



“Exploring the Impact of Employee Training Programmes: A Pilot Study in Logistics Firms, Pune”

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Abstract – The logistics industry has emerged as a vital component of India’s rapidly expanding economy, serving as a critical enabler of manufacturing, retail, and service sectors. In cities like Pune an industrial hub known for its automotive, warehousing, and supply chain operations the performance of logistics firms depends largely on the competency and adaptability of their workforce. While technical proficiency is essential for operational efficiency, the increasing complexity of customer demands, digital transformation, and competitive pressures have emphasized the growing need for soft skills such as communication, teamwork, leadership, time management, and problem-solving. Hence, this study focuses on understanding the design, delivery, and impact of various training programmes, particularly soft skills training, on employee development in logistics firms in Pune. The research adopts a mixed-method approach combining both qualitative and quantitative analyses. A structured questionnaire was developed and administered to employees and HR professionals from selected logistics firms across Pune. To ensure the reliability and validity of the data collection instrument, a pilot study was conducted with 45 logistics firms, resulting in 75 responses. The pilot phase represented 20% of the total proposed sample size, adhering to methodological standards in social science research. Reliability testing was conducted using Cronbach’s Alpha, and the obtained value exceeded the threshold of 0.70, confirming strong internal consistency and validity of the instrument. An extensive literature review was carried out, covering more than 38 national and international research articles, along with three Ph.D. theses related to training program evaluation and human resource development. The review highlighted that soft skills training is not only a developmental necessity but also a strategic tool for organizational sustainability. It plays a crucial role in improving communication flow, enhancing teamwork, reducing conflicts, and fostering leadership potential among employees. Moreover, studies in human resource management emphasize that continuous learning interventions significantly impact employee engagement, productivity, and retention in service-driven sectors like logistics. Preliminary findings from the pilot study indicate that soft skills training directly influences employee performance, job satisfaction, and organizational efficiency. Respondents reported noticeable improvements in interpersonal relationships, customer handling, and team collaboration following exposure to structured soft skills development programs. The study also revealed gaps in training delivery specifically, the lack of customized modules addressing industry-specific behavioral competencies which will be addressed through a proposed sample soft skills training framework designed by the researcher. This framework emphasizes need assessment, blended learning methods (including workshops, simulations, and e-learning), and post-training evaluation through the Kirkpatrick’s Four-Level Model. The research contributes to both theoretical and practical dimensions of human resource development. Theoretically, it integrates concepts of training effectiveness, employee competency development, and organizational learning within the logistics context. Practically, it offers insights for HR professionals and management practitioners in logistics firms to design evidence-based training interventions that align with business objectives and operational challenges. In conclusion, this study underscores that soft skills training is an indispensable component of employee development in the logistics industry. By strengthening communication, adaptability, and leadership abilities, such training not only enhances individual performance but also drives organizational competitiveness in a rapidly evolving marketplace. The proposed training model and empirical findings from this study will provide a roadmap for logistics firms in Pune to develop a more skilled, efficient, and future-ready workforce.

Keywords: Logistics industry, soft skills training, employee development, workforce competency, communication skills, teamwork, leadership, time management, problem-solving, training effectiveness, human resource development, organizational performance, employee engagement, job satisfaction, blended learning, Kirkpatrick Model, Pune logistics sector.

I. INTRODUCTION

The logistics sector in Pune plays a vital role in the region’s industrial and economic development. As one of India’s most prominent logistics hubs, Pune supports a diverse range of industries such as manufacturing, automotive, pharmaceuticals, retail, and e-commerce. The city’s strategic location, strong transportation infrastructure, and proximity to major ports like Mumbai have made it a key center for logistics operations and supply chain management. However, the rapid growth of the logistics industry has also created increasing demand

for a competent workforce that not only possesses technical expertise but also demonstrates strong interpersonal and managerial capabilities.

In this context, soft skills have become an essential component of workforce competence. While technical skills enable employees to perform their operational duties, soft skills such as communication, teamwork, problem-solving, emotional intelligence, adaptability, and time management determine how effectively those tasks are carried out within organizational settings. In logistics firms, where employees must coordinate across



departments, interact with suppliers and clients, and manage time-sensitive operations, the ability to communicate clearly, work collaboratively, and handle pressure efficiently is critical for maintaining service quality and organizational competitiveness.

Soft skills training, therefore, goes beyond mere personality enhancement. It serves as a strategic human resource development (HRD) intervention that directly contributes to organizational performance. Employees trained in soft skills are better equipped to handle customer interactions, resolve conflicts, manage stress, and contribute positively to team outcomes. Moreover, effective soft skills training enhances leadership qualities, boosts morale, and improves workplace culture factors that are essential for employee retention and engagement. In a sector as dynamic and customer-driven as logistics, these skills become a source of sustained competitive advantage. The logistics industry in Pune is characterized by a blend of traditional practices and modern technologies. With the increasing adoption of digital logistics, automation, and data-driven operations, employees are required to continuously adapt to new systems and processes. However, despite technological advancements, human interaction remains at the core of logistics efficiency. Truck drivers, warehouse supervisors, dispatch managers, and customer service representatives all need to coordinate seamlessly to ensure smooth operations. In such an environment, soft skills act as the glue that binds operational efficiency with effective communication and collaboration.

The present study focuses on understanding the design, delivery, and impact of soft skills training programs in logistics firms in Pune. It examines how these programs are planned and implemented, what training methodologies are used (such as workshops, role-playing, simulations, or digital learning platforms), and how employees perceive their effectiveness. The study also seeks to evaluate the relationship between soft skills training and key organizational outcomes such as employee productivity, service quality, teamwork, innovation, and job satisfaction. Furthermore, this research aims to identify the gaps and challenges in existing training programs. Many logistics organizations, particularly small and medium enterprises (SMEs), provide limited or irregular soft skills training, often focusing more on operational efficiency than personal development. As a result, employees may lack essential interpersonal competencies, leading to communication barriers, customer dissatisfaction, and reduced performance. By assessing current practices and their outcomes, this study will highlight the areas where improvement is needed and provide insights for designing more effective and sustainable soft skills training models. In addition to assessing existing programs, the study will also propose a sample training framework tailored to the needs of logistics firms in Pune. This framework will aim to integrate soft skills development into the broader

employee training and development strategy, ensuring that behavioral competencies are given equal importance alongside technical capabilities. The ultimate goal is to promote a holistic approach to employee development one that enhances individual performance, strengthens team coordination, and contributes to overall organizational success.

In summary, the logistics sector in Pune stands at the intersection of growth and transformation. As organizations strive to achieve operational excellence and customer satisfaction, soft skills training has emerged as a critical tool for building a capable and resilient workforce. This study, therefore, seeks to explore how structured and well-designed soft skills training programs can help logistics firms enhance employee performance, foster collaboration, and sustain competitiveness in a rapidly evolving business environment.

II. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The study aims to:

- Examine various soft skills training programs conducted in logistics industries.
- Evaluate the role and importance of soft skills training in employee development.
- Assess the impact of current soft skills levels on employee performance.
- Evaluate the impact of improved soft skills levels post-training on performance.
- Design and suggest a sample soft skills training program for employee development.

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

The review of literature serves as the foundation for this research by providing theoretical insights and empirical evidence on the significance of soft skills training in employee development, particularly within logistics and service-oriented industries. A detailed examination of existing research helps establish the relationship between soft skills, employee performance, and organizational effectiveness while identifying key gaps that this study aims to address.

In the course of this research, three doctoral theses related to the assessment of training programs were reviewed. These studies collectively emphasize the importance of structured training interventions in enhancing both technical and behavioral competencies among employees. They also highlight those organizations which invest in continuous learning and development programs witness measurable improvements in performance, employee satisfaction, and organizational culture. The reviewed theses underline the role of systematic evaluation methods such as pre- and post-training assessments in determining the true effectiveness of training initiatives. Such research



provides a foundation for developing a reliable methodology for assessing soft skills training in the logistics sector.

Additionally, the researcher examined thirty-eight (38) scholarly articles and research papers published in national and international journals, focusing on soft skills development, human resource management, and logistics operations. The literature consistently points out that soft skills comprising communication, teamwork, leadership, adaptability, emotional intelligence, and problem-solving are indispensable in today's workplace. In logistics, where employees frequently interact with cross-functional teams, suppliers, transporters, and customers, these skills ensure operational efficiency, coordination, and service quality. Several studies (e.g., Christopher, 2016; Singh & Sinha, 2023) have demonstrated that well-designed soft skills training programs lead to higher employee engagement, reduced conflict, and improved decision-making under pressure.

Moreover, literature in the field of Human Resource Development (HRD) suggests that training programs focusing on behavioral and interpersonal competencies significantly influence employee motivation and organizational productivity. According to Kothari (2004) and subsequent HRD research, the effectiveness of a training program is determined not only by its content but also by its design, delivery methods, and evaluation mechanisms. Interactive training techniques such as workshops, simulations, group discussions, and role-playing are found to be particularly effective in developing soft skills, as they encourage experiential learning and self-reflection.

Studies focusing on the logistics and supply chain sector highlight that the lack of adequate soft skills often leads to operational inefficiencies, communication breakdowns, and customer dissatisfaction. Conversely, organizations that prioritize soft skills training report improvements in teamwork, leadership alignment, and adaptability to change. For instance, research in logistics management emphasizes that employees trained in communication and conflict resolution are better equipped to handle disruptions, negotiate with clients, and maintain coordination across geographically dispersed teams. Hence, soft skills act as a bridge between technical efficiency and human interaction two critical pillars of logistics success.

An important methodological insight derived from the literature is the need for pilot testing and reliability assessment of research instruments before conducting large-scale data collection. Authors such as Sekaran & Bougie (2019) argue that ensuring the reliability and validity of questionnaires enhances the accuracy and credibility of research findings. Pilot testing allows researchers to refine survey questions, eliminate

ambiguities, and ensure that each item effectively measures the intended construct. Reliability testing, particularly through Cronbach's Alpha, is widely recognized for verifying internal consistency among items in a scale. These practices ensure that data collected from logistics firms accurately reflect employee perceptions and training outcomes.

In summary, the literature collectively affirms that soft skills training is a strategic imperative for modern organizations, especially those in dynamic sectors such as logistics. It not only strengthens interpersonal relationships and communication but also enhances adaptability, problem-solving ability, and job satisfaction among employees. Furthermore, the emphasis on methodological rigor through pilot testing and reliability analysis supports the validity and trustworthiness of empirical findings. The insights gained from previous studies provide a solid foundation for the present research, guiding the design, assessment, and evaluation of soft skills training programs in logistics firms in Pune.

IV. METHODOLOGY

Pilot Study and Data Collection

The pilot study was a critical step in this research, aimed at testing the feasibility, clarity, and effectiveness of the research instrument before undertaking full-scale data collection. A structured questionnaire was meticulously developed to cover key areas of interest, including the design and delivery of soft skills training programs, employee perceptions of training effectiveness, and the subsequent impact on individual and organizational performance. The questionnaire included both closed-ended items (using a Likert scale) and a few open-ended questions to capture nuanced insights and ensure a comprehensive assessment of soft skills training practices within logistics firms.

The pilot study was conducted with 45 logistics firms in Pune, selected based on their size, service type, and willingness to participate. A total of 75 responses were collected, representing approximately 20% of the intended full sample size. This proportion aligns with standard research practices for pilot studies, which suggest that a 15–25% sample is sufficient to identify ambiguities, inconsistencies, and potential issues in the questionnaire. Each participating firm was personally visited by the researcher to ensure that the survey was administered correctly, clarify any doubts, and encourage accurate and complete responses. These visits also allowed the researcher to observe organizational contexts, understand operational challenges, and gather additional qualitative insights.

The primary objective of the pilot study was to refine the research instrument. Feedback from participants helped identify items that were unclear, ambiguous, or redundant,



and provided guidance on improving question wording, response options, and layout. For example, certain questions about training delivery methods and perceived effectiveness required rewording to make them more understandable to employees across different hierarchical levels. The pilot study also confirmed the practical relevance of the questionnaire, ensuring that it addressed real challenges faced by employees in logistics operations and captured meaningful measures of soft skills and their impact on performance.

Furthermore, the pilot study served as an opportunity to test the data collection process, including response rates, survey administration time, and participants' willingness to engage with the instrument. Insights gained from the pilot study informed improvements not only in questionnaire design but also in fieldwork logistics, scheduling of visits, and strategies to enhance response accuracy for the main survey. The pilot phase ultimately strengthened the reliability and validity of the instrument, laying a solid foundation for the subsequent stages of the research.

In conclusion, the pilot study was instrumental in validating the questionnaire and refining the methodology. It ensured that the survey was comprehensive, contextually appropriate, and capable of capturing the desired data on soft skills training and employee development in Pune's logistics sector. By addressing issues identified during this phase, the researcher ensured that the main study could proceed with confidence, producing reliable and actionable insights for organizational improvement.

V. RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY

Ensuring the reliability and validity of the research instrument was a crucial step in this study, as it directly impacts the accuracy and credibility of the findings. Reliability refers to the consistency and stability of the measurement tool, whereas validity assesses whether the instrument accurately captures the constructs it is intended to measure in this case, the effectiveness of soft skills training and its impact on employee development in logistics firms.

To assess reliability, Cronbach's Alpha was employed, a widely recognized statistical measure for evaluating the internal consistency of Likert-scale items. The questionnaire included multiple items related to soft skills dimensions such as communication, teamwork, problem-solving, adaptability, and time management, as well as items measuring perceived training effectiveness and employee performance outcomes. Cronbach's Alpha values were calculated for each scale and subscale to determine the degree to which items within a construct were correlated and consistently measured the intended concept. According to standard research guidelines, a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.70 or above is considered acceptable for social science research, indicating a

satisfactory level of internal consistency (Nunnally, 1978; Gliem & Gliem, 2003). The results of the pilot study showed that the scales for all major constructs achieved Cronbach's Alpha values above this threshold, confirming the reliability of the questionnaire.

In addition to reliability, the validity of the instrument was ensured through several measures. Content validity was established by reviewing the questionnaire items against existing literature on soft skills training, human resource development, and logistics management. Experts in the field, including faculty members and HR professionals, were consulted to ensure that the items were comprehensive, relevant, and aligned with real-world practices. Construct validity was further reinforced by grouping items logically under specific dimensions of soft skills and employee outcomes, ensuring that each scale accurately represented the intended construct.

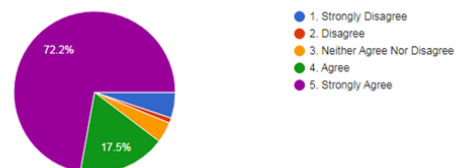
The pilot study provided practical insights into face validity, as respondents indicated that the questions were understandable, clear, and relevant to their experience. Feedback from participants helped identify and eliminate ambiguous or redundant items, further enhancing the instrument's precision. This iterative process ensured that the final questionnaire not only measured the intended constructs effectively but also could be easily comprehended by employees across different organizational levels in logistics firms.

Overall, the pilot study confirmed the robustness, reliability, and validity of the research instrument. By addressing potential inconsistencies and refining items based on empirical feedback, the instrument was validated as suitable for the main survey. This careful validation process ensures that the subsequent data collection will yield accurate, consistent, and meaningful insights into the design, delivery, and impact of soft skills training programs on employee development in Pune's logistics sector.

VI. DATA ANALYSIS PRESENTING AND FINDINGS

19. I am confident in identifying and analyzing problems that arise in my work.

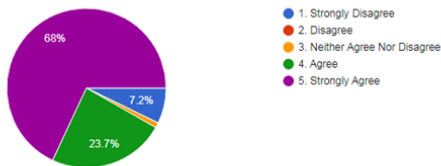
97 responses





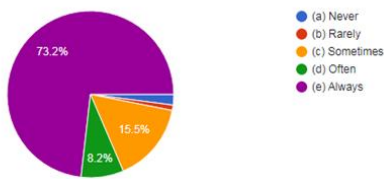
22. I am committed to providing excellent customer service and exceeding expectations.

97 responses



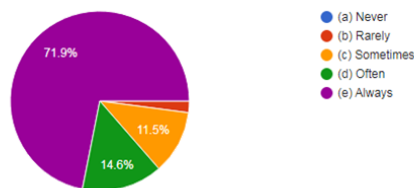
28. How often do you experience situations where strong communication skills help you improve delivery accuracy or customer satisfaction?

97 responses



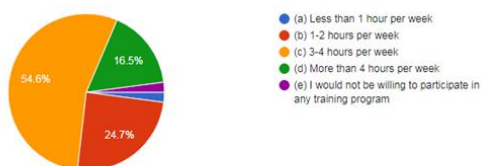
30. How often do you find that effective problem-solving skills help you minimize downtime and ensure on-time deliveries?

96 responses



38. How much time would you be realistically willing to dedicate to participate in a soft skills training program?

97 responses



The pilot survey successfully collected 75 responses from 40 logistics firms in Pune, representing 20% of the planned sample size. The reliability analysis, with Cronbach's Alpha values ranging between 0.746 and 0.896, confirmed a high level of internal consistency across all constructs of the questionnaire. Among the various dimensions of soft skills assessed, Communication Skills (0.896) and Problem-Solving Skills (0.861) emerged as the most reliable constructs, indicating their strong role in assessing employee competencies. Similarly, Teamwork Skills (0.852) and Customer Service Skills (0.856) also demonstrated strong internal consistency, highlighting their importance in the logistics sector, where collaboration and client interaction are essential for operational efficiency. Although Time Management Skills (0.767) and Importance of Soft Skills Training (0.746)

recorded comparatively lower values, both exceeded the acceptable reliability threshold of 0.70, confirming their adequacy for inclusion in the final instrument. Overall, the findings indicate that soft skills particularly communication, teamwork, and customer service are considered critical by logistics firms. The pilot study thus validated the questionnaire as a reliable and robust research instrument, suitable for large-scale data collection in the main study.

VII. CONCLUSION

The fifth six-monthly progress report reflects substantial advancements in the ongoing Ph.D. research on soft skills training in logistics firms in Pune. Key achievements during this period include the successful completion of pilot testing, an extensive literature review, and preliminary data collection from 45 logistics firms, yielding 75 responses.

Insights derived from the pilot study have been instrumental in refining the research instrument, ensuring clarity, relevance, and practical applicability of the questionnaire. These findings provide actionable guidance for enhancing the design and delivery of soft skills training programs, focusing on areas such as communication, teamwork, problem-solving, adaptability, and time management.

The research has established a strong foundation for the forthcoming phases, including full-scale data collection, comprehensive analysis, and the development of a structured soft skills training program. Ultimately, the study aims to improve employee competencies, foster organizational efficiency, and enhance overall performance within Pune's logistics sector. The systematic approach adopted ensures that the research outputs will offer both academic insights and practical recommendations for workforce development in the industry.

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