
| Belief 5 | • The idea that human misery is invariably externally caused and is forced on us by outside people and events |
| Belief 6 | • The idea that if something is or may be dangerous or fearsome we should be terribly upset and endlessly obsess about it |
| Belief 7 | • The idea that it is easier to avoid than to face life difficulties and self-responsibilities |
| Belief 8 | • The idea that we absolutely need something other or stronger or greater than ourselves on which to rely |

Table 2 **Continued**

| Belief | Idea |
|---|---|
| Belief 9 | • The idea that because something once strongly affected our life, it should indefinitely affect it |
| Belief 10 | • The idea that human happiness can be achieved by inertia and inaction |

Source: Based in Jones (1968).

# 3. Methods

Our research objective is to evaluate the impact of irrational and limiting beliefs in the development of employment skills. We conducted our fieldwork doing a series of practical workshops with 30 students of two different master's degrees related to the Hospitality Management industry of the Faculty of Commerce and Tourism of the UCM. In these workshops two surveys have been conducted and two tutors observed the student´s reactions using observational methods in order to see, first-hand, the kind of interactions which take place in a class or field setting.

This methodology (Cotton, Stokes, & Cotton, 2010) has the advantage of enabling data to be collected on events occurring in real-time, in a natural situation. The data will be less influenced by the researcher's own agenda and will be (at least in the raw form) relatively free from bias. Observation was used in conjunction with questionnaires as a form of triangulation (using more than one data collection method to provide a greater understanding of the situation).

## 3.1. Participants

The participants were master students, since they will be closer to the work connection. The participation and attendance at the workshops by the students has been voluntary, since we wanted to prove the degree of commitment of personal growth, the interest of the students, as well as the resistance of destiny in all their process.

It was very revealing that after the first workshop, where the basis of the project was explained and the completion of the Ellis Test took place, the group dropped in participants to half of those involved, from 30 students in the first workshop to approximately 15 students in the three remaining. Something to note is that after the first contact, attendance of students of Asian origin is reduced to zero.

The total sample consisted of 30 participants of both genders: 21 women and 9 men. The ages ranged from 23-28 years and the participants belonged to a middle class within the socioeconomic stratum. 11 were non-Spanish (4 of Asian origin, 6 of Latin American origin, 1 of Arab origin, 1 of European origin).

## 3.2. Survey instrument

In the first workshop we used the Jones' (1968) Irrational Beliefs Test (IBT) that is a prominent self-report instrument that assesses dispositional rationality-irrationality with respect to 10 beliefs proposed by Ellis. This scale is constructed by Jones in order to measure and evaluate the irrational beliefs, and includes 10 subscales and 100 items. Each subscale is related to one of the irrational beliefs which are: Demand for Approval, High Self Expectation, Blame Proneness, Frustration Reactive, Emotional Irresponsibility, Anxious Overconcern, Problems Avoiding, Dependency, Hopelessness Changes and Perfectionism. Scoring of the test is on the base of "agree" or "disagree" in each of the 100 items. Various studies confirm the result of this test and show that the cronbach alpha of the test is 0.71. This test has also an acceptable validity and consistency. Jones has observed the test-retest reliability to be 0.92.

In the second workshop, students were asked to identify soft skills they thought most relevant in relation to their future employability in the hospitality sector. The method used was the Unstructured Brainstorming technique (Diehl & Stroebe, 1987). Through this method, 16 capacities were identified. The participants were asked for a self-assessment in these capacities, and additionally, an external evaluation of three different people was realized. With this exercise, we identified the most appreciated skills of the group and those they may lack at an individual level. The idea of comparing both evaluations, an internal one made by each student and an external one made by third parties, provides a more objective perception of the participants. It permits to analyze the existence of distortions between self-perception and the perception of others. After carrying out both evaluations, the students were asked to reflect on the results obtained through a comparison of both assessments. In addition to the purposes of collecting data for our research, we used this method as many authors recognize its positive effect on the development of abilities (Sleegers & Leithwood, 2010). However, since the focus of this research is on the effect of limiting beliefs on skills, we will not present the part of the exercise that shows the comparison of self-assessment with the external evaluation.

# 4. Analysis

For the analysis of the obtained data, we conducted a descriptive investigation, and Pearson's correlation is used for testing the relationship between variables within the group. There can be a positive or negative correlation and it cannot be used when the null hypothesis is retained, as there would be no relationship. Pearson's correlation should be used when there is a significant effect ($p > 0.05$).

Firstly, we present the descriptive results of the Jones' test (1968), and then we analyze the correlations between the different competences within the group. With this test, we want to check if there are correlations between the possession of specific competencies or not. Finally, we analyze the correlation of limiting beliefs with perceived competencies and we contrast and enrich this result with the tutor´s observation.

# 5. Results and discussion
## 5.1. 1st Workshop results

As we explain in the methodology section, we ask students to take the Jones' test, and the results can be seen in Table 3. The limiting beliefs that we summarize in one word correspond to the ten beliefs defined by Ellis that we cite in the literature review. The results show that the most significant limitations from beliefs refer to the thought that there are bad people who deserve to be punished for their actions as well as perfectionism, dependence on others and the need for approval. However, the results obtained, considering that the scale is 1-10, are around medium figures (neither too low nor too high), the lowest being those referring to the influence of the past and to think that external events are the cause of most of the misfortunes that happen to them. The results obtained show that the students are not aware of their inherent limitations that are a consequence of their beliefs, outcome of education and personal development.

Table 3.
**Descriptive results of Ellis' test**

|          | N  | Minim | Max | Mean   | St. deviation |
|----------|----|-------|-----|--------|---------------|
| Belief_9 | 14 | 1     | 8   | 3.5000 | 2.13937       |
| Belief_5 | 14 | 0     | 10  | 3.7143 | 2.43148       |
| Belief_7 | 14 | 3     | 6   | 3.9286 | 0.99725       |

Table 3 **Continued**

|  | N | Minim | Max | Mean | St. deviation |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Belief_3 | 14 | 2 | 7 | 4.3571 | 1.49908 |
| Belief_1 | 14 | 2 | 10 | 4.4286 | 2.37663 |
| Belief_4 | 14 | 3 | 8 | 4.4286 | 1.50457 |
| Belief_10 | 14 | 3 | 10 | 4.8571 | 1.95555 |
| Belief_6 | 14 | 3 | 8 | 5.2857 | 1.77281 |
| Belief_8 | 14 | 2 | 8 | 5.2857 | 1.58980 |
| Belief_2 | 14 | 2 | 9 | 5.4286 | 2.27746 |

In reference to the observation results, the tutors confirmed that there was a great need for approval from the others (belief 1, Table 2) within the group. Four of the 30 students who took the test obtained relevant scores. Two of them (women), reached the maximum score, and coincide with a brilliant academic record and their lack of confidence in themselves and the cancellation before others. For the group, the belief 7 (Table 2) stands out as the one with the least amount and therefore the one that least affects the group (in general). On the contrary, we can highlight the belief with the highest score, which has been belief 6 (Table 2) "You should feel fear or anxiety about anything unknown, uncertain or potentially dangerous." This belief is an anchor to conformity. Fears make the comfort and safety zone is sought, in extreme cases it can limit the ability to risk or make decisions. In a society in which the socioeconomic level is deeply rooted in beliefs, it is not surprising that security, comfort and conservation instincts are of vital importance to the group.

## 5.2. 2nd Workshop results

The objective of the second exercise was first to identify among all the students, the essential skills for job performance in the hospitality sector (according to the perception and knowledge of the students themselves).

The students identified the soft skills that we present in Table 4 as those most demanded in the hospitality industry:

Table 4
**Students perceived soft skills**

- COMMERCIAL ATTITUDE
- POSITIVITY
- LEADERSHIP
- CHARACTER
- DECISION MAKING
- INITIATIVE
- AUTONOMY
- COMMUNICATION
- GIFT OF PEOPLE
- PROBLEM RESOLUTION
- PROACTIVITY
- MOTIVATION

Table 4 **Continued**

- EMPATHY

- PERSEVERANCE

- TEAMWORK

- RESPONSIBILITY

- COMMITMENT

We have compared these competencies with those developed by literature (see Table 1) finding three different categories (see Table 5):

1) Skills developed in the literature by various authors

2) Skills conceptualized in the literature with other terms but with a similar meaning and

3) Competencies not identified / not conceptualized by the literature as specific to this sector.

Table 5
**Comparison of skills identified by students and literature**

| Cate-gory | Competencies identified by the students | References |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | • LEADERSHIP | Tas et al. (1996); Brownell & Brownell (1994); Kay & Russette (2000); Gursoy & Swanger (2004) |
| 1 | • COMMUNICATION | Okeiyi et al. (1994); Gursoy & Swanger (2004); Lin (2002); Gursoy & Swanger (2005); Tesone & Ricci (2005, 2006); Whitelaw et al. (2009) |
| 1 | • MOTIVATION | Whitelaw et al. (2009) |
| 1 | • TEAMWORK | Chung (2000); Gursoy & Swanger (2005); Tesone & Ricci (2005, 2006); Raybould & Wilkins (2006) |
| 1 | • PROBLEM RESOLUTION | Cho & Connolly (1999); Raybould & Wilkins (2006) |
| 2 | • INITIATIVE | Conceptualized as Self-management Chung-Herrera et al. (2003) or general management skills Lowry & Flohr (2005) |
| 2 | • AUTONOMY | Conceptualized as Self-management Chung-Herrera et al. (2003) or general management skills Lowry & Flohr (2005) |
| 2 | • PROACTIVITY | Conceptualized as Self-management Chung-Herrera et al. (2003) or general management skills Lowry & Flohr (2005) |
| 2 | • EMPATHY | Conceptualized as Interpersonal skills Tas et al. (1996); Kay & Russette (2000) |
| 2 | • PERSEVERANCE | Conceptualized as Self-management Chung-Herrera et al. (2003) or general management skills Lowry & Flohr (2005) |
| 2 | • RESPONSIBILITY | Conceptualized as Professional Conduct Okeiyi et al. (1994) or good work habits Gursoy & Swanger (2005) |
| 2 | • COMMITMENT | Conceptualized as Professional Conduct Okeiyi et al. (1994) or good work habits Gursoy & Swanger (2005) |
| 3 | • COMMERCIAL ATTITUDE | Not defined by the literature specifically for this sector or general management skills Lowry & Flohr (2005) |
| 3 | • POSITIVITY | Not defined by the literature specifically for this sector; Conceptualized as Self-management Chung-Herrera et al. (2003) or general management skills Lowry & Flohr (2005) |
| 3 | • CHARACTER | Not conceptualized by the literature as a competence |
| 3 | • GIFT OF PEOPLE | Not conceptualized by the literature as a competence |

We consider that future research should contrast with other students the identified skills as well as their ontological significance. This aspect seemed even more relevant in the case of the competences not conceptualized by the literature as competences.

Concluding particular emphasis has finally been placed in interpersonal skills and self-management. Then, we ask students to self-assess about the self-identified skills from 1-5, where 1 is very little, and 5 is high.

We present the results in Table 6.

Table 6
**Skills self-evaluation**

|  | Mean | St. deviation |
|---|---|---|
| • RESPONSIBILITY | 4.6429 | 0.63332 |
| • COMMITMENT | 4.6429 | 0.49725 |
| • TEAMWORK | 4.2143 | 0.57893 |
| • EMPATHY | 4.0000 | 1.03775 |
| • PERSEVERANCE | 4.0000 | 0.87706 |
| • PROACTIVITY | 3.9286 | 0.73005 |
| • MOTIVATION | 3.9286 | 0.73005 |
| • PROBLEM_RESOLUTION | 3.8571 | 0.66299 |
| • COMMUNICATION | 3.7857 | 0.97496 |
| • GIFT_OF_PEOPLE | 3.7857 | 1.12171 |
| • INITIATIVE | 3.7143 | 0.72627 |
| • AUTONOMY | 3.7143 | 0.72627 |
| • LEADERSHIP | 3.5714 | 0.51355 |
| • CHARACTER | 3.5714 | 1.22250 |
| • DECISION_MAKING | 3.5714 | 0.85163 |
| • POSITIVITY | 3.2857 | 1.13873 |
| • COMMERCIAL_ATTITUDE | 2.6429 | 1.00821 |

The two most developed skills are responsibility and commitment. We believe that these results may present a bias since of the initial 30 students, only 14 took this test. We interpret that they were perhaps the most committed and responsible from the initial group. The two least developed capacities on average are positivity and commercial attitude. This result can be an insight for hospitality postgraduate schools since they are somehow capacities that students see they will need and where they are scarce.

Finally, we analyze if the competences were correlated with each other. The results are presented in Table 7.

Table 7
**Skills significant correlations**

| Skills positive correlations | |
|---|---|
| • Empathy-perseverance | 0.592* |
| • Leadership-decision making | 0.707** |
| • Proactivity-initiative | 0.684** |
| • Problem solving-autonomy | 0.707** |
| • Communication-gift of people | 0.940** |
| • Teamwork- commitment | 0.554* |
| • Responsibility-commitment | 0.785** |
| • Responsibility-perseverance | 0.692** |
| • Commercial attitude-gift of people | 0.539* |
| • Commercial attitude-character | 0.553* |
| • Motivation-decision making | 0.566* |

Note: *$P \leq 0.05$; **$P \leq 0.01$.

We find the results of Table 7 very suggestive, since they show us that there are many synergies in the development of the skills among the students. Each one of them could be analyzed, but as our sample

is small, we will do it in future studies. We find it especially challenging that the commercial attitude is linked to the character and gift of people, since we can rely on these capacities to develop it.

## 5.3. Limiting beliefs and soft-skills

The degree of internalization of certain beliefs tends to have a direct relationship between negativity or negative anticipation, the positivity of the person, the ability to open before the unknown, fear and other characteristics. The discovering of adherence to beliefs can show students how they limit them in a certain way and how they might use them in order to empower themselves and change those beliefs.

After analyzing the limiting beliefs (1st Workshop) and main soft-skills (2nd Workshop), we selected the sample of the students for whom we had all the data, that is, they had participated in the two workshops. With these data, we first analyze the significance of the correlations between both groups of variables.

We find the existence of highly specific negative correlations especially relevant. They would be indicating how there are certain limiting beliefs that limit the development of soft skills.

Leadership is significant negative correlated with belief 4 (-0.540*), that is, the idea that it is horrible when things are not the way we like them to be is limiting the leadership as a soft skill in the students.

Proactivity is significant negatively correlated with three limiting beliefs: belief 7 which refers to problem avoidance (-0.641 *) and thinking that inactivity will provide happiness belief 10 (-0.547 *) and belief 4 (-0.537). This result is quite logical and also indicates that the lack of proactivity can come from these limiting beliefs. This leads us to think about the convenience of confronting no proactive people with those thoughts linked to the belief that it is easier to avoid problems and responsibilities in life than to face them, and the fact that happiness increases with inactivity, passivity and leisure.

The communication capacity is negatively correlated, and this correlation is being significant with the demand for approval: belief 1 (-0.721 **), perfectionism belief 2 (-0.718 **) and the thought that the past has great influence on the present belief 9 (-0.609 *), these beliefs were the ones that would somehow be limiting students in their oral and written communication. However, this communication capacity is positively correlated with the seventh belief that it is easier to avoid problems than to face them, a fact for which we do not find a plausible explanation.

The gift of people, in turn, is also negatively correlated with the demand for approval: belief 1 (-0.684**) and perfectionism belief 2 (-0.624 *), being these beliefs that seem to be blocking in students that ability to relate positively with the rest. The capacity development that we called as "character", and that we related to assertiveness, appears negatively related with two limiting beliefs: catastrophizing, belief 4 (-0.643 *) and past influence belief 9 (-0.588 *). In other words, the belief that leads us to think that it is horrible when things do not go as we would like and the relationship with which the past determines the present negatively, influence students to act with self-confidence and assertiveness. Teamwork is also negatively correlated, and this correlation is significant, with the demand for approval belief 1 (-0.631 *) and catastrophizing belief 4 (-0.643 *). In other words, victimhood and the need for approval from others may be making the ability to work in teams more difficult. The commitment also appears negatively correlated, in a significant way, with the need for approval and feeling loved: belief 1(-0.642 *) and perfectionism belief 2 (-0.534 *) as well as with the influence of the past belief 9 (-0.615 *). As the commitment is one of the capabilities unequivocally demanded by companies, they should consider that to facilitate their development while new workers need to be approved and be able to do their job well. The commercial attitude seems blocked by the fear of the unknown belief 6 (-0.541 *). Motivation is negatively correlated with the need for approval belief 1

(-0.690 **), the influence of the past in the present belief 9 (-0.665 **). The positivity, which was one of the capabilities along with the less developed commercial attitude in students (in their perception) also appears negatively correlated with the need for approval belief 1 (-0.674 *) and the influence of the past belief 9 (-0.600 *).

In summary, we can affirm that there are many relationships between limiting beliefs and soft-skills, with the demand for approval and inactivity as happiness being the beliefs that most capacities seem to block. These beliefs seem closely related to millennials. Numerous studies talk about the priority that millennials give to leisure as well as most of the existing interventions do not reduce the number of hours employees work, but reconfigure leisure time around work (Lee, McCann, & Messenger, 2007). There is also abundant literature that talks about the need for millennial approval as well as the one that proposes to propose reverse mentoring as a social exchange tool (Chaudury & Gosh, 2012).

# 6. Conclusions, implications and limitations of the research

This paper is exploratory and studied the students' perceptions about the skills demanded by the Hospitality sector and, for the first time, the relationship between the limiting beliefs and soft skills. We verify that on the one hand, the student's do not use the same skills denominations as the companies. This fact may be due to the lack of connection between the training that students receive in the master's degree and the industry requirements. On the other hand, studying their perception, we also find competencies that they call "character" and "gift of people", which, although they could be classified as intrapersonal and interpersonal competencies respectively, had not been defined as such. The relationships found between soft-skills can be useful in the recruitment and selection processes since in one process, companies cannot do all the tests they would like, and these relationships can be helpful in order to find the most suitable candidate. Also, in training programs, for industry and university, it may be convenient to keep in mind that the development of these competencies is not isolated, but that certain competencies are linked. Managers should know that the commitment of employees can be increased by giving new graduates more responsibility and enhancing teamwork. The study reveals new factors related to limiting beliefs that may slow down and interfere in the development of abilities desired by the students. These results may be significant for both universities, which develop master programs for hospitality management, and the sector itself. Also, it provides students with tools that permit them to recognize and use correctly empowering skills and transform limiting beliefs that do not allow them to develop their full potential.

The outcomes of this study are intended to influence both the contents of the master's programs, as well as in the selection processes of the hospitality sector companies.

The main contribution of the paper focuses on the effect of limiting beliefs on the development of soft-skills — this is an unexplored topic in the literature in general and in the hospitality sector in particular. The results of the paper illustrate how the "need for approval" and the "need for leisure" are the central beliefs that limit the development of soft-skills in our student's. In this paper, we intend to open a line of research that will have, as a result, other research that covers the main limitations of our study. Another line of research we propose is that it refers to Asian students and limiting beliefs. It is necessary to study this issue with larger and more representative samples, as well as to have categorical data that help us establish comparisons by country of origin, age and gender.

Another study that we want to carry out is to complete the database with which we have worked in the second part of the paper when the students in the sample (N = 14) have entered the labour market.

When we have this data, we will study the causal relationships between limiting beliefs, skills and job success. For this purpose, we will use the relatively new technique of the QCA. This technique is especially appropriate in social science research, mainly when a few cases are being studied, and we want to know in-depth each case and the associated causality relationships. QCA can determine how a data set empirically supports descriptive inferences or implications.

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