

## **A Study on Impact of the Outbound Training Programme for Developing Soft Skills in University Students**

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### **Abstract**

Today all higher educational organizations are constantly evaluating the ways of means of creative training tools to impart the actual skills and knowledge in order to empower the human capital. Understanding the importance this newly raised important aspect, most of the educational institutions in Sri Lanka have initiated programmes, projects and activities for developing soft skills in their students. Outbound Training (OBT) is a technique used to enhance the efficiency of participants through experiential learning. In other words, taking the group of participants away from the actual work environment into the outdoors and are assigned some challenging task or activity that needs to be completed by them within a given time frame. That will help to enhancing the participant's soft skills such as teamwork, team bonding, communication, leadership, time management, problem solving, decision making, motivation , change and personal development. Sri Lankan universities today are utilizing OBT as a tool to acquire the soft skills among the participation student's to bridge the gap between industry and academics.. The purpose of this study was to identify the impact of the out bound training on student's soft skills development.

Out-Bound training is such a step to make the students realized the value of corporate culture and need to leadership development to unveil the cohesive nature of doing thing. Out-OBT is a training method that has raised the spectrum of expectation in delivering the actual result over other training methods. These empirical researches like to find the same answer about the impact of OBT on university students in gaining the soft skills.

The study was descriptive in nature with the sample size of 200 first and second year students pursuing own degree programme from four faculties in wayamba university of Sri Lanka have exposure to outbound training were considered for this study. Two days residential OBT camps were held at identified training location and participated 200 first year and second year students. A structured feedbacks was used as a primary data collection. Students are divided into teams and assigned tasks or activities for completion in a specified time. Achievement and performance during the activities is reviewed in group discussions to identify behaviours that enhance

performance or lead to failure or decreased performance. Strategies are formulated to deal with factors that hamper, and these strategies are then put to use in the activities that follow, to trial on their effectiveness.

This empirical study concludes that OBT has its quantum effect on university education that reinforce that this method of training has its capacity to enrich the students with soft skills. On the contrary, this study has revealed the effective mechanism of OBT over other training methods on university students. Hence, satisfaction the degree of level among students (OBT Participants) was high with its deep impact. This method of training has drawn most effective tool to instil the natural leadership skill among participant students over traditional training methods. This study exhorts some further suggestion to incorporate and thrust more activities into OBT programme such as two phases of the entire programmes, more application of analytical games, psychological experiments need to be incorporated into these training methods to gain the more accurate result in developing the soft skills among students.

This training programmes aimed to take students, out of the comfort zone of their normal environment to participate in some specially designed exercises. Each of the activity is meant to offer them with a certain amount of self - discovery and self-understanding and introspection with its attendant outcome of self-development. There was also of course the joy and thrill of participating in such activities which will refresh and rejuvenate the participants, both physically and mentally. In addition, the activities presented a challenging environment, which stretches their "normally assumed" capabilities and helps them break out of their self-imposed 'limitations'. All these effects become evident by the physical and mental 'high', which the participants exhibit in their study place. OBT is a potential tool for shaping & grooming personality of the participants as evident by the analysis, it could be an effective method of imparting corporate skills. Trainer Competencies and Training methods are the critical factors to ensure the success of OBT.

**Key words:** Outbound training; Soft skills; Sri Lankan university students; Students feedbacks