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## **Cognitive Personal Qualities Back Seated for P.R. Employees; Comparison Among Different Skills, A Case Study of Economy Hotels in Egypt**

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### **Abstract**

The hotel industry is one of the world's oldest industries (Bovin, 2019, M. N. Chibili, 2019). Due to the fast expansion of the industry, skilled staff is a prerequisite for its success. This is especially true in African countries (Ernst & Young, 2018), where new hospitality projects are soring.

Public relations of a hotel have great importance in reflecting the good well to the public and the community (Kayoko, et al, 2017, Ronald D. S., 2020). The skills and personal traits of public relations staff both, are crucial, therefore, to ensure the perfect delivery of such a task the effect of personal traits on job performance is indisputable, to improve employees' job performance.

The main objective of this paper is to answer the question of whether personality traits on one side outweigh employees' skills on the other side. P.R. personnel of economy hotels in Cairo constitute the sample of this research together with P.R. managers and hotel guests.

**Keywords:** Technical skills, Acquired Skills, Cognitive personality qualities, P.R employees, Economy hotels.

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## **Introduction**

Public relations is a competitive field that demands knowledge and skills for success. Employers are acknowledging a shift toward technical focus, but the misconception that a positive attitude is more important than technical skills still exists (Brief and Motowidlo, 1986; Williams and Anderson, 1991). This paper aims to highlight the growing importance of acquiring technical skills in Personality Recognition (P.R.) and how these skills may surpass cognitive personality traits. It tries to debunk the myth that attitude is the most important factor in P.R. and explores the impact of cognitive personality traits on the effectiveness of technical skills, providing a new perspective for employers and employees in the field (Williams and Anderson, 1991, Katz and Kahn 1978, Katz and Kahn 1978, Chah et al. 2012, Ganet al.2024). This essay discusses the positive attitudes towards technology in the Public Relations (P.R.) field, emphasizing the importance of technical skills and the numerous benefits it can bring to professionals and their work, providing examples to support further discussion.(Katz 2010, Zhu, 2013, Çerçi, Ü. Ö. 2024). Therefore, The main objective of this paper is to answer the question of whether personality traits on one side outweigh employees' skills on the other side.

The paper concludes by highlighting the importance of technical skills and the impact on cognitive personality traits, which are crucial in the workplace, and how these skills can significantly influence these traits.(Sosik et al. 2011, Murphy and Cleveland, 1995, Mead, 1934, Dobre et al., 2012; Fernández-Breis et al., 2009; Kao and Hung, 2007; Ukko et al., 2009; Zeffane and Al Zarooni, 2008, Wen Yao,2023).

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## Background of the Study

### *Importance of technical skills in P.R*

Traditionally, it was largely assumed that the key to success in P.R. lies in the cultivation and maintenance of healthy professional relationships with stakeholders, such as journalists, and effective communication, both of which are attributed to cognitive personality traits. (Sighania,2012). However, the digital revolution and the increasing ubiquity of big data have resulted in significant changes to the skill set required for successful P.R. practice. (Ernst & Young, 2013, Wen Yao,2023), Nowadays, technical skills such as social media management, search engine optimization, and data analysis are invaluable to a P.R. practitioner. (Tewari,2010; CFR Org, 2012, Jayanthi & Cyril 2020). First and foremost, the use of technical skills in P.R. promotes efficiency and accuracy in the workplace. For example, digital communication and social media management allow for a broader and more time-efficient reach when targeting key publics, in comparison to traditional methods, such as through the press. (Kayoko, Seren, Mitsuo, 2011, Ikeas et al (2020). Technical skills are essential in the digital era to avoid obsolescence and to effectively manage crises. In today's fast-paced society, crises can strike at any time, and P.R. professionals must be proficient in digital communication, such as search engine optimization, to effectively strategize their crisis communication. Social media platforms can be used to quickly disseminate messages, maximizing exposure (Ernst et al, 2014). The rise of data analytics and 'big data' necessitates the ability to interpret and utilize this information for successful P.R. practice, as modern P.R. is increasingly utilizing data to

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inform strategy and enhance communication focus. Eastaff (2002), Ap and Wong (2001), Baum and Szivas (2008), Nneka et al. (2024). This, in turn, saves time, and resources, and increases the credibility of a successful campaign. Ergo, the effective use of technical skills in P.R. today is crucial in several different aspects, which ultimately leads to aiding and achieving success for an organization. With the above points in mind, it is made clear that technical skills surpass cognitive personalities in a P.R. workplace. (Sighania,2012, Lee, and Meng, 2021).

### ***Common misconceptions about attitude in P.R***

A recent survey suggests that while "caring" is considered essential in the field of Public Relations (P.R.). Most P.R. executives prioritize knowledge and experience in the field for effective P.R. skills. This is due to the increasing importance of understanding how technology is transforming how people absorb news and make decisions, making it crucial for P.R. professionals. (Ernest et al, 2004). The P.R. industry has shifted towards focusing on technical skills and effective communication, despite the growing importance of positive relationships and communication in digital media. However, personality traits like a positive attitude and compassion towards others are considered more crucial than technical skills in the field. Adrina, Roberto, and Maura (2011) and Kumar, et al, (2019). Many P.R. workplaces practice beliefs about hiring decisions, promotion opportunities, and daily operations. Good workers, who maintain good relationships with colleagues and are friendly and supportive to their boss, are often considered "good workers" and their professional capacity may be overshadowed (Kayoko et al., 2011, McDonald C., 2020)

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Besides, Academic research and "how-to" guides often emphasize the importance of a positive attitude for successful P.R. careers. However, these theories often overlook the crucial role of technical skills in the success and sustainability of a P.R. campaign or organization, leading to a lack of understanding in everyday work life. Donnelly et al., (2012). Also, it is suggested that the researchers should investigate further into the reasons for these misconceptions and how it has negatively affected the P.R. industry as a whole. (Raybould et al., 2005, Kamau and Waudo 2012).

### ***Acquired skills***

Furthermore, recognizing our skills can enhance our self-awareness and ambitions. By recognizing our skills from our experiences, we can identify areas of success and areas for further development, allowing us to identify areas for improvement (Oener, 2016, Dondi, 2021). In effect, this serves as a roadmap for personal development, confidence-building, and increasing employability and suitability for future professional experiences. (Kao and Hung, 2007; Ukko et al., 2009) also, recognizing that everyone has acquired skills is crucial. Demonstrating these skills to ourselves and others allows us to reach our full potential in any situation. This fosters self-development, leading to personal growth and laying the groundwork for further development in other areas. (Katz 2010, Zhu, 2013, Goleman, 2018).

Acquiring and developing new skills builds confidence in facing new challenges and experiences. Acquired skills foster adaptability and learning through experiences, helping us navigate change and challenges. Recognizing and understanding the benefits of these skills helps us build confidence and adapt to new situations. (Enz, 2011, Allan et al., 2024). This also has the benefit

of potentially opening up new doors and possibilities to us as we become more flexible and creative in our approach to different experiences and ways of working. (Dong, 2009, Kim et al., 2009, Dwivediet al., 2022). According to Donnelly et al., (2012) reflecting on our experiences is crucial for skill development. By reflecting on our experiences and learning from them, we can build upon and progress. This process helps us recognize the skills we have used in certain experiences and their benefits on our personal and professional growth. This process not only helps us understand the experience but also helps us identify areas for improvement.

Acquired skills are acquired over time, acquired through experience and continuous practice. They are not born with them but are developed through professional and personal experiences. These skills can be utilized and improved over time, making them valuable in various fields. (Kayoko et al. 2011, Buttet al. 2018).

### ***Definition and characteristics of acquired skills***

Acquired skills are abilities learned through practice and repetition, often in a specific context. They enable us to perform a predetermined task with minimal effort, time, energy, and resources. For instance, learning how to use a computer under specific circumstances allows us to apply that skill in various situations (Costa and McCrae, 1992, Dyrenforth et al., 2010, Button et al., 2020). A skill is, by definition, something that can be transferred from one situation to another and is not a one-off occurrence. Those who learn the piano can apply their knowledge to play any piece of piano music. (Karani, 2011, Kwok, Adams, and Price, 2011). These skills can continue to be developed through practice and may include teaching, research, communication, clinical care, and management. In many ways, the terms skills and abilities are

interchangeable (Digman, 1990). However, people often seek to identify what their 'key' skills are and therefore examples of these are important to give to potential employers. (Greengross and Miller, 2009, Benita and Supriya, 2016) More recently, tendencies to classify, for example, people in certain jobs as skill levels become ever more refined as debates about the knowledge-driven economy take on a greater significance in the world and we try to map the movement of skills between countries. (Dyrenforth et al., 2010, Parr, A. 2022 ). The classification and development of skills is a complex subject, with various definitions and theories surrounding them. Examples include learned capacities like computer programming, learned coordination like sports, and learned knowledge like historical periods. These skills can be improved and developed through various means. (Judge et al., 1999; Komarraju et al., 2011). Cognitive skills are essential abilities that the brain uses to think, learn, read, remember, pay attention, and solve problems. These abilities are inherent in individuals and can be trained and improved. Each individual has certain levels of natural ability in a new cognitive skill, as it is not completely new to them. The capacity to learn and develop these skills comes from core abilities that allow individuals to grow and develop them. Cognitive skills work together to take incoming information and convert it into the knowledge bank used in daily life. (McCrae and Costa, 1992, Komarraju et al., 2011, Courage, 2015)

### ***Examples of acquired skills***

When selecting a job, it's crucial to consider your acquired skills, as these skills can help you apply for suitable job positions that align with your skills and knowledge. (Zhang, 2003, Malik, 2018). Good communication is a widely

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acquired skill that allows individuals to acquire knowledge, learn new facts, and develop new ways of thinking through relevant experiences. As experts in their field, knowledge is informed by practice and theoretical understanding. (Shafiro, 2004; Teng, 2008, Savery, 2015). Acquired skills, such as computer, information technology, and numerical skills, are essential for job application and are discussed in detail in a separate section. It is crucial to use impressive examples to support job applications. Zeffane et al., (2018) see that a leader requires acquired knowledge and skills to lead a team effectively. While experienced individuals may possess the best knowledge, only those with the best-acquired skills and abilities can lead a team. These acquired skills, which include both knowledge and abilities, contribute to a leader's higher salary compared to their team members.(Mitsuo et al, 2008, Ruben et al., 2023).

### ***Importance of acquired skills***

Acquired skills are essential for modern careers, as they are acquired through practice and repetition. These skills are distinct from cognitive skills, which are born with. In each practice, a neural pathway is formed in the brain, enabling the new skill to be performed, making it a learned or acquired skill. (Rainsbury et al., 2002, Abadzi, 2016). Therefore, Acquired skills are crucial for individuals to perform tasks and activities, fulfilling job requirements, studying, and leisure activities. They are becoming increasingly essential in the workplace, making them essential for various tasks and activities. (Hodges &Burchell, 2003). The demand for skilled workers who can use technology to create high-quality goods or services is high, making technology-based skills highly sought after. However, employers value a wider range of acquired skills, making these valuable human skills more often the deciding factor when choosing between candidates. (Nilsson, 2010, Zagonari's 2009, Trought,



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2017.). Employers value acquired skills like time management, multitasking, and problem-solving just as much as ICT qualifications. Creativity and imagination are encouraged to promote new ideas and ways of doing things, creating an environment where acquired skills are constantly developed and learned. Therefore, the importance of acquired skills cannot be underestimated. (Raybould and Wilkins, 2005, Kim 2008),

Acquired skills provide essential knowledge and abilities that are crucial throughout a person's life, from education to employment. Developing these skills enhances one's value to employers, improving job satisfaction and career progression, thus making them more valuable.(Kayoko et al., 2011),

### ***Technical skills***

According to (Mohan et al 2018)., technical skills are necessary for all employers and all workplaces, no matter what the nature or the size of the company is. A worker is required to work internationally with workers and colleagues to complete tasks and achieve company and well as personal goals. (Kayoko, 2008, Caligiuri, 2022). He must develop his skills in communication problems so that he and his colleagues understand and respect each other's ideas, and his innovative problem-solving methods through a high level of technology and resourcefulness like using computer-aided solutions. (Victoria 2005, Kamau 2012).

All employers in the modern workplace would look for employees to be confident with the technological improvements and changes, to satisfy the requirement of work. Lings 2004, Victoria, 2005, Kolot, 2022). For instance,

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employers are impressed by those who can use data to support their theories and ideas, while employees who are not confident in dealing with data and carrying out an efficient analysis are asked to take training courses to cope with this essential technical skill. (Raybould and Wilkins, 2005).

Also, employers usually encourage their employees to have regular health and safety training, as using equipment has risks for accidents. They also expect to use the skills learned in practice, to ensure a safe workplace. (Baum, 2002, Australian, 2003, Brauer, 2022 ). For example, a computer user who is very good at using Microsoft Word and Microsoft Excel can list them as skills on their resume. Raybould et al. (2005). A software engineer requires technical and hard skills, including problem-solving techniques and good project management to complete projects on time and within budget. With the continuous development of technology, many jobs and industries now rely on technology, making technical skills highly sought after by employers. The employee must be able to solve problems using specific techniques and be able to work with new technology and machinery (Lings 2004, Wilkins 2005, Mindell, & Reynolds, 2023).

Technical skills refer to the specific knowledge and abilities required for a particular job or field. Many jobs require particular technical skills, such as specialized knowledge of a scientific field, technology, or computer systems. (Sigala, 2001, Ergin Ersay, 2013). Professions that would require technical skills range from technology, such as software engineering, data science, and web development, to medicine, such as a doctor or nurse. (Raybould,2005) Technical skills fall into the category of hard skills, which are skills that are teachable and whose presence can be tested or proved. These skills are easily quantifiable compared to soft skills, which are attributes and personality traits that can be used in every job.

## ***Cognitive Personality Qualities***

Since the 1980s, researchers concentrated on undertaking features seen as basic personality measurements. This attention increased cause of the advancement of accepted personality configuration (Goldberg, 1990, 1992). Almost all of the researchers affirmed the five-factor model strength (Murugesan and Dominic, 2012, 2013), and recommended empirical outcomes relying on individual variances (Goldberg, 1990, 1992, Möttus et al., 2022).

The Big Five personality qualities are tremendously inherited, which means that the genetic influence on the five scopes of Big Five personality qualities measured as extraversion (53%), neuroticism (41%), friendliness (41%), ingenuousness (61%), and meticulousness (44%), have a genetic root (Jang et al., 1996), have persisted steadily over time (Costa and McCrae, 1992), and could be comprehensive across cultures (Costa and McCrae, 1995; Salgado, 1997). According to Goldberg (1993), personality qualities are intellectualized at numerous ranks of perceptions from a diversity of theoretical points of view. Digman proposed this five-factor personality model in 1990, and Goldberg expanded it to include the highest levels of the organization in 1993 (Fokides, 2021)

## **Methodology**

The main objective of this paper is to answer the question of whether personality traits on one side outweigh employees' skills on the other side. This research population is constituted of managers and staff, of P.R. and customers

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of Greater Cairo three-star lodges. Academics and professionals collaborated in developing three questionnaire forms to serve as the tools for this research. disseminated in three-star hotels in Greater Cairo, 140 forms were in use adopting the convenience sampling technique during the period April 2020 to January 2021. The forms were disseminated among managers, staff, and employees.

To reveal the inter-relationships between the several dimensions, i.e., the importance of cognitive personal qualities versus personal skills the researchers used both descriptive and quantitative methods. Later, data collected were analyzed using SPSS version 26 and necessary tests were instituted to derive information from these data. Frequency, percentage, weighted average tests, and Kruskal Wallis test were used to compare managers', employees', and guests' viewpoints about the research question. Notions of all participants were also tested based on a point scale to reveal the most important notions for each group of participants.

### **Results and Discussion**

Guests were asked to define the skills they preferred the most upon dealing with staff. The following table exhibits the ranking of these skills according to guests' perceptions.

**Table (1) Guests' perceptions of skills upon dealing with staff.**

Element	Ex – important		temperately important		Not Important		W.avg	Rank
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%		
Academically qualified.	40	74.01	10	19.58	4	7.51	144	1
Experienced	34	62.86	14	25.87	6	10.13	136	2

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Professional Outlook	12	21.32	24	45.55	18	35.53	102	7
Communicative	18	33.34	21	37.98	15	29.80	111	6
Fluent.	30	57.51	16	29.53	8	14.85	130	3
Resolves critical issues	28	50.95	17	30.78	9	15.67	127	4
Fervently stable	22	41.83	20	38.01	12	21.32	118	5

The above-mentioned table shows that 7.01% of guests valued qualified employees as their priority. Guests valued experience (26.86%) as second in importance, and fluency (57.51%) was third in importance. Resolving issues, fervently stable, communicative, and professional outlook were fourth through seventh.

The researchers note here that the respondents' answers favored mainly academic qualifications, experience, and fluency in cognitive skills. The ranking based on this becomes as follows:

1. Academically qualified and experienced
2. Experienced Managing critical situations
3. Fluent.
4. Resolves critical issues
5. Fervently stable
6. Communicative
7. Professional Outlook

Kruskal Wallis test -which compares ranks between groups apart from frequency- was implemented to detect differences. According to the test result ( $H=0.0653$ ,  $p=.7983$ ), this designates non-significance among P.R. managers

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and guests. This means that both the former and the latter agree to the ranking of the set of skills suggested.

To define the obstacles that hinder P.R. activities hotel guests investigated were asked to weigh them according to their impacts. The following table represents outcomes.

**Table (2) Hindrances in performance of the P.R. department according to guests.**

<b>Hindrances in Faults of P.R by guests'</b>	<b>Occurrence</b>	<b>w.Average</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Rank</b>
oldfashion technologies	30	120	25.20	2
Monotonous and bureaucracy	12	12	10.52	4
Recruiting under-qualified staff	25	75	21.92	3
short budgets of P.R	47	235	35.96	1
Total	114		100	

Based on the table above the responses of guests on the hindrances that deter the performance of the P.R. department. Since some guests picked up more than one choice, the total number of responses amounted to 114. Of the guests (35.96%) chose short-budget, (25.20%) went for old-fashioned technology used (21.92%) selected under-qualified staff recruitment, (and 10.52 %) picked up the monotonous bureaucracy. The researchers concluded that the rank of the hitches that hinder the P.R department performance in economy hotels is as follows:

1. Short budgets of P.R
2. oldfashion technologies.
3. Recruitment of Under-qualified staff
4. Monotonous and Bureaucracy.

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Guests were asked to suggest ideas to improve the role of P. R. activities in examined economy hotels. The following table echoes these ideas.

Table (3) Guests' recommendations to improve P.R. activities in examined economy hotels.

Recommendation.	Guests		Rank
	Occurrence	%	
Utilizing cutting-edge technology in P.R activities	21	42.85	1
keep guests' contact data activated	18	36.73	2
Recruiting adequate academically qualified and proficient staff.	10	20.04	3
Total	49	100	

The aforementioned table displays the responses of guests and their ideas to improve the activities of P.R. in economy hotels as follows (42.85%) required utilizing cutting-edge technology in P.R. activities, (36.73 %) went for keeping guest contact data and (20.04%) for recruiting adequate academically qualified and proficient staff will add to the operation.

The research team examined the hindrances that deter the activities of the P.R. according to managers, employees, and guests viewpoints by comparing their ranking in Table (5) as follows:

Table (4) Hindrances fronting P.R. activities comparative viewpoints of managers, staff, and guests.

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<b>Managers viewpoint</b>	<b>Staff viewpoint</b>	<b>guests point view</b>
Short adoption of modern communication technology.	Insufficient PR budget	short budgets assigned to P.R. activities
short budgets assigned to P.R. activities	Old-fashioned communication technology	Short adoption of modern communication technology
lack of attentiveness to training.	Use of futile tools and methods	Uner-qualified staff
Monotonous and bureaucracy, centralism of decision.	Under-qualified employment / poor performance of P.Rstaff	Monotonous and bureaucray,
Favoritism in selecting staff	Incompetent planning /poor implementation	
	Delay in internal work procedures	
	Absence of follow-up	

For additional examination of the case, the Kruskal Wallis test was used to compare the responses of guests, managers, and staff.

The Kruskal Wallis test value indicated is ( $H=0.5345$ ,  $p=.4647$ ) which means there are no significant variances among managers and staff concerning hindrances that deter the activities of the P.R. department.

To pursue the investigation the weighted average method was used for ranking of viewpoints of staff and managers. This was done by adding the weights of staff and managers. The ranking became as follows

- 1- Favoritism in recruitment (24 points)
- 2- Monotonous, Bureaucracy and centralization (20 points)
- 3- Inadequacy of training (16 points)



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- 4- Short P.R. budgets (15 points)
  - 5- old-fashion technology (13 points)

To profoundly explore the case, the weights of the same variables that expressed guests were added to the previous calculation. The ranking is as follows

- 1- Favoritism in recruitment (30 points)
- 2- Monotonous, Bureaucracy and centralization (24 points)
- 3- Inadequacy of training (22 points)
- 4- Short PR budget (19 points)
- 5- Old fashion technology (17 points)

Since the calculated mean is ( $m=22.4$ ), therefore, favoritism in recruitment (30 points), Monotonous, Bureaucracy, and centralization (24 points), and inadequate training (22 points) are reflected as the main hitches that hinder the activities of the P.R. department by all interviewees. It is worth noting here that all factors are internal operational issues. It is worth noting also that what was thought to be major obstacles like limited budget and old-fashioned technology means were less than the calculated mean and came at the bottom of the list of obstacles.

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Table (6) Comparison of notions of P.R. managers, employees, and guests in economy hotels.

<b>Managers notions</b>	<b>Employees' notions</b>	<b>guests' notions</b>
Using modern technology	Increasing the PR budget	Using modern technology
Increasing the PR budget	Using modern technology	Maintain guest data for contact
Increasing training program.	Recruiting qualified academic calibers with the required experience	Recruiting qualified academic calibers with the required experience
Recruiting qualified academic calibers with the required experience.	Increasing training program.	
decentralization and flexibility in decision-making	Setting an annual plan for the activities for public relations and follow up on implementation.	

To compare the responses of guests, managers, and staff., the Kruskal Wallis test was used.

According to the test results ( $H=5.2083$ ,  $p=0.02248$ ), managers' and staff points of view regarding notions are significantly different. Public relations managers focused on utilizing up-to-date technology followed by uplifting resources. In other words, they focused principally on staff and technology” operational issues”. Whereas, staff notions focused on increases in budgets and the usage of up-to-date technology. In other words, they centered on “financial issues” other than operational ones.

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To sum up recommendations the weighted average method for ranking of viewpoints of employees and managers was performed. The calculations were done based on adding the weights of employees and managers

- 1- Increase training (17 points).
- 2- Recruitment of qualified experienced staff (17 points)
- 3- Increasing PR budgets (13 points)
- 4- Use of modern technology (13 points)
- 5- decentralization and Flexibility in making decisions (2 points)
- 6- Planning (1 point)

When the weights of the same set of variables of guests were added to the previous calculation this resulted in the following ranking:

- 1- Recruitment of qualified experienced employees (20 points)
- 2- Increase training (17 points, no guest weight)
- 3- Use of modern technology (16 points)
- 4- Increasing PR budgets (13 points, no guest weight)
- 5- Decentralization and Flexibility in making decisions with (2 points)
- 6- Planning (1 point)

Moreover, as the calculated mean for the first four variables ( $m=16.5$ ) therefore, recruitment (20 points), training (17 points), and use of up-to-date technology (16 points) are seen as the main notions to improve the activities of P.R. as agreed by all. It is worth noting here that all these factors are internal operational issues. Also what was thought to be important like uplifting budgets, decentralization and flexibility in

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decision-making and planning were less than the calculated mean and came at the bottom of the list of recommendations.

### **conclusions and implications of the research**

Several lodging managers are inclined to overrate staff attitude. They do the same concerning financial allocations while at the same time underrating the importance of technical skills in performing jobs. They always marked, all the time, that they are most about attitude. This research discredits such a mythos. The findings of this research give proof firstly, that technical skills overshadow the cognitive traits of employees, especially in the P.R. department, and secondly, that financial shorts are not the main contributors to inadequate performance but rather; technical skills are. The main conclusion of this paper is that operations need to gear up resources to improve the technical skills of P.R. employees more than any other skill and to forget about the myth of attitude in selecting and hiring P.R. employees. This research was conducted on the P.R. department staff. More research is required to include other departments of lodges of different categories.

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