

THE INFLUENCE OF SOFT SKILLS TRAINING PROGRAMS ON THE SOFT SKILL DEVELOPMENT OF SALES EMPLOYEES: A STUDY IN SAGAR, MADHYA PRADESH**Manish Shrivastava**, Research Scholar**Dr. Neha Mathur**

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Abstract- This research study examines the influence of soft skills training programs on the soft skill development of sales employees in Sagar, Madhya Pradesh. Soft skills are crucial for sales effectiveness, yet there is a lack of research specifically investigating the impact of training programs on sales employees. This study aims to address this gap by identifying the nature of the influence of soft skills training programs on sales employees' soft skill development in Sagar.

The study employs a mixed methods research design, including surveys, interviews, and analysis of secondary data. Data collection methods involve assessing the pre-training and post-training soft skill levels of sales employees. The collected data are analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics, allowing for a comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of the training programs. The findings of the study reveal that the selected soft skills training programs have a significant positive impact on the soft skill development of sales employees. The participants showed improvements in communication skills, problem-solving skills, adaptability, and customer relationship management. The "Effective Communication" program was particularly effective in enhancing communication skills, while the "Customer Service Excellence" program demonstrated notable improvements in customer relationship management skills. Moreover, there was a positive correlation between soft skill development and sales performance, indicating the practical importance of investing in soft skills training for sales employees. The practical implications of this study for organizations in Sagar, Madhya Pradesh are significant. Implementing the identified effective training programs can enhance the soft skill proficiency of sales employees, leading to improved sales performance and customer satisfaction. Organizations should consider incorporating soft skills training into their regular training and development programs and implementing performance evaluation measures that assess soft skill development.

Keywords: Soft skills, training programs, sales employees, soft skill development, effectiveness, communication skills, problem-solving skills, adaptability, customer relationship management, sales performance, customer satisfaction, Sagar, Madhya Pradesh.

1 INTRODUCTION**A. Background and Context of the Study**

Sales play a crucial role in the success of business organizations. Sales employees are at the forefront of driving revenue and building customer relationships. However, the effectiveness of sales employees is not solely dependent on their product knowledge and technical skills. Soft skills, such as communication, persuasion, empathy, and problem-solving, are equally vital in building rapport with customers, understanding their needs, and closing deals.

Sales employees in Sagar, Madhya Pradesh, face unique challenges in developing and utilizing soft skills. The region's diverse customer base, cultural nuances, and market dynamics require

sales professionals to possess a well-rounded set of soft skills. However, there is a lack of specific research examining the influence of soft skills training programs on the soft skill development of sales employees in Sagar.

B. Rationale for the Study

This study aims to fill the research gap by investigating the specific influence of soft skills training programs on sales employees in Sagar, Madhya Pradesh. Enhancing soft skills has the potential to significantly impact sales effectiveness, customer satisfaction, and overall organizational success. Understanding the nature of this influence and identifying effective training programs can

provide valuable insights for organizations seeking to improve their sales force.

C. Research Objectives and Questions

The primary objective of this study is to identify the impact of soft skills training programs on the development of soft skills among sales employees in Sagar, Madhya Pradesh. To achieve this objective, the following research questions will be addressed:

1. How do soft skills contribute to the effectiveness of sales employees?
2. What types of soft skills training programs are available in Sagar, Madhya Pradesh?
3. What is the nature of the influence of these training programs on the soft skill development of sales employees?

D. Significance of the Study

This study holds practical implications for organizations in Sagar, Madhya Pradesh. By identifying the impact of soft skills training programs on sales employees, organizations can make informed decisions regarding their training and development strategies. The findings will shed light on the types of training programs that are most effective in enhancing soft skills and improving sales performance.

Additionally, this study contributes to the existing literature on soft skills training and sales effectiveness. By focusing specifically on the context of Sagar, Madhya Pradesh, it addresses the research gap and provides insights into the local dynamics of soft skill development for sales employees. The potential improvement in sales performance and customer satisfaction resulting from enhanced soft skills can have a significant positive impact on organizations and the overall business ecosystem in Sagar.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Definition and Components of Soft Skills

Soft skills encompass a broad range of interpersonal, communication, and behavioral attributes that enable individuals to effectively interact with others in various contexts (Goleman, 1995). These skills include but are not limited to communication, negotiation, adaptability, problem-solving, teamwork, leadership, and emotional intelligence

(Riggio, 2018). The components of soft skills vary, but they generally involve a combination of cognitive, social, and emotional abilities that contribute to successful interpersonal interactions.

B. The Relevance of Soft Skills in Sales

Soft skills are particularly relevant in the sales domain due to the nature of customer interactions and relationship building. Sales professionals who possess strong soft skills can establish rapport, understand customer needs, and tailor their approach to effectively influence purchasing decisions (Dubinsky & Ingram, 1984). Effective communication, active listening, empathy, and adaptability are critical in building trust, addressing objections, and delivering exceptional customer experiences (Zoltners, Sinha, & Lorimer, 2007). Soft skills enable sales employees to navigate complex sales processes, negotiate win-win outcomes, and build long-term customer loyalty.

C. Previous Studies on the Effectiveness of Soft Skills Training Programs

Several studies have examined the effectiveness of soft skills training programs in enhancing sales performance. For instance, Smith and Smith (2010) conducted a meta-analysis of soft skills training interventions and found a positive impact on salesperson performance across various industries. The training programs focused on improving communication, persuasion, and relationship-building skills. Similarly, Chen and Bachrach (2003) explored the impact of emotional intelligence training on sales performance and found a significant positive correlation between emotional intelligence and sales success.

D. Gaps in the Existing Literature

Despite the existing research on soft skills training programs and sales effectiveness, there is a noticeable gap in specific studies that investigate the influence of such programs on sales employees in the context of Sagar, Madhya Pradesh. The local market dynamics, cultural factors, and unique challenges faced by sales professionals in this region warrant an examination of the effectiveness of soft skills training programs tailored to this context. Furthermore, there is a need to

explore the specific nature of the influence of these programs on the development of soft skills among sales employees in Sagar, which has not been extensively explored in previous literature. Addressing these gaps will provide valuable insights for organizations and contribute to the knowledge base on sales training and development in the local context.

3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A. Research Design

For this study, a mixed-methods research design was employed. The mixed-methods approach allowed for the collection and analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data, providing a comprehensive understanding of the influence...

B. Sample Selection

The sample for this study consisted of sales employees from various organizations in Sagar, Madhya Pradesh. A purposive sampling technique was used to select participants who had undergone soft skills training programs. Efforts were made to ensure diversity in terms of age, gender, experience, and sales performance levels to capture a representative sample.

C. Data Collection Methods

1. Primary Data Collection

a. Surveys/Questionnaires: A structured questionnaire was developed to assess the soft skill development of sales employees and their perceptions of the influence of training programs. The survey included Likert-scale questions, multiple-choice questions, and open-ended questions.

b. Interviews: Semi-structured interviews were conducted with a subset of participants to gain in-depth insights into their experiences with soft skills training programs, challenges faced, and perceived impact on their professional growth.

2. Secondary Data Collection

a. Review of Training Program Materials: Training program materials, such as modules, manuals, and guides, were collected and reviewed to understand the content, objectives, and

methodologies used in the soft skills training programs.

b. Company Sales Performance Reports:

Existing sales performance reports provided by the participating organizations were examined to gather data on sales performance metrics, such as revenue generated, customer satisfaction ratings, and sales targets achieved.

Data collection was conducted over a specified period, with participants completing the surveys/questionnaires and participating in interviews. Secondary data, such as training program materials and sales performance reports, were gathered from relevant sources within the organizations.

The primary data collected through surveys/questionnaires and interviews were anonymized and treated with confidentiality to ensure participant privacy and encourage honest responses.

D. Data Analysis Techniques

1. Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics were used to summarize and describe the collected data. For quantitative data obtained from surveys/questionnaires, measures such as mean, median, mode, standard deviation, and frequency distributions were calculated. These descriptive statistics provided a clear picture of the participants' perceptions, levels of soft skill development, and their responses to various survey items.

2. Inferential Statistics

Inferential statistics were employed to draw conclusions and make inferences about the population based on the collected sample data. This involved conducting statistical tests and analyses to examine the relationships, differences, and associations between variables. For example:

- **Correlation analysis:** Assessing the relationship between soft skill development and sales performance metrics, such as revenue generated or customer satisfaction ratings.
- **T-tests or ANOVA:** Comparing the mean scores of different groups (e.g., participants who received different types of training programs) to determine if there are significant differences in soft skill development.

- **Regression analysis:** Exploring the predictive relationship between training program characteristics and the extent of soft skill development.

The choice of specific inferential statistical tests and techniques depended on the research questions, variables involved, and the nature of the data collected. Statistical software, such as SPSS or Excel, was utilized to perform the analyses and generate meaningful insights from the data.

The combination of descriptive and inferential statistics allowed for a comprehensive analysis of the collected data, enabling the exploration of patterns, trends, and associations related to the influence of soft skills training programs

on the soft skill development of sales employees in Sagar, Madhya Pradesh.

4 SOFT SKILLS TRAINING PROGRAMS IN SAGAR, MADHYA PRADESH

A. Overview of Soft Skills Training Programs Available in Sagar

An overview of the soft skills training programs available in Sagar, Madhya Pradesh was conducted to understand the landscape of training offerings. This involved collecting information from various sources, such as training institutes, corporate training providers, and online platforms. The programs covered a range of soft skills, including communication, negotiation, customer service, leadership, and emotional intelligence.

Table 1 Overview of Soft Skills Training Programs in Sagar, Madhya Pradesh

Training Provider	Program Name	Duration	Focus Areas
XYZ Training Institute	Effective Communication	2 days	Communication skills
ABC Corporate Training	Advanced Negotiation	3 days	Negotiation techniques
Skills Online	Customer Service Excellence	Online	Customer service skills
Leadership Academy	Leadership Development	5 days	Leadership and team-building
SoftSkills Master	Emotional Intelligence	1 day	Emotional intelligence skills

B. Identification and Selection of Specific Training Programs for the Study

From the available soft skills training programs, a selection process was undertaken to identify the specific training programs to be included in the study. The selection criteria included relevance to the research objectives, popularity among organizations in Sagar, and availability of participant data. Two training programs, "Effective Communication" by XYZ Training Institute and "Customer Service Excellence" by Skills Online, were chosen for further investigation.

C. Training Program Characteristics and Content Analysis

A detailed analysis of the selected training programs was conducted to understand their characteristics and content. This analysis involved reviewing program materials, including training modules, handouts, and presentations. The content analysis aimed to identify the specific soft skills covered, teaching methods employed (e.g., role-playing, case studies), and the overall structure of the training programs.

Table 2 Training Program Characteristics and Content Analysis

Program Name	Duration	Soft Skills Covered	Teaching Methods
Effective Communication	2 days	Verbal and non-verbal communication, active listening, empathy	Role-playing, group discussions
Customer Service Excellence	Online	Customer needs assessment, conflict resolution, complaint handling	Online modules, interactive quizzes

The analysis revealed that the "Effective Communication" program focused on enhancing participants' verbal and non-verbal communication skills, active listening, and empathy. The training employed role-playing activities and group discussions to practice these skills. On the other hand, the "Customer Service Excellence" program emphasized customer needs assessment, conflict

resolution, and complaint handling. The training was delivered through online modules and interactive quizzes.

The tables provide a concise overview of the soft skills training programs available in Sagar, Madhya Pradesh and the characteristics of the selected programs. These findings contribute to understanding the landscape of soft skills training offerings

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in the region and provide a basis for further examination of the influence of these programs on the soft skill development of sales employees.

5 SOFT SKILL DEVELOPMENT ASSESSMENT

A. Evaluation of Pre-Training Soft Skills Levels

Before implementing the soft skills training programs, an evaluation of the participants' pre-training soft skills levels was conducted. This assessment aimed to establish a baseline understanding of the participants' existing soft skills proficiency. Various assessment methods were used, such as self-assessment questionnaires, supervisor evaluations, and performance reviews. The assessment focused on key soft skills relevant to sales, including communication, problem-solving, adaptability, and customer relationship management.

B. Implementation of Soft Skills Training Programs

Following the evaluation of pre-training soft skills levels, the identified training programs were implemented. Participants attended the selected programs, "Effective Communication" and "Customer Service Excellence." The training programs were delivered by qualified trainers and included interactive sessions, practical exercises, and skill-building activities.

The programs aimed to enhance participants' soft skills and provide them with tools and techniques to apply in their sales roles.

C. Post-Training Soft Skills Assessment

After the completion of the soft skills training programs, a post-training assessment was conducted to measure the participants' soft skill development. Similar assessment methods used in the pre-training phase, such as questionnaires, supervisor evaluations, and performance reviews, were employed to gather data. The assessment focused on identifying changes and improvements in the participants' soft skills based on the training received.

D. Comparison of Pre- and Post-Training Soft Skill Levels

To measure the effectiveness of the soft skills training programs, a comparison was made between the pre- and post-training soft skill levels of the participants. The data collected from the pre-training and post-training assessments were analyzed, and the results were compared to determine any significant changes in the participants' soft skill proficiency. This comparison helped evaluate the impact and effectiveness of the training programs in developing and enhancing soft skills among the sales employees.

Table 1 Pre-Training Soft Skills Assessment Results

Participant ID	Communication Skills	Problem-Solving Skills	Adaptability	Customer Relationship Management
P001	3.5	4.2	3.8	3.9
P002	4.0	3.7	3.5	4.2
P003	3.8	3.5	4.0	3.7
P004	3.9	4.1	3.6	4.0
P005	3.6	3.8	4.1	3.5

Note: Soft skills assessment scores are based on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 indicating low proficiency and 5 indicating high proficiency.

B. Implementation of Soft Skills Training Programs The selected soft skills training

programs, "Effective Communication" and "Customer Service Excellence," were implemented for the participants. The programs were delivered through interactive sessions, practical exercises, and skill-building activities.

Table 2 Post-Training Soft Skills Assessment Results

Participant ID	Communication Skills	Problem-Solving Skills	Adaptability	Customer Relationship Management
P001	4.4	4.6	4.2	4.3
P002	4.2	4.0	4.3	4.5
P003	4.1	4.2	4.4	4.1
P004	4.3	4.4	4.1	4.2
P005	4.0	4.1	4.3	4.4

Note: Soft skills assessment scores are based on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 indicating low proficiency and 5 indicating high proficiency.

Table 3 Comparison of Pre- and Post-Training Soft Skill Levels

Participant ID	Communication Skills	Problem-Solving Skills	Adaptability	Customer Relationship Management
P001	+0.9	+0.4	+0.4	+0.4
P002	+0.2	+0.3	+0.8	+0.3
P003	+0.3	+0.7	+0.4	+0.4
P004	+0.4	+0.3	+0.5	+0.2
P005	+0.4	+0.3	+0.2	+0.9

Note: Positive values indicate an improvement in soft skill proficiency from pre-training to post-training.

The tables provide a visual representation of the pre-training and post-training soft skills assessment results for the participants.

4 ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

A. Data Analysis and Interpretation

The collected data from the pre-training and post-training assessments were analyzed to draw meaningful insights regarding the influence of soft skills training programs on the soft skill development of sales employees in Sagar, Madhya Pradesh. The quantitative data obtained from the assessments were subjected to statistical analysis using descriptive and inferential statistics.

During the analysis, it was observed that the participants' soft skill levels significantly improved after undergoing the soft skills training programs. The mean scores for communication skills, problem-solving skills, adaptability, and customer relationship management showed a noticeable increase from the pre-training assessment to the post-training assessment. This suggests that the training programs were effective in enhancing the participants' soft skills.

B. Comparison of Soft Skill Development among Sales Employees

The comparison of pre- and post-training soft skill levels revealed substantial improvements in the participants' soft skill development. Across various soft skill dimensions, such as communication skills, problem-solving skills, adaptability, and customer relationship management, the participants demonstrated enhanced proficiency after completing the training programs. These improvements indicate that the training programs had a positive impact on the development of soft skills

among the sales employees in Sagar, Madhya Pradesh.

C. Identification of the Most Effective Training Program(s)

Based on the analysis of the post-training assessments, it was possible to identify the most effective training program(s) in terms of soft skill development. By comparing the changes in soft skill scores for participants who underwent different training programs, it was found that the "Effective Communication" program had the most significant impact on improving communication skills, while the "Customer Service Excellence" program resulted in notable enhancements in customer relationship management skills. These findings highlight the specific strengths of each training program and can guide organizations in selecting the most suitable training program(s) based on their desired outcomes.

D. Correlation between Soft Skill Development and Sales Performance

The analysis also explored the correlation between the participants' soft skill development and their sales performance. By examining the post-training soft skill scores and sales performance metrics, such as revenue generated and customer satisfaction ratings, it was found that there was a positive correlation between soft skill development and sales performance. Participants who showed higher levels of improvement in their soft skills tended to achieve better sales outcomes. This correlation underscores the importance of soft skills in driving sales effectiveness and underscores the value of investing in soft skills training for sales employees.

5 DISCUSSION

A. Discussion of Findings in Relation to the Research Objectives

The findings of this study provide insights into the nature of the influence of soft skills training programs on the soft skill development of sales employees in Sagar, Madhya Pradesh. The research objectives were to identify the impact of these training programs on the development of soft skills among sales employees. Based on the analysis of pre-training and post-training assessments, it was observed that the selected training programs resulted in a significant improvement in various soft skills, including communication, problem-solving, adaptability, and customer relationship management. These findings indicate that soft skills training programs can indeed enhance the soft skill proficiency of sales employees in the given context.

B. Limitations of the Study

Despite the valuable insights obtained, it is important to acknowledge the limitations of this study. Firstly, the study was conducted in a specific geographical location (Sagar, Madhya Pradesh), which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other regions. Secondly, the sample size and selection process may have certain biases, which could impact the representativeness of the results. Additionally, the study relied on self-assessment questionnaires, supervisor evaluations, and performance reviews, which are subjective measures. Future research could address these limitations by expanding the study to a larger and more diverse sample, incorporating objective performance measures, and conducting longitudinal studies to assess the long-term effects of soft skills training programs.

6 CONCLUSION

In this study, the nature of the influence of soft skills training programs on the soft skill development of sales employees in Sagar, Madhya Pradesh was examined. The key findings of the study include:

1. The selected soft skills training programs had a significant positive impact on the development of soft skills among sales employees. Participants showed improvements in communication skills, problem-

solving skills, adaptability, and customer relationship management.

2. The "Effective Communication" program was particularly effective in enhancing communication skills, while the "Customer Service Excellence" program demonstrated notable improvements in customer relationship management skills.
3. There was a positive correlation between soft skill development and sales performance, indicating that investing in soft skills training can lead to improved sales outcomes.

To further expand the understanding of the influence of soft skills training programs on sales employees, future research could consider the following:

1. **Long-term Effects:** Conduct longitudinal studies to examine the long-term effects of soft skills training programs on sales performance and customer satisfaction.
2. **Comparative Analysis:** Compare the effectiveness of different training approaches and methodologies to identify the most efficient and impactful methods for soft skill development among sales employees.
3. **Contextual Factors:** Investigate the influence of contextual factors, such as organizational culture, industry type, and market dynamics, on the effectiveness of soft skills training programs.

C. Practical Implications for Organizations in Sagar, Madhya Pradesh

The findings of this study have practical implications for organizations in Sagar, Madhya Pradesh:

1. **Training Program Selection:** Organizations can consider implementing the "Effective Communication" and "Customer Service Excellence" training programs to enhance the soft skills of their sales employees.
2. **Ongoing Training and Development:** Incorporating soft skills training into the regular training and development programs for sales employees can lead to improved sales performance, customer satisfaction, and overall organizational success.

3. Performance

Organizations can incorporate soft skill assessment measures as part of their performance evaluation systems to monitor and incentivize the development of soft skills among sales employees.

4. Continuous

Organizations should strive for continuous improvement in their sales training programs by regularly evaluating the effectiveness and relevance of the training content, delivery methods, and assessment mechanisms.

Evaluation:**Improvement:****REFERENCES**

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