Chapter Nine

Implications for Future Research
and Limitations of the Study
Introduction to the Chapter

The findings of the present study have revealed that soft skills training programmes are perceived as important and useful for performance at the workplace as they help to achieve specific behaviours which lead to better performance at work. The soft skills training programmes selected for the study play an important role in bringing about a change in attitude which is evident through specific outcomes that denote a change in attitude. The validation of the recommendations also shows that there is a definite impact of each training programmes in achieving specific behavioural outcomes and in improving specific behaviours which are the objectives of each training programme.

This chapter describes the possible implications of the study for future research and in design of training programmes. The implications have been drawn in the light of results of the study.

9.1. Implication for Future Research

✓ As the results show that perceptions of importance of non-verbal communication skills depend on age there is further scope for research in understanding the nature of non-verbal communication skills training. The field of non-verbal communication skills training has yet to grow into an independent domain for training. The research findings give a strong message to researchers to probe deeper into the science of non-verbal communication and to trainers to pay serious heed to the application of the domain of non-verbal communication skills in order to bring in its relevant application in training programmes on non-verbal communication skills. Based on further research in this area, non-verbal communication skills training can then be customized to be conducted individually and also for inclusion in verbal communication skills training, assertive skills training, conflict management, business etiquette and presentation skills training.

✓ As perceptions of importance of leadership skills depend on age researchers and training experts need to study the nature of training interventions at every stage and investigate the training needs of a person progress in his/her career and need leadership skills training required for that position.
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✓ As the research shows that there is a difference across perceptions of importance of team-working skills depending on age, research and training experts need to probe further into the possible training interventions for team skills at every age.

✓ Assertive skills training is deeper than other areas of soft skills training that focus on skill building. Assertive skills training focuses on changing underlying behavioural patterns by probing into childhood recordings which is not easily accomplished. There is scope for further research into ways of helping people to change underlying behavioral patterns and blend it in assertive skills training.

✓ There is a need to research specific requirements of time management training, as time management is sometimes interpreted as a requirement for stress management training or etiquette training. Time management requires personalized attention and counselling. Research should also be conducted on actual working styles of younger and older workers to understand the requirements of different generations to make the training relevant for each age group.

✓ There is a need to probe into the design and methodology of business etiquette training and to look at how it can impact all segments to address the difference across perceptions of usefulness of business etiquette depending on age. Different educational backgrounds perceive the level of importance of business etiquette differently. Business etiquette training is important and mainly critical in cross cultural training especially for senior levels of management or in international business interactions. Concepts such as image management and grooming are recent developments and will take time to be viewed uniformly as important by all educational segments.

✓ There is a need to probe the difference in perceptions of usefulness of presentation skills training for performance.

✓ There is a need to study the nature of impact that age has on how soft skills training can facilitate quick action orientation because the results show that perceptions of the extent of a positive role of soft skills on performance vary with age.
Leadership Skills Training, Self-Awareness Training, Assertive Skills Training, Time Management Training, Business Etiquette Training should be studied for methodology, content, and depth of training and for inclusion as independent training modules. There is a need to study why their importance varies with educational background. As these programmes can be considered as need-specific training programmes, this finding sends a strong message to HR and Training researchers to conduct in-depth research in these areas for optimum efficacy.

There is a need to study how all soft skills training programmes can include the aspect of building relationships as the finding shows that ability to build relationships after taking soft skills’ training varies across educational backgrounds.

Irrespective of educational background, soft skills training as a reason for changing outlook towards life is viewed differently. There is further scope for research in this area.

There is also scope to research why managers with different educational backgrounds differ in the extent to which they are able to achieve self-awareness after being trained in soft skills.

Due to the nature of assertive skills training, which requires lab process like treatment in order to bring about effectiveness, trainees with different educational backgrounds are bound to respond differently to assertive skills training. This is a call for researchers and training experts to study how to bring about significant change in attitude through the more scientific design of training interventions by deeply studying the needs of each educational background.

Research on impact of verbal communication skills training on performance needs further development because although verbal communication skills is considered highly important across age-groups and educational backgrounds, the utility of the training programmes has varied perceptions among educational faculty groups.

Findings on perceptions of utility of business etiquette training on performance imply that business etiquette training is in a formative stage. The results of the study make a strong call to researchers, trainers and
professionals in the stream of business etiquette training to strive to establish tangible links between knowing business etiquette and its relevance for performance for all educational backgrounds and not limit it to selected sectors. In-depth research is required in this area. However there is a difference in the perceptions of educational faculty on the importance of the Business Etiquette Training and Time Management Training. The finding makes a strong case for developing more awareness of the content of business etiquette training programmes in all technical groups

- There is a need to study the reasons for there is a difference in the way different educational backgrounds view the role of soft skills’ training in bringing change at the workplace, building relationships at the workplace, bringing a change in outlook towards life, facilitating self-awareness and developing assertive skills.

- There is also a need for further research on why there is a difference in the way different educational faculty view the role of soft skills in changing attitude in terms of improving Discerning Skills at The Workplace, Enabling the use of Cognitive Ability and Knowledge, Enabling Leadership, Enabling Change at The Workplace, Building Relationships at The Workplace, Building a Global Perspective at the Workplace, Enabling Self-Development, Bringing a Change in Outlook towards life and Facilitating Self-Awareness.

9.2. Limitations of the Study

These findings are limited on perceptions of the importance and utility of soft skills training as applicable to their sectors and to themselves. This study could be carried further to wider segments to get more insights. The study could go deeper into each training interventions to get deeper insights with specific measurable outcomes with more variables for every training programmes. However, within the constraints of time and sample population availability, this study had to be limited to the current findings.
Companies are hesitant to divulge information on their training evaluation processes due to confidentiality. This study could be much more comprehensive if HR and Training Departments could share information on their training feedback. Trainers

It was challenging to identify organisations which conduct soft skills training programmes. Some in-house trainers, as well as independent training consultants and training consultancy outfits perceived that the study would reflect on their training competence by way of trainees giving responses to the questionnaire. They had to be convinced that the study was not aimed at evaluation of trainer’s expertise or training competence and that the objective was to help the training fraternity to design appropriate soft skills training interventions with the aim of improving performance.

The area of soft skills training is still viewed in a very diffuse manner with companies not being very sure of the measurability of the outcome. The realm of business etiquette especially is subject to cultural bias. Similarly, assertive skills training is an area which is sensitive and had to be handled with care.

It was also difficult to get respondents to fill in the questionnaire after they had finished training and they had to be convinced that this study would not jeopardise their career.

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constituted of senior HR and Training professionals who are busy with their training schedules.

The significant findings of this study could be taken further to delve into the specific reasons for managers not finding importance and utility in certain training programmes. Within the constraints of the research time given, this study could come up with the current findings.