

RESEARCH ARTICLE



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## Resilience, Perseverance, and Emotional Intelligence: Soft Skills from Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea*

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### Abstract

This paper explores the soft skills embedded in Ernest Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea*, highlighting their contemporary relevance. While soft skills such as resilience, perseverance, adaptability, and emotional intelligence are often taught in professional training programs, this study argues that literary texts can serve as rich pedagogical resources for cultivating these attributes. Through the struggles of Santiago, the novella's central character, readers encounter lessons in resilience against adversity, perseverance in the face of prolonged challenges, adaptability in managing scarce resources, and emotional intelligence in recognizing human and ecological interconnectedness. By examining Santiago's ordeal, this paper demonstrates how literature offers timeless insights into personal growth and professional competence. For technical graduates in particular, such skills are indispensable as they navigate collaborative workplaces, manage complex projects, and adapt to rapidly changing technological environments. The ability to combine technical expertise with resilience, adaptability, and emotional intelligence not only enhances employability but also strengthens leadership and problem-solving capacities. Ultimately, *The Old Man and the Sea* exemplifies the enduring value of literary narratives in teaching soft skills vital for the twenty-first century.

**Keywords:** Soft skills, Hemingway, resilience, pedagogy.

## **Introduction**

Soft skills, often defined as personal attributes that enable effective interaction and adaptability, are increasingly recognized as crucial in both academic and professional spheres. Attributes such as resilience, perseverance, emotional intelligence, and adaptability are indispensable for success in contemporary contexts. While discussions of soft skills often focus on workplace training or pedagogy, literature can also serve as a profound medium for exploring and internalizing these competencies. Ernest Hemingway's novella *The Old Man and the Sea* (1952), a canonical work of modern American literature, is a compelling narrative that not only portrays the struggle of an aging fisherman but also embodies enduring lessons in soft skills. Through Santiago's character, the novella highlights qualities that remain vital in the twenty-first century.

## **Methodology**

This study adopts a qualitative and interpretive approach to examine the soft skills embedded in Ernest Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea*. The methodology is rooted in literary analysis, focusing on thematic exploration, character study, and textual interpretation. Santiago's experiences are analyzed to identify recurring themes of resilience, perseverance, adaptability, and emotional intelligence. These themes are then contextualized within contemporary discussions of soft skills in education and professional training.

The analysis draws on secondary sources in soft skills literature, including works by Goleman (1995) on emotional intelligence and Robles (2012) on workplace competencies, to establish a theoretical framework. By bridging literary interpretation with pedagogical theory, the study highlights how canonical literature can serve as an effective educational resource for cultivating soft skills.

The choice of *The Old Man and the Sea* as the primary text is deliberate, given its enduring narrative of struggle, dignity, and human endurance. The methodology emphasizes close reading of the novella alongside comparative insights from leadership and employability studies. This interdisciplinary approach ensures that the findings are not confined to literary analysis but extend to practical applications for technical graduates and professionals.

## **Discussion**

### **Resilience and Perseverance**

Santiago's journey into the sea demonstrates a remarkable capacity for resilience. Despite his advanced age and prolonged streak of misfortune, he sets out to sea with determination. His battle with the marlin epitomizes perseverance in the face of seemingly insurmountable odds. In the modern context, this resilience parallels the need to endure failures, professional setbacks, and the uncertainties of life. Santiago's refusal to surrender, even after losing the marlin to sharks, embodies the principle of finding dignity in persistence rather than merely in victory. Such resilience is a cornerstone soft skill for personal and professional growth.

### **Adaptability and Problem-Solving**

Hemingway's protagonist continually adapts to challenges presented by the sea. Santiago manages his limited resources with ingenuity, improvises his fishing strategies, and endures physical pain with mental strength. Adaptability, a skill often emphasized in leadership and employability studies, emerges as Santiago finds creative ways to survive. His problem-solving ability reinforces the notion that adaptability is not simply reacting to change but proactively navigating it with resourcefulness.

### **Emotional Intelligence and Self-Reflection**

A deeper layer of Santiago's character reveals significant emotional intelligence. He respects the marlin as a worthy adversary and

demonstrates empathy towards it, humanizing his struggle rather than reducing it to mere conquest. Such recognition of interconnectedness and respect underlines self-awareness, humility, and ethical consciousness. Santiago's solitude allows him moments of self-reflection, demonstrating how emotional intelligence contributes to resilience and self-motivation. In professional environments, emotional intelligence fosters teamwork, conflict resolution, and ethical decision-making—qualities exemplified in Santiago's quiet dignity.

### Lessons for Contemporary Readers

In an era dominated by technological advancements and competitive pressures, Hemingway's novella offers timeless insights into the human condition. Santiago's journey illustrates that success is not solely defined by external achievement but also by inner growth, endurance, and ethical engagement with challenges. By engaging with *The Old Man and the Sea*, students, professionals, and leaders can cultivate resilience, perseverance, adaptability, and emotional intelligence—soft skills essential to personal and collective advancement.

### Conclusion

Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea* transcend its narrative of a fisherman's struggle to capture the essence of universal human qualities. Santiago's ordeal becomes a metaphorical framework for understanding and cultivating vital soft skills. His resilience, adaptability, perseverance, and emotional intelligence resonate with contemporary demands, making the novella not only a literary masterpiece but also a pedagogical resource for soft skill development. As literature continues to intersect with education and leadership discourses, Hemingway's work provides a timeless model of human strength and character.

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