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Assessment of the Impact of Soft Skills on Prospective Teachers' Soft Skills

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A B S T R A C T

The present study examined that how soft skill training affects prospective teachers' soft skills. The present study has used the experimental method and a one-group pre-test post-test design for the experiment within the scope of quasi-experimental research. The sample size consisted of 90 potential teachers who were enrolled in a two-year teacher training program (B.Ed.) at three of Bndelkhand University's training colleges in Jhansi, India. Utilizing self-made assessment tools, the participants' Soft Skills are evaluated prior to the Soft Skills training. The chosen group of prospective teachers receives the soft skills training. The participants' Soft Skills are assessed once more using the same evaluation methods once the Soft Skills program is over. A paired sample t-test is used to statistically examine the changes in the participants' competence from the pre-test to the post-test. The outcomes suggest that soft skills have been significantly impacted by the training in soft skills. The findings emphasize the need of adding soft skills in teacher training programs to give future teachers the interpersonal and emotional intelligence required for successful instruction.

Keywords: Soft Skill training, Prospective Teachers

1. INTRODUCTION

In an ever-evolving professional landscape, technical expertise alone no longer guarantees success. The ability to effectively communicate, collaborate, adapt, and lead has become equally, if not more, important. These abilities, often referred to as "soft skills," are the intangible qualities that shape how we interact with others and navigate various situations. Recognizing the significance of soft skills in personal and professional growth, the practice of "soft skill development" through dedicated "soft skill training" has emerged as a pivotal strategy for individuals and organizations alike. This paradigm shift underscores the understanding that proficiency in soft skills not only enhances one's career prospects but also fosters harmonious relationships, innovation, and holistic self-improvement. In this exploration, we delve into the concept of soft skills, the value of their cultivation, and the role that specialized training plays in nurturing these essential attributes.

Soft skills are indispensable for teachers as they navigate the complex and evolving landscape of education. Beyond imparting knowledge, teachers must communicate effectively, manage diverse classrooms, and empathize with students' individual needs. Adaptability is key in an ever-changing educational environment, allowing teachers to embrace new methodologies and technologies. These skills foster an inclusive atmosphere, where collaboration, problem-solving, and leadership inspire students to excel both academically and personally. Moreover, cultural competence, creativity, and a commitment to lifelong learning enable teachers to connect with students from various backgrounds and continually enhance their teaching methods. In essence, soft skills empower teachers to create enriching learning experiences, laying the foundation for students' success in a dynamic world.

Soft skills are essentially people's skills or personality specific skills. According to Hewitt Sean (2008) soft skills are "non-technical, intangible, personality specific skills" which determines an individual's strength as "a leader, listener and negotiator, or as a conflict mediator". Soft skills are the traits and abilities of attitude and behaviour rather than of knowledge or technical aptitude (Tobin, 2006).

The Center for Career Opportunities at Purdue University defines soft skills as "the cluster of personality traits, social graces, facility with language, personal habits, friendliness, and optimism that mark each of us to varying degrees." Their list of soft skills includes work ethic, courtesy, teamwork, selfdiscipline, self -confidence, conformity to prevailing norms, and language proficiency . Soft skills are different and distinct from Hard Skills. Soft skills are those skills that add more value to the hard skills adorned by an individual. Martin Carole (2008) comments that hard skills are more "along the lines of what might appear on your resume" whereas soft skills are "cluster of personality traits, social graces, personal habits, friendliness and optimism."Soft skills are not a substitute for hard or technical skills, but they act as harmonizing skills that serve up to unlock the prospective for highly effective performance in people even with good hard skills.

2. REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

Mandeep Kaur and Arti Talwar (2014) study was designed to examine the relationship between teaching competency and emotional intelligence of secondary school teachers. The findings of the study reveal a significant positive relationship between teachers' teaching competency and their emotional intelligence. Nidhi Kakkar (2014) examined the Teaching Competency of Teacher-Trainees in Relation to their Emotional Intelligence. The findings of present research revealed perfect positive relationship between the emotional intelligence and teaching competency of teacher-trainees whereas sex factor has no impact on the level of emotional intelligence.

Sasipriya and Annaraja (2017) studied the relationship between the performance in soft skills and teaching competency of secondary teacher education students. The sample consists of 1287 secondary teacher education students. The investigators developed two tools for collecting data namely Soft skill inventory and Teaching competency scale (2009). Significant relationship between the performance in soft skills of secondary teacher education students and their teaching competency is found significant.

In a research, Bozgün and Pekdoğan (2018) concluded that pre-service teachers differ in their social skills regarding such variables as gender, department, seniority and family income. The researchers reported that male students, students studying science teaching and classroom teaching, and those in their third year have higher social skills than female students, students who study pre-school teaching, psychological counselling and guidance, and second year students, respectively.

Ngang et al. (2015) attempted to identify critical issues in soft skills development through teaching professional training and found that larger class sizes, being too academically focused, and insufficient period of training lead to failure in soft skills development. As a solution, the researchers proposed the use of an embedded model to ensure integration of soft skills in every course design.

Balakrishan and Anbuthasan (2016) noted that the rural and urban teachers differ significantly in their team-building skills and that state and private school teachers differ significantly in oral communication, computer skills, organisational ability, leadership and team-building skills. Lavilles and Robles (2017) indicated a significant relationship between teachers' soft skills proficiency level and school performance in the Philippines.

Likewise, Romero-Cobeña (2019) evaluated the soft skills of teachers in Ecuador and concluded that teachers play important roles as trainers of people and always maintain good management in the quality of education provided within the educational unit. Peabody (2019) stated that school administrators interpreted soft skills as being the decisive factor in effective teaching and that they shared the importance of teachers building connections with their students through their positive relationships, which included the ability to recognise, understand, and manage their emotions and the students' emotions for the benefit of student learning. In a quantitative research conducted in Peru, Guzmán-Britto (2019) found significant differences between the soft skills of teachers in public educational institutions. De Paniza (2019) conducted a project on the development of soft skills of teachers and teaching directors in Colombia and recommended the integration of a subject on soft skills from preschool to high school curricula. Similarly, Streltsova and Ivanova (2020) underlined the need for purposeful work on the development of soft skills of teachers in Russia. Kateryna Kolesnik et. Al (2023) studied future-teacher soft skills development in the context of Ukraine's entry into the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). The results of the experiment show that a 0% indicator for unsatisfactory level of soft skills development was achieved. The guarantor of success in the soft skills development program is the conscious and cohesive work of the teaching staff, as well as an environment of cooperation with motivated students.

3. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

To Study the effect of Soft Skills training on Soft Skills of Prospective Teachers.

4. HYPOTHESIS OF THE STUDY

There is no significant difference between the mean scores of pre and post-test of Soft Skills of Prospective Teachers

5. DESIGN OF THE EXPERIMENT

The investigator has adopted the experimental method as the method of studying the effectiveness of Soft Skills training on Soft Skills of Prospective Teachers. In the experimental method the investigator has adopted the one-group pre-test post-test design within the realm of quasi-experimental research for the experiment. Here's a brief explanation of this experimental design :

Selection of Participants : Size of the sample consisted of 90 prospective teachers pursuing two year teacher's training programme (B.Ed.) under various colleges of Bndelkhand University, Jhansi. The prospective teachers who will participate in the study are selected based on certain criteria, such as their willingness to take part in the training and their availability for the duration of the study.

Pre-Test Measurement : Before the Soft Skills training is administered, the participants' Soft Skills is measured using appropriate assessment tools. This initial measurement is referred to as the "pre-test." It establishes a baseline of the participants' competencies before any intervention (Soft Skills training) takes place.

Intervention (Soft Skills training) : The Soft Skills training is provided to the selected group of prospective teachers. This training is designed to enhance their teaching skills, emotional understanding, and social interactions.

Post-Test Measurement : After the Soft Skills training has been completed, the participants' Soft Skills is measured again using the same assessment tools that were used in the pre-test. This measurement is referred to as the "post-test."

Data Analysis : The changes in the participants' competencies from the pre-test to the post-test are analyzed statistically by paired sample t-test. This analysis aims to determine whether any improvements in Soft Skills have occurred as a result of the Soft Skills training.

6. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The testing of this hypothesis has been done by comparing the mean scores of pre and post-test of Soft Skills of Prospective Teachers. The data was analyzed with the help of paired t-test. The results are given in table-1 tot 3.

Table - 1

Paired Samples Statistics for Pre and Post Test of Soft Skills

Variable	Paired Sample Statistics			
Soft Skills	N	Mean	SD	Standard Error
Pre Test	90	110.467	10.321	1.088
Post Test	90	113.456	9.906	1.044

Table - 2

Paired Samples t-Test for Pre and Post Test of Soft Skills

Variable	Paired Differences			Paired Sample Test			Effect Sizes
Soft Skills	Mean	SD	Standard Error	t	df	p	Cohen's d
Pre Test	2.989	2.624	0.277	10.804	89	<.01	2.624
Post Test							

Table - 3

Paired Samples Correlation between Pre and Post test of Soft Skills

Variable	Paired Sample Correlation		
Soft Skills	N	Correlation	Sig.
Pre Test	90	0.967	< .01
Post Test	90		

Interpretation of the Mean Values :

From the table No. 1, it is evident that - the mean value of pre-test scores of Soft Skills is 110.467 and the mean value of post-test scores of Soft Skills is 113.456. The mean pre-test score of 110.467 indicates the average performance of individuals on the Soft Skills assessment before any intervention or treatment. The mean post-test score of 113.456 indicates the average performance of the same individuals on the Soft Skills assessment after the intervention or treatment has been applied. Comparing the mean pre-test and post-test scores, it appears that there is an increase in scores from the pre-test to the post-test.

The difference between the mean pre-test and post-test scores (113.456 - 110.467 = 2.989) represents the average increase in scores after the intervention or treatment. The increase in mean scores suggests that, on average, individuals' Soft Skills have improved after undergoing the intervention or treatment.

While the mean scores provide important information about the central tendency of the data, it's also important to consider whether the observed increase is statistically significant. For this purpose paired t-test was applied.

Interpretation of t-Value :

The t-value of 10.804 is the calculated test statistic. It quantifies the difference between the means of the paired groups relative to the variability within the groups. Since the obtained t-value is significant at the 0.01 level of significance, it means that the calculated t-value is greater than what would be expected under the null hypothesis (no significant difference). A t-value of 10.804 with 89 degrees of freedom is very high and indicates a substantial difference between the means of the paired groups.

The significance level of 0.01 means that the probability of observing a t-value as extreme as 10.804 (or more extreme) under the assumption of no true difference between the means is less than 0.01. This suggests strong evidence against the null hypothesis.

The significant t-value suggests that there is a statistically significant difference between the means of the pre-test and post-test scores for Soft Skills. So, the null hypothesis (H0-1) "There is no significant difference between the mean scores of pre and post-test of Soft Skills of Prospective Teachers" is rejected.

This result has practical implications, indicating that the intervention or treatment applied between the pre-test and post-test measurements has had a significant impact on individuals' Soft Skills scores.

In summary, a t-value of 10.804 with 89 degrees of freedom and significance at the 0.01 level suggests a substantial and statistically significant difference between the means of the paired groups in the context of Soft Skills scores. Thereby it can be concluded that the Soft Skills training is effective for development of Soft Skills among B.Ed. trainees.

Interpretation of Correlation Value :

From the table No. 03, it is evident that the correlation value between pre-test and post-test scores of Soft Skills is 0.967, which is significant at .01 level, indicates a very high degree of positive linear relationship between pre-test and post-test scores of Soft Skills. Overall, a significant correlation of 0.967 indicates a robust and notable relationship between pre-test and post-test scores of Soft Skills, suggesting that the two measures are strongly associated.

Interpretation of Cohen 'd' :

The last column of table No. 02 shows effect size (cohen 'd') of pre-test scores and post-test scores of Soft Skills. The obtained value of cohen 'd' is 2.624. A Cohen's d value of 2.624 for a pre and post test of soft skills suggests an extremely large effect size. This indicates a substantial and significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores in terms of soft skills development. The obtained value of cohen 'd' indicates a very substantial change in the measured variable (in this case, soft skills) between the two time points (pre-test and post-test).

A Cohen's d value of 2.624 suggests that the change in soft skills from pre-test to post-test is not only statistically significant but also highly practically significant. It implies that there has been a major improvement or change in the participants' soft skills over the course of the intervention or training.

Such a large effect size could have meaningful implications for the individuals involved, as well as for any educational or training programs aimed at enhancing soft skills. It suggests that whatever intervention or treatment was administered between the pre-test and post-test had a profound impact on participants' soft skills.

In summary, a Cohen's d value of 2.624 indicates a substantial improvement in soft skills from pre-test to post-test, suggesting a highly effective intervention or training program that led to a significant change in participants' abilities. So we can say that there is significant impact of Soft skills training on Soft Skills of Prospective Teachers. Soft skill training have a profound impact on an individual's personal and professional growth.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

Certainly, here are some common recommendations based on research findings regarding the impact of soft skills training on the development of soft skills:

1. Customized Training Programs: Tailor training programs to the specific needs and roles of participants. Generic training might not be as effective as personalized content that addresses the unique challenges and requirements of different job roles.

2. Integration with Job Tasks: Integrate soft skills training with real job tasks and responsibilities. When participants can immediately apply what they've learned to their daily work, the retention and transfer of skills tend to be higher.

3. Active Learning and Practice: Design training sessions that involve active learning and hands-on practice. Interactive workshops, role-playing, case studies, and simulations can provide participants with opportunities to apply and refine their soft skills in realistic scenarios.

4. Feedback and Reflection: Incorporate regular feedback sessions where participants can receive constructive input on their soft skills performance. Encourage them to reflect on their experiences and identify areas for improvement.

5. Leadership Support: Ensure that organizational leaders are supportive of soft skills training and actively participate. When leadership emphasizes the importance of soft skills, it can create a culture that values their development.

6. Measurable Objectives: Set clear, measurable objectives for soft skills training. This could involve defining specific behavioral changes or performance improvements that are expected as a result of the training.

7. Blended Learning Approach: Combine various training methods, such as in-person workshops, online modules, and coaching sessions, to cater to different learning preferences and maximize engagement.

8. Incorporate Emotional Intelligence: Soft skills often involve emotional intelligence, empathy, and self-awareness. Design training content that helps participants understand and manage their emotions effectively.

9. Continuous Assessment: Implement ongoing assessment mechanisms to track the progress of participants in acquiring and applying soft skills. This could involve self-assessment, peer evaluation, or supervisor feedback.

10. Encourage Self-Directed Learning: Empower employees to take ownership of their own soft skills development. Provide resources and guidance for self-directed learning so that they can continue honing their skills outside formal training sessions.

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