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TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT- EFFECT OF DEMOGRAPHIC & SITUATIONAL FACTORS

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Abs tract:-*Training and development is the field which is concerned with organizational activity aimed at bettering the performance of individuals and groups in organizational settings. It has been known by several names, including human resource development, and learning and development. In the current scenario, there are major forces within the banking industry requiring organisations to seek new & innovative methods to deliver services more efficiently. This has huge implications for overall employee development and human resource planning. Bartlett (2007) argues that HRD issues associated with these changes are often overlooked. Furthermore, although ensuring that learning is transferred and utilised in the workplace remains of critical importance for HRD researchers and practitioners (Burke & Hutchins, 2008), Clarke (2007 and 2002) states that very little empirical research on training transfer has been conducted in human service organisations.*

This paper reports on the effect of demographic variables on training transfer from a study that collected data from 104 employees of 2 banks within Jaipur namely, Kotak Mahindra Bank & Standard Chartered Bank. The variables explored were employee age, education, salary range, designation, marital status, employment tenure, and some situational factors affecting training. The study found that a number of the variables investigated, significantly impacted on levels of training transfer. These results have important implications for HRD practitioners with regard to the profile of the workforce in such setting, the role of training and development, and training environment.

Keyw ords:Employee Training, Development, Demographic Variables, Banking.

INTRODUCTION

Banking organisations are facing challenges and burdens as a consequence of the quality of education, age of employees, increased workload, and different situational factors. Managing the professional workforce within this challenging climate requires effective training and development resulting in skilled personnel. In present environment, where training success is defined as contributing to enhanced individual and organisational performance, some studies have reported that typical organisational training programmes are only achieving about a 10% success rate (Saks and Belcourt, 2006; Brinkerhoff, 2005). Yet, according to Saks and Belcourt, "transfer is the primary leverage point by which training influences organisational-level outcomes and results".

Furthermore, Hutchins (2009) states that a review of evaluation benchmarking data indicated that organisations reported, employees applied less than 40% of knowledge and skills obtained from training when measured 90 days post training. Wexley and Latham (2002) found that immediately post training; approximately 40% of training is transferred falling to 25% at six months and 15% at 12 months. These figures suggest that the time and money invested in the training & development intervention is never fully realised. Consequently, an understanding of different factors affecting transfer to the workplace is necessary if the

effectiveness of training and development programmes is to be analysed & increased. However, very little empirical research on training transfers has been conducted in human service organisations. The current study will address this gap by exploring effect of various demographic and situational factors on training and development in banking sector. This study explores how demographic variables (age, educational background and designation) & situational variables (time since training, employment tenure, and training environment), affect the skills of employees and level of complexity of training transfer post-programme.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Demographic factors such as age, length of service, and education level have been associated with organizational commitment (Abdulla & Shaw, 1999; Dodd-McCue & Wright, 1996; Morrow, 1993), however, Weidmer (2006) found that demographic factors were not significant predictor of organizational commitment. Transfer of training can be defined as the application of learned knowledge, skills and attitudes to the job and their subsequent maintenance over time (Cheng & Ho, 2001). Gielan and Nauta (2001) identified three dimensions of transfer; the direction, the level of complexity and the distance. Direction refers to either positive transfer (where training leads to desired performance) or negative transfer (where it fails to produce

intended job performance). Regarding level of complexity, lateral transfer refers to the learner achieving a task at the same complexity level as the task already mastered whereas vertical transfer refers to the ability to apply learning to similar or more complex skills. Distance refers to applying learning to tasks that are similar or equal to the learner's job tasks (near transfer) or to contexts where there is a lack of similarity to the job tasks (far transfer). The level and dimension of transfer desired will depend on the aim of the training intervention. For the purposes of this study, the impact of demographic & situational factors on the direction and complexity levels of training transfer were explored as these levels were the most relevant to the intervention under investigation.

Baldwin and Ford (1988) classified influences on training transfer into three categories: trainee characteristics, training design factors and work environment factors. With regard to trainee characteristics, the majority of empirical studies reported in the literature have focused predominantly on trainee personality factors; trainee ability and motivational factors. According to Van der Klink et al. (2001), trainee characteristics account for most of the variability in training transfer. However, empirical research has not reached a consensus on how demographic variables related to transfer (Chen, Holton and Bates, 2006).

Hastings (1994), stated older trainees experienced more difficulty applying training content to the job. Older adults show less mastery of training material than younger adults. Conversely however, Thijssen (1996), found older trainees with a broad variety of work experiences showed fewer problems achieving training goals and probably face fewer problems with the application of training to the job. As a result of the contradictory findings, the variable employee age was selected to investigate its effect on training transfer in the current study.

Dorsey et al. (1999) suggest that certain types of prior experience have a significant relationship with post training performance. More specifically, Lim and Johnson (2002) found that the degree of transfer was greatly influenced by the individual's technical skills at the start of the programme. Given that there is a dearth of research regarding the effect of employee educational background on training transfer, this variable was selected for the study on the basis that members of the sample base were divided according to two different educational backgrounds (Graduates and Post Graduates) reflecting their level of training, qualification and skill base. Chen et al. (2006) state that transfer research investigating the relationship between job function and transfer of learning is scarce. They argue that different jobs represent different roles and functions within an organisation and these differences may alter trainee's perceptions about the applicability or transferability of skills learned. Consequently, employee designation has the potential to influence training transfer and was considered in this study on the basis that members of the sample group used in the study represented several different job positions within their organisation.

Donovan, Hannigan and Crowe (2001) found that employment tenure was relevant to training transfer. For example, employees who had more years of experience in the

organisation were more prepared for training, believed content to be more relevant and experienced more opportunities for transfer of training. However, the banking sector is characterised by high job turnover and therefore previous findings may not be generalizable to the sample population used in this study. Consequently, employment tenure was selected for investigation.

Saks & Belcourt, (2006) found in a survey of 150 organisations, that, less than 50% of employees successfully transfer knowledge and skills six months post training. This would indicate that a decrease in training transfer is inevitable in the long-term. There were arguments that research into long term retention is important if individual and organisational performance is to be obtained and maintained. Therefore, this study investigated the effect of time since training on the level of training transfer.

In some studies, it was also found that trainees who received adequate information and clear rationale for the training programme from employers reported greater motivation to attend and learn. Trainees unhappy with pre and post training activities were more likely to return to established practices whereas those who perceived training as leading to higher reward were significantly more likely to transfer training to the workplace (Santos and Stuart, 2003). This study investigates how preparation for training impacts on training transfer.

OBJECTIVES

1. The major objective is to analyse the impact of various demographic and situational factors on transfer of training and development programs.
2. Another objective is to find out some solutions for much more effective training programs by making changes in the impacting variables.

Hypothesis

1. Demographic variables like age, educational background, designation of an employee impacts transfer of training.
2. Some situational factors like employment tenure, preparation of training and training environment also renders huge effect on learning and knowledge of an employee in the organization.

METHODOLOGY

A well-structured questionnaire was used to collect the primary data. For designing an effective questionnaire for the study, it was felt necessary to test the validity of the questionnaire. This was done by a pilot study consisting of visits to different branches of the selected two banks for this study developing a draft questionnaire and getting opinion of the bank employees on the same.

The questionnaire was finalized based on the comments and suggestions of the bank employees and also the enhanced exposure of the researcher based on the field visits to various banks. Secondary data for the study were collected from reputed journals, magazines, websites and bank records. Total sample size for this study is 104 employees.

Questions asked for Demographic and Situational Factors Age-Employees were asked to provide their current age.

Educational Background- Background refers to respondents' level of education and qualification. Background was divided into two general categories: Graduates and Post Graduates.

Employment Designation-Designation refers to the job role or employment position held by the employee at the time of completing the questionnaire. It is recognised that within the two categories of employee background, respondents may have different roles within their workplace which has the potential to influence transfer training and training outcomes. Employees were asked to indicate their position as given by their organization. The data was then segregated according to middle level or senior level management employees.

Time since training- The time period that elapsed since the respondents engaged in the training intervention ranged from 6 to 60 months. This data was made available by the particular bank's training department.

Employment tenure/ Work Experience-This variable was measured using a single closed question asking employees to indicate how many years they have been employed in their current organisation.

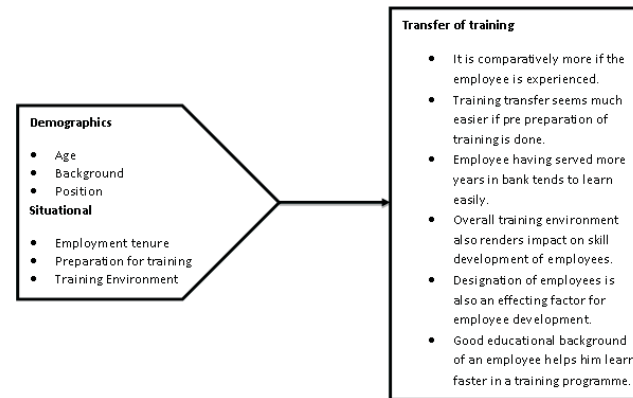
Preparation for training- Employees were asked in a closed question if they had received all the information they needed about the intervention before training commenced. The responses were received on a scaled question ranging from 1 as strongly disagree and 5 as strongly agree.

FINDINGS

Some findings have been collected after detailed analysis of questionnaires filled by employees.

1. Out of a sample size of 104 employees, 64% were of age group of 35-40 years which states that they were mature enough to grasp the training programs.
2. Employees who were post graduate but had less experience were similar in transfer of training in comparison to those employees who were graduate but more experienced.
3. Only 35% of employees agreed that they were being pre prepared or informed about the training programs before its commencement.
4. Employee's designation had little effect on the transfer of training at their workplace. Almost 47% employees were of senior management and rest of middle level management.
5. 81% employees stated that comfortable and friendly training environment increases their interest in training program and helps them in training transfer too.

Figure 1: Various Demographic & Situational Variables and their Impact on Training Transfer



CONCLUSION

This study found that respondents' age is significantly associated with transfer of training at the workplace. Employees aged 35-40 reported implementing training at workplace more frequently than younger or older employees. The results might be explained by the fact that older respondents were likely to have accrued more years' experience working in this environment than younger respondents during which time they acquired personal and work related self-efficacy which facilitated them overcoming any obstacles to transfer.

It was found that employee having spent more years in organization were better prepared & believed content to be more relevant and experienced more opportunities to transfer for training than those who were new to the organization. As experienced employees were already familiar with the training processes and environment they showed less reluctance in learning and training transfer.

Educational background and designation dint made any considerable impact on transfer of training. Employees received different training according to their profile so there was not much comparison of designation in training transfer. Pre preparation for training before its commencement was highly responsible for its effectiveness. Employees felt at ease if they were previously informed about the agenda and their role in the training program.

Training environment has also been a significant factor in influencing employee's learning from a particular training program. The more comfortable a training environment is, the much better chances are there for employee's effective learning.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Training environment should be kept comfortable in accordance with employee's requirements and roles.
2. Employees should be informed in advance about the training program and its link to their job profile or designation. A timely post training feedback should always be taken from employees.
3. Age should be considered while developing a training program for employees having mixed age group.

4. Demographic variables like educational background, gender, designation should be kept in mind while designing a particular training program.

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