



Influence Of Soft Skills Training On The Holistic Development Of Hotel Management Graduates

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Abstract

The market and educational landscapes are both rapidly evolving. A decade ago, the majority of corporate institutions actively sought for people with stellar academic records and additional work experience. Hard skills and expertise alone, however, are no longer adequate to keep up with the influx and expansion of the corporate sector. Employers prefer to employ professional and excel the people who are resourceful, moral, and self-motivated and who have strong soft-skills like communication. Lack of soft skills among applicants has led to a low hiring rate by corporations. Despite the utmost requirement and significance of soft skills in hospitality management curriculum, the institutions are hesitant to include soft skill development in their degree curricula. This essay is based on an empirical study that compared students who regularly attend soft skills training sessions with those who didn't.

Key words: market and educational landscapes, hard skills, soft skills training

Introduction

The educational landscape has seen a tremendous transformation in recent years. No matter how technically skilled a person feels they are, if they cannot effectively connect with their coworkers or clients, they will not flourish in the corporate environment. Effective communication is a key part of soft skills and is essential in the corporate world.

Regardless of the industry, soft skills are now a necessary and highly sought-after trait for professions in the business world. As according Serby Richard (2003), hospitality management skills requirements are so stringent that companies specifically explore people

who can add value to their organization and have the capacity to learn and then use soft skills to distinguish between such a job opportunity and satisfaction in a new position.

Due to this, it is now more difficult to get and maintain a work. All applicants who want to have an advantage over their rivals must improve their soft skills in order to triumph despite any challenges they encounter during the recruiting process or even during their employment.

Companies expect and consider possession of soft skills as the indicator of good performance of the employees in future, according to Hewitt Sean (2008), who supports this point of view. In order to flourish in this dynamic period, individuals nowadays must possess a strong soft skills quotient in addition to their core knowledge. Today's hotel management professionals need to receive training as part of their academic education to help them develop soft skills to develop all aspects of their personalities and aptitude, which will help them acquire a decent job in the corporate world.

Today's modern workers need to have a high Soft Skills quotient in order to flourish in this competitive period, regardless of their professional experience or subject expertise. Only 15% of success is made up of one's hard skills; the other 85% is made up of one's soft skills (Watts M and Watts R. K, 2008). Some hotel management institutions in Uttarakhand have not yet incorporated soft skills into their curricula, despite the fact that they are so crucial in the modern corporate environment. [11]

This essay aims to educate these hospitality management institutes on the value of including soft skills in their curricula in order to guarantee excellent placement. This essay is based on an empirical comparison of the soft skill levels of students who regularly participate in soft skills training programs and those who do not.

Definition

In essence, personal attributes are personality- or people-specific skills. Soft skills are "non-technical, intangible, personality specific qualities," as according Hewitt Sean (2008), which indicate a person's aptitude as "a manager, communicator and negotiator, or as a conflict mediator." Instead of information or technical ability, soft skills are the characteristics and aptitudes of attitude and behaviour (Tobin, 2006). Soft skills are "the cluster of personality qualities, social graces, language proficiency, personal routines, friendliness, and optimism that mark each of us to varied degrees," according to the Center for Job Prospects at Purdue University. Doing work ethically, being courteous, team building abilities, disciplined, confident, conformance to social norms, and language competency are among their list of soft skills. [8]

Hard talents and people skills are unique from one another. Soft talents are those that complement a person's hard skills more effectively. According to Martin Carole (2008), soft talents are a "collection comprising character qualities, social graces, personal routines, kindness and cheerfulness," while hard skills means "along the lines of what may show on

your resume." Although they are not a replacement for professional or hard abilities, personal attributes act as a key to unlocking the potential for highly effective performance in people who already possess strong hard skills. ^[4]

Need of Developing Soft Skills and Research Evidences

Vogt Peter (2007) quoted in this thriving business era, excellent soft skills are crucial. There is an enormous number of skilled aspirants of the hotel industry, and the competition is quite tough. They are forced to supplement the technical knowledge they possess with the essential people skills in order to show their actual potential if they want to get an advantage over their rivals. One would undoubtedly be able to stand out from other applicants for hotel managerial roles if they possess excellent skills and experience. ^[9]

Thacker and Yost (2002) emphasised the value of teaching students soft skills in hotel management programs since they need training to function well in teams. It is a common complaint among companies that "business graduates lack strong team leadership skills." Similar to this, Knell and colleagues (2007) claim that employers are continuously looking for employees who are creative, communicative, and culturally aware. ^[3] Employers view soft skills gap, such as those in communications, collaboration, and client attention and responsiveness, as being significantly more important than technical knowledge they possess with the essential people skills shortages, according to the National Employers Skills Survey 2003. (Watkins, 2004). ^[10]

During in the hiring process, poor personal attributes, such as communication skills, create a negative impression on companies and could prevent a student with strong technical knowledge they possess with the essential people skills from being chosen for employment (Pauw and et al, 2006). ^[5]

Soft Skills Training

Sessions emphasizing on Soft skills training attempt to develop a wide range of talents, including boldness, negotiating, communications, and the ability to create and sustain interpersonal relationships, regardless of the target population or the organization where they are taught. Soft talents are thought of being personal qualities that each person possesses naturally. Every person possesses these skills to a certain degree. However, if these skills are not exercised or if the person who possesses them is ignorant of them, he or she will not be able to make use of their innate abilities.

Sessions emphasizing on Soft skills training aims to get rid of these obstacles or hurdles so the person may use their abilities. Through the development of soft skills, a person can become aware of their latent talents and cultivate them for their overall success. Regardless of the skills they have received, everybody can profit from soft skill training.

The Study

This essay seeks to determine the substantial improvements that soft skills training can make to a hospitality management life of a student. By analyzing the students' soft levels of skill prior to and after the program, the role and importance of soft skills training on the holistic development of the hotel management students.

Objective

1. To determine the influence of soft skill training on the soft skill levels of students studying hotel management.
2. To identify the key soft skill areas that can be strengthened following exposure to soft skill training.

Hypothesis

H₀: Impact of Soft skills training program on Hotel management graduates is significant.

H₁: Impact of Soft skills training program on Hotel management graduates is not significant.

Research Design

The study employed an experimental "post-test" design with a single control group as its methodology. The researchers divided the individuals into two groups for the research: an experimental group and a control group. The control group simply received standard content-related and hotel training, whereas the experimental group received soft skills training (the independent variable). Only students who were homogeneous in terms of key demographic characteristics, such as education level, age group, gender, and economic background, were chosen for the study.

The study makes the assumption that every other unrelated factors, including parenting and the college environment, have an equal and comparable impact on the students inside the experimental and control groups.

Universe

Six of Uttarakhand's 18 hotel management schools have a soft skills program that is required of all students, but the other 12 schools place more of an emphasis on developing students' analytical abilities. The control group was selected at random from the 12 colleges that emphasise the acquisition of analytical abilities, whereas the experimental group was chosen at random from the six institutions that offer soft skills training. The study focused on Uttarakhand college students studying hotel management who were between the ages of 21 and 24. They made up the study's sample population.

Sample Size

80 respondents has made up the entire sample. Using a simple random sample approach, 40 students were assigned to the experimental group and 40 to the control group.

Tools of Data Collection

Employer' soft skills scale was used to evaluate the students' soft skills. There were 25 questions on the scale covering several soft skills subsets. A five-point scale was used. The scoring of the scale was done in a way so each participant's set criteria on the scale represents their total score on soft skills.

Objective of Soft Skills Training Programmes

Develop effective communication skills was one of the key goals of the soft skills instruction given to pupils (spoken and written).

- Develop their capacity for efficient communication in business correspondence and report preparation.
- Improve your management, teamwork, and interpersonal skills.
- Enlarge the student's skill set in order to make them competent in regard to the current Work demands.

The goals above were achieved by the soft skills curriculum taught in the experimental group of hotel management colleges. It attempted to increase pupils' self-awareness so they might grow eager and enthusiastic to succeed no matter how challenging the scenario was.

Analysis Plan

The research makes the assumption that both the Experimental group and the Control group were homogeneous at the time of their formation, that any appreciable distinctions in the soft skills of a Experimental group as compared to the Control group are a result of the impact of the soft skills training. By using paired sample' t test, the significance and the type of effect will be determined. The same was done using SPSS 17. The results of this investigation will either support or contradict Hypothesis No. 1. In order to eliminate the influence of any auxiliary variables, such as self - development sessions, site training, and responder maturity, data was collected by the researcher from both the experimental group and control group at the same time.

Limitation of the Study

This research primary constraint engulfs investigators were unable to exert equal control over the experimental group and control group in terms of their general personal experiences, personal characteristics, and regular learning in the classroom.

Result and Discussion

Different average values for the experimental group and the control group were deduced. The initial goal of the study was to determine how the soft skills training affected the experiment group's hotel management students. An impact score, which is derived as distinguish between the test results discovered individually for the control and experimental group, was used to assess the effect of soft skills training. The "t" test was used to determine whether the post-test results for the control group and experimental group differed statistically. The results of the "t" test will demonstrate or refute the proposed hypotheses.

(Table No.1) Comparison of the soft skills scores of experimental and control group

	Mean	SD	N	t	p
Experimental group	93.9	8.9	40	4.65*	0.00
Control group	82.6	8.1	40		
Impact score					

** : significant at 0.01 level

The average soft skill score for experimental group students is 93.9, while the average score of 82.6 for students in the control group demonstrates that even individuals of the control group typically have high soft skill scores. However, a statistical comparison of the soft skill levels of the two groups reveals that the individuals of the experimental group had considerably better soft skills than those of the control group, with a t value of 4.765 significant at the 0.01 level.

This suggests that by soft skills training lays and contribute to the holistic development of the students studying hotel management. It highlights how instruction in soft skills can help hospitality management institutes better prepare their students for elevated amounts of employment. The opinions and findings of scholars like Awe Jide (2008), Elderdge Brad (2006), Serby Richard (2003), and S Thacker and Yost are highly associated with these findings (2002). The aforementioned finding supports the first hypothesis, according to which soft skill development programmes can greatly enhance learners' soft skill development. After testing the theory, researchers sought to identify the key soft skill areas that may be greatly enhanced by soft skill development.^{[1] [2] [6] [7]}

Table -2 Changes or improvement in soft skills components

Soft skills components	Experimental group			Control group			t	Significance level
	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD	N		
Oral/spoken skills	3.6	0.7	40	3.2	0.6	40	2.89**	0.005
Written communication	3.8	0.6	40	3.4	0.8	40	1.51	0.133
Honesty	3.9	0.8	40	3.6	0.6	40	2.53*	0.018
Teamwork	3.8	0.9	40	3.4	1.0	40	3.04**	0.004
Self motivation/ initiative	4.0	0.8	40	3.4	1.2	40	2.63*	0.012
Work ethic/ dependability	3.6	0.7	40	3.3	0.9	40	1.95	0.058
Critical thinking	3.7	0.9	40	3.5	1.2	40	2.13*	0.038
Risk taking skills	3.6	0.8	40	3.6	1.0	40	2.66*	0.012
Flexibility/adaptability	4.0	0.8	40	3.2	0.8	40	6.12**	0.000
Leadership skills	4.2	0.9	40	3.8	0.7	40	3.14**	0.003
Interpersonal skills	4.1	0.7	40	3.4	0.8	40	2.63*	0.012
Working under pressure	3.8	0.8	40	3.2	1.2	40	3.155**	0.003
Questioning skills	3.7	0.8	40	3.2	0.8	40	2.23 *	0.032

Creativity	3.8	0.7	40	3.6	1.1	40	1.069	0.291
Influencing skills	3.7	0.8	40	3.5	0.8	40	3.5**	0.001
Research skills	3.7	0.6	40	3.2	0.7	40	2.46*	0.018
Organization skills	3.6	0.7	40	3.2	0.9	40	0.47	0.653
Problem solving skills	4.0	0.8	40	3.6	0.7	40	2.29*	0.029
Multicultural skills	3.7	0.8	40	3.5	0.8	40	1.06	0.299
Computer skills	3.8	0.8	40	3.8	1.0	40	1.28	0.212
Academic skills	3.7	0.8	40	3.8	0.9	40	1	0.323
Orientation program	3.5	0.7	40	3.5	0.6	40	1	0.320
Quantitative skills	3.6	0.7	40	3.4	0.7	40	0.68	0.5
Training skills	3.8	0.8	40	3.6	0.9	40	2.88**	0.007
Managing time	4.1	0.7	40	3.5	0.7	40	4.12**	0.000

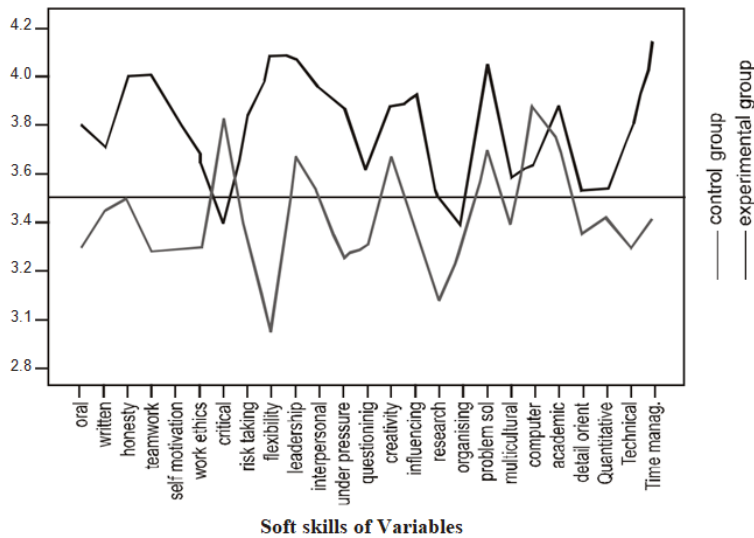
* : level of significance ** : level of significance

0.05

0.01

According to Table No. 2, participants in the experimental group scored significantly more than control group students on measures of oral/spoken abilities, honesty, collaboration, risk-taking, under pressure, persuading, learning, and timekeeping. At 0.01 levels, it was determined that there was a substantial difference observed among the experimental group as well as control group in terms of these elements pertaining to the soft skills. The experimental and control group displayed comparable statistical significant distinctions in terms of consciousness, critical thinking, interpersonal skill, research skills, and issue abilities at the level of 0.05.

Figure-1- Soft skills of hotel management students



It is clear from the following graph that students who study hotel staff who participated in soft skills training achieved above-average results across the board. The findings above can be attributed to the experiment group's soft education and training as long as the control group and experimental group are homogeneous with regard to exogenous variables. This demonstrates that students can significantly improve in nearly all of the key soft skills areas after receiving soft-skills training.

Conclusion

Modern managers are expected to possess both technical and hard abilities as well as soft talents. Hotel management managers should be able to comprehend requirements to gaps in communication, link and organize, and must be aware of how engage others' assistance. The development and promotion of corporate executives are undoubtedly impacted by the executive's capacity for teamwork and interpersonal effectiveness. The findings of the study indicate that learners' soft skills can be improved if hotel management colleges offer them properly designed and structured soft-skills training programs.

The research in this paper demonstrates how frequently conducting sessions embarking on soft skills can dramatically help students to improve' skills and experience and, as a result, their employment.

Students that regularly engage in soft skills training will have an advantage over their peers in terms of both employment and general personality. This is anticipated to show up in their performance throughout their lives and in interview they will undergo for job placements. Although technological skills are required by the management from their employees at the

low level management, it is a blend of hard and soft skills that will enable them to reach greater heights in their careers.

This study thereby illuminates the urgent necessity of the hour. i.e., hospitality management institutions need to take notice in order to fill in the gaps in their student' knowledge by including soft skills training into their curriculum.

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