

Integrating Professional Skills Training for Disabled Soldiers: A Pilot Study

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Abstract: Career transition of disabled servicemen and serving soldiers belonging to Army to civilian lifecycle plays major part in their resettlement. The difficulties and problems of these soldiers those due to medical reasons are rendered unfit and those in service who are under prolonged medical treatment, need to be recognized and also appropriate actions to be adopted. Researchers observation indicate that soldiers with disabilities face a series of hurdles in earning an income, due to physical capacity, out - of - the - way workplaces, negative typecasts, a lack of educational qualification and need for Industry related courses. In an effort to consider appropriate Industrial training, a pilot value addition training was initiated that is professional Training Imparted in collaboration with Industry at the Institute for disabled soldiers. The pilot was on Repair and Maintenance of Domestic Electronic Appliances a way to achieve respectable rehabilitation. The researcher, Industry and students who all were part of the pilot found this training was an effective opportunity to become professional level technician/supervisor and could repair and maintain Domestic Appliances. The researcher analyzed the efficiency and effectiveness of the value addition training which imparted Professional/technical Skills in the framework of average academic qualifications available, their physical capacity, and expectations of the Industrial employer. The disabled soldiers formed 90% of the class strength and 10% were dependent on the disabled soldiers. Assessment done by qualitative and quantitative mechanisms showed improvements in professional skills after the successful completion of Training and could carry out maintenance and diagnostics of electronic appliances as per the Industrial environment. The Program was beneficial for bringing out meaningful changes with interpersonal and professional development as 40% were interested in employment versus 60% in self - employment.

Keywords: Professional skills, Disabled soldiers, Value addition training, Employment.

1. Introduction

Military personnel are unique as they are self - motivated, disciplined, dedicated, and ready to cope with difficult situations as they are trained for it. The military is a heavily physically demanding occupation; it has a risk to the well - being of soldiers, and evaluating its impact on occupational disability is difficult.

According to Minnis S. E. focus was on veterans career transition. Personnel with Military background possess a massive array of skills but employers (civilian) are not familiar about it, thus there is a cultural divide [1]. The span of time spent in military service has transformed their lives and they have faced a number of challenges in ways not expected. Once their serving is over they are forced into career transition in the later life which is a major change. Due to retirement or various other reasons, a certain percentage of soldiers detach from military service very year [1]. Minnis has also noticed that soldiers had foremost challenges in implementation of their talents achieved in their military tenure to the civilian establishments with whom they were seeing for employment [1].

Soldier Resettlement is a challenge, as the expected quality of life is sustained by his family. Soldiers are isolated from mainstream society during the service; hence, it is difficult for them to adjust their civilian way of life. The transition from armed force to civilian life is uneasy after parting from military services and is important phase of life [2]. Chopade et. al. discussed that civilian employers have misunderstanding, that soldiers are too regimented, stubborn, and not adaptable to civilian job positions [3]. Davis et. al. identified the major challenges soldiers faced in

the job tenure and transition to civilian occupation demonstrated that they can be precious possessions to civilian organizations [4].

Military service separation may cause soldiers to lose their identity and feelings of homelessness. As per Schlossberg et. al. career transition of soldiers with service related disabilities are based on existing resources in four main areas when soldiers life is introduced with new changes. [5] These resources are related to 4Ss such as the soldier's situation, self, support, and strategies [6].

As per Chopade et. al. Studies available on occupational disability is limited, mostly from the US context, Even literature based on occupations and disability linkage and long term effects of war related disability among military personnel are quite few [7].

Elliott et. al. analysed the practical issues faced by a soldier and attempts to offer realistic and practical solutions to the disabled soldier who have become non - deployable. [8] Hollander et al has conducted survey of US military disabled soldiers. They evaluated the correlation between physically demanding occupations, job demands, hospitalisations and disabilities among soldiers [9]. Krahan et. al research focuses on an overview of disability, rehabilitation, assistance and supports, and recommendations for including the disabled [10].

Social rehabilitation of disabled military personnel is of highest concern. Mishra in his research compiled the beneficial information on Disabilities Act 1995, Disabilities Act 2016 and certain Army rules. These acts and rules give

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relief to injured and disabled military personnel and are useful for claiming the disability benefit [12].

This research study is descriptive in nature. Disabled soldiers in the army were considered for the study. Primary data were collected using questionnaires and interviews with disabled soldiers.

The Institute where the research was conducted was for Differently Abled Ex - Servicemen, those due to medical reasons were rendered unfit for Service in the Armed Forces and those in Service who are under prolonged Medical Treatment for severe disability are being trained in vocational trades. Disabled servicemen and serving soldiers belonging to the Army, Navy, and Air Forces: Disabled soldiers belonging to the Para - Military Forces, ITBP, CRPF, and Ex - servicemen and Dependents are part of the training program.

The training pedagogy organized for disabled soldiers as the main training, that is, Vocational Education, Value Addition Training (professional Training Imparted in collaboration with Industry) and On the job / apprenticeship training. Value - addition training was compulsory for all soldiers. Value addition training is imparted depending on the physical capacity and job market requirements.

The challenged soldiers are trained in vocational with certain engineering vocations, such as three main traders as IT - related computer operator/hardware/networking technicians, Electrician, and Fitter ITI trades. All these trades are at the ITI level and training standards are as per the National Skill Qualification Framework (NSQF) with Qualification Packs (QP) of Level 3/4 job roles and are trained in all National Occupation Standards (NOS).

The batch candidates, that is, disabled and ex - service personnel of the Armed Forces, are given value addition training who have already undergone vocational training, and the pilot batch of value addition training was planned to achieve respectable rehabilitation of disabled soldiers. Training was consequently organized in the framework of average academic/professional qualifications available with disabled soldiers, their physical capacity, and expectations of the employer in the current and continuously changing industrial environment. The competency required for the industry demanded professional and technical expertise, along with personal and social skills. Respectable rehabilitation of disabled soldier retiring after working for number of years of disciplined service entails his suitability for supervisory/lower managerial assignments after induction into service. The training curriculum accordingly was decided and continuously reviewed and upgraded accordingly through various industry associates.

Value addition training aims to polish their skills and equip them for respectable post - retirement rehabilitation by keeping them updated with the contemporary job requirements in the technological era.

Case study

Today, we encounter technology at the intersection of every business and profession. With the advent, the evolution and

advancement of technologies possessing technical skills are the need of the hour. Here an attempt was made to impart value addition training to make the disabled soldiers suitable for employment and self - employment.

2. Description

After their services, armed forces soldiers are aptly suitable for supervisory/managerial job roles in the industry. Additional skills, as per prevalent opportunities, must be imparted. Ineluctables for effective supervisory/managerial assignments include computer literacy, English communication, soft skills, and value addition training.

Value addition training is hands - on training given in collaboration with the industry, and is a prospect to hone acquired skills and assess own strengths and weaknesses as per industry requirement; the present study is a pilot for imparting technical skills to bring out meaningful changes in disabled soldiers.

India's consumer market is growing rapidly, and home appliances have been the most wanted, largest and fastest growing segments [13]. It involves three categories: major appliances (air conditioners, fridges, and washing machines), smart appliances (including major and small appliances with smart features) and small appliances (vacuum cleaners, electric kettles, and fans) [13].

In India the domestic appliance market is led by whirlpool with net sales of about 60 billion Indian rupees followed by Indian companies like Crompton Greaves at 53.7 billion rupees and Bajaj Electricals at 47.4 billion rupees [13]. In India home appliances have been increasing steadily and a vast untapped market is for appliances such as air conditioners (AC), fridges and washing machines [14]. According to a survey, the changing lifestyles of Indian consumers and emerging economy have led to nuclear families, increase in the number of working people and the migration of the job population. Hence, these developing households have a growing need for accessibility and are continuously viewing for new appliances that offer convenience and considerably reduce the effort and time spent on everyday chores [14]. The main growth accelerators for this industry are increased affordability, increasing digital penetration, energy - efficient products and an increase in aspiration [14].

The mushrooming middle class in urban parts and aspirational demand from rural India, coupled with government reforms, make the appliance industry look positive toward the next phase of growth exponentially. Electrification of rural areas, popularity of online sales and the rising influence of social mass media has helped in increase demand. It is found that two - thirds of the total revenue is produced from the urban populations, and the remaining is made from the rural populations. [14] Considering the requirement of manpower in domestic appliances, the pilot value addition course conducted for disabled soldiers was the Repair & Maintenance of Domestic Electronic Appliances.

The course was designed to become a professional - level technician or supervisor for manufacturing or service technicians to work on appliances as refrigerators, washing machines, and air conditioners with a high level of accuracy. It also helps to understand the work principles of appliances and can easily diagnose a problem. For all products of the manufacturing or service industry, it is important to study theory and practical both linked with intelligence. It is that theory was taught through recorded lectures that the soldiers carefully listened to, watched demonstrations, and worked with their own hands for realization with 3Hviz. Hands, head and heart. This made them more knowledgeable, skilled, and supported by a suitable attitude towards work and people. There was a great opportunity to become professional - level technicians/supervisors with the power of communication, able to note different diagnostic errors in appliances. The topics covered were engineering drawings, basic electricity and electronics, refrigeration tools and equipment, refrigeration, brazing, air - conditioning, washing machines, and industrial safety.

The pilot value addition program "Repair and Maintenance of Domestic Electronic Appliances" was conducted from September 2022 till 30th November 30, 2022, with 300 hours of training. Training was conducted for 4 hours per day and was conducted by researchers and Industry personnel. They were from different ranks (BSF, Army, and CRPF), which formed 90% of the class strength, and 10% were dependent on the disabled soldiers (D/S). They had done vocational Electrical, IT, or Fitter ITI level trade as their main training.

Outcomes: Mixed - method study of the training revealed a number of positive outcomes.

The researchers and industrial personnel had conducted theoretical and practical fields in the training program had an opinion that the soldiers could serve as a good reservoir/technician for starting their own service centre for repair and maintenance of Fridge, Washing machine and Air - Conditioner while some were interested in working in Industry. They also came up with an idea of repairing old Fridge, Washing machine and Air - Conditioner and giving it on rent to the required. The findings indicate that disabled soldiers with electrician trade are sufficiently inclined towards this program and have an inclination toward self - employment, as most have sufficient resources to step into this career.

Improved employment/livelihood outcomes: As an outcome of successful training, the batch enrolled had 90 % of the soldiers with disability and 10% were a family member for the disabled soldier. There were persons from different ranks (BSF, Army, CRPF, D/S) who lacked good education and were financially not very strong. They are trained in self discipline, physical stamina and endurance, risk taking in military. By the end of the program, 100% of the enrolled individual were interested in working for the income generation by starting a service center or joining a manufacturing Industry.

Disabled soldiers reported increased acceptance of training as well as increased confidence after training. The soldiers

were self - motivated, highly disciplined, and ready to take risks. A survey of training found that the percentage of those who could work on electronic appliances, such as Refrigerators, Washing machines, and Air conditioners, increased from 20% (before) to 80% (after). The program also exposed them, particularly to leadership positions. Study of the program through pre and post test and using quantitative and qualitative methods found upgraded outcomes, with 60% of the participants securing good results in test after training. The results indicated that the training program was successful as soldiers were ready for employment (40% were interested in employment versus 60% in self - employment).

Of the participants, 90% had their self income (80% as employees and 10% as self - employed). After the training, the soldiers were ready for job placement. The training period was used for imparting knowledge, with real - time practical skills, supervisory and management skills, perseverance, teamwork and leadership skills. Earning a living was an additional positive outcome.

Improved motivation to find work: All participants testified that they were motivated to find employment after completing the value addition training, although there is a positive bias here. An industrial visit to a manufacturing plant during training facilitated them to obtain jobs in industry, as some of the soldiers desired to work in industry. They showed their inclination towards employment at the Supervisor or Managerial level.

Better well - being and quality life outcomes: Project reports prepared as part of training by most indicated that they had a stimulus for self - employment when they went to their hometown. Most of them are from rural backgrounds, and after acquiring technical skills, they can obtain a good opportunity for additional income in their hometown. Participants reported that with the additional income, they would be able to provide an enhanced livelihood for their families, which would increase social acceptance and improve overall quality of life.

Learned Lessons:

An per the internal assessment which highlighted the importance of value addition training for disabled soldiers inclusive programs, in addition to broader sensitization on job market avenues and removal of social barriers.

Although the study found that vocational training along with value - added training can improve employment outcomes at the supervisor or managerial level, it also emphasized that the training matched participants abilities, skills and financial. A participant who had undergone training in the repair and maintenance of domestic electronic appliances could afford hand tools, such as screw drivers, hammers, measuring tapes, wrenches, and so on, and a multimeter/digital clamp meter, or a participant who was part of the training but was unable to find a job because employers were of the view that the participant educational background was not up to the mark could think of self - employment. This study identifies the need for value addition training in collaboration with industry and to take advantage of the schemes such as micro - credit, in addition

to integrating activities to address discrimination in civilian life.

As a qualitative evaluation of the training indicated improvements in self - esteem, more social opportunities, and learning a vast array of skills. The training was aimed at the acquisition and improvement of the Professional skills that are relevant in the Industry and for overall social and professional achievements.

There are barriers, such as scope of employment opportunities, social barriers, low educational background, physical accessibility of workplaces and lack of transport.

Overall, the training program had a positive impacts on the disabled soldiers and were introduced to range of employment and livelihood outcomes, but these impacts remain relatively small and conclusions will be based on rigorous impact evaluation.

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