

Impact of Soft Skills on Improving the Career Development among IT Employees

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Abstract

Career development is a key component in any employees work life. Soft skills enacts as an integral element in achieving the career development. This study emphasis on the importance of soft skills and its influence on upgrading the career development among IT employees. This study spotlights the relationship between the soft skills and career development of the IT employees. The study was carried out in Tamil Nadu. A descriptive research design is used for the study. The result of the study pointed out that the soft skill has a positive relationship with the career development of the IT employees. When the IT employee excels in soft skills then the career development of the IT employees also increases.

***Keywords:** Career development, conflict resolution skill, it employees, leadership skill, soft skill.*

Introduction

Soft skills are one among the essential element that must be processed by the IT employees in their professional life. Soft skills could be achieved by any individual during their school days. In recent days the schools are giving importance to cultivate soft skills among students by adding soft skills in their study plan. The skill that grows a positive attitude with others and the ability to overcome their obstacles is termed as Soft skills. The job market is filled with challenges to participate in this market; the employees must brush-up their soft skills, the changes never take place in a day. The employee must train themselves on these skills in day to day. These soft skills pave a way to develop a strong career development path. The

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soft skills incorporate interpersonal relations among employees and develop communication skill among the employees. The communication skill develops the ability of an employee to convey the empathy and ideas with others effectively. The others here are referred as public, co-workers, superiors and customers.

Career Development is a continuing process of attaining knowledge and enhancing the skills that will assist in employee to setup a career path. Career Development is a key for implementing a career plan. The Career plan of an employee lays a career path, career development verifies that the employee is trained and fully developed before they move to higher position in the hierarchy. The employers of the organization motivates career development programs for employees in the organization because these programs has an huge response to the problems faced by HR, the superiors of the firm favors to promote the existing employees and they verify that the employee is fit for the promotion, this is helped through career development. The soft skills in career development uplift the career opportunities within the organization or outside the organization. These career development programs encourage and strengthen the employee to compete in the job market.

Statement of the Problem

The globalization has brought more changes to the world. It has made the organization from different nations to come closer and work together. In the business world, the survival of the fittest is the essential key constraint followed by the organizations. In the fast moving competitive business world, the organization concentrates more on employees in the work place. Employers concentrate more on the career development of the employees. A career development plan benefits both the employers and employees. It creates a win-win situation for the both employees and employers. Several studies portray that the soft skills. The soft skills are essential element in career development plan. This study concentrates more on the importance of the soft skills that is needed for the career development of employees in the organization.

Review of Literature

Soft Skills

Communication Skills

Due to numerous factors, the business environment has become more competitive and complex. The key asset of the organization is human resources, who play an important part in performance and success of the organization. The employers of the organization recruit hold

on to and promote the employees who are ethical, reliable, possessing effective communication, positive attitude and employee who are dedicated to work and learn. (wats & wats, 2009). The organization feels that technical skills only doesn't accomplish the objectives and goals of the organization. The employees are included in practicing decision making activities and engaged in different levels of leadership. The employees need good communication skill because they have to engage within the organization, stake holders and with the customers. (Majid, Liming, Tong & Raihana, 2012). The proficiency in communication is the potential to convey views in an effective manner attain goals and strengthen the relationship. (Raman & Sharma, 2012). Rajaram R., HR head for an IT company stated that the majority of degree holders of the present day fail to write down, rectify and write complete sentence in English. They lack understanding of grammatical feature and about the importance of punctuation marks. (Bharathi, 2016). The Schools and collages must concentrate on communication skill of the students and add that in their curriculum. This helps the students to prepare themselves for their professional life.

Time Management Skill

The organization has four types of resources: employees, equipment, capital and time. Out of the four resources, time is precious and it cannot be replaced, this time management skills are important for the organization to be successful (Pearce, 2007). Time Management skills teaches the employees to organize their time, so that employees can be more effective in taking decisions and becoming productive at the workplace (Hashemzadeh, Ranjbar, Moosavi & Eidi, 2011). The comprehension of time management and designing the leisure plans can affect the mental and physical health of the employees (Trenberth,2005). When employees are independently allowed to choose the timing to spend leisurely will be a holistic approach, than employees being dictated and compelled to do a certain role, which leads to improve in happiness (Bresciani, Duncan & Cao, 2010).

The Organization rewards its employees for their competence and hard work. An employee has to be efficient and complete the targets within the given time. When work is done in a given time, the employee can await for timely appraisal from superiors and recognition from clients. Delay in work affects the employee and the organization. The employee must embrace a systematic approach to be successful at the work place (Mathew, 2015). The principle of time management is prioritizing by putting something at first position and then assigning others at the second and third position. Develop goals and arrange it from most

important to least important. Then develop a time plan to achieve the goal (Kattey & Torres, 2006). These time management skills help the employee to develop and grow in their career.

Conflict Resolution Skill

Conflict Management approaches is the behavioral technique that is used to settle conflict (Sportsman & Hamilton, 2007). Conflict at work place in definite, the results depends upon the manner through which conflict is controlled (Almost, Doran, Hall, & Laschinger, 2010). The capacity and strength of preventing conflict is regulated by the process through which conflict is managed (Meyer, 2004). If an organization has to function effectively, Conflict Management is highly important for the effectual operations of organization in individual, cultural and developmental change in society (Kunaviktikul, Nuntasupawat, Srisuphan & Booth, 2000). The method through which conflict is handled particularly creates tension to the situation than the conflict (Trudel & Reio, 2011). In Organization, the conflict is categorized into three; they are task, personal and relationship (Klein, Knight, Ziegert, Lim, & Saltz, 2011).

The conflict that arises from the goals and content of the work is termed as task conflict (Ayoko & Callon, 2010). Conflict resolution imply sense making in which the individuals communicate and create sense co-operatively, this build a common culture (Abolafia, 2010). When transformation occurs in organization, the actual setup and communication practice changes, the organization will adapt the change. Forgiveness is important between the participants who practices conflict that restore harmony within the organization (Goldman & Wade, 2012). Conflict resolution theory was originated during 1950 on the times of cold war and the disputation resolutions occur between the nations (Nowak, Deutsch, Bartowski, & Salomon, 2010).

Team Work Skill

Team in an organization is defined as a set of employees who work together to attain the same goals and objectives to deliver a best services. Team work has the potential to empower the employee of a team to have a high quality of assertiveness, emotional security and the talent to organize and discuss with other members positively (Sanyal & Hisam, 2018). The benefit of team work in organization promotes the growth in productivity in the sphere that needed for innovative solving of tasks, high level of flexibility and operational management (Vaskova, 2007). Team members emphasize the skills, understanding and talent when they

work as a team (Forcebel & Marchington, 2005). Many researchers pointed out that effective practices and conceptualization related to team work, can see the difference in the improvement of employee performance and the potential of the employee to solve the conflict that arise in the job and increase their productivity at work (Sanyal & Hisam, 2010).

The Organizations have initiated to implement a team based strategy in their work to increase the performance, maintain their productiveness and co-operatively working to attain the goals and objectives of the organization. Team based strategy means the employees of the organization work as a team to accomplish the given tasks (Conti & Kleiner, 2003). In a team work, trust is highly important for the team members in the team. In a study it is found that there is a positive correlation between the trust and team performance. The trust in the team build up the behavioral concepts and faith of team work, that emphasize development in the personality of the individual, develop their talents and skills (Roger & Mickan, 2000). Thus team work develop a performance in the employee and improve the effectiveness of the organization.

Leadership Skill

Leadership skill is a type of power where the individual has the potential to influence or replace the beliefs, actions, values and attitudes of another individual (Ganta & Manukonda, 2014). Leadership skill is termed as the potential of motivating a large number of employee to simultaneously execute the same action and achieving the goal on the headers (Nawawi, 2002). Leadership includes the supply of power between the employees in a balanced way and the potential to use a power and influence the followers in a different means (Rivai, 2008). The leaders of the team are encouraged to participate in leadership training programs to improve their knowledge and skills to become more efficient in their strategies and implementation (Freifeld, 2013). The leaders of the organization are encouraged to bring an effective change in the team members, the members co-operate and communicate within other members of the team and develop innovate ideas that generate a prominent outcome for organization (Gilley, Dixon & Gilley, 2008).

Leaders want to develop a positive value within the employees and cultivate trust among the employees and allowing their members to do their job independently and establishing a conversation with each other (Malloch & Melnyk, 2013). Leadership skill doesn't only influence the members in the organization but also it delivers a direction to the members to

achieve the vision and mission of the organization. Effective leadership skills develop leaders to set strategies that enhance the members of the team to achieve the organization objectives and targets (Hao & Yazdaniford, 2015).

Career Development

A soft skill is an individual trait to intensify an employee's interactions, career development and job performance. The skills that are related to communication, Analytical and leadership are the important skill that an organization is looking into an individual during the recruitment (Pazhani & Priya, 2012). Soft skills enact a pivotal role in career development; it improves the possibility for an individual to get an employment (Shukla & Kumar, 2017). A survey was conducted in IT industry on the requirements and importance of soft skills and the cause behind the deficiency of soft skills among students and the findings of the study pointed that team management skills, interpersonal skills, team building skills, communication skills and problem solving skills are the important skills looked by the organization in the students. These skills are followed by motivation, emotional intelligence, decision making skills, positive attitude and presentation skills (Raman & Koka, 2015).

Career is the task that relates the organizational and personal goals directly and generates an accumulation of emerging experiences from the work, tasks and position of the individual that leads to advancement, transfer that the individual exalts in the position (Yilmaz, 2006). Career development includes different choices through which developing employees' abilities, updating the current skills and preparing there self for the future promotion (Ko, 2012). Career development programs in the organization enable the employees to create progress from the beginning of the career. It also establishes the career path and eliminates the obstacles that come across their work. It also establishes workflow in the firm by giving training for the employees' career stability and increase the mobility of work. Thus organization supports the career of the employees and career development programs (Calik & Eres, 2006).

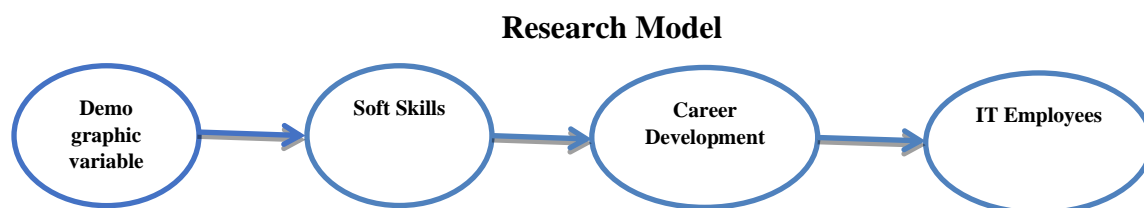


Figure 1. Framework on impact of soft skills on career development among IT employees

Objectives

1. To study the relationship between the soft skills and career development among IT employees.
2. To obtain the soft skill factors those highly influence the IT employees.

Hypothesis

1. There is no significant relationship between the soft skills and career development among IT employees.
2. There is no significant difference on the soft skill factors that highly influence the IT employees.

Research Methodology

A descriptive research design was applied in the research to examine the subject using extensive data and to depict from all angles. The participants of the study were IT employees at executive level from three different organizations from Tamil Nadu. The sample size of the study was 75. A purposive sampling method was carried out in selecting the respondents based on their proficiency in the subject. The primary data was collected from the circulated questionnaires. The secondary data used in the study was collected from the circulated questionnaires. The secondary data used in the study is collected from journals, books, newspapers, magazines and websites. Percentage analysis, one way ANOVA and Friedman Test are the tools used for the analysis through SPSS.

Analysis and Interpretation

Table 1.

Distribution of study

Personal data	Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Age	Above 25 years	13	17.3
	26 - 30	40	53.3
	31 - 35	22	29.3
	Total	75	100
Gender	Male	33	44
	Female	42	56
	Total	75	100
Soft Skill Training Options	Voluntary	42	56
	Mandatory	33	44
	Total	75	100
Soft Skill Training Mode	Online mode	49	65.3
	Offline mode	26	34.7
	Total	75	100

The table 1 outlines the demographic profile of the IT employees. From the above table it is observed that 17.3% of IT employees who are taken for the survey are above 25 years, 53.3% of IT employees are between the age of 26-30 years, 29.3% of IT employees are between the age of 31-35 years. It is observed that 44% of IT employees are male and 56% of IT employees female. Similarly, 56% of IT employees are given voluntary options to attend soft skill training and 44% of IT employees are given mandatory option to attend soft skill training by the organization. 65.3% of IT employees are given online mode of soft skill training by the organization and 34.7% of IT employees are given offline mode of soft skill training by the organization.

Testing of Hypothesis 1

Table 2.

One Way ANOVA Test for Soft Skills and Career Development of IT Employees

Career Development	Soft skill	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F-value	P-value
Self-Analysis	Between groups	72.606	9	8.067	4.182	0.000*
	Within groups	125.394	65	1.929		
	Total	198.000	74			
Opportunity Cognizance	Between groups	100.345	8	12.543	8.477	0.000*
	Within groups	97.655	66	1.480		
	Total	198.000	74			
Building up goals	Between groups	66.908	9	7.434	3.686	0.001*
	Within groups	131.092	65	2.017		
	Total	198.000	74			
Training	Between groups	100.072	9	11.119	7.380	0.000*
	Within groups	97.928	65	1.507		
	Total	198.000	74			
Job Search	Between groups	105.886	9	11.765	8.302	0.000*
	Within groups	92.114	65	1.417		
	Total	198.000	74			

Note: * denotes significant at 5% level

The above table 2 was tested through one way ANOVA. The above analysis shows that, the F value of self-analysis is 4.182 where P value is 0.000, the F value of opportunity cognizance is 8.477 where P value is 0.000, the F value of building up goals is 3.686 and the P value is 0.001, the F value of training is 7.380 and the P value is 0.000 and the F value of job search is 8.302 and the P value is 0.000 for the career development.

From the above analysis it is understood that P value is less than the significant level for the career development factors with respect to soft skill factors. Therefore, null hypothesis is rejected and alternate hypothesis is accepted, i.e., There is a significant relationship between the soft skills and career development among IT employees.

Testing of Hypothesis 2

Table 3.

Friedman Test for Soft Skills of IT Employees

Soft skills of IT employees	Mean Rank	df	Chi-square	P-value
Communication skill	3.35			
Time Management skill	2.89	4	8.836	0.002*
Conflict resolution skill	2.83			
Team work skill	3.08			
Leadership skill	2.85			

Note: *denotes significant at 5% level

The above table 3 analysis is done through Friedman test. From the above table 3, the mean ranks exhibited are listed for the factors of soft skills of IT employees. The soft skill factors that highly influence IT employees are communication skill and the mean rank is 3.35, time management skill and the mean rank is 2.89, conflict resolution skill and the mean rank is 2.83, team work skill and the mean rank is 3.08, leadership skill and the mean rank is 2.85.

The soft skill factors that highly influence the IT employees are listed in the order of mean rank. The high priority is given to communication skill which ranks first, second priority is given to Team work skill which ranks second, third priority is given to Time management skill which ranks third, fourth priority is given to Leadership skill which ranks fourth and fifth priority is given to conflict resolution skill which ranks fifth.

Findings

The major of the IT employees who are taken for the survey are between the age 26-30 and majority of the employees are female. Similarly, majority of the IT organization has given voluntary option to attend soft skill training in the organization and majority of the IT employees are given soft skill training in online mode.

There is a positive and significant relationship is found between soft skills and career development of IT employees. It is understood that when IT employees excel in soft skills then career development of the IT employees also increases.

The factors that influence soft skills of IT employees are ranked in the order communication skill, team work skill, time management skill, leadership skill and conflict resolution skill.

Suggestions

The employees who are working in IT organizations must concentrate on their future career development and promotion. The employees need to widen their short phase of thinking. There are different ways to develop career development. One of the methods to develop career development is Job shadow method. This method helps the employee to learn and work in different jobs. The lateral move method will also increase the experience of the employee. The employee will gain knowledge to handle multiple jobs. This will widen the skills and improve the value of the employee. The employees need to discover new strategies in developing soft skills and to be upgraded in recent technologies to shine in their career. The employees need to build up goals and design a plan to attain them. The employees need to utilize company programs that will aid the employee in career development programs.

Conclusion

Employees are the veins of the organization. The employees with adequate skill set perform better in their organization. The outcome of this study reveals a positive relationship between the soft skills and career development among IT employees. This study provides the insight that soft skills which is hunted by the organization is highly important for the employee to escalate in career development. This study points out that the soft skill is an important trait that has to be achieved by the employee in order to attain career development in their profession. There are certain limitations in this study. The survey was carried out only in three organizations and the sample size is 75, which is too low. As the sample size is low, the result cannot be generalized to the entire IT employees. This study can be extended further in future and extended to “Impact of technologies on the career development of IT employees. Thus the soft skills and career development enhance the performance of the IT employees and improve the efficiency of the organization.

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