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Non-Technical Skills Needed for the Current and Next-Generation Agricultural Workforce

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Abstract: This study highlights the need to recognize and train agricultural workers in essential non-technical skills to enhance workforce effectiveness and sustainability within the agriculture sector. Focused on the Gippsland region of Victoria, Australia, the research involved initial semi-structured interviews with three agricultural training managers to identify relevant non-technical skills for food and fibre workplaces. Representatives from twenty Gippsland food and fibre businesses were then surveyed to rate these identified skills across different workforce segments: (a) seasonal workers, (b) entry-level workers, (c) supervisors, and (d) managers. Descriptive statistics, including frequency counts, means, and standard deviations, were used to analyze the responses. Employer ratings for skill needs were weighted against the number of workers employed in each workforce segment. Key non-technical skills such as communication, teamwork, problem-solving, and cross-cultural competence were found to be in high demand, particularly among seasonal and entry-level workers. However, there is a significant gap between the importance of these skills and their prioritization in accredited training programs. Addressing this gap is crucial for investing in a skilled and adaptable agricultural sector that is competitive and sustainable. The theoretical understandings derived from this study's results warrant further research and replication in diverse commodity sectors and locations within Australia and internationally.

Keywords: agricultural workforce; training and development; qualitative data

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1. Introduction

The agricultural workforce today is characterized by a blend of traditional practices and emerging technologies, presenting both opportunities and challenges. Several mega-trends are shaping its future, influencing job design and strategies for attracting and retaining workers. Technological advancements like automation and precision farming are revolutionizing practices, requiring new skills, and altering roles [1]. Climate change and sustainability pressures are driving shifts toward different practices, affecting workforce demands [2]. Additionally, demographic changes, such as urbanization and an ageing rural population, pose challenges in maintaining a stable labour force [3].

As the world of agricultural work changes, there is a need to better understand the skills required by the new and current workforce to adapt and engage with current and future job opportunities and embrace new developments in the way tasks are performed. Retaining existing workers is important as the organizational knowledge they possess affords efficiencies in production processes. As such, the existing workforce is required to upskill through formal, on-the-job, or short course training as part of their role, as more manual, repetitive, or physical tasks are replaced with technology. However, it is not only new technical skills but also proficiency in a number of non-technical skills areas that must be learned [4]. Furthermore, it has been acknowledged that agricultural education and extension services need to move beyond supporting the technical knowledge and skills development of people working in agricultural enterprises to the non-technical skills that

will ensure workforces continue to adapt to the different challenges that arise within the agriculture industry and that research on this topic is required [5]. Indeed, a recent review of international labour requirements in agriculture found that several non-technical skills are now listed among the greatest skills shortages for this industry, including (a) social skills and teamwork, (b) problem-solving, (c) learning, and (d) planning [6].

Non-technical skills encompass a broad range of transferable traits, skills, and abilities that support effectiveness and flourishing in life and at work [7,8]. These skills have been referred to in the academic and grey literature as soft skills, employability skills, evergreen skills, 21st century skills, or power skills. For this study, we have selected the term non-technical skills to contrast these with technical skills. Technical or hard skills are concrete, measurable abilities tied to the operation of equipment or tools in a particular profession. These skills are essential for fulfilling job responsibilities within industries demanding specialized expertise to perform precise tasks [9]. Past research has found that while technical skills training may support people's entry into a workplace, it is the emphasis on non-technical skill training that supports workers in sustaining employment over the longer term and continuing to learn technical skills [10]. For this reason, they are increasingly important for people to embrace the future of work and adapt to any disruption to the world of work. These skills are also essential for people to develop their careers, effectively and safely conduct their work, and take on increasing levels of responsibility in overseeing teams in agricultural enterprises. The following sections review the current literature on the non-technical skills required in agriculture across student and workforce populations in different employment settings. The current context is then described, and research questions are identified.

1.1. Non-Technical Skills in Agriculture

Non-technical skills development in relation to the pursuit of an agricultural career have largely been studied at the pre-employment stage, with secondary school students or university students. Studies of agricultural educators in secondary institutions have found consensus among faculty members that a range of non-technical skills are highly valued, considered highly significant in their teaching programs, and integrated on a daily to weekly basis [11]. There are several ways that secondary and tertiary educators deliver learning experiences to support the development of non-technical skills, including a variety of work experience activities, study-abroad experiences, and team-based projects within courses [12]. In identifying skills that would support tertiary graduates' employment in agriculture, skills gaps were identified in key areas including problem-solving, time management, verbal communication and presentation skills, and receiving constructive criticism [13]. For entry-level employees, a range of agricultural organizations rated communication skills and team skills as the most important non-technical skills for university graduates, and while all non-technical skills were deemed valuable, various skillsets were deemed more or less important depending on the work context, i.e., work in extension, in contrast with a non-profit organization [14].

Haddad and Marx [15] examined the differences in agricultural students' soft skill development when engaged in a supervised agriculture experience program compared to those who did not participate. They found no difference in perceived soft skills development and reasoned that other experiences outside the workplace provide opportunities to develop these types of skills. While this is a logical explanation, the implications of such a finding may be that soft skill development either happens or does not happen based on the experiences of individuals, unlike technical skills development which often involves some sort of dedicated training alongside workplace-based experiences. Supporting this variance in the development of soft skills through experiential learning, a study of tertiary agricultural and environmental science students engaging in immersive study abroad experiences found that those who travelled individually developed different skills, in particular personal growth, when compared to those who travelled in a group, who developed teambuilding skills [16].

In terms of the existing agricultural workforce, a focus on non-technical skills is present in the occupational health and safety literature. Farming and agriculture are high-risk industries due to hazardous environments and the nature of the work. Farmers and workers face frequent dangers from heavy machinery, toxic chemicals, unpredictable livestock, and extreme weather, leading to numerous accidents, injuries, and fatalities globally [17,18]. The lack of adequate safety measures, knowledge, and training in many regions worsens the situation, emphasizing the need for improved safety protocols and education to enhance farm safety [19,20]. Prior research in agriculture has focused on understanding how farmers engage in decision making to achieve better outcomes which reduce the risk of particular job demands that lead to stress [21]. A study of 32 farmers across Scotland and Northern Island found that farmers reported daily use of non-technical skills including (a) situation awareness, (b) decision making, (c) leadership, (d) teamwork, and (e) task management [22]. Farmers utilize these skills while working either in teams or alone to mitigate the risk of safety incidents at work and when concerned about costs and equipment [23]. These skills are also described as cognitive, social, and personal resources that complement technical abilities and enhance safe and efficient task performance [24]. Non-technical skills provide farmers with the capabilities that can help them to work in ways that reduce and manage psycho-social hazards at work. These hazards, including high job demand during seasonal peak periods, remote or isolated work, and uncertainty in tasks requirements as farmers respond to weather events, can have detrimental physical and mental health impacts [25,26].

In further consideration of adaptive non-technical skills in the general agricultural workforce, leadership skills are particularly important as they enable individuals to effectively guide teams, manage resources, and drive innovation in agricultural practices [27,28]. Leadership skills not only encourage innovation and effective resource management but also ensure the long-term sustainability of agricultural practices [29]. Research also indicates that effective leadership in agricultural cooperatives can enhance member participation and decision-making processes [30,31].

Studies often use student participants, but many seasonal and entry-level agricultural workers lack tertiary training and rely on on-the-job learning or short courses. Agricultural education and extension services must now focus on non-technical skills to help the workforce adapt to industry challenges, highlighting the need for research in this area [5]. There has been little consideration of what non-technical skills may be relevant for the different segments of the existing agricultural workforce. The current study seeks to explore this further and identify at what stage in career advancement pathways do these skills become necessary for individuals' job performance.

1.2. Context for the Research

The Gippsland region faces significant workforce challenges that threaten the sustainable growth of its food and fibre industry. With 28 percent of the region's land dedicated to agricultural use, Gippsland farms produce 28.6% of Victoria's dairy and 19% of its vegetables [32]. A 2022 report commissioned by the Latrobe Valley Authority [33] highlighted the importance of a strong agricultural workforce, the need to attract and nurture talent and leadership within Gippsland, and recent restrictions on international seasonal labour leading to a pronounced skill shortage. Addressing these issues requires a strategic approach to talent development. This involves collaboration between local education and training institutes, industry, and regional stakeholders to create a workforce that will support Gippsland's future competitiveness in a tight national labour market.

Given these challenges, it is crucial to explore new ways to attract, engage, and motivate a diverse workforce in the Australian agricultural industry. Seasonal and entry-level farm positions often attract workers with little prior experience, yet these roles require specific skills. Previous research has focused on micro-credentials for technical skills [34], but this study highlights the importance of non-technical skills training.

1.3. Research Questions

Due to attraction and retention challenges, agricultural businesses often hire workers for entry-level positions based on their non-technical skills [35]. Prior research [36] indicates that non-technical skills such as teamwork, decision making, communication, leadership, and initiative are crucial for the agriculture industry. These skills can be recognized and additionally trained via face-to-face and blended formats [37]. This research paper focuses on the need to recognize and train agricultural workers in these essential non-technical skills to enhance workforce effectiveness and sustainability within agriculture.

For the current study, we seek to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: How do non-technical skills requirements differ for workforce segments?
RQ2: What non-technical skills domains are prioritized for training?
RQ3: What training delivery preferences exist for non-technical skills training?

For the present study, we investigate non-technical skills and training requirements across different workforce segments within food and fibre businesses in Australia's Gippsland region.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Participants

Participants were recruited through Food and Fibre Gippsland's membership networks, with email invitations sent and follow-up phone calls made to employers. While the sample is considered a convenience sample, all efforts were made to survey a range of different employers. The representatives from 20 food and fibre business included HR/training managers (n = 8) business/farm owners (n = 5), branch/sales/project managers (n = 3), CEOs (n = 2), and managing directors (n = 2). Enterprises were involved in horticulture production (n = 6), dairy production (n= 3), consulting services in either horticulture or dairy (n = 3), and food processing/manufacturing using horticulture or dairy products (n = 4), with four participants not reporting their type of business. Workforce size for each enterprise ranged from 4 employees to 592 employees (Mdn. = 55.5, M = 119.95, SD = 146.14).

2.2. Materials and Procedures

Initial consultations were conducted with three training managers for the purpose of gathering data to assist in the formulation of the study's employer survey. These managers represented large Gippsland-based agriculture, horticulture, and food processing businesses. These consultations provided in-depth discussions of business training needs, motivations to invest in workforce training, and the non-technical skills perceived as crucial for the sustainability of the agriculture sector.

A survey was then designed by the research team, with a mix of closed and open-ended questions. Completed by Food and Fibre Gippsland employers (see Section 2.1), this survey captured their ratings of skills needed for different workforce segments including (a) seasonal workers, (b) entry-level workers, (c) supervisors, and (d) managers. Questions also captured preferred training delivery methods, including (a) online, (b) face-to-face, or (c) blended, and preferences for training programs to either be nationally accredited or non-accredited. An open-response question on priority non-technical skills areas for workforce training gave the opportunity to identify skills beyond those identified during the initial consultation process. These additional skills were revealed and identified through a content analysis process [38]. The credibility and trustworthiness of this analysis and its results was established via debriefing amongst all research team members.

The non-technical skills listed in the survey instrument included (a) cross-cultural competence, (b) problem-solving skills, (c) communication skills, (d) teamwork/collaboration skills, (e) creativity and innovation skills, (f) self-management/time management skills, (g) understanding individual differences (personality/abilities/motivation/strengths), and (h) strategic thinking and planning.

2.3. Analysis

Descriptive statistics including calculating frequency counts, means, and standard deviations were used to analyze responses. Employer ratings for skills needs were weighted against the number of workers employed in each workforce segment (seasonal/entry-level/supervisor/manager) for the enterprises.

3. Results

3.1. Skills Needs by Workforce Segments

The overall average requirements for each non-technical skills domain in relation to job performance across different employment categories are reported in Table 1. These results have been weighted against the number of workers employed by businesses in each category at peak periods.

Cross-cultural competence skills were moderately to mostly important across all workforce sectors. Likewise, communication skills and teamwork/collaboration skills were fairly consistent in terms of the strength of need across employment. Each of these soft skills contribute to creating inclusive cultures and foster good relationships among workforces. These may be particularly important when considering the high levels of on-the-job learning from peers and supervisors that happens in these workplaces. Large differences can be observed between seasonal/entry-level workers and supervisor/manager workers on creativity and innovation skills, and strategic thinking and planning and moderate differences for understanding individual differences, self- management/time management skills, and problem-solving skills. Proficiency in these more cognitive soft skills and organizational soft skills are more likely to be needed for people in positions with greater autonomy. When a second analysis excluding 'not needed' responses was conducted there were negligible changes to the response patterns. Figure 1 shows a graphical representation on the changes in importance ratings in relation to employment categories.

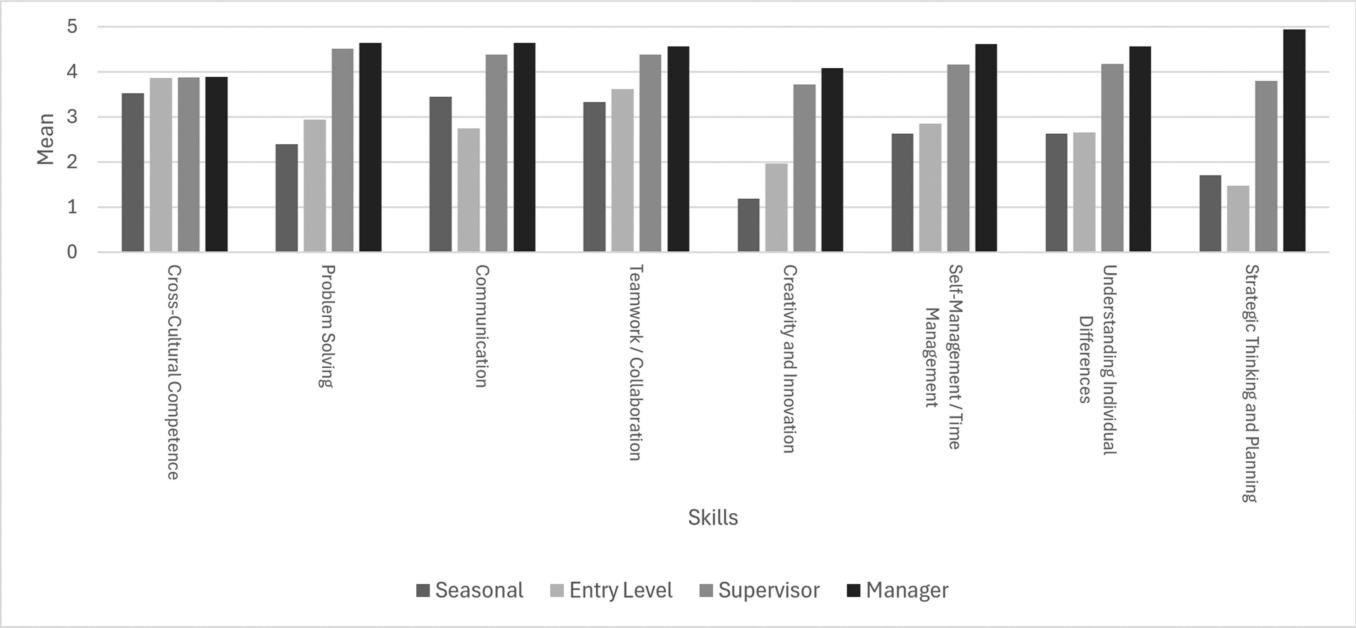

Figure 1. Changes in importance ratings in relation to employment categories.

Table 1. Means and standard deviations for required soft skills domains related to job performance across categories of employment (N = 1882).

Skills Domain	Seasonal M (SD) *n* = 774	Entry-Level M (SD) *n* = 749	Supervisor M (SD) *n* = 221	Manager M (SD) *n* = 138
Cross-Cultural Competence (able to effectively work with people from different cultural backgrounds)	3.53 (0.57)	3.87 (0.68)	3.88 (0.90)	3.89 (0.67)
Problem-Solving Skills	2.40 (0.62)	2.94 (1.18)	4.52 (0.60)	4.64 (0.65)
Communication Skills	3.45 (1.21)	2.74 (0.90)	4.39 (0.49)	4.64 (0.48)
Teamwork/Collaboration Skills	3.33 (0.74)	3.62 (0.86)	4.38 (0.49)	4.56 (0.49)
Creativity and Innovation Skills	1.18 (0.41)	1.97 (0.50)	3.72 (0.70)	4.08 (0.78)
Self-Management/Time Management	2.63 (0.59)	2.85 (1.09)	4.16 (0.50)	4.62 (0.79)
Understanding Individual Differences (personality/abilities/motivation/strengths)	2.63 (0.58)	2.66 (1.05)	4.17 (0.65)	4.57 (0.81)
Strategic Thinking and Planning	1.70 (0.93)	1.47 (0.67)	3.80 (0.68)	4.94 (0.24)

Note. The means and standard deviations calculated have been weighted against the number of workers employed by businesses in each category. Rating scale is (1) not needed, (2) slightly needed, (3) moderately needed, (4) mostly needed, and (5) extremely needed.

3.2. Priority Non-Technical Skills Areas

When asked about what non-technical skills domain areas are training priorities, four of the workplaces (23.5% of respondents, 2 SMEs and 2 large organizations) clarified that these were either not a priority or a low priority. An additional farming business clarified that communication skills were important, but these would not be 'trained' but rather discussed informally in team meetings or one-on-one at work. While at the other end of the spectrum, one HR manager interviewed stated "Soft skills like communication and teamwork etc. is a priority because it contributes to good work culture". Strategic thinking and planning were identified by two start-up businesses as priority areas for development (11.8% of respondents). Other than this, the clear dominant skills domain priorities for businesses were communication skills (47% of respondents, *n* = 8), teamwork (29.4% of respondents, *n* = 5), and time management (23.5% of respondents, *n* = 4). Not specifically listed as a skills domain but mentioned in open-response questions by three organizations was leadership skills (*n* = 3). If this category had been provided as an option, it is likely that other participants would have selected it. Other skills areas mentioned in this open response included strategic thinking and planning (*n* = 2), and creativity and innovation (*n* = 1). One employer involved in an agricultural service business mentioned that mental health first aid could potentially be a useful skillset for consultants to learn when interacting with clients.

3.3. Preferences for Delivery of Training for Non-Technical Skills

With regards to the non-technical skills domains, there was a clear preference for online or blended learning for skills that relate to individual performance (e.g., problem-solving skills, creativity and innovation, self-management/time management, understanding individual differences, and strategic thinking and planning). For non-technical skills domains that involve relational skills (e.g., cross-cultural competence, communication skills, and teamwork/collaboration skills), the preference was for blended or face-to-face delivery. There was a considerable acceptance of non-accredited/informal training non-technical skills domains. However, a fair proportion of employers still reported a preference for nationally accredited training (31.3% to 43.8%). See Table 2.

Table 2. Non-technical skills training delivery preferences.

Skills Domain	Online	Face-to-Face	Blended	Nationally Accredited	Non-Accredited	No Preference
Cross-Cultural Competence (N =16)	18.8%	37.5%	43.8%	31.3%	50.0%	18.8%
Problem-Solving Skills (N = 16)	25.0%	18.8%	56.3%	31.3%	50.0%	18.8%
Communication Skills (N = 16)	12.5%	50.0%	37.5%	43.8%	37.5%	18.8%
Teamwork/Collaboration Skills (N = 16)	6.3%	43.8%	50.0%	37.5%	43.8%	18.8%
Creativity and Innovation Skills (N = 16)	18.8%	31.3%	50.0%	31.3%	50.0%	18.8%
Self-Management/Time management (N = 16)	43.8%	12.5%	43.8%	43.8%	37.5%	18.8%
Understanding Individual Differences (N = 16)	31.3%	25.0%	43.8%	37.5%	43.8%	18.8%
Strategic Thinking and Planning (N = 16)	12.5%	31.3%	56.3%	37.5%	43.8%	18.8%

4. Discussion

The current study sought to identify the non-technical skills requirements for different workforce segments employed in a range of different agricultural businesses and investigate the potential career development requirements of employees. In addition to this, the tension between skills importance ratings and employer training priorities was explored, and potential training delivery preferences recorded. These findings are now discussed.

For the seasonal workforce, cross-cultural competence, communication skills, and teamwork/collaboration skills were identified as the most important non-technical skills. Employers rated these skills as moderate to mostly needed for this segment to perform effectively. Similar ratings were given for longer-term entry-level employees, except communication skills, which were rated lower than for seasonal employees. This difference may reflect the large number of seasonal workers in Australia sourced through international labour schemes, necessitating non-technical skills for teams with significant cultural diversity and individuals for whom English is a second language. In contrast, Australian residents and citizens tend to be recruited into more permanent entry-level positions [39].

The importance of communication and teamwork/collaboration skills for entry-level employees aligns with prior research on employability skills for agricultural university graduates entering the workforce [14] and highlights the significance of social connection as a link between well-being and employment [40]. Other non-technical skills required by seasonal or entry-level workers include problem-solving skills, self-management/time management skills, and understanding individual differences, although employers rated these as only slightly to moderately needed for these cohorts. Additionally, mental health first aid was mentioned as a non-technical skill, aligning with research that explored the role of listening and communication within mental health delivery [41].

There is an observable difference between employers' ratings of non-technical skills when comparing entry-level workers to supervisors. Supervisors are moderately to mostly required to have cross-cultural competence, creativity and innovation skills, and strategic thinking and planning. Additionally, problem-solving, communication skills, teamwork/collaboration skills, self-management/time management, and understanding individual differences are rated as mostly to extremely needed for supervisors. These ratings for supervisors are similar for managers, although creativity and innovation skills, and strategic thinking and planning are rated as mostly to extremely needed as individuals reach higher levels of responsibility within agricultural businesses. Non-technical skills identified by [22] in the farm safety literature appear to peak in importance at the supervisor level, indicating their necessity for day-to-day operations (working in the business). In contrast, the increased importance of creativity and innovation skills, and strategic thinking

and planning for managers highlights their critical role in overseeing the future growth and prosperity of the organization (working on the business).

These findings underscore the importance of individuals becoming increasingly proficient in various non-technical skill domains to thrive at work and advance their careers. However, not all employers prioritize non-technical skills training for employees. Communication skills, the most frequently prioritized skill by employers, received endorsement from just under half of the participants. Teamwork and time management, the next highest priority areas for training, attracted endorsement from just under 30% and 25% of employers, respectively. Interestingly, three agricultural organizations identified leadership skills as a priority for staff training. This suggests that employers view non-technical skills through the lens of competencies required for leadership behaviours.

4.1. Implications of the Current Research

The current findings hold several implications for agricultural enterprises and the individuals who are employed within them, and organizations who support workforce training including industry organizations and government. Considering the employer ratings on non-technical skills needed for job performance and training priorities, it appears that while employers recognize the role of non-technical skills for different segments of their workforce, they prioritize dedicating finite training resources to the development of employees' technical skills [34]. This leaves non-technical skills development reliant on the mentoring or coaching that seasonal and entry-level workers may receive from those in supervision or management roles, or on individuals' capacity to learn and reflect on experiences in the workplace. The crucial role of non-technical skills in workers' promotion from entry-level roles to supervisors indicates that employers are likely to recruit into these positions based on competence in non-technical skills. Without the clarity provided by non-technical skills training opportunities, many individuals initially attracted to agriculture may remain unaware of how to develop the skills needed to advance their careers. Accredited training for technical and non-technical skills offers employees the benefit of formally recognized qualifications that enhance career opportunities [42]. In contrast, unaccredited training, while cheaper and more flexible for employers, can provide fewer benefits to workers in terms of skill recognition and transferability to other occupations or industries [43].

Regarding training delivery, preferences leaned towards either face-to-face or blended (a mix of online and face-to-face delivery) options. Employers were divided on whether training should be nationally accredited or if non-accredited training was acceptable. These preferences have implications for the current trend of industries partnering with tertiary learning institutions to offer micro-credentials. Past research suggests that online, self-paced micro-credentials can be beneficial for workforce development [34], providing short course learnings responsive to individuals' current roles and responsibilities in the agricultural workplace. Delivered through online learning management systems, these micro-credentials may address the theoretical components of skills development, complemented by on-the-job training. While many non-technical skills may be approached similarly, communication skills development stood out as an area where employers preferred face-to-face delivery. Teamwork/collaboration skills had the lowest preference for online-only delivery, likely because these skills are social and benefit from a group learning environment for practice and reflection. Conversely, more individual cognitive skills such as problem-solving, self-management/time management, and understanding individual differences received the highest endorsements for online-only delivery, although blended delivery remained the preferred method.

4.2. Limitations and Future Directions for Research

The current study has several limitations for generalizability. Firstly, the relevance of non-technical skills can be highly context-dependent [14]. Secondly, the study's scope is bounded by geographical location and focuses primarily on local agribusiness workforce

requirements, centred largely on the dairy and horticulture industries. Therefore, the theoretical understandings derived from these results warrant further research and replication in diverse commodity sectors and locations within Australian and internationally. Regarding practical implications, including the implementation of training interventions, industry-led training support relies on a critical mass of people to engage in these services. In our analysis, we addressed this practicality by weighing the participant responses against the number of employees for each workforce segment. This means that different skills, such as cross-cultural competence, may not be as relevant for a dairy farmer compared to a large horticultural producer. However, utilizing this information to upskill workers in this region ensures that individuals are equipped with non-technical skills required for a significant proportion of career opportunities available.

With regards to the scope of the research, across the literature, there is much variance in the selection of non-technical skills studied within the agriculture industry. For example, the non-technical skills identified that focus on the safe performance of on-farm tasks do differ from the non-technical skills that focus on career transitions from education settings to the workforce. Our study considers career transitions while in the workforce and took a stronger employability focus in addressing the specific workforce challenges in the Gippsland region. However, the research findings may have been strengthened with further integration of other non-technical skills relating to leadership and safety in agriculture. It is also probable that people working in agriculture aspire to career transitions that are not linear, not exclusively within a single organization, and not within a single commodity group. For example, the farm hand that then seeks to become an agronomist, the food production worker that seeks a role in transport and logistics, or the extension officer that seeks to move from a role in horticulture to broadacre cropping. Future research that explores the full range of non-technical skills in agriculture and maps these to more diverse roles and tasks across the industry, including roles within the professional services sector, is needed. This would support people to better understand the non-technical skills they develop while employed in their current roles and how these can transfer to different roles, enabling them to navigate job transitions and develop a rewarding and satisfying career within the industry.

The current study has limitations in terms of understanding employers' preferences for training of non-technical skills. The reasons for the gap that exists between employer's acknowledgement that non-technical skills are important for job performance and the lack of priority given to the provision of training on non-technical skills for the workforce were not explored. Further research is required to understand the reasons for this sentiment and how effective non-technical skills training can be delivered, in particular for aspiring and existing supervisors and managers in agricultural businesses, given the essential nature of this skillset for these workers.

5. Conclusions

This study underscores the vital need for accredited non-technical skills training in the agricultural workforce, both pre- and post-employment. Key competencies such as communication, teamwork, problem-solving, and cross-cultural competence are in high demand, particularly among seasonal and entry-level workers. However, there is a significant gap between the importance of these skills and their prioritization in training programs. Addressing this gap is crucial for advancing careers and ensuring organizational success in agriculture. This study also emphasizes the necessity of tailored training interventions that consider contextual factors and geographic differences. Effective non-technical skills training programs tailored to the diverse needs of agricultural workers require collaborative efforts between industry and training institutions. This collaboration extends to initiating non-technical skills training in high schools to foster career paths within agriculture [44–46]. Investing in these skills for future and current workers will enhance competitiveness and sustainability in the agricultural sector.

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Institutional Review Board Statement: This study was conducted in accordance with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2018) and approved by Human Research Ethics Committee of CQUniversity Australia (approval number 22634, 23 September 2020).

Data Availability Statement: The data presented in this study are available from the corresponding author on request due to ethical reasons.

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