EFFECT OF EMPLOYEE SKILLS ON CUSTOMER SATISFACTION: A STUDY ON AUTOMOBILE SECTOR EMPLOYEES IN KURUNEGALA DISTRICT, SRI LANKA

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ABSTRACT

The relationship between businesses and their clients has long been a basic concern in any industry, and therefore preserving that relationship has been the primary emphasis of any business at present. This is an exploratory study aimed at determining how employees' skills affect client satisfaction in the automobile industry in Kurunegala district, Sri Lanka. Using a multistage sample technique, 125 clients who visited the automobile sales center were chosen as the sample of this study. After a client purchased a vehicle, the client was given a self-administered questionnaire, which was developed on the "Much Skills" matrix that covers three categories: Job focus, soft skills, and technical skills. A well-structured questionnaire with 35 items was utilized to collect data using a quantitative research technique. The questionnaire was distributed to 125 clients. A total of 117 questionnaires were filled up, and only and 106 questionnaires were fully completed. The five-point Likert scale was used to rate the participant's view with a series of statements ranging from 1 to 5, with 1 indicating strong dissatisfaction and 5 indicating strong satisfaction. After the data has been collected, it was filtered and presented in the form of tables and graphs. The gathered data were coded and analyzed by SPSS (version 23). Along with the descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, chi-square, multiple regression, and factor analysis were used in the study's analysis. Based on the sample, the findings suggest that the technical, soft, and job-related skills of employees have an impact on clients' satisfaction. Finally, this research has provided an enhanced understanding of how organizations can improve client satisfaction. The findings of this study are essential for an organization to implement policies to achieve a higher competitive outcome, which leads to organizational success. This study contributes to the literature by increasing and improving the company's existing information in order to increase customer satisfaction with after-sales service in the Sri Lankan automotive industry.

Keywords*: *Automobile market, Customer satisfaction, Employee skills

1. INTRODUCTION

Customer satisfaction is critical to every company's success. Sam Walton (1990), the founder of Walmart and Sam's Club, says that there is only one boss in a business. He is the customer. Customers can fire everybody in the company from the chairman on down, simply by spending his money somewhere else. Moreover, unsatisfied customers would spread the word to all of their companions, creating a bad image of the business, which will have a significant negative impact on a company's future.

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This evidences that customer satisfaction is the most crucial factor in establishing customer loyalty and ensuring a long-term commercial relationship. A business cannot expect long-run business relationships with unsatisfied customers.

Customer satisfaction is always dependent on the abilities of the employees, and therefore, employees are seen as the lifeblood of every company. Employees that interact with these consumers face-to-face are frequently the ones who determine their degrees of satisfaction, keeping them happy with the company and preventing them from looking for someone to suit their needs elsewhere (Erin, 2021). Therefore, understanding the impact of employees upon the overall satisfaction levels of customers is very vital. On the other hand, employees' abilities and skills in dealing with customers play a critical influence on a company's success. They provide outstanding customer service, which results in customer satisfaction. Evanschitzky, Sharma and Prykop (2012), in their research on the role of the sales employee in securing customer satisfaction, confirmed that adaptive selling and employee satisfaction positively impact customer satisfaction. Jeon and Choi (2012) also confirm that employee satisfaction leads to customer satisfaction.

Hence, customer servicing has become a field of greater interest for academics and practitioners over the past two decades. Researchers have has looked into whether high skills are a contributing factor to successful and high-performing businesses. Some researchers identified that employee skills are critical for succeeding in today's competitive business market by providing high-quality service and gratifying customers (Penny, 2015; Froy, Giguère and Meghnagi, 2012). These studies have discovered a significant link between a highly skilled workforce and organizational performance, which is most typically evaluated by labor productivity. For instance, Reid (2000) suggested that a more skilled UK workforce was related to a greater commercial orientation and strategic awareness, and propensity to innovate to retain competitive advantage. Taken together, these studies have identified that when a customer walks into a business for the first time, he will be able to tell whether the greeting he receives from personnel is misleading or sincere.

1.1. The Automobile Industry in Sri Lanka

In Sri Lanka, the automobile industry is one of the most popular and competitive industries. Because of the fierce rivalry in the vehicle market, businesses that provide excellent customer service are the only ones that can survive. So, to compete in this competitive business environment, a company requires talented staff that can provide excellent customer service and establish client loyalty.

The vehicle trading companies are mainly scattered in Colombo, Kandy, Kurunegala, and Negombo districts. At present, Kurunegala has overtaken Colombo as the most popular city for vehicle purchases among the populace. As a result, automobile trading has become a highly competitive industry in this district. Traders who provide excellent customer service will be able to keep their businesses prosperous. The Sri Lanka automobile report published in 2019, which offers a comprehensive view of the market dynamics of the Sri Lankan automobile industry, also emphasizes that the

Sri Lanka automotive market is slowly shifting towards a service-oriented model with new players focusing extensively on customer experience and consumer data.

In this context, the purpose of this paper is to look into the relationship between employee skills and customer satisfaction in the automobile market in Kurunegala, Sri Lanka. Furthermore, the paper aims to investigate the impact of various types of skills— technical skill, soft skill, and job focus skill —in increasing overall customer satisfaction.

1.2. Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this research is to determine the relationship between service employee skills and customer satisfaction in the automobile market in the Kurunegala district. The specific objectives are to:

1. Determine the relationship between service employee technical skills and customer satisfaction in the automobile market in Kurunegala District.

2. Examine the relationship between service employee soft skills and customer satisfaction in the automobile market in Kurunegala District.

3. Ascertain the relationship between service employee job-focused skills and customer satisfaction in the automobile market in Kurunegala District.

1.3. Research Questions

At the conclusion of this research, the following questions will be addressed. They are as follows:

1. What is the relationship between service employee technical skills and customer satisfaction in the automobile market in Kurunegala district?

2. What is the relationship between service employee soft skills and customer satisfaction in the automobile market in Kurunegala district?

3. What is the relationship between service employee job-focused skills and customer satisfaction in the automobile market in Kurunegala district?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES

2.1. Customer Satisfaction

Customer satisfaction is critical to every company's success – and long-term success. Hence, customer satisfaction has been one of the most important characteristics that managers should focus on. The firm's competitive advantage over other firms was in satisfying clients better than its competitors, surpassing the clients' needs, and wants better than its rivals (Minta, 2018). Therefore, for a firm to maintain its solvency, data related to customer satisfaction needs to be adequately collected and analyzed (Karolina, 2008). Consumer satisfaction can be defined as a measure of how well a company's products and services meet or even exceed customer expectations. Philip Kotler in his definition for customer satisfaction says that customer satisfaction is a 'person's feeling of pleasure or disappointment, which resulted

from making a comparison between a product's perceived performance or outcome and his/her expectation's (Kotler, 2001). According to Blanchard and Galloway (1994), consumer satisfaction refers to how well a company's products and services meet or surpass customer expectations. In other words, customer satisfaction refers to the extent to which given products and services meet or exceed client expectations. Therefore, the concept of customer satisfaction is fundamentally based on perceived performance and expectations. What is referred to here as perceived performance is the consumer's perception of the product or service experience. According to this definition, customers set the satisfaction goals themselves before they go out to make a purchase. Hence, customer satisfaction is the result of a subjective comparison of the client's expectations to the perceived performance of the products/services (Oliver, 1980).

Customer satisfaction is not the same thing as customer loyalty. Customer satisfaction is a measurement of a customer's attitude toward a product, a service, or a brand. It's usually measured by a customer satisfaction survey on a numerical scale. Customer loyalty is a set of behaviors and attitudes that a customer exhibits that demonstrate loyalty to a product, service, or brand, such as repeat purchases or choosing the brand over a competitor (Jimmy, 2019). Customer satisfaction can often be considered as a major difference in a competitive environment where businesses compete for customers, and it has increasingly become a key element of business strategy. According to Zeithaml and Bitner (2012), the term satisfaction is a much broader concept than only evaluating the quality of the service, and there are other aspects that influence it as well. This customer satisfaction is determined by the product quality, price, customer's opinion of service quality, as well as situational and personal aspects, as shown in Figure 1.
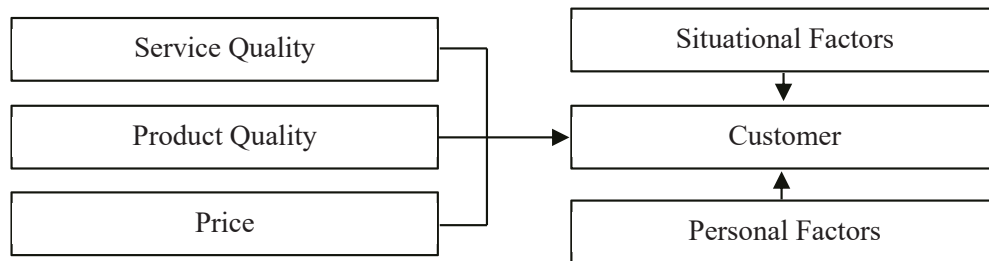
Service Quality		Situational Factors
Product Quality		Customer
Price		Personal Factors

Figure 1. Model of customer satisfaction

Source: Zeithaml and Bitner (2012)

This shows that Zeithaml et al. (2018) went ahead and developed a customer satisfaction model that includes several factors. Among others, one of the most important factors is service quality. Prevailing a hyper-competitive market, customers demand values that come with the product and secrecies that satisfy the consumer, and the automotive industry is one of the best examples.

Satisfaction is frequently determined by the quality of the product and service. The literature on customer satisfaction highlights that the quality of the given services has a significant impact on the end user's satisfaction (Sherriff and Roger, 2005; Hisham

and Siddig, 2018). For instance, Hisham and Siddig (2018) investigate the impact of employee skills on service performance. The findings show that employee skills have a direct and significant impact on service performance and customer experience, and that customer experience has a direct and significant impact on service performance. They concluded that employees' skills have a direct and considerable positive impact on service quality.

2.2. Important of Employee skills

The fierce competition that currently exists in the market does not make it any easier (Nitzan and Libai, 2011). Consequently, for the business, getting customers is hard. Keeping them, on the other hand, is the most challenging part of the business. Being the first contactors, employees play a vital role in satisfying customers. They are key stakeholders in the development of the organization's performance and satisfying its customers. Therefore, employees must be aware of how their job affects organizational outcomes.

Adriana et al. (2020) emphasized that the employees are one of the most important stakeholders in an organization and the organization as a whole. The Virgin founder, Richard Branson, says that making employees the top priority can bring benefits for both customers and investors. "*If the person who works at your company is not appreciated, they are not going to do things with a smile*," Branson says. To this end, he says that Virgin prioritizes employees first, customers second, and shareholders third (Oscar, 2014). Marriott (2015) argues that if you take care of your employees, they will take care of your customers and your business will take care of itself. In simple terms, companies should put employees first, because customer perceptions of service quality and customer satisfaction are influenced by employee behaviors.

The creation of a long-term relationship with a consumer is probably one of the most significant things which have a very positive impact on the business's future. Hunter and Tietyen (1997) found that when employees are satisfied, they are more loyal and productive. Potterfield (1999) found that satisfied employees affect customer satisfaction and organizational performance. It is believed that every employee aspires to work on something they enjoy. On this premise, Noel (2020) creates an employee skills profile that includes three categories: job focus, soft skills, and technical abilities.

2.3. Technical skills

Employee skills are the skills, qualities, and attitudes that employers say are essential for their workplace. One of the most important skills is technical skill. Technical skills are the abilities and experience required to do a specific job. An employee can accomplish more specialized, specific work if he has technical skills. Technical skills are most commonly classified as hard skills. However, it is important to understand that technical skills are not stand-alone skills.

2.4. Soft skills

Technical knowledge is not a skill in and of itself. In today's business, a combination of hard and soft skills is required. Soft skills are considered as a combination of social skills, communication skills, people skills, personality traits, personal attitudes, career attributes, emotional intelligence quotients, and social intelligence that empower employees to navigate their environment, work in synergy with others, perform well and achieve their objectives with complementing hard skills (Anon, 2021). In fact, in LinkedIn's Global Talent Trends 2019 report, 92% of talent professionals reported that soft skills are equally or more important to hire than hard skills (Samantha, 2019). Subashree and Senthilrajan (2017) studied the impact of effective employee communication on job satisfaction in the automobile industry in Chennai. They highlighted that the management should concentrate on human skills which involve effective interaction with others and in turn lead to job satisfaction.

2.5. Job-focus skills

Job focus skills can be defined as the value we bring to our workplaces that is connected to our personal interests, values, and competencies (Noel, 2020). The concept of a job focus recognizes that skills and interests vary throughout time. There may be occasions when you need to upskill or discover that you want to learn a new skill.

2.6. Employees Skills and Customer Orientation

Employees are one of the most important aspects of practically every business's success; they are the ones who get the job done and on time. It is common knowledge that having the correct personnel on hand will assist a company in moving in the direction it desires (Thomas, 2013). Gallup's State of the American Workplace report which was published in 2017 also concluded that workers desire job roles and employers that would allow them to make the most of their strengths. Employees perform best in roles that allow them to combine their talent (the natural capacity for greatness), skills (what they can accomplish), and knowledge (what they know), according to the report (Gallup, 2017).

These works of literature stimulate more scholars to research in the field of employee skills, behavior, and satisfaction, which in turn influences customer satisfaction and business performance at large. For instance, Kamala (2018) studies the implications of training on employee performance in automobile sector in Chennai. The researcher proposes that employees are a company's most valuable asset, and they play a critical part in its success. Therefore, their knowledge, skills, and abilities help them to perform well at their jobs, which in turn requires proper training, as it has an impact on employee motivation and commitment. Sanmugam and Tan (2016) investigated customer satisfaction with technical services in the Malaysian automobile sector. They concluded that technical services appear to be part of after-sales in the automotive industry and still they have room for improvements to their after-sales activities for their relationship with customers.

Because employee skills are often a substantial component of service quality, customer orientation is frequently seen as a key determinant of service business success. Studies have often shown a high correlation between customer orientation and customer satisfaction. For instance, Aburayya et al. (2020) investigated the correlation between customer orientation, service quality, customer satisfaction, and customer loyalty. The results revealed that orientation of the customer was indicated to be positively correlated to the service quality and customer satisfaction and that rather than service quality, consumer satisfaction would have a more considerable impact on consumers' decision to be loyal.

Four dimensions of customer orientation have been used to assess customer orientation of service employees in several studies, including technical skills, social skills, motivation of service employees, and decision-making authority of service employees (Hennig-Thurau, 2014; Amangala and Ateke 2018). For instance, Amangala and Ateke (2018) investigated the relationship between customer orientation of service employees and customers' satisfaction. The study concluded that satisfaction of customers depends on the customer orientation of service employees through technical skills, social skills, and decision-making authority of service employees.

2.7. Conceptual Framework

Based on the literature discussed above, the conceptual framework of this research is constructed and presented in Figure 2.
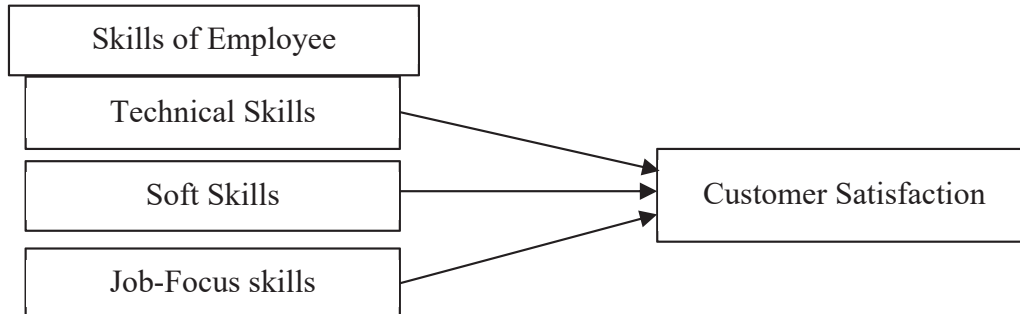
Figure 2: A conceptual framework of the link between Employee Skills and Customer Satisfaction

2.8. Research Hypotheses

This study is therefore an effort to examine the nexus between employee skills and customer satisfaction in the Sri Lankan context. The following hypotheses were formulated to provide direction for the study:

H_1: There is a significantly positive relationship between the technical skills of service employees and customer satisfaction in the automobile market in the Kurunegala district.

H_2: There is a significantly positive relationship between the soft skills of service employees and customer satisfaction in the automobile market in the Kurunegala district.

H_3: There is a significantly positive relationship between the job-focused skills of service employees and customer satisfaction in the automobile market in the Kurunegala district.

3. METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to see if there was a nexus between employee skills and customer satisfaction in the automobile market in Kurunegala. The participants of this study were customers who had purchased a vehicle recently. Due to the "Covid-19" outbreak in the country, the judgmental sampling technique was used to arrive at the hundred and six (n = 106) customers who participated in the study. Each respondent was treated as a separate sampling unit.

The study used a quantitative methodology and an explanatory design. Both quantitative and qualitative data were used to achieve the objectives of this research. In a cross-sectional survey, a questionnaire was used for primary data collection, which was comprised of both open-ended and close-ended questions were included in the questionnaire. The questionnaire was pre-tested with a sample of five consumers before data collection. Based on the feedback received from the pilot survey, weaknesses of the previously made questionnaire were identified and amendments were made.

To identify the influence of employee skills on customer satisfaction, opinions of customers were collected by providing statements for each factor with five-point Likert scale answers. The respondents' overall satisfaction with the service quality was determined using a 5-point Likert scale with the following options: highly satisfied, satisfied, neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, dissatisfied, and highly dissatisfied, with Likert scale ratings of 5, 4, 3, 2, and 1 respectively. Researchers utilize a "Much Skills" matrix, which is an upgraded version of the conventional skill matrix, to keep track of each employee's qualifications and talents in a matrix format. The traditional skills matrix is a visual tool that illustrates each individual's level of competency in specific skills and their interest in using those skills in the form of a table. The Much Skills is a platform that attractively visualizes data on skill sets in an appealing, easy-to-understand interface. Much Skills is founded on the notion that everyone aspires to work on something they enjoy. It helps people design a skills profile for themselves that covers three categories: Job focus, soft skills, and technical skills (Noel, 2020).

The collected data were analyzed using the IBM SPSS Statistics 23 version. Various statistical techniques, namely Correlation analysis, One-Way ANOVA, Independent sample t-tests, and frequency distribution, have been applied. Correlation analysis was done to identify the relationship between employees' skills and customer satisfaction. To identify whether there is a significant difference in satisfaction of

customers between the male and female customers, independent sample t-tests were used.

Table 01: Much Skills

Variable	Dimension
Technical Skill	Anticipating customer requests
	Offering explanations/justifications
	Educating the customer
	Providing emotional support
	Exhibits a thorough knowledge of all products
Soft Skill	Employees are courteous, polite, cheerful
	Employees are responsive, friendly, and patient listeners
	Managers refer to customers by their names
	Treats all customers in a consistent way
	Talks politely with you
	Exhibits proper etiquette when dealing with you
	Good basic verbal and customer relations skills
	Listens to you with empathy and responds in a good manner
Job-Focus skill	Offering personalized information
	Responds to your needs on time
	Displays happy moods in the job
	Handle special requests saying not my responsibility
	Keeps hands, face, body clean and tidy
	Greets you with a friendly welcome and a big smile
	Can establish harmonious relationships with customers

3.1. Reliability Test

The current study established the instrument's validity by submitting it to a panel of experts comprised of academics and practitioners with sufficient expertise of the study's subject, while the internal consistency of the measurement items was confirmed through Cronbach's Alpha test of reliability with a threshold of 0.70 set by Nunnally (1978). A twenty-question questionnaire has been developed to assess how customers perceive the service quality of employees in the automobile industry. Each question was a 5-point Likert scale, with responses ranging from "strongly dissatisfied" to "strongly satisfied." A Cronbach's alpha was calculated on a sample

size of 106 customers to see if the items in this questionnaire reliably assess the same latent variable (i.e., feeling of service quality).

Table 02 below presents the summary of the reliability results.

Table 02: Reliability Statistics

Variable	No of items	Cronbach's Alpha
Technical Skills	05	.733
Soft Skills	08	.837
Job-Focus Skills	07	.809

According to the findings, all the Cronbach's alpha values are greater than the threshold, indicating a high level of internal consistency for scales of three independent variables used for this sample.

3.2. Sample Adequacy

The sample adequacy was measured by using KMO and Bartlett's Test.

Table 03: KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy.		.704
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	887.497	887.497
	210	210
	.000	.000

To determine the sampling adequacy of data, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test is utilized. The KMO statistic appears in Table 03 indicates that the sample as a whole is suitable for factor analysis, as long as the value is more than 0.7. Bartlett's test of sphericity is used to test the hypothesis that the correlation matrix is an identity matrix, which would imply that the variables are unrelated and hence unsuitable for structure identification. The results show that factor analysis can be useful with data because the significance values are less than 0.05 ($p < 0.05$).

3.3. Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics for both dependent and independent variables are given in Table 04. Findings reveal that customers are satisfied with the services of the automobile dealers ($\bar{x} = 4.23$, SD = .4048) in Kurunegala district. They also pleased with the job-focused skill ($\bar{x} = 4.27$, SD = .4204), technical skill ($\bar{x} = 4.23$, SD = .4048), and soft skill ($\bar{x} = 4.18$, SD = .4259) of the service employees in the automobile industry.

Table 04 shows the descriptive statistics for the items of the independent variables. To measure the customer's perception of the service quality of employees (i.e., skills of employees) twenty indicators were used and they were measured on a 5-point Likert scale, with responses ranging from "strongly dissatisfied" to "strongly satisfied".

Table 04: Descriptive Statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Customer Satisfaction	106	4.2296	.40482
Technical Skills	106	4.2396	.46551
Soft Skills	106	4.1774	.42590
Job-Focus Skills	106	4.2717	.42038

Table 05: Item Statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Offering personalized information	106	4.1792	.56564
Anticipating customer requests	106	4.2642	.59043
Offering explanations/justifications	106	4.2547	.55311
Educating the customer	106	4.2547	.69091
Providing emotional support	106	4.0849	.64907
Employees are courteous, polite, cheerful	106	3.9811	.70348
Employees are responsive, friendly, and patient listeners	106	4.1604	.55441
Managers Refer to customers by their names	106	4.0283	.73624
Treats all customers in a consistent way	106	4.2830	.62875
Responds to your needs in a timely manner	106	4.2547	.67699
Displays happy moods in the job	106	4.0660	.73379
Talks politely with you	106	4.1038	.61612
Handle special requests saying not my responsibility	106	4.3679	.54029
Exhibits proper etiquette when dealing with you	106	4.2453	.59859
Is able to establish harmonious relationships with customers	106	4.3019	.60427
Exhibits a thorough knowledge of all products	106	4.3396	.53250
Greets you with a friendly welcome and a big smile.	106	4.3491	.60226
Listens to you with empathy and responds in a good manner	106	4.2170	.53461
Good basic verbal and customer relations skills	106	4.2925	.55148
Keeps hands, face, body clean and tidy	106	4.3585	.57219

The mean values of these indicators range from 3.9811 (*employees are courteous, polite, and cheerful*) to 4.3679 (*handle special requests saying not my responsibility*). These findings suggest that customers are satisfied with all of the service quality indicators used in this study.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This part focuses on the testing of hypotheses from which certain decisions will be deduced. The correlation and regression statistical tool was used to test hypotheses based on the data obtained by the research instrument, and inferences were drawn. The results of the data analysis are presented below.

A structured questionnaire was distributed to 125 respondents who visited automobile outlets, 19 of whom did not respond, and only 106questionnaires were incomplete, representing a response rate of 84.8 percent. Out of our total population surveyed, 82.1% were male and 17.9% were females. The majority of them were in the age group 36-55 years (51%), followed by the age group above 56 years (22.6%). 18.9% claimed that their monthly family income is between Rs. 150,000 to Rs. 250,000. Out of the remaining population, 7.5% claimed that their family income is between Rs 250,000 to Rs. 350,000, while 21.7% claimed that their family income is over 350,000. Hence it can reasonably conclude that a majority of respondents are within the high-income bracket and can easily change their automobile within a short period of time if dissatisfied.

4.1. Hypotheses Testing

4.1.1. Testing of Hypothesis 01

H_1: There is a significantly positive relationship between the technical skills of service employees and customer satisfaction in the automobile market in the Kurunegala district.

Table 06: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
					Change Statistics				
1	.914[a]	.835	.833	.16547	.835	524.446	1	104	.000
a. Predictors: (Constant), Technical Skill									

The multiple correlation coefficient (R = .914[a]) indicates that there is a strong positive correlation between the service employees' technical skill and customer satisfaction; the adjusted R^2 = .835 indicates the coefficient of determination, which is the variability seen in customer satisfaction as a result of the service employee technical skill; thus 83.5 percent of the change in customer satisfaction is due to the technical skills, that indicates a strong predictive ability of the technical skill on the satisfaction.

Table 07: ANOVA[a]

	Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	14.360	1	14.360	524.446	.000[b]
	Residual	2.848	104	.027		
	Total	17.207	105			

a. Dependent Variable: Customer Satisfaction

b. Predictors: (Constant), Technical Skill

Table 07 shows the regression ran to predict customer satisfaction based on the technical skills of service employees; this variable strongly predicts customer satisfaction, as the model reveals $F (1, 104) = 524.446$, $p < 0.05$.

Table 08: Coefficients [a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficient	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.862	.148		5.823	.000
	Technical Skills	.794	.035	.914	22.901	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Customer Satisfaction

Table 08 shows that the variable contributed significantly to the prediction of customer satisfaction in the automobile market in Kurunegala district; the significant values reported are less than 0.05 ($p < 0.05$), implying that the technical skill of service employees have a significant impact on customer satisfaction. As a result, researchers accept the alternative hypothesis, H_1: There is a significantly positive relationship between the technical skills of service employees and customer satisfaction in the automobile market in Kurunegala district.

4.1.2. Testing of Hypothesis 02

H_2: There is a significantly positive relationship between the soft skills of service employees and customer satisfaction in the automobile market in the Kurunegala district.

Table 09: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.938[a]	.880	.879	.14099	.880	761.646	1	104	.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), Soft Skill

Table 09 shows multiple correlation coefficient.938[a], which indicates that there is a strong positive correlation between the service employees 'soft skill and customer satisfaction; the adjusted $R^2 = .880$ indicates the coefficient of determination, which is the variability seen in customer satisfaction as a result of the service employee soft skill; thus 88.0% of the change in customer satisfaction is due to the soft skill, indicating that the soft skill has a strong predictive ability.

Table 10 illustrates the results of the regression that was run to predict customer satisfaction based on service employees' soft skills; this variable highly predicts customer satisfaction, as the model reveals F (1, 104) = 761.646, $p < 0.05$.

Table 10: ANOVA[a]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	15.140	1	15.140	761.646	.000[b]
	Residual	2.067	104	.020		
	Total	17.207	105			

a. Dependent Variable: Customer Satisfaction
b. Predictors: (Constant), Soft Skill

As revealed by Table 11, the employees' soft skills contributed significantly to the prediction of customer satisfaction in the automobile market in the Kurunegala district. The significant values ($P < 0.05$) confirms that employees' soft skill has a significant impact on customer satisfaction. As a result, the findings support the second alternative hypothesis, H_2: There is a significantly positive relationship between the soft skills of service employees and customer satisfaction in the automobile market in the Kurunegala district.

Table 11: Coefficients [a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.505	.136		3.723	.000
	Soft Skill	.892	.032	.938	27.598	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Customer Satisfaction

4.1.3. Testing of Hypothesis 03

H_3: There is a significantly positive relationship between the job-focus skills of service employees and customer satisfaction in the automobile market in the Kurunegala district.

The multiple correlation coefficients are used to measure the strength of the relationship between service employees' job-focus skills and customer satisfaction. As shown in Table 12, multiple correlation coefficients R = .927[a] connotes the existence of a strong positive correlation between employee job-focused skills and customer satisfaction.

The adjusted R^2 = .858 shows the variability seen in customer satisfaction as a result of the service employee job-focused skill; thus, the job-focused is responsible for 85.8% of the change in customer satisfaction, indicating that the job-focused also has a strong predictive ability.

Table 12: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
					Change Statistics				
1	.927[a]	.859	.858	.15249	.859	635.976	1	104	.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), Job-Focused Skill

Table 13: ANOVA[a]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	14.789	1	14.789	635.976	.000[b]
	Residual	2.418	104	.023		
	Total	17.207	105			

a. Dependent Variable: Customer Satisfaction

b. Predictors: (Constant), Job-Focused Skill

Table 13 shows the results of the regression that was used to predict customer satisfaction based on service employees' job-focus skills; as the model shows, this variable strongly predicts customer satisfaction, with $F_{(1, 104)} = 635.976$, $p < 0.05$.

As shown in Table 14, the employees' job-focus skills played a major role in predicting customer satisfaction in the automobile market in the Kurunegala district.

Table 14: Coefficients [a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.505	.136		3.723	.000
	Job-Focused Skill	.892	.032	.938	27.598	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Customer Satisfaction

The statistical significance value ($p < 0.05$) demonstrates that an employee's job-focused skill has a significant impact on customer satisfaction. These findings confirm the third alternative hypothesis, H_3: There is a significantly positive relationship between the job-focus skills of service employees and customer satisfaction in the automobile market in the Kurunegala district.

Multiple correlation analysis is also used to measure the relationship between dependent and independent variables. As revealed by the Table 15, there is a statistical significant positive relationship between customer satisfaction and service employees technical skill (r = .914, p < .05), soft skill (r = .938, p < .05), and job-related skill (r = .927, p < .05). These findings also support the three hypotheses of this study.

Table 15: Correlations

		Customer Satisfaction	Technical Skills	Soft Skills	Job-Focused Skills
Customer Satisfaction	Pearson Correlation	1	.914**	.938**	.927**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000
	N	106	106	106	106
Technical Skill	Pearson Correlation	.914**	1	.774**	.747**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000
	N	106	106	106	106
Soft Skill	Pearson Correlation	.938**	.774**	1	.840**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000
	N	106	106	106	106
Job-Focused Skill	Pearson Correlation	.927**	.747**	.840**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	
	N	106	106	106	106

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

5. DISCUSSION OF FINDING

This section of the study discusses the results of the hypothesis testing, which represents the outcome of the data analysis.

5.1. Technical skill and Customer satisfaction

The regression analysis of the relationship between the technical skill of service employees and customer satisfaction (H_1) shows 83.5% of change. This implies that technical skills will result in an 83.5 percent increase in customer satisfaction in the vehicle market. There is a strong relationship between employees' technical skills and customer satisfaction. This is in line with the submission of LinkedIn's Global Talent Trends (2019) and Samantha (2019).

5.2. Soft skill and Customer satisfaction

The relationship between service employees' soft skills and customer satisfaction was also assessed in this study. According to the findings, the regression analysis of the relationship between service employees' technical skills and customer satisfaction (H_2) shows a change of 88.0 percent. This means that in the automobile market, soft skills will result in an 83.5 percent boost in consumer satisfaction. These findings confirm that the soft skill of employees and customer happiness are inextricably linked. This is in line with the submission of Subashree and Senthilrajan (2017) and LinkedIn's Global Talent Trends (2019).

5.3. Job-focused skill and Customer satisfaction

The regression analysis of the relationship between the job-focus skills of service employees and customer satisfaction (H_3) also reveals an 85.8 percent change. This suggests that in the automobile market, job-focus skills will increase consumer pleasure by 83.5 percent. Therefore, researchers conclude that employee job-related and customer satisfaction are tightly related. This is in line with the submission of (Noel, 2020).

5.4. Limitation of the Study

The research paper is based on 106 responses received through a structured questionnaire which seems to be small in size. As a result, it may not accurately reflect the majority's viewpoint. Because the sample was chosen during the COVID 19 epidemic, the study's lack of randomness in sample size can also be considered a limitation. Accordingly, generalizations based on performed surveys may not be very accurate. Individuals filling out the survey may be hesitant to divulge personal information; therefore, certain questions may not get accurate responses. Furthermore, because all surveys are done in English certain understanding problems may occur. Also, since a questionnaire was employed to collect data, and respondents were unable to clarify any doubts because the responses were filled out in the absence of the researchers, which may have resulted in respondents misinterpreting the questions.

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