

# SOFT SKILLS TRAINING VERSUS HARD SKILLS TRAINING

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## ABSTRACT

The information technology industry is today's fastest growing industry in the world. The IT industry is going through a lot of technological changes and increased competition at a very fast pace. Everyday some new technology is developed and the industry needs more people to work upon it efficiently. Hence there is a need of soft skills training as it helps in improving communication and in developing personality of an individual as a professional from what he was when he joined company and hard skills training helps in grooming an individual in terms of technical task the individual is assigned to perform. This helps in making an individual develop as a technical performer which can handle situation with team and can even drive team in terms of crisis. The purpose of this research is to determine the importance of soft skills training and hard skills training in an IT company and to study the various concepts related to the soft skills training and the hard skills training. The theoretical portion of this report has been studied with an aim to gain knowledge about the various concepts related training and the two types of training. Not much literature can be found to study. The primary research was conducted to examine whether soft skills or hard skills training is considered more important in an IT company. The research was conducted through interviews and questionnaires which were targeted towards the employees working in an IT company. The data analysis of the research result showed that organization has more focus on the hard skills training whereas the employees consider soft skills training to be more important which are aimed towards grooming the overall personality of the employees.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The challenges associated with the changing nature of work and the workplace environment are as real for the campus as elsewhere. Rapid change requires a skilled, knowledgeable workforce with employees who are adaptive, flexible, and focused on the future. As a manager, one of your key responsibilities is to train and develop your staff.

In the world of work, “hard skills” are technical or administrative procedures related to an organization’s core business. Examples include machine operation, computer protocols, safety standards, financial procedures and sales administration. These skills are typically easy to observe, quantify and measure. They’re also easy to train, because most of the time the skill sets are brand new to the learner and no unlearning is involved.

By contrast, “soft skills” (also called “people skills”) are typically hard to observe, quantify and measure. People skills are needed for everyday life as much as they’re needed for work. They have to do with how people relate to each other: communicating, listening, engaging in dialogue, giving feedback, cooperating as a team member, solving problems, contributing in meetings and resolving conflict. Leaders at all levels rely heavily on people skills, too: setting an example, team building, facilitating meetings, encouraging innovation, solving problems, making decisions, planning, delegating, observing, instructing, coaching, encouraging and motivating.

## **COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE**

Companies derive a lot of competitive advantage from training and development. Soft skills training groom the overall personality of the employees, whereas hard skills training help in enhancing knowledge about the job. It offers competitive advantage to a company by removing performance deficiencies, making employee stay long, minimizes accidents, scraps and damage, and meeting future employee needs and also provides an edge for an enhanced advantage as clarifies the match between organizational and individual employee goals, and to attract and retain the strong talent of the present employees.

## **OBJECTIVE**

The main objectives of my study are:

- To determine the importance of soft skills and hard skills training in an IT company.
- To examine whether the soft skills or hard skills training is given more importance in an IT company.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The research has been carried out using a combination of primary and secondary data. The primary data was collected using interviews and a self-administered questionnaire. The secondary data has been collected through articles, magazines, reports, journals, and newspaper and internet.

Sampling Plan for Primary Research

**Sampling method:** Convenience sampling

**Sample size:** 120

**Sample unit:** employees working in 3 reputed IT industry organizations (name of the company cannot be mentioned due to security reasons)

**Data analysis:** After collecting the data, it was analysed through statistical tools like excel sheets and graphs.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Introduction to training and development**

Randall S. Schuler in his book effective personnel management defines training and development as “any attempt to improve current and future employee performance by increasing an employee’s ability to perform learning, usually changing employee’s attitude or increasing his or her skills or knowledge.

### **TRAINING**

For organizational productivity training assumes great significance. Though it is a type of education, training is job oriented. Training has greater significance for success of modern organizations. Core competencies and expertise give the organizations an edge over competitors and training plays vital role in developing and strengthening these competencies. Change of technology demands that employees update their knowledge, skills, abilities and technical expertise. Jobs are becoming more independent demanding high interpersonal and problem solving skills, which can be acquired only through training.

## **TYPES OF TRAINING**

Trainings can be very broadly classified as soft skills training and hard skills training.

### **SOFT SKILLS**

Interesting enough the internationally renowned encyclopedias have little to say about soft skills. The online encyclopedia “Wikipedia” gives a very broad definition of soft skills, which leaves much room for discussion: “Soft skills refer to the cluster of

personality traits, social graces, and facility with language, personal habits, friendliness, and optimism that mark people to varying degrees. Soft skills complement hard skills, which are the technical requirements of a job.” (Wikipedia, 2012).

Soft skills training refers to the training that enhances an individual's interactions, job performance and career prospects.

Soft skills are sometimes broken down into personal attributes, such as:

- optimism
- common sense
- responsibility
- a sense humor
- integrity
- time-management
- motivation

and interpersonal abilities, such as:

- empathy
- leadership
- communication
- good manners
- sociability
- the ability to teach

### **Importance of Soft Skills**

Psychologist Daniel Coleman has repeatedly reiterated the value of soft skills, saying that an individual’s ability to know and manage themselves, as well as their relationships with others is twice as important as their intelligence quotient (IQ). Because there are constant pressures from work as well as changes in the work environment, an employee has to be prepared for these, and this can only be made possible if they have the needed soft skills to help them face the many challenges every single day.

Employers today put a high regard on soft skills because they understand that to get things done, to achieve the company goals, they have to have the right employees in their organization. People with good personal attributes and excellent interpersonal skills are necessary and invaluable to their business.

### **HARD SKILLS**

Hard skills are specific, teachable abilities that may be required in a given context, such as a job training, which will help an individual to execute their profession. Hard skill is a

basic and fundamental as it helps an individual to develop knowledge in a particular domain.

### **Importance of Hard Skills**

Hard skills, as mentioned, are something you learn through training and through certain educational programs. If you studied to become a doctor, you should know how to diagnose an illness or to determine which drug to be prescribed so as to cure this illness. If you do not have the knowledge and the know-how, you will not be able to practice your profession as a doctor. Years of training will help you acquire “technical” skills.

In any career path or business you choose, hard skills are always needed. For example, if you want to be a teacher, you need to know how to make lesson plans; if you are a salesperson, you need to know the products or services you are selling; if you are a guidance counsellor, you need to know human behaviour; and so on.

In essence, influencing others and getting them to look up to you are something you will find difficult to do if you do not know the technical aspects of your job. You cannot motivate the members of your team to complete a project if you do not even know how to complete it yourself. You cannot lead others in an effort to increase your company’s profits if you do not even understand finance, marketing, and business development.

Hard skill training refers to the training that imparts specific, teachable abilities that may be required in a given context, such as a job or university application.

### **RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

**Table 1: Percentage of new employees and long standing employees**

|                        |     |
|------------------------|-----|
| Number of respondents  | 120 |
| long standing employee | 84  |
| New employee           | 36  |

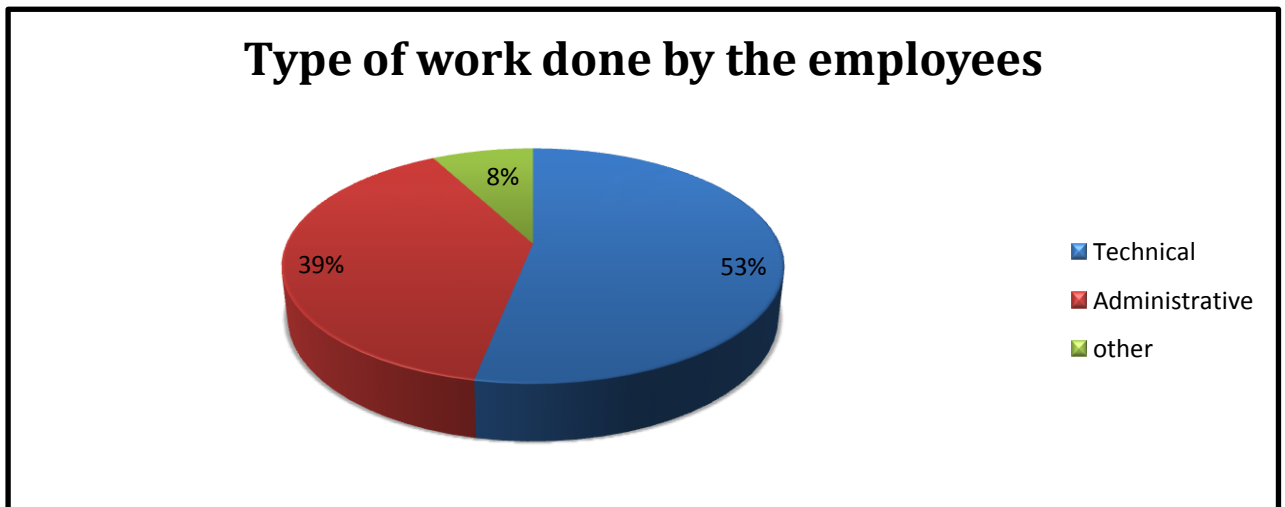
### **Percentage of the long standing and new employees**



Interpretation: 70% of the employees from whom the data has been collected are long standing employees, whereas, 30% of the employees are new employees in the organizations. Thus, the chances of getting accurate responses are more. New employees are the ones who have worked for 1-6 months, and all the employees beyond that are considered to be long standing employees.

**Table 2: Percentage of various types of work performed by the employees**

|                       |     |
|-----------------------|-----|
| Number of respondents | 120 |
| Technical             | 68  |
| Administrative        | 50  |
| other                 | 10  |

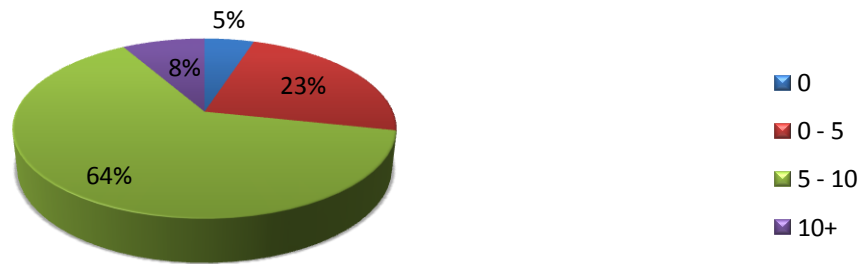


Interpretation: As per the Pie chart, 53% of the data has been collected from the technical employees, 39% of the data from the employees performing the administrative tasks, and 8% data from the employees performing various other tasks. There are also a few employees who perform both the technical as well as administrative tasks, so they have been mentioned in both the categories, i.e. technical as well as administrative.

**Table 3: Percentage of the number of trainings attended in the past**

|                       |     |
|-----------------------|-----|
| Number of respondents | 120 |
| 0                     | 28  |
| 0 - 5                 | 76  |
| 5 - 10                | 10  |
| 10+                   | 6   |

### Number of trainings attended in the past

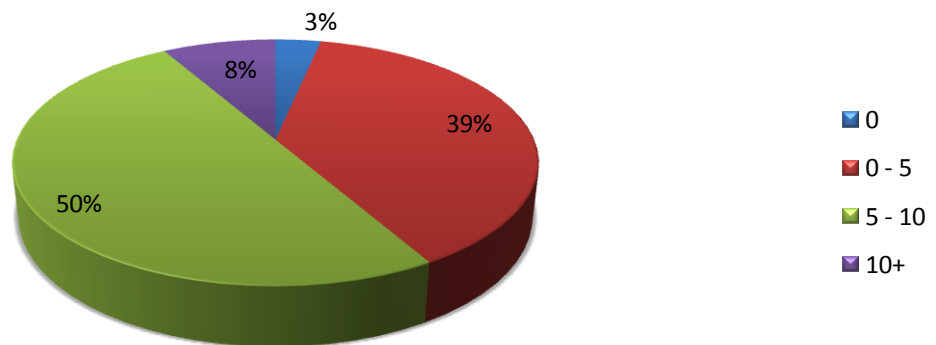


Interpretation: As per the data, most of the employees (64%) have attended around 5-10 trainings since their joining, followed by 23% of the employees who have attended less than 5 trainings, and only 8% of employees are there who have attended more than 10 training in the organizations. Whereas, there are also 5% employees in the organizations who have not attended even a single training in their organization.

**Table 4: Percentage of trainings attended related to soft skills**

|                       |     |
|-----------------------|-----|
| Number of respondents | 120 |
| 0                     | 3   |
| 0 - 5                 | 47  |
| 5 - 10                | 60  |
| 10+                   | 10  |

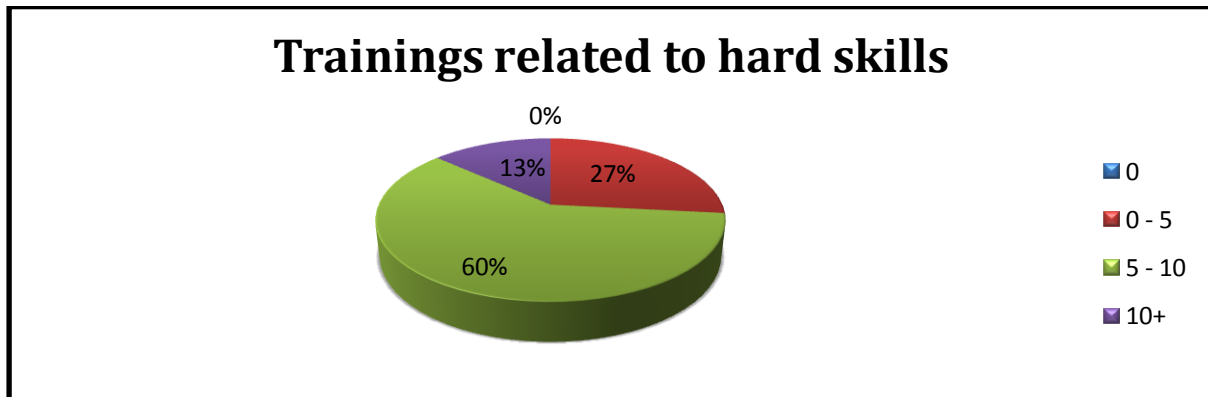
### Number of trainings related to soft skills



Interpretation: 50% of the respondents say that they have attended between 5-10 trainings related to soft skills, which is this is followed by 39% of the employees who say that they have attended less than 5 trainings related to soft skills;this is followed by 8% respondent employees who have attended more than 10 trainings. Whereas, there are 3% employees in the organizations who have not attended even a single training in their organization.

**Table 5: Percentage of trainings attended related to hard skills**

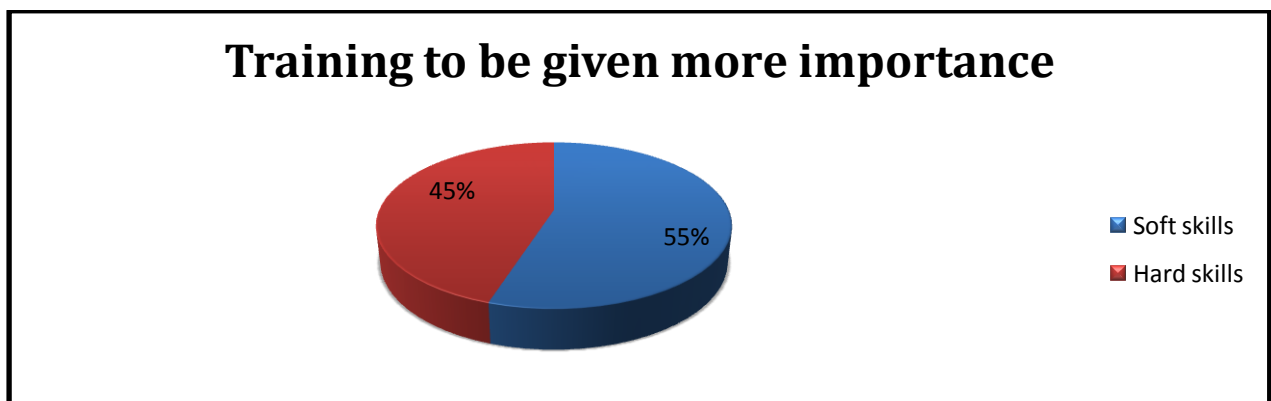
|                       |     |
|-----------------------|-----|
| Number of respondents | 120 |
| 0                     | 0   |
| 0 - 5                 | 32  |
| 5 - 10                | 72  |
| 10+                   | 16  |



Interpretation: The pie chart shows that, 60% of the employees have attended around 10 training related to hard skills, followed by 27% of the employees who say that they have attended only around 5 trainings related to hard skills in the past. Whereas, 13% of the employees have gone through more than 10 hard skills training.

**Table 6: Percentage of the type training to be given more importance**

|                       |     |
|-----------------------|-----|
| Number of respondents | 120 |
| Soft skills           | 66  |
| Hard skills           | 54  |

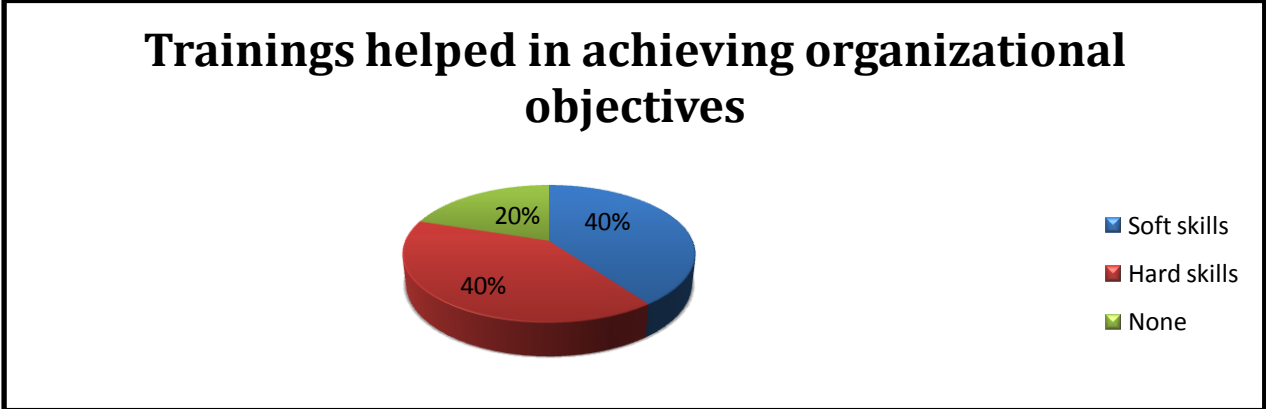


Interpretation: As per the data collected from the employees, a majority of respondent employees (55%) say that soft skills training should be given more importance in comparison the hard skills training, where as 45% of the employees respond vice versa.

**Table 7: Percentage of various trainings helped in achieving organizational objectives**



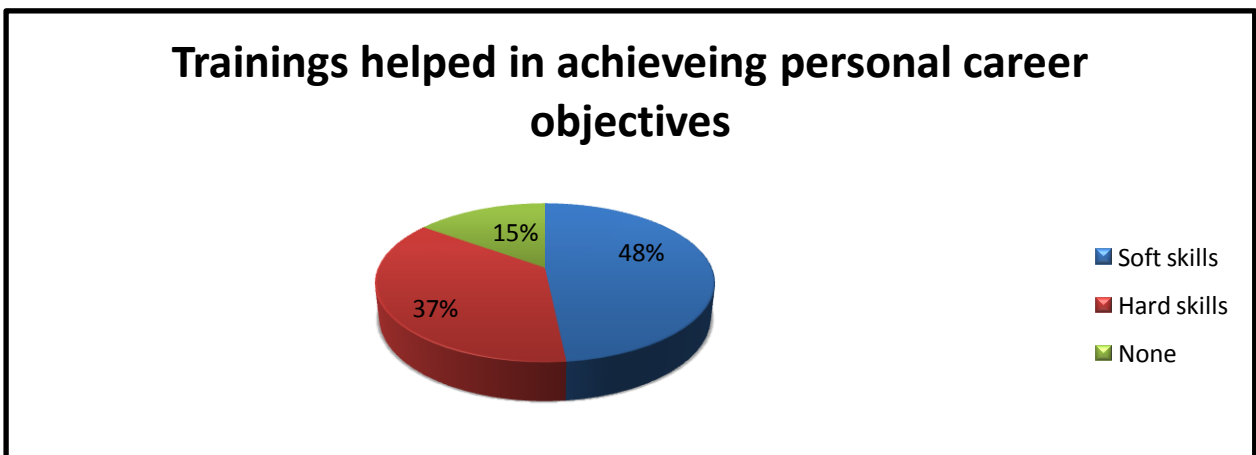
|                       |     |
|-----------------------|-----|
| Number of respondents | 120 |
| Soft skills           | 48  |
| Hard skills           | 48  |
| None                  | 24  |



Interpretation: The pie chart shows that 40% of the respondents employees say that soft skills training has helped them in achieving their organizational objectives whereas the other 40% says that hard skills training has helped them in achieving their organizational objectives. Apart from this, there are 20% employees who even say that none of the trainings have helped them in achieving their organizational objectives.

**Table 8: Percentage of various trainings helped in achieving personal career objectives**

|                       |     |
|-----------------------|-----|
| Number of respondents | 120 |
| Soft skills           | 58  |
| Hard skills           | 44  |
| None                  | 18  |

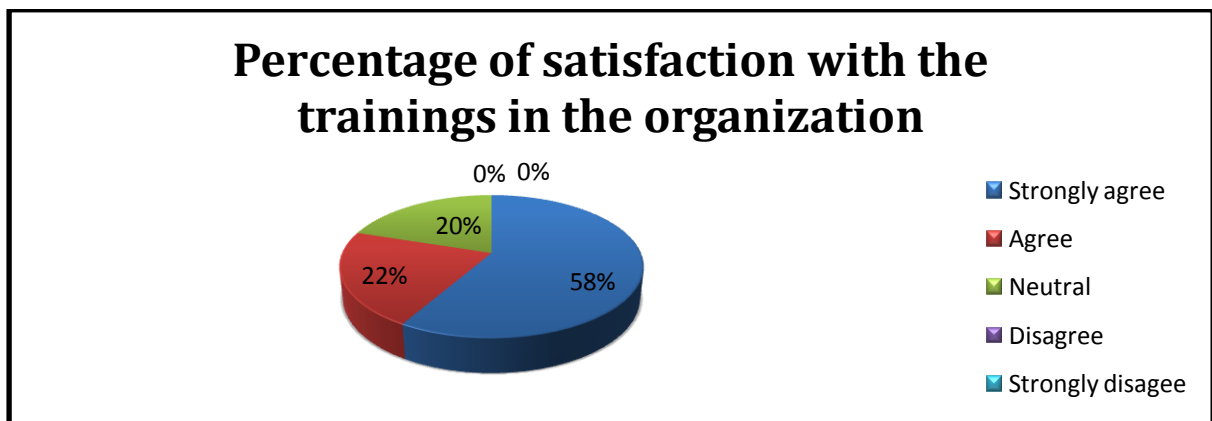


Interpretation: The pie chart shows That more number of the respondent employees feel that soft skills training have helped them more in achieving their personal career objectives

whereas, 37% of the employees say that hard skills training has helped them ore in achieving their personal career objectives. Apart from this, there are 15% of the respondent employees who feel that none of the two types of trainings has helped them to achieve their personal career objectives.

**Table 9: Percentage of employee satisfaction with the trainings in the organization**

|                       |     |
|-----------------------|-----|
| Number of respondents | 120 |
| Strongly agree        | 70  |
| Agree                 | 26  |
| Neutral               | 24  |
| Disagree              | 0   |
| Strongly disagree     | 0   |

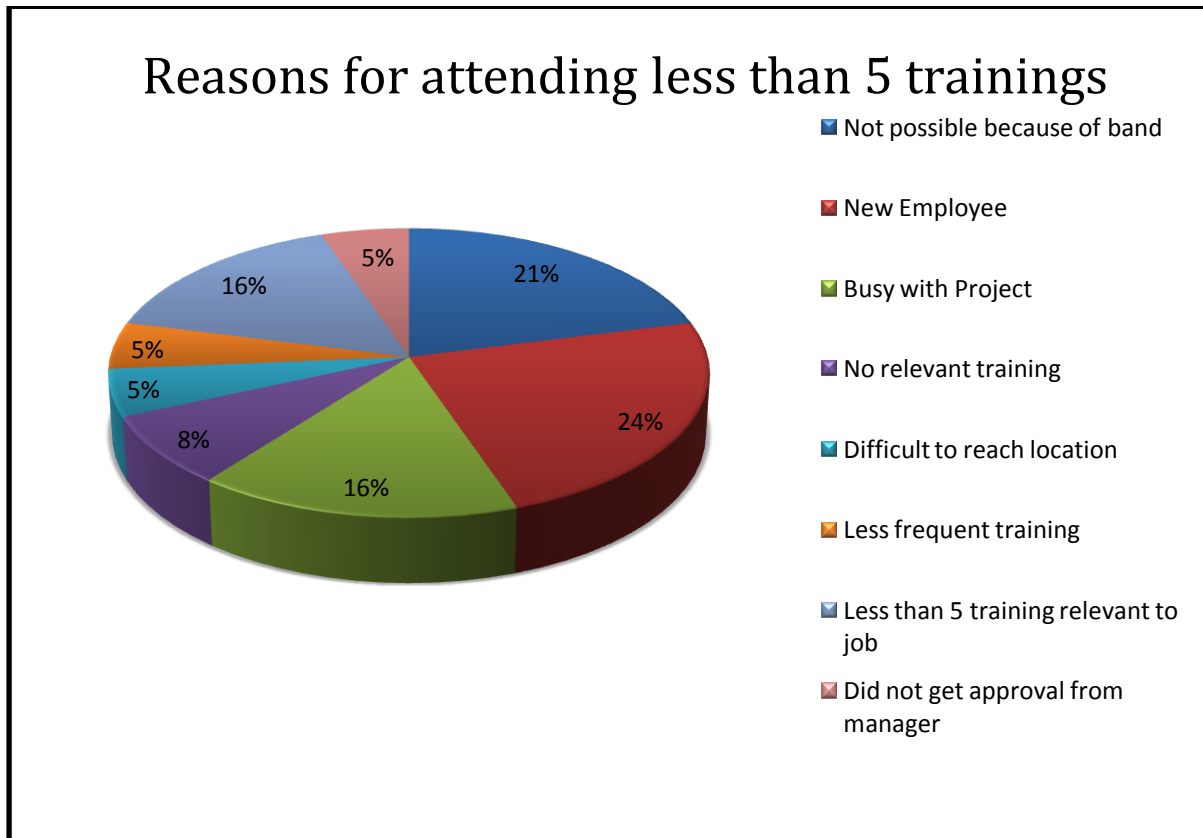


Interpretation: Based on the response of the respondents, majority(58%) of the employees have extremely good opinion about trainings organized in the organization. This is followed by 22% of the employee who are satisfied with the trainings. Whereas only 20% of the respondents say that they have a neutral opinion with the trainings organized in their organization.

**Table 10: Percentage of reasons for attending less than 5 trainings**

|                              |    |
|------------------------------|----|
| No. of respondents           | 76 |
| Not possible because of band | 16 |
| New Employee                 | 18 |
| Busy with Project            | 12 |

|                                      |    |
|--------------------------------------|----|
| No relevant training                 | 6  |
| Difficult to reach location          | 4  |
| Less frequent training               | 4  |
| Less than 5 training relevant to job | 12 |
| Did not get approval from manager    | 4  |



Interpretation: The respondents for this are the employees who have attended less than 5 trainings. The pie chart shows the various reasons stated by the employees for not attending the training. The majority of the respondent employees who were not able to attend the training are the new employees( 24% ), further 21% of the employees were not able to attend the training due to the band criteria, further 16% employees say that they were busy with the project, another 16% say that less than 5 relevant trainings related to their job were conducted, followed by 8% who say that not even a single training was conducted related to their job. Whereas, 5% employees gave following reasons in each of the categories, i.e. there are less frequent trainings, it is difficult to reach location, or they did not get approval from their managers.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the data analysis,

- A majority of the employees in the organizations are extremely satisfied with the trainings in the organization.

- On a majority scale soft skills training is considered to be more important by the employees. Whereas, the organizations conducts more number of hard skills training for the employees as it finds it to be more important.
- There is a need to encourage more employees in the company so that employees attend more training thus reducing the 23% value to as minimum as possible, which will directly help in organization in improving the efficiency of the employees and thus enhance the productivity.
- The soft skills training are considered more effective than hard skills training by the employees in achieving their personal career objectives. And without having good soft skills it is not possible to achieve your career goals.
- For achieving the organizational objectives the employees give equal importance to both the hard skills as well as soft skills training, whereas a few employees do not find the need to any training.

## **SUGGESTIONS**

- Support teams (Admins, Human resources and operations) should be considered while planning training.
- The trainings should be formulated keeping in mind the trainees, who are coming from various areas.
- Training should also include training exams / assessment to be conducted in organizations' premises itself.
- Certifications for training done as well as Participation of certification done for training should be provided.
- Some training should be given irrespective of band.
- More number of soft skills training should be organized.
- Training should be organized at site level as well as new innovation level. There should be more subjective material / books / cd's etc. to be provided to participants.
- The examples used in the training must reflect organization's internal environment, so that the audience can relate to it.

## **LIMITATIONS**

- The time period of the study was only 8 weeks which may provide a deceptive picture in comparison of the study based on long run.
- The study is based on primary data where the sample size was very small.
- The company not provided too much of data.

- The study explains the comparison of data of only three companies.

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