IRJEMS International Research Journal of Economics and Management Studies
Published by Eternal Scientific Publications
ISSN: 2583 – 5238 / Volume 4 Issue 10 October 2025 / Pg. No: 61-66
Paper Id: IRJEMS-V4I10P109, Doi: 10.56472/25835238/IRJEMS-V4I10P109

Original Article

Soft Skills Mastery for Accountants in Hong Kong: Key Insights and Professional Perspectives

[1*]**Chee Leong Kow**
[1]*Twintech International University College of Technology, Pulau Pinang, Malaysia.*

Received Date: 21 September 2025 Revised Date: 14 October 2025 Accepted Date: 16 October 2025 Published Date: 18 October 2025

Abstract*: Soft skills training and development for accountants in Hong Kong have gained more prominence over the past few years due to the evolving role of the accountant. This study recognizes key findings and professional perspectives about soft skills development for accountants, with particular emphasis on its growing importance in parallel with technical skills. Drawing from interviews with seasoned practitioners and a survey of professional practice, the research determines the most significant soft skills required to succeed, including communication, problem-solving, adaptability, and leadership. It examines how these skills augment traditional accounting activity, build successful client relationships, and foster career development. The study also identifies the challenges accountants face in acquiring and enhancing these skills, such as limited formal training opportunities and the perception of soft skills as secondary technical information. Through these findings, the study advocates for a more integrated approach to accounting professional development, whereby soft skills are regarded as indispensable to success in coping with the complexity of modern financial environments. The study concludes with recommendations for training programs and organizational initiatives to develop Hong Kong accountants' soft skills competency to prepare them for future challenges and demands in the profession.*

Keywords*: Accounting Career Skills Enhancement, Client Relationship Management, Communication, Cross-Cultural, Professional Growth.*

I. INTRODUCTION

In the rapidly changing world of international business today, the accountant's function has transcended the technical areas of financial reporting, tax compliance, and auditing. Accountants today are envisioned more as strategic business advisors in organizational decision-making, thus necessitating a broader skill set that includes leadership, communication, collaboration, and emotional quotient – commonly referred to as soft skills. In a global finance hub like Hong Kong, this trend is most pronounced as businesses look for finance professionals capable of managing sophisticated regulatory environments, dealing with a wide mix of stakeholders, and contributing meaningfully to the strategic goals of their organizations.

It has been established that individuals with highly developed soft skills are far more productive in terms of being part of different teams, communicating effectively with colleagues, customers, and stakeholders, as well as managing change management within an organization. For instance, Polonen [1] suggested special abilities such as empathy, negotiation, and leadership, being part of soft skills, are aspects of human behavior that no machine, however advanced, can ever fully replicate. They ensure human interests and ethical needs find their place within business processes even when AI and automation prevail.

The inclusion of soft skills in accounting classes is an extrapolation of larger trends in the job market, where interdisciplinarity and adaptability are more highly valued. Accountants are no longer simply "number crunchers" today but are reasonably strategic within the firm's organizational structure. That means that, while accountants are required to be competent at day-to-day accounting functions, they must also develop leadership skills, manage teams, and participate in decision-making that affects a firm's long-term profitability.

Teeter and Sandberg [2] support this assertion, demonstrating that the need for soft skills in accounting is present at all levels of a career. An experienced accountant is supposed to mentor junior staff, lead client engagements, and advise on corporate strategy—roles that all involve good interpersonal and communication skills. It has increasingly come to be viewed as a strategic profession that must interpret data in a way that drives decisions and innovation.

In a vibrant city like Hong Kong, it is undeniable that competencies contributed to the careers of professional accountants. The need for these competencies has increased significantly, particularly due to the pandemic. When entering the workforce, graduates struggle with the uncertainty of job-seeking. Typically, they struggle with going from college to the office, the long-term prospects of the industry students want to enter, and most importantly of all, their skills being mismatched with current employers. To make the transition easier, higher education institutions make their students go through internships to prepare for the job-seeking process. Yet, there is much to be done for these internship programs. Institutions need to collaborate with employers and students to ensure that the programs are relevant not only to the degree program curriculum but also to the social and cultural context of Hong Kong. Doing so would enable students to acquire more in-demand skills. These concerns are especially important in light of the state of Hong Kong's economy after the pandemic. From July to September 2021, the country's unemployment rate was estimated at 6.4%, the highest in 15 years [3].

Due to these changes in global workplace dynamics, Hong Kong is no exception in imposing new requirements on education systems to meet the needs of industries. Indeed, such transformation is more evident in recent years, concurrent with the fluctuations in the current post-pandemic economies. Tertiary education institutions should work hand in hand with employers in a way that the degree programs offered are competitive enough to meet the competencies required in existing employment. One of the foundational alignments in this area is the need to develop both technical and soft skills in the classroom, which is being increasingly pursued with greater urgency by organizations seeking individuals who can engage and connect with others, adapt, and lead effectively using their hard skills.

The current reality of the profession should be taken into account to help determine areas where accountants may need further development, with a view to informing future professional programs and training. It shall be an exploratory study by design, with a view towards collecting data from Hong Kong accountants, who are more narrowly defined as CPAs, for further analysis of the competencies involved in highly performing in the workforce today.

This study aims to reveal the importance of soft skills among Hong Kong accountants, examining how these non-technical skills are transforming the profession's requirements and career progression. With business environments around the world becoming increasingly interconnected and technology-driven, communication skills, teamwork, and flexibility are as valuable as technical skills. Through an analysis of strategic advice from industry thought leaders and experts, this research sheds light on how accountants and their employers perceive the importance of mastering soft skills, as well as the issues and challenges accountants face in developing their professional expertise.

The study also examines how soft skills complement traditional accounting expertise, enabling accountants to more effectively manage client relations, support top-level business decisions, and drive innovation in the workplace. This new competency framework has significant implications for accounting education and professional growth in Hong Kong, where graduating accountants with the right blend of skills is key to ultimate career fulfillment.

II. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The research seeks to identify the soft skills of professional accountants [4] in Hong Kong. It focuses on the profile of accountants, the strategies to utilize in addressing the training needs of accountants who lack soft skills, and the coaching methods that need to be implemented to help accountants effectively interact with clients and staff.

III. METHODS

The research used a descriptive-correlational method to help guide the study. By using this approach, the research was able to identify interrelated variables and simultaneously develop possible solutions for the studied problems. The correlational aspect of this study involves analyzing the relationships and patterns that arise from the responses of CPA participants to survey questions that touch on soft skills.

The research gathered data from CPAs currently working in the government or private sectors of Hong Kong. The study used a convenience sampling because there is a large number of CPAs working in Hong Kong. The sample was efficiently obtained by drawing from sources that are most accessible to the researcher. The sample was drawn from a roster of registered CPAs currently practicing in Hong Kong, provided by the Hong Kong Institute of Certified Public Accountants (HKICPA). According to the "Alpha-list of Members in Good Standing" from HKICPA, there are 130 CPAs who are qualified to participate in this study.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

A) Profile of the Respondents

Table 1 shows that most respondents (46.70%) are under 25 years old, while 34.60% are aged 25-29 years old. Smaller percentages fall into other age groups, with 6.50% each in the 35-39 and 40-44 age ranges. 57% of respondents are female, while 43% are male. The majority (66.40%) are college graduates who passed the licensure exam, 25.2% have completed master's coursework, 6.5% have master's degrees, and 1.90% hold doctoral degrees. Most respondents (62.60%) have worked for 1.5 years, while 27.10% have been employed for 6-10 years. Only 3.70% have 16-20 years of service, and 2.80% have less than a year. The majority (78.50%) have attended three or fewer seminars in the past three years, while 18.70% have attended 4-6 seminars. Only a small number attended more than 6.

Table 1: Distribution of respondents according to their profile

PERSONAL-RELATED FACTORS	*f*	%
Age		
25 below	50	46.7
25 to 29 years	37	34.6
30 to 34 years	4	3.7
35 to 39 years	7	6.5
40 to 44 years	7	6.5
55 to 59 years	1	.9
60 years and above	1	.9
Total	**107**	**100.0**
Sex	***f***	**%**
Male	46	57.0
Female	61	43.0
Total	**107**	**100.0**
Educational Attainment	***f***	**%**
College Graduate	71	66.4
with Master's units	27	25.2
Master's Degree	7	6.5
with Doctoral units	2	1.9
Total	**107**	**100.0**
Years in Service	***f***	**%**
Less than a year	3	2.8
1-5 years	67	62.6
6-10 years	29	27.1
11-15 years	2	1.9
16-20 years	4	3.7
21-25 years	1	.9
26-30 years	1	.9
Total	**107**	**100.0**
Number of IT-Related Seminars and Trainings attended for the last 3 years	***f***	**%**
3 and below	84	78.5
4-6	20	18.7
7-9	1	.9
10 and above	2	1.9
Total	**107**	**100.0**

B) The Strategies to Utilize to Address the Training Needs of the Accountants who Lack in Soft Skills

a. Emergent Theme 1: Soft Skills Needed for Success

The first recurring theme was the dearth of soft skills among entry-level workers with technical training. Communication skills, professionalism, and client interaction were among the soft skills indicated by the participants. Each participant listed the soft skill issues they have seen among staff members based on their personal experiences and observations. In the participant interviews, the topic of soft skills essential for success was mentioned 81 times.

Table 2: The soft skills that participants regarded as being most important

Subthemes	*n*	% of the frequency of occurrence
Communication skills	32	40
Professionalism	15	18
Interacting with clients	34	42

Communication skills. Responses from participants highlighted how crucial soft skills are for success. The results were consistent with the theoretical framework proposed by Thomas and Qiu [5], according to which technological advancements, together with education and training, raise the need for highly qualified workers. According to Dalaya et al. [6], organizations have a difficult time finding the right employees with the essential hard talents and soft skills. The results of my investigation agree with those from earlier studies. The relationship between human capital training and performance, according to Thomas and Qiu and Dalaya et al., gives accountants opportunities for personal improvement and increases their value to the firm. Participants' comments support the agreement with earlier studies. Soft skills are "a very important thing for professional staff in an accounting firm to learn," according to PP2, because even if employees are technically competent, "if they can't communicate well with their staff they can't communicate well with a client," as stated by PP1: "Some of them have good communication skills, but I would say, half of them do not." It won't work, PS1 stated. "Overall, effective communication is the largest problem, especially for new workers. Knowing when to utilize email, pick up the phone, or go meet someone in person, and how to effectively communicate in an appropriate manner are all examples of suitable communication techniques.

Professionalism. Poor professionalism, according to Clark, Downen, and Bain [7], has an impact on society, employers, and customers. Because of this, individuals who discussed the lack of soft skills in accountants also highlighted the lack of professionalism. The results corroborated a study by Strauss-Keevy and Maré [8] that claimed professionals' careers depended on their ability to use soft skills. Jackson [9] added that communication proficiency is crucial for professional performance and that both practitioners and educators concur with this statement. As younger people assume leadership roles, many of them lack what I would call professionalism, according to PP1. Being aware of how to express oneself. How can you seem professional while maintaining a relaxed attitude?” It's a really delicate line, PS1 said, "between going in there and being professionally skeptical and pushing back on them when we need to push back on them, but still being able to do it in a way that they're still pleased to hire us again the next year. Coming out of college and right out of the gate, I believe it is incredibly tough to understand that delicate balance.

Interacting with clients. Etter and Ross [10] stressed that accountants with strong communication skills are in high demand while consulting and communicating with clients, as was already mentioned. According to Chydenius and Gaisch [11], interaction skills can involve a range of abilities, including the use of suitable communication channels, the ability to generate trust in clients, and the ability to identify and meet their requirements. Participants in this study remarked that the capacity of accountants to engage with clients is a crucial soft skill, which is similar to the findings of Etter and Ross and Chydenius and Gaisch.

The query, "How do you deal, on one, with a client, particularly if you're coming in at your entry-level," was posed in selected feedback from participants like PP1. Dealing with folks who are considerably older than you may be necessary. How do you project that you know what you're doing, and how do you go about doing that?" Some of the skills that we see lacking have more to do with dealing with clients and how to handle upset clients", said PP2.

b. Emergent Theme 2: Mentoring and Leadership Programs

Providing mentoring and leadership programs emerged as the second major theme from the data. Participants in the discussion on this issue identified ways to raise the level of competencies for entry-level accountants who possess technical expertise but lack soft skills. They also identified ways to build relationships among peers. Participants remarked that mentoring and leadership programs designed by managers and leaders to support the professional development of entry-level personnel offered practical training and priceless experiences. The topic of mentorship and leadership programs was mentioned ten times in participant interviews.

Table 3: Frequency of Mentoring and Leadership Programs

Name	*n*	% of the frequency of occurrence
PS1	1	10
PP2	3	30
PS2	1	10
PG1	2	20
PP1	3	30

During the interview, participants specifically discussed mentorship and leadership activities. We have supervisors mentoring senior employees, and senior employees are mentoring entry-level people, according to PP1. I'm going to try to assist one of the people I mentor in learning how to engage with others, get them to do what you want them to do, and teach and train them. Therefore, we currently have a mentoring program in place for everyone. PS2 said, "The mentoring training has decreased our turnover." PG1 declared, "We've hired an outside consultant." PP2 said, "We have matched up people in the emerging leaders' group with senior-level leadership group, and they meet once a month and have breakfast and lunch, you know, spend an hour just talking about ways that they can improve their soft skills within the firm." She initially began with a leadership program that included six senior-level employees and the junior staff members they believed had the ability to become managers or senior staff. She speaks about many various topics, including how to advance your career and communication, personality types, and work skills.

c. Emergent Theme 3: Team Building Initiatives

Team-building initiatives were the last major trend to emerge from the data. Participants praised that the organization has various team development initiatives and activities during each month and at least twice per year while discussing this issue. The topic of team-building exercises was mentioned 22 times in participant interviews.

Table 4: Frequency of Team Building Initiatives

Name	*n*	% of the frequency of occurrence
PS1	3	14
PP2	5	23
PS2	2	9
PG1	4	18
PP1	8	36

The results of this study support earlier research by Jackson [9], which asserts that opportunities for soft skills training in a work environment with realistic client and team interactions are essential for accountants to attain long-term employment and success. Efficient teamwork also necessitates efficient communication with management [12]. Working in teams improves productivity while also fulfilling the company's overall goals, according to more than 78% of business leaders in the United States [13]. Aga, Noorderhaven, & Vallejo [14] found that research on team building projects continues to offer guidance on how to teach technical staff soft skills.

Participants' comments, such as PG1's, "We are probably at our best at team building," support the firms' acknowledgment of the need to invest in team projects. Each year, we undertake a few team-building activities. Additionally, we do hold regular team meetings. One of the exercises was to answer six out of ten questions by drawing them on the paper provided by the consultant, which we then posted outside our door in an effort to foster internal communication. PP1 stated, "We do team-building exercises throughout the year. Some of them are merely entertaining pursuits. We provide lunch for the crew and give them survival kits during the busiest season. During the Olympics last year, we held a team-building exercise where participants were put into groups and competed in events like calculator races. We also have a starfish fund, to which people give, so if someone needs assistance due to a personal circumstance, we will do it.

Similarly, "our emerging leaders group just completed a team-building activity within their group," PP2 said. They all proceeded to a maze-like game [15] where you are locked in a room and must work as a team to find out how to escape. Additionally, PS1 stated, "We try to have group events twice a year where we all grow, and we all go do something fun outside of the office. It does help interdepartmentally to keep us cohesive and keep communications open throughout the departments. I believe that it brings us together and strengthens our bonds with one another, making coaching sessions more fruitful.

d. The Coaching Methods to Implement to Help the Accountants Effectively Interact with Clients and Staff

The study suggests that improving accountants' soft skills can benefit both employers and clients. Employers can use the findings to train their staff, and clients will appreciate accountants who are skilled in communication and teamwork. The main theme was "Theme 1: Soft Skills Needed for Success." Subcategories of this subject that arose included client engagement, professionalism, and communication. Soft skills like communication, professionalism, and building relationships with clients are the key to success, the study found. The respondents agree that excellent communication, mentoring, and team-building training are essential in improving the skills.

From the responses, three of the respondents agreed that spending time with new employees is needed in order to facilitate them in gaining their soft skills, testifying to the idea of mentoring and leadership initiatives. All participants agreed that continuous interpersonal contact and personal interaction foster confidence and trust, which increases workplace participation.

Since Theme 3 was described, the majority of participants felt that team-building activities involving participation and openness showed dedication to the firm at work. In teamworking research, employees indicated that managers supported them effectively and that they worked well in teams, communicating and solving problems better.

The findings from the research emphasize offering more soft skills education and training to accountants. These findings concur with the literature that previously pointed out that employee development can have significant benefits. This new information can assist leaders in crafting initiatives to enhance the professional development of accountants. Through continuous training and learning, accountants can enhance their client handling skills, enhance their work performance, improve the client satisfaction level, and ultimately help the company achieve its goals.

V. CONCLUSION

The research has identified the soft skills of professional accountants in Hong Kong based on the following:

Leadership and mentorship schemes can involve on-the-job training that results in staff promotion and retention, thereby decreasing turnover. A mentorship culture supports professionalism and career advancement. In the accounting field, the implementation of these programs can lead to a positive social transformation, as these methods may build well-organized and solid teams and improve their important soft skills.

In order for the soft skills training to be properly implemented in the accounting field, it is crucial that all management levels are committed to taking part in the mentoring and leadership processes. This ensures that the training is not only for "mere training" but is regarded as an actual part and integrated into the company's daily operations. When a superior or a senior management engages in these activities, this creates a value and relevance for the need for soft skills development.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

Because of the preceding conclusions, the researchers recommend the following:

The findings of this study defined the ways managers teach technical workers in soft skills. One of the methods is to provide soft skill training programs. Another is to provide in-house staff mentorship and leadership programs. A third is to participate in teambuilding exercises that promote workplace collaboration, along with the development of professional relationships.

Through improvement in engagement, participation, and work expectations by the development of soft skills, mentoring increased participants' interpersonal and communication skills. The programs for mentoring and leadership provide the opportunity for recruits to learn from more experienced workers and understand the proper corporate behavior.

Higher learning institutions must take the findings on board as well. Students should be equipped with interpersonal and soft skills if they are to make a smooth transition from the classroom to the job. Accounting students should be provided with courses related to those skills. Universities could do more to assist employers in finding all-round accounting recruits by working with businesses that employ accountants.

VII. REFERENCES

[1] Polonen, A. (2021). The Human Advantage: Soft Skills in a World of Automation. Journal of Work & Technology, 18(2), 45-59.

[2] Teeter, R.A., & Sandberg, R. (2020). The Evolving Role of Accountants in a Technological World. Journal of Accounting and Management, 30(4), 12-21.

[3] Cheng, S. L., & Kubanychbekova, A. (2023). Precarity and struggles of employment: A case study of undergraduates in Hong Kong. *International Journal of Linguistics, Literature and Translation*, 6(4), 131-135. doi:https://doi.org/10.32996/ijllt.2023.6.4.17.

[4] Abu Asabeh, S., Alzboon, R., Alkhalaileh, R., Alshurafat, H., & Al Amosh, H. (2023). Soft skills and knowledge required for a professional accountant: Evidence from Jordan. *Cogent Education*, *10*(2), 2254157.

[5] Thomas, H., & Qiu, T. (2013). Continuing professional development: Accountability, autonomy, efficiency, and equity in five professions. *British Journal of Educational Studies,* 61(2), 161-186. doi:10.1080/00071005.2012.756445.

[6] Dalaya, M., Ishaquddin, S., Ghadage, M., & Hatte, G. (2014). An interesting review on soft skills and dental practice. *Journal of Clinical and Diagnostic Research*, 9, 560-569. doi:10.7860/JCDR/2015/12725.5719.

[7] Clark, T., Downen, T., & Bain, C. (2016). Professionalism in accounting graduates: Employers' preferences and colleges of business' challenges. *Journal of Academy of Business Education,* 17(1), 57-171. http://www.abeweb.org.

[8] Strauss-Keevy, M., & Maré, D. (2015). *Influence: The development of pervasive skills.* Accountancy SA, 52-54. Available at http://www.accountancysa.org.za (Accessed 29 July 2022).

[9] Jackson, D. (2016). Modeling graduate skill transfer from university to the workplace. *Journal of Education & Work,* 29(2), 199-231. doi:10.1080/13639080.2014.907486.

[10] Etter, E. R., & Ross, B. W. (2013). The use of article summaries in accounting courses: Improving students' reading comprehension, learning, thinking, and communication skills. *American Journal of Business Education (Online)*, 6, 595-608. doi:10.19030/ajbe.v6i6.8163.

[11] Chydenius, T., & Gaisch, M. (2016). Work-life interaction skills: An exploration of definitional and functional perspectives within the Austrian and Finnish ICT industry. *Business Perspectives & Research*, 4(2), 169-181. doi:10.1177/2278533716642654.

[12] Parratt, J. A., Fahy, K. M., Hutchinson, M., Lohmann, G., Hastie, C. R., Chaseling, M., & O'Brien, K. (2016). Expert validation of a teamwork assessment rubric: A modified Delphi study. *Nurse Education Today*, 36, 77-85. doi:10.1016/j.nedt.2015.07.023.

[13] Crutchfield, T. N., & Klamon, K. (2014). Assessing the dimensions and outcomes of an effective teammate. *Journal of Education for Business*, 89(6), 285-291. doi:10.1080/08832323.2014.885873.
[14] Aga, D., Noorderhaven, N., & Vallejo, B. (2016). Transformational leadership and project success: The mediating role of team-building. International *Journal of Project Management,* 34(5), 806-818. doi:10.1016/j.ijproman.2016.02.012.
[15] Tekik, O., Surer, E., & Can, A. B. (2022). Verifying maze-like game levels with model checker Spin. *IEEE Access*, *10*, 66492-66510.