OUTBOUND TRAINING AND ITS EFFECT ON EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE - A REVIEW OF LITERATURE

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ABSTRACT
This paper in the form of Literature Review is focused on the past research work that has been done in the area of Outbound Training. The objective of the paper is to evaluate this type of training programs and analyze the effect of outbound training on employee performance and The primary focus of the researcher has been to assess the work done so far to study the evaluation of outbound training programs and effectiveness of these training programs. Primarily the paper focuses on studying the effectiveness of imparting Outbound Training programs to the managerial level employees. The insights gathered from this review of literature indicate a scope for future research to assess the technique of outbound training effectiveness and its impact on employee performance.

Key words: Outbound training, effectiveness, evaluation, employee performance
Introduction

In the past few years, nature of jobs has changed radically and also the skill sets required to sustain and succeed in a job have changed. Globally competitive market and a volatile business environment demands that in addition to technical skills employees should also possess soft skills to understand project objectives and should have the aptitude and ability to accomplish them with the existing resources Kumar and Hsiao, (2007). Employers in most of the cases expect their employees to exhibit multitude skills such as, interpersonal skills, project management skills, technical skills, cognitive aptitude, leadership skills and many more (Brown and Bowen, 2009).

Employees are the backbone of any organization. They are responsible for customer feedback, customer satisfaction, quality of products and events and thus maintaining a brand image of the company. Training plays a crucial role in maintaining the desired performance of the employees. Training develops the desired skill sets to accomplish goals. Training is a necessity in the workplace. Employee training denotes programs that educate employees on technical skill sets as well as required behavioral changes thus enhancing professional development opportunities for an employee.

Outbound Training (OT) is practiced by organizations to enhance organizational performance through experiential learning. It is important to operationally define OT for a systematic investigation. A realistic and pragmatic approach to define OT is through review of published literature that suggests the following common criteria - Purpose, Environmental criterion, the managerial criterion, the developmental criterion.

Human skills are important because it is humans who deliver using their diverse skills and creativity. One of the most difficult challengers for manager or supervisors is people management as it requires extensive use of relationship management skills (Bourne and Walker, 2004). Some of the critical soft skills identified are communication, organizational effectiveness, leadership, problem solving, teambuilding, flexibility, creativity and trustworthiness Belzer1 (2001). It has been observed that many a
times soft skills can compensate for the lack of customary cognitive intelligence, and also they often differentiate adequate and astronomical performance (Muzio et al., 2007).

All the foul levels of Donald L. Kirkpatrick’s classic evaluation model could be used to measure the effectiveness of Soft skill training. Kirkpatrick has suggested that training can be measured or evaluated at four different levels:

Level 1: Measurement of participants’ reaction (during the training)
Level 2: Measurements of participants’ learning in terms of content of the training
Level 3: Measurement of participants’ use of newly learnt skills and knowledge when on the job
Level 4: Measurement of the organizations return on the training investment

Generally, evaluation of soft skill training is conducted until level 3. In spite of the growing importance of soft skills, little systematic research has been conducted to conceptualize such skills and even less has been done to measure these skills. Given this gap in the literature, this research is aimed to introduce the impact of outbound training on soft skills development or so called “practical acumen” which is required by the Professionals.

Statement of problem
Organizations are spending heavily on outdoor adventure-based training programs, but there is rarely an evidence of its effectiveness on the employee performance. Though companies spend heavily on this type of training, but the critics are strong about its limited advantage. Therefore, research and evaluation is required to reveal the effectiveness of outbound training.

Objectives of the study
- To understand the various factors which affect the outbound training.
- To undertake the empirical analysis on outbound training and its effective on employees performance.

Methodology
Secondary data was collected through information published by selected organizations, training institutions, magazines, journals and other databases.
Review of Literature on Training and Performance

Outdoor Management Development (OMD) program is gradually being acknowledged as a faster way of developing managerial efficacy. Kurt Hahn was first to employ, an outdoor experience that was created. This experience offered challenges and could be used for improvement of the employee as an individual and also the development of groups and team. This Outward Bound movement (OMD) started by Hahn continues to be operational in education and corporate world all over the world even today.

Organizations carry out training programs, both in-house and outdoor, for developing employee skills. Increasingly, companies are cheering the notion of learning outside the work environment called as “Outdoor training programs” or Outdoor Management Development (OMD) program. In this study, Outdoor training program is interchangeably used for Outdoor Management Development (OMD). These Outdoor training programs are expected to create awareness and promote out of the box thinking.

After a good training session, generally the trainer or the management thinks that their job is done. But in reality, many a times the elements imparted in the training does not get transferred to the job. It is important that training is documented and its efforts are counted. It needs to rationalize its being and contribution. Here the review of literature is divided into four sections, namely Training, Outbound Training, Evaluation and Performance.

Review of Literature on Training

1. Tracey, J Bruce, Hinkin, Timothy R, Tannenbaum, Scott I, Mathieu, John E (1997), in their work stress that pre-training motivation had direct influence on two levels of training reaction and on application level of cognitive learning. Self efficacy and motivation are two important factors for relevant training outcomes ¹.

2. Narendra M. Agrawal (2000), the author in this paper explores the human issues and challenges faced by the Indian software organizations. It suggests measures to solve these human challenges and emphasizes the importance of soft skills training programs ².
3. **John P. Wilson Steven Western (2000),** in this paper the authors have conducted a research conducted to understand likely inhibitors that can reduce success of a performance appraisal process in relation to training and development strategies and plans.  

4. **Aradhana Khandekar and Anuradha Sharma (2006),** the authors in this paper explain that the role of organizational learning is progressively becoming more crucial for organizational performance. The study is based on Based on three Indian global firms operating in National Capital Region of Delhi, India, explores the correlation of organizational learning with organizational performance in the Indian context.

5. **Jyotsna Bhatnagar (2007),** this paper is an attempt to design training interventions in order to reduce employee disengagement and attrition.

6. **S. Raghu Raman Pawan Budhwar G. Balasubramanian, (2007),** in this paper, the authors have talked about challenges in the ITES sector especially in KPOs. The major problems highlighted here are retention of employees, training design and infrastructure people management and work-life balance.

7. **Lisa A. Wieland Handy, (2008),** in the research paper discusses that little has been done to relate work environment variables to transfer of training.

8. **Ebrahim Soltani Ying-Ying Liao, (2010),** the purpose here to examine the training practices for employees in Iranian-based organizations. The paper suggests that there is insufficient evidence to correlate employee performance with the training programs organized by the firm. The study indicates further research to test implications of training interventions.

9. **Muhammad Awais Bhatti and Sharan Kaur (2010),** in this paper the author highlights the role of individual and training design factors on training transfer. This paper provides practical implications for training transfer. The authors emphasize on training transfer through positive trainee reaction. Research also says that perceived content validity develops positive reaction
but and increases the efficacy level of trainees. Therefore, training professionals to maximize training transfer should focus on the content and transfer design factors ⁹.

10. **Ashish Malik Venkataraman Nilakant, (2011)**, authors have scrutinized the aspects that stimulates training choices in ITES sector in India. Important factors which helps in making choices for training are process in this sector are -- complexity, high staff turnover, and client requirements ¹⁰.

11. **Larisa Nikitina and Fumitaka Furuoka (2011)**, in their paper have identified the critical soft skills necessary for growth. The paper also throws light on how new employees lack “expertise and skills, especially soft skills, required by employers and competitive job markets ¹¹.

12. **Uma Pricilda Jaidev and Susan Chirayath (2012)**, in their paper focus on the factors which play an important role in transfer of training. As per the authors, trainee characteristics, Training design and delivery mechanisms, work environment and situational and organizational factors and intentions to transfer and reactions are the basic pre-training, during-training and post-training activities are the predictors of Transfer of Training ¹².

13. **Khawaja Fawad Latif, (2012)**, in this paper the author has tried to construct an outline to assess employee satisfaction with a training program and determine its key indicators. This paper also reiterates the gap in research and development of an appropriate scale of measurement for evaluation of training efficiency ¹³.

14. **T. Brad Harris Wonjoon Chung Holly M. Hutchins Dan S. Chiaburu (2014)**, here the authors have studied both the parties of a training program. One is the trainer directiveness and the other is the learning goal orientation of trainees’ and its impact on training satisfaction and training transfer. The authors suggest a detailed study to explain the effect of trainer styles on training outcomes with respect to trainee learning ¹⁵.
15. Harsh Sharma (2014), the author in this paper has compared importance of training program and performance of training department in service and manufacturing sectors in India. The author does suggest that further research can be conducted to study other aspects of training such as training need identification, training methods and training evaluation 16.

16. Querubin S. Yap and Jon K. Webber (2015), the authors here have investigated the leadership practices adapted in a training department where outsourced as well as internal employees work together to create a positive corporate culture 17.

Review of Literature on Outdoor Training

17. Chapman C.A. Lumsdon, (1983), in their paper stressed that physically and psychologically demanding tasks and environment offer more learning opportunities in managerial learning. They further remarked on the kind of OT programs to be developed which would in turn develop new and appropriate behaviors in response to new tasks and task situations as these are the most beneficial and transferable outcomes of OT 18.

18. Graham Elkin, (1992), here the author has discussed the advantages and disadvantages of outdoor training. He has also suggested that research is important to understand the importance of focus required, risk and mindset of consumer and providers of training 19.

19. Richard J. Wagner John Campbell, (1994), here the authors have deliberated on the transfer of learning that should happen during OT. They have also discussed a new concept “virtual reality training “to improve the benefits of OT 20.

20. Richard Holden, (1995), here the author supports Outdoor training and discusses the importance of these training programs by clearing the clutter around outbound training 21.

21. Janet Kelly, (1996) in the paper has emphasized on the role of Outbound training and its approach to team building. The paper is focused on how companies use this training to achieve organizational performance 22.
22. Glenn M. McEvoy Paul F. Buller, (1997), the purpose of this article is to express features of outbound training programs. The article explains the pros and cons as well as certain special features of OT so that both designers and consumers of this program can gain maximum.

23. Cheng and Ho (2001), Moreover, very few studies have investigated transfer in outdoor management programme that may give different results from the transfer of indoor training programmes.

24. Broderick, Andrew, Pearce, Glenn (2001), in this paper the authors have examined the theories of supporting adventure learning and has also proposed research into areas like duration and depth of involvement in adventure learning, pre and post training assessment and determining the validity of transfer.

25. High, Teresa (Birdie); Graefe, Alan R (2002), the purpose of this study was to gauge the impact of motivational and environmental factors on the efficiency of outdoor based training. It also focusses on other factors affecting the outcome of outdoor training.

26. John P. Meyer (2003) in his paper proposes a way to improve outdoor-adventure experiential learning. His study provides four areas of organizational experience— visioning, strategizing, performing and assessing. He proposed further research to bridge the gap between action and learning in the organizations.

27. Sheryl L. Shivers and Blackwell, (2004), in their paper indicated that teamwork attitudes collected before the outbound training are positively associated with team support, potency, intentions to remain in the team, and team survival. In this paper the authors mention that there are many anecdotal evidence that support the effectiveness of outdoor training, expressed by top executives and former participants but empirical evidence on the value and importance of outbound training is lacking.
28. Roger Dean Fuller (2006), here the author talks about the mechanisms that activate outdoor management learning process and transfer. The researcher here proposes further work into demystifying factors that enhances learning transfer 30.

29. Philip J. Jones and Cliff Oswick (2007) the authors here have investigated the effect of participation in an OMD program. This study is a look into the design of existing OMD programs that start with a linear view of development of short duration and easy tasks into complex and longer activities 31.

30. Efthymios Valkanos Iosif Fragoulis, (2007), in their research advocated the benefits of experiential learning. The authors tried to determine concept of experiential learning, and also opined that adult learning should be based more on their experiences to assist them develop 32.

31. Sally Watson Elena Vasilieva, (2007), in this paper the authors have a positive view on wilderness training. They take it as a promoter for continuous leadership progress. The authors believe that this process integrates various learning support in the next year of this activity 33.

32. Raymond A Noe (2008), the author discusses the positive impact of outbound training but still raises a doubt if it does work? He also points out that extensive research to prove its importance is still missing 34.

33. Billy Desmond and Angela Jowitt (2011) in their paper did a critical examination of dialogical and embodied alignment to experiential learning. The authors suggested that Learning during Outdoor Management Development (OMD) can be improved if participants could be invited to attend to their body and emotions along with the live experiences. Thus a shift in the learning process is required 35.

34. Patricia Yin Yin Laua and Gary N. McLean (2013) investigated if constituents of outdoor management program, trainees and work environment did have an influence on perceived transferable skills. It was found in this study that Macro-dynamic activities, continuous learning culture and self-efficacy significantly influenced perceived transferable skills, but micro-dynamic
activities, instructor’s skills and perceived content validity did not. The outdoor management development program was seen to be not effective for return on investment. The authors emphasized on more research to assist practitioners in selecting appropriate OMD programs for better returns.

35. Jennifer Patterson, (2014) examines the nature of experiential learning and reflects on how experiential learning is valued academically and culturally. It considers environmental influences to balance the relational practices that represent intangible experiential elements in partnership work.

36. Marimuthu K. N. and Sankar Mukherjee (2014) in their paper highlights the influence of OT to create impact and embed managerial skills, particularly leadership. The paper suggests that competency driven training activities need to be included in OT to reach to the accuracy of accomplishing skill development.

Review of Literature on Evaluation of Training Program

37. James Hassett (1992), suggested a method for tracking return on training investment. He proposed training investment analysis that could be used to estimate the impact of any training program on an organization’s bottom-line.

38. Reid Bates (2004) in his paper explains four-level training evaluation model proposed by Kirkpatrick. He argues that the model is unable to effectively address summative and formative question. The author is also of the view that this model confines the ability of training and HRD professionals to fulfill their core duty.

39. Earl M A Carter and Frank A McMahon (2006), in their book discussed aspects about obtaining evidence on the organization’s investment on training needs. They identified certain indicators such as improved safety performance, reduction in absenteeism, reduction in rework, improved team work, reduction in customer complaints etc. which could be considered when evaluating the training program.
40. Pilar Pineda-Herrero Esther Belvis Victoria Moreno Maria M. Duran-Bellonch Xavier Úcar, (2011), the authors have suggested tools for evaluating training program with limited resources. This paper also talks about practical methodology to enable assessment of training among big sets 41.

41. Rameshwar Dubey Angappa Gunasekaran (2015), the authors in this paper have tried to identify justifiable supply chain skill. This paper also proposes research on devising a scientific measurement scale to maintain training framework 42.

Review of Literature on Performance

42. Don Elger (2000), he proposed in his research that there are three important elements required for effective performance improvements. They are performer’s mindset, performer’s involvement in an educating environment and learning through experiences and practice 43.

43. Ravi Bapna, Nishtha Langer, Amit Mehra, Ram Gopal, Alok Gupta (2013) found in their research that a unit increase in training lead to a 2.14% increase in an employee’s performance. The researchers found that in the IT/ITES sector, that when general training, behavioural training is imparted, it improves employee performance. The researchers mention that the impact of training should focus on methodically designed development program 44.

44. Aidah Nassazi (2013) as per the researcher, training has a positive impact on employee performance 45.

45. Neelam Tahir, Israr Khan Yousafzai, Dr. Shahid Jan, Muhammad Hashim (2014), the authors here tried to determine if training and development has an influence on employees’ performance and efficiency 46.

46. International Atomic Energy Agency, Vienna (2003), in this report an emphasis was given on Training Performance Indicator Matrix. It has been said that it is crucial to measure training performance to help improve performance of trainers and training management and thereby in improve the evaluation of training efficiency and effectiveness 47.
47. **Abd Hair Awang, Rahmah Ismail, Zulridah Mohd Noor (2010)**, It was found that training programs have positive impact on employee performance in terms of, knowledge, dexterity and positive work behavior 48.

48. **Sheelam Jain, Ravindra Jain (2015)**, the authors assessed employee training through managerial perceptions. Five dimensions were used for assessment, namely commitment, access, relevance, benefits and satisfaction with training 49.

**Findings and Conclusion**

Outdoor programs offer relevant learning experience and help employees to enhance interpersonal skills, develop technical knowhow and team building skills. The success of the program is based on the desired results. Therefore it is highly essential that the effectiveness of outdoor training and its effectiveness on employee performance are evaluated. This will turn benefit the training providers as well as the participants of the OT program and thus in turn effect the bottom-line of the company.

To start with, it should take the accountability and define the learning outcomes and substantiate it with evidences. The first step in the training cycle is to understand the goal of the management. Then, one should go for a training need analysis to determine if training is required to meet the organizational goals. Training department should take up the responsibility to help management take an informed decision on the need of the training by providing proper evidences, support and advice.
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