

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

Who can we say qualifies as a successful student? Is it the grades that they make, the position in class they ranked, the overall percentage in their cohort or the graduation with first class distinction that they received? What about the need be able to function effectively with their peers, with colleagues, with their supervisors and with society in general? The need to be able to think creatively and critically, the need to communicate effectively, the need to show their leadership skills, the need to show their ability to manage, in whole the need to be a global and engaged citizen is very important for today's graduates.

As the world evolved over the last few decades, so has the world of education and employment. Today's knowledge workers have fewer individual repetitive tasks, more autonomy, and more need to work with and through people at every level of an organization (Overtoom, 2000).

We discussed in chapter one, grades of students are not just the determining factor for employers but their ability to think and function efficiently on the job is what employers are looking for. These are the soft skills that employers are demanding from graduates but, what exactly are soft skills?

## 2.2 Soft Skills

Various studies on the required attributes of a graduate indicated that any graduate ought to have both generic competencies as well as disciplinary knowledge (Ng, Abdullah, Nee & Tiew, 2009; Wye & Lim, 2009; and Quah et al., 2009). Generic competencies are skills, abilities and attributes that can complement the field of specialization (Quek, 2005; Quah et al., 2009). This is because mere possession of discipline knowledge is not sufficient to allow a student or the graduate to function effectively in the workplace (Quah, et al., 2009c; Kaur & Sharma, 2007).

Generic competencies or skills are abilities that are deemed relevant across many different jobs or professions (Cassidy, 2006). Generic skills include communication skills (Zinser, 2003; Quek, 2005; Cassidy, 2006; Kaur & Sharma, 2007; Singh & Singh, 2008; Wye & Lim, 2009; Ng et al., 2009); problem-solving skills (Quek, 2005; Cassidy, 2006; Wye & Lim, 2009; Ng et al., 2009; Kaur & Sharma, 2007); computer literacy, information literacy ability (Quek, 2005; Ng et al., 2009); teamwork (Quek, 2005; Cassidy, 2006; Kaur & Sharma, 2007; Ng et al., 2009); relating to others (Bakar & Hanafi, 2007); good team leadership skills (Thacker & Yost, 2002); creative thinking, problem solving and analytical skills (Singh & Singh, 2008); negotiation (Wye & Lim, 2009); self-management (Zinser, 2003; Kaur & Sharma, 2007). Quek (2005) has further expanded the list to include interpersonal skills, leadership skills, research skills; practical orientation abilities such as diversity awareness and global understanding; attributes like diligence, dependability and honesty, flexibility, adaptability and resourcefulness. Cassidy (2006) agreed with Quek (2005)'s list and also included self-discipline as an important trait to have.

The term general competencies or soft skills is also referred to by many researchers as employability skills. According to Sherer and Eadie (1987) as quoted in Cassidy (2006), “Employability skills are not job specific but are skills which cut horizontally across all industries and vertically across all jobs from entry level to chief executive officer.” Cassidy (2006) added that because of their relevance to professional functioning, non-technical skills are commonly referred to as employability skills.

As listed above there are many generic soft skills that are important and required on the job but which ones are more important and that employers are emphasizing on? It is not enough by just knowing on a general basis what types of skills are important but to find out how important are each of the skills to employers and to students. A research was done by Raymond, McNabb and Matthaei (1993) on both students and employers to look for perceptions of the most important skills for entry-level employees. They found that “employers ranked oral skills, dependability, interpersonal skills, written skills, and self-starter/motivation as the top five skills and abilities essential for success.” The students’ respond was also similar perceiving oral skills, interpersonal skills, dependability, motivation and written skills as the most important.

Some researchers have developed models to look at the elements that go into employability. Hillage and Pollard (1998) as cited in Pool and Sewell (2007) proposed that employability consisted of four main elements. The first are “employability assets” belonging to the graduates themselves, which includes knowledge, skills and attitudes. Second is “deployment” which includes, career

management skills and job search skills. Thirdly is “presentation” which is linked to “job getting skills” like preparing a CV, interview techniques, job experiences and finally “personal circumstances” like family responsibilities and external factors like the opportunity for employment.

Bennett, Dunne and Carre (1999) proposed a model of course provision in higher education which included five elements. They include “disciplinary content knowledge; disciplinary skills; workplace awareness; workplace experience and generic skills.” This model has taken into account all the necessary elements to ensure that a graduate achieves an optimum level of employability. However Yorke and Knight (2004) argued that there are some elements missing and proposed the USEM account of employability. According to literature this model is the most well known and respected in this field (Pool & Sewell, 2007). USEM is an acronym for four inter-related components of employability. They are understanding; “skills; efficacy beliefs; and metacognition.” The authors suggest that this USEM model is: “...an attempt to put thinking about employability on a more scientific basis, partly because of the need to appeal to academic staff on their own terms by referring to research evidence and theory” (Knight & Yorke, 2004, p. 37).

Locally, Quek (2005) found that employers prefer interpersonal skills, knowledge-acquiring skills and flexibility as being very important in contributing towards success in work performance while graduate employees expressed value-acquiring skills, practical orientation skills and cognitive skills as being crucial for successful work performance. Similarly another study to find out if perceived abilities were similar between fresh employees and those of their employers, Quah

and Lim (2006) found that both employers and students shared the same perceptions on the most sought after skills required of entry-level job seekers. The outcome of this study was that interpersonal skills and verbal communication skills were rated highest by both employers and students. Employers cited enthusiasm and self-starter to be the most important abilities they are looking for in entry-level employees whilst students indicated that the ability to motivate/influence and make decisions were the most important abilities, followed by the ability to organize and plan, managing projects, self-started and managing people.

While it is important to know the perceptions of employers and fresh-entry graduates on the important skills required, Kwok (2004) argues that is not enough but to examine the differences in perceptions of skills needed across the various programmes. This is necessary as different skills set are required for different jobs/fields. He did a study on perceptions of university graduates and faculty members across academic disciplines with respect to the development of general employability skills in undergraduate programmes. His study was based on Biglan's classification system of skills into hard, soft, pure and applied fields. According to his study, significant differences in perceptions with respect to the development of employability skills were often found in soft fields compared to hard fields and in applied fields compared to pure fields. He found that,

*“University graduates of soft fields perceived greater development of writing and oral communication skills than graduates of hard fields. Meanwhile, graduates of applied fields perceived greater development of teamwork skills than graduates of pure fields. Faculty members from soft fields integrated writing skills and oral communication skills in their courses more so than*

*those in hard fields. Faculty members from soft fields and applied fields believed there were greater opportunities for students to develop employability skills than faculty members from hard fields and pure fields.”*  
(p.iii)

### **2.3 Peer relationship**

This is the famous quote by John Donne (1572 – 1631) on “No man is an island” which reads:

*“No man is an island entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main; if a clod be washed away by the sea, Europe is the less, as well as if a promontory were, as well as any manner of thy friends or of thine own were; any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind. And therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee.”*

Human beings are social creatures and need to be with others as we cannot function alone. Humans build their lives around people, friends, colleague and peer networks and their families (Kusterer, 2009). These friendship groups are viewed as a resource that helps younger people master age-graded tasks (Crosnoe, 2000). Friendships provide a platform for students to learn and refine socio-emotional skills. They observe and emulate what they see their friends do. Learning takes place through social interactions, observation and doing.

Students tend to spend more time with friends either formally within the classroom or casually when they hang out with friends. In this new environment,

young people experiment with new identities and roles, and seek affirmation from friends, who serve as both mirrors and models (Kusterer, 2009). Peer influence is conceptualized as an enforcement of unwritten rules, norms, beliefs, and attitudes of the peer group (Radziwon, 2003) and their friendships primarily foster emotional socialization (Crosnoe, 2000).

More often than not, peer influence is perceived as a negative force of influence in a youngster's life. There is always the issue of mixing with the 'bad hats' or bad company that can easily influence a child but peer influence may also be a positive force, like role models to follow and someone to look up to. Berndt and Keefe (1996) identified four paths to peer influence. The first influence is for social approval, in which adolescents act in ways that will make a positive impression on their peers. Second, adolescents generally want to act like their peers, which is why many adolescents choose friends who have characteristics they admire. The third is self-enhancement, in which students judge their competence by comparing it to that of their friends and finally, adolescents discuss issues with their peers to justify their beliefs. They have friends who think and behave similarly and so it is easier to justify one's action as the other person is also doing it.

Kusterer (2009) argues that we should pay attention to the three major groups with which an adolescent interacts. One group is a child's best friend, usually one or two peers the child will spend most of his or her time with. This is their closest friend. Next group is known as the cliques, which is typically comprised of approximately six to ten people. This is the group that a student will sit with at lunch and interact with after school. The final group is the "crowd." This is a larger set of

peers who share common attitudes and activities. This is also the group that sets the norms. Radziwon (2003) added that often an individual's perception of this larger peer group that has the greatest influence.

Social influence among friends is a mutual process. This means that adolescents influence their friends while being influenced by them. Berndt and Keefe (1995) concurred that the usual result of this process is that an adolescents' characteristics become more similar to those of their friends. Another perspective on peer relationships addresses the inclination of adolescents to select friends whose characteristics are already similar to theirs. Berndt and Keefe (1995) added that because of the link between similarity and influence, correlations between adolescents' characteristics and their friends' characteristics have often been used to estimate friends' influence on each other. However, there is also the danger of overestimating the influence of friends'. Adolescent students tended to affiliate with other students who had academic characteristics similar to their own (Ryan, 2001). Having close friends was important to changes in adolescents' achievement and affect in school. Controlling for their initial levels of achievement (grades and test scores), students with high achieving friends showed greater increases in achievement over time compared to students with lower achieving friends. Because of the close interaction, the student and the friend tends to behave similarly, focus on the same things and have similar priorities. The characteristics of one friend rubs off to the other friend.

Another study by Fuligni, Eccles, Barber, and Clements (2001) as quoted in Kusterer (2009) assessed two different types of peer orientation which are “peer



advice seeking” and “extreme peer orientation”. The former was characterized by the extent to which adolescents turned to their friends for personal and emotional support. The latter assessed the extent to which adolescents would sacrifice their talents, goals, school performance, and parents' rules due to the level of importance they placed on maintaining good relationships with their peers.

A great deal of research has identified the powerful effect of peers on academic achievement in late childhood, early adolescence and late adolescence. However there is very limited research in this area on young adults in colleges and universities. Most of the studies are done on peer influence to academic achievement but we are not aware of any studies on the aspects skills development, in particular pertaining to soft skills. Being a young adult in college is the first step towards building a career and life later on. The success or failure in university will have a great impact on the students' performance in life after college. Studying peer relationships provides an insight into a socialization agent of young adults which shapes the maturity level, thinking, motivations, expectations, and values that affect the development of soft skills among college/university students. Because of the importance peer relationship has in moulding a student, it is timely to study if by mixing with these peers for the next 3 to 4 years in university will have an effect on their ability to develop soft skills.

## 2.4 Personality

According to Robbins (2005), personality is “the sum total of ways in which an individual reacts and interacts with others” (p.100). Personality is “the dynamic organization within the individual of those psychophysical systems that determine his unique adjustment to his environment”. It is often described in terms of measurable traits that a person exhibits. Personality traits are “enduring characteristics that describe an individual’s behaviour” (Robbins, 2005, p.103).

Earlier arguments in personality research were on whether an individual’s personality was the result of heredity or of environment. Was the personality determined at birth, or was it the result of the individual’s interaction with his/her surroundings? Personality appears to be a result of both influences and today the need to recognize the third factor – the situation, is equally important. Therefore it can be concluded that an individual’s personality is now generally considered to be made up of both hereditary and environmental factors, moderated by situational conditions (Robbins, 2005). Previous studies was conducted on the likelihood of personality traits being related to students’ participation in extra-curricular activities and how such activities are likely to influence college outcomes (Bauer & Liang, 2003). College outcomes are usually measured in terms of grade point averages (GPAs) and for UCSI students it will be being on the Dean’s list, listed in award ceremonies and awarded scholarships for academic achievements. Some researchers have studied the personality characteristics, for example the need for structure, conscientiousness and extraversion as additional variable in predicting college outcomes (Perry, Hladkyl, Perkun, & Pelletier, 2001). Tross, Harper, Osher and Kneidinger (2000) discussed the ability of personality to predict college success and retention but found that

conscientiousness affected college retention both directly and indirectly through college GPA.

According to Entwistle (1972) as cited in Bauer and Liang (2003) the effect of personality traits on achievement will also vary depending on ability and age. His review of research involving Cattell's 16 Personality Factors and Eysenck's Personality Inventory revealed that introversion affects college success. Child (1969) as discussed in Bauer and Liang (2003) showed that both introversion and neuroticism are advantageous traits for university students' academic success because introverts avoid social situation and enjoy "bookish and abstract or conceptual pursuits"(p.278), and neurotics have a higher level of internal drive.

To measure how personality can play a part in influencing students' development of soft skills, the Big-Five personality model is used. This form of measure is chosen because it has been widely discussed and used to study personality spectrums and the model discusses the continuum on which personality can exist.

The Big-Five factors are:

- a) Extroversion which is one of the dimensions of the Big Five personality which explain one's comfort level with relationships. This dimension forms a continuum ranging from extroverts which are the outgoing, friendly, sociable, comfortable in a crowd type to the introverts being more reserved, shy, timid and quiet.
- b) Agreeableness is a dimension which explains "an individual's propensity to defer to others" (Robbins, 2005). This continuum explains that people who are highly agreeable tend to be warm, trusting, cooperative as compared to people who are low on agreeableness tend to be more confrontational, disagreeable and cold.

- c) Conscientiousness is an important dimension in the Big Five as it measures reliability. A person who is very conscientiousness is highly dependable, responsible, accountable and well organized as compared to a person who is low on conscientiousness has little sense of urgency when handling any tasks and difficult to rely on for a job well done.
- d) Emotional stability explains a person's ability to handle stressors. On one end of this continuum, people with high emotional stability tend to exhibit high self confidence, they are calm, secured and not easily flustered as compared to the other end of the continuum where a person with low emotional stability tend to have lower self esteem, have inferiority complex, unsecure, depressed and anxious.
- e) Openness to experience dimension explains a person's interest and openness to novelty and new things. People who are extremely open tend to be more creative, curious and open to new ideas and always engage in dialogue and conversation with those around them. They are eager to learn new material or new experiences. On the other end of the openness continuum, are people who like to remain in their comfort zone, not curious and open to new ideas or just prefer the status quo. Getting these people to engaging in meaningful conversation with those around them will be the last thing to happen.

Research using the Big Five model found important relationships between these personality dimensions and job performance (Robbins, 2005). Certain personality types can find success in academia and job performance. Therefore, if studies have proven to link personality with school success and job performance, can there be a relationship between personality and the successful development of one's soft skills?

This study then hopes to find if there is a relationship between personality and the development of soft skills. This model below shows that personality types can lead to success in school as well as professionally, therefore personality type may play a role in soft skills development.

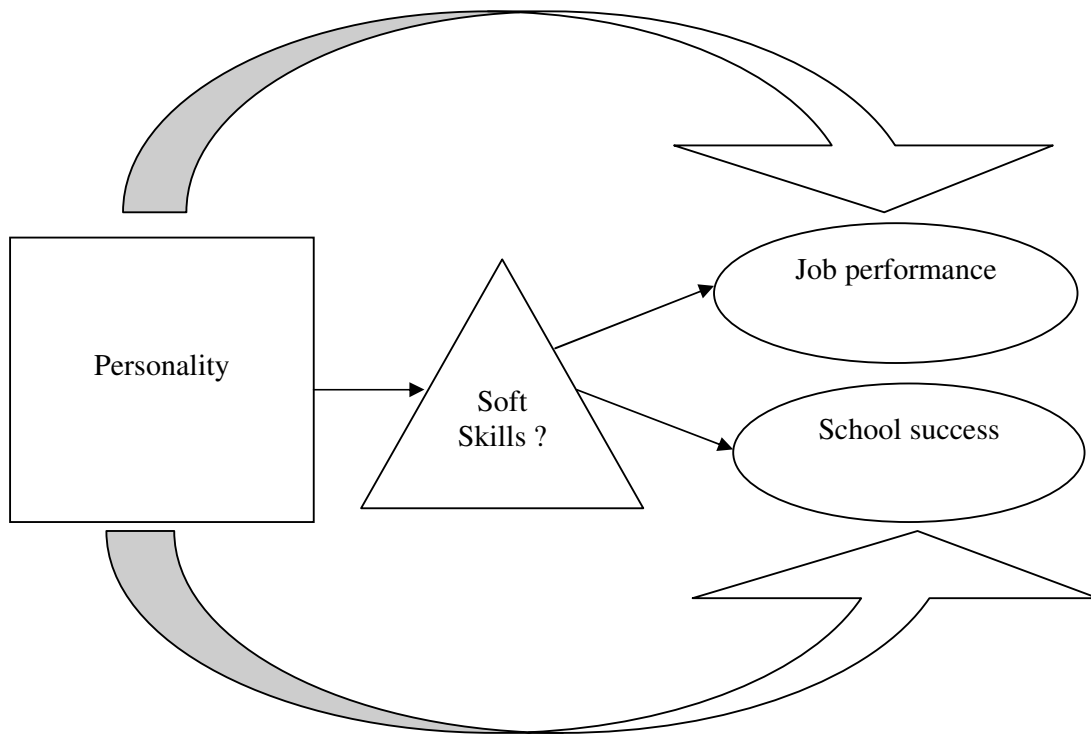


Figure 2.0

Personality as a possible factor for soft skills development

## 2.5 Emotional Intelligence

Since Daniel Goleman introduced emotional intelligence through his bestsellers *Emotional Intelligence* in 1995 and *Working with Emotional Intelligence* in 1998, it has become both a buzz word and an important work life concept. Self-awareness is one of the dimensions in developing personal competence and emotional intelligence, commonly known as EQ begins with this dimension. It is important for

one to know and be aware of one's emotions, strengths, capabilities, and weakness and accept the limitations of oneself and be open to comments or recommendations for change (Ong, 2010).

Another EQ model developed by Peter Salovey and John Mayer in 1997 relates EQ as a cognitive ability of processing emotions and adapting behaviours accordingly. It empowers us to harness personal feelings and emotions to create optimal results in today's challenging and demanding work environment. Emotional intelligence is increasingly relevant to organizational development and developing people, because the EQ principles provide a new way to understand and assess people's behaviours, management styles, attitudes, interpersonal skills, and potential. Emotional intelligence is an important consideration in human resources planning, job profiling, recruitment interviewing and selection, management development, customer relations and customer service. It is easy to see why this is such an important attribute to have. It is a set of learnable skills which includes self-awareness, empathy, optimism, self-direction and motivation to manage self and inter-personal relationships. Having emotional intelligence has been shown to improve efficacy, interpersonal skills, communication and enhance decision-making abilities. Knowing oneself means to be adept at identifying the emotions we feel, the symptoms behind such feelings and the source of it. It allows one to identify behavioural patterns so as to avoid unnecessary reactions but instead have positive demonstrations of attitude and character. Choosing ourselves is that part of us that would allow for thoughtful decision-making that would result in optimal outcomes. These are skills that prevent one from being impulsive as opposed to practicing delayed gratification, optimism, responsibility and careful judgement.

A study by Gabel, Dolan and Cerdin (2005) suggest that emotional intelligence is a strong predictor of cultural adjustments and that empathy, social responsibility and social relations may predict better performance in the specific tasks. Matthews, Zeidner and Roberts (2002) as cited in Gabel, Dolan and Cerdin (2005) identified a “significant correlation between the cognitive and emotional components of people’s intelligence, and how that relationship matters in effectively accomplishing all sorts of goals in any area of human behaviour” (p.377). Mayer and Salovey (1997) found that a person with high social-emotional intelligence reflects his or her capacity to perform actions on his or her own and with and through others.

Emotional intelligence is cited by many employers as still lacking in fresh graduates. This is important not just for employment but for life in general. People need to be able to control anger, to rationalize, to have good judgment for health of mind and body. Based on the literature above, there could be a positive correlation between emotional intelligence and the ability to develop soft skills. Therefore this study hopes to find out the level of emotional intelligence amongst students in UCSI and to find out if this has a positive relationship to soft skills development.

## **2.6 Factors relating to school**

The main challenges facing educationist have always been raising the standard or quality of education, improving methods of delivery, educational accountability, assuming responsibility for educating students to high levels of excellence. Efforts have been made to ensure development of a good, well rounded curriculum and engaging qualified lecturers to teach the students but little emphasis is given on the condition of the physical environment within which these teaching and learning takes

place. Numerous research have been conducted to link physical environment of the school and quality of school facilities to student outcomes in both achievement and in their attitude.

According to Uline and Moran (2008), school climate may explain the poor impact that poor school facilities has on learning. For example a run-down, dilapidated, crowded, old and worn desk and chairs may lead to low morale, lack of motivation, commitment and reduced effort on the part of teachers to teach and students to learn. Therefore poor school climate can lead to poor achievement when facilities are inadequate.

Extensive research has been done in the United States on the impact of school climate on student achievement and these studies have showed positive results. From the study of Uline and Moran (2008) he found that several researchers studied various factors of school climate which contributes to student achievement. McGuffey (1982) as cited in Uline and Moran (2008) found that there was a link between a school's physical environment and student achievement. Physical environment such as newer buildings, improved lighting, indoor air quality, specific facilities such as science laboratories and school library all contributed positively. He concluded that physical state of school was a predictor of student achievement. In another study by Lewis (2000) as quoted in Uline and Moran (2008) found that while controlling variables such as student motivation, socio-economic status and race/ethnicity, good facilities did indeed have an impact on school achievement.



These studies all found a positive relationship between school factors and student achievement. This study hopes to look at if the student's attitude towards school will impact their soft skills development.

## **2.7 Cultural Orientation**

According to Wiener (1982) as cited in Clugston, Howell and Dorfman (2000) cultural socialization is the basic determinant of all values. However, cross cultural research must be looked at carefully as theories tested within one country may vary according to cultural dimensions tested and the sample used in the study. Cultural orientation will be used as a moderator because UCSI University has a multicultural student body. Approximately 15% of its students' population comes from more than 70 countries around the world. It is valid to find out if there is indeed a difference between cultures and within cultures on soft skills development.

For the purpose of this study, the cultural dimensions chosen are individualism/collectivism, power distance, uncertainty avoidance and femininity/masculinity. These orientations represent a wide scope and can be tested between countries and within the same country for different culture. According to Triandis (1994) as quoted in Clugston et al. (2000) "individualism is characterized by attitudes of independence from ingroups, achievement, freedom, autonomy and fairness" (p.11). Collectivism, on the other hand looks at interdependence, the need to be in a group, security, duty, mutual respect and harmony. Power distance looks at the extent to which an individual is willing to accept unequal power distribution within an institution or organization. Uncertainty avoidance looks at the extent to which people feel threatened by uncertainty and seek to avoid being in such

situations. Masculinity/femininity bases more on the sexes. Masculinity is referred to the male where duties to protect and provide is stronger compared to the female functions as care givers and one who focuses on quality of life and health for the family.

## **2.8 Research Framework**

While many studies have been done on the types of skills needed for employment and perceptions of soft skills needed by students, none have been done on the development of soft skills itself and the factors influencing their development. This study aims to find out the influence of students' personality, peer relationship, emotional intelligence and the school learning environment itself on the development of soft skills.

The independent variables (IV) tested are peer relationships, student's personality, emotional intelligence of the student and the attitude towards school. The dependent variable (DV) will be the development of soft skills of students. The study has also included one moderating variables (MV) of cultural orientation including individualism/collectivism, power distance, masculinity/femininity and uncertainty avoidance.

Basically there are a number of reasons why the researcher choose these four independent variables. Firstly on the average each of the respondents will spend about three to four years in UCSI University, before they graduate and enter the job market. It is through this period of time, the researcher aims to study how peer relationship can influence students' soft skill development. For example, the time

they spend together on group study, class assignment and the extracurricular activities. There is also tendency for students to form their own group and thus, restricting others to join them or them joining other students. Therefore can all these activities helps or influence to the development of student's soft skills?

Another reason personality is included as an independent variable because the researcher believes that each of the respondents' is unique in their own way. Since the transition from high school to university, it will be interesting to study how the students are coping up with their university life such as relating to time management, diversity which is interaction with local and international students or even setting goals. With this in mind, the design of the questionnaire on personality is based on the Big-Five personality model which is extroversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability and openness to experience.

Before graduating from USCI University, all students are required to undergo an internship with the industry for three months. Based on the co – operative work report from the employers' in 2009, emotional intelligence is lacking among fresh employees. Therefore emotional intelligence is included as independent variable to find out how it can contribute to soft skills development among students. Hopefully recommendations can be forwarded to the management of UCSI to improve on this area whereby when students are sent for internship, at least the employers' feedback is more positive.

Attitude towards school which is the last independent variable is chosen by the researcher because previously numerous researches had been done and it is concluded

that positive relationship does exist between school factors and student achievement as mentioned in Point 2.4. Therefore based on this independent variable, this study hope to find out will school factors has a role to contribute in soft skills development in the context of UCSI students. The findings can also be an indication to the management if work is needed to upgrade the facilities and ambience of the university.

For the moderating variable, culture is chosen because the other studies mentioned using field of study, gender, age as a moderator. Studying cultural effects on soft skills development was not covered thoroughly. This study will look at cultural elements from the angle of individualism/collectivism, power distance, uncertainty avoidance and femininity/masculinity.

Therefore, the research questions in this study are design to answer the following;

1. How does type of personality of the student influence his/her soft skills development?
2. How does the influence of peers contribute to his/her development of soft skills?
3. How does the attitude of the student towards school have an influence on his/her soft skills development?
4. How does emotional intelligence play a part in soft skills development?

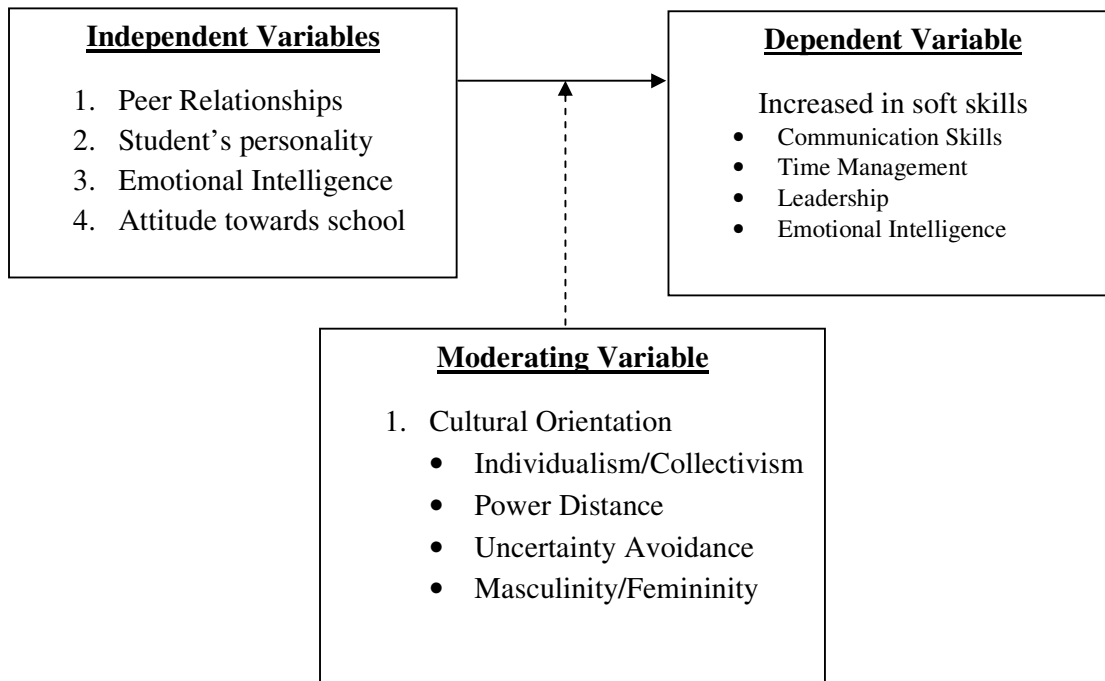


Figure 2.1

Framework for research

## 2.9 Hypotheses

From the five points mentioned above, the researcher believed that the four independent variables and the moderate variable which is cultural do influence on soft skills development among students in UCSI University. The soft skills development which this study is emphasising on is communication skills, time management skills and the leadership skills. This is because from the time the student finishes high school and move forward to university, they need to adjust to the university life. The mode of learning is totally different as compared to high school. Environment also changes and so does their group of friends. Therefore their soft skills need to be further developed to ensure that they are independent and are capable of presenting themselves to the employment market besides producing good grades in their study.

This study has derived several hypothesis and sub-hypothesis based on the literature discussed earlier.

A great deal of discussion has been conducted on the influence of peer relationship on student development. Kusterer (2009); Radziwon (2003) and Crosnoe (2000) have all highlighted the positive effects of peer relationship on student development.

Studies show positive outcomes of peers as role models, support group, social influences and possibly building of behaviour and characteristics and linking peer relationship to success in academia. If peer relationship can influence the positive development of the student, then the hypothesis is as follows:

- H1: Peer relationship has a positive influence on soft skills development
  - H1a: Peer relationship has a positive influence on communication skills
  - H1b: Peer relationship has a positive influence on time management skills
  - H1c: Peer relationship has a positive influence on leadership skills
  - H1d: Peer relationship has a positive influence on emotional intelligence

Based on the Big Five Personality Traits of extroversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability and openness, there seem to be a correlation of certain personality types that can lead a student to successful outcomes. Therefore H2 is as follows:

- H2: Personality has a positive influence on soft skills development
  - H2a: Personality has a positive influence on communication skills
  - H2b: Personality has a positive influence on time management skills
  - H2c: Personality has a positive influence on leadership skills
  - H2d: Personality has a positive influence on emotional intelligence

As discussed in earlier, various factors from school, from the facade, the facilities, the lecturers and the services all play an important role in determining the student's attitude and academic outcome. The more positive the student's attitude towards the school is, the more likely they are in attaining success. Therefore, H3 is as follows:

- H3: Attitude towards school has a positive influence on soft skills development
  - H3a: School factors has a positive influence on communication skills
  - H3b: School factors has a positive influence on time management skills
  - H3c: School factors has a positive influence on leadership skills
  - H3d: School factors has a positive influence on emotional intelligence

Emotional intelligence is yet another important determinant a student's academic and work life success. Since the Co-op partners of UCSI and many other reports cited emotional intelligence as a key determining factor, it is timely that this study looks at it effect on soft skills development. Hence H4 is as follows:

- H4: Emotional intelligence has a positive influence on soft skills development

H4a: Emotional intelligence has a positive influence on communication skills

H4b: Emotional intelligence has a positive influence on time management skills

H4c: Emotional intelligence has a positive influence on leadership skills

Culture will be a good moderator in this study as the institution has an enrolment from 70 different nationalities. Knowing how students develop themselves based on these orientations will give insights to Malaysian as well as the foreign students on how various culture functions and will learn to develop a sense of understanding and tolerance amongst the cultures.

H5: Culture has a moderating effect between the independent variables and soft skills development

H5a: Individualism/collectivism has a moderating effect between the independent variables and soft skills development

H5b: Power distance has a moderating effect between the independent variables and soft skills development

H5c: Uncertainty avoidance has a moderating effect between the independent variables and soft skills development

H5d: Masculinity/femininity has a moderating effect between the independent variables and soft skills development