

TYPE OF TASK AND METHOD OF TRAINING AS DETERMINANTS OF SELF-EFFICACY: A TEST OF SOCIAL LEARNING THEORY

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Self – Efficacy (SE) or the extent to which someone is confident in his or her ability to perform tasks is associated with the effectiveness of training and therefore plays an important role in the success of training and development (T&D) interventions in organizations. Past research indicates that SE may be improved through the three training methods: mastery experience, vicarious experience and through verbal persuasion. Yet the extent to which these training methods improve SE may depend on the type of training task. The present study examined the extent to which the three training methods improve SE for performing servicing and operational tasks.

The study adopted a mixed factorial experimental design (3 x 2 x 2). SE assessment was the dependent variable, while the method of training (three levels) and type of task (two levels) were the two between subjects independent variables. Of these, the type of task, namely servicing and operational, was treated as the moderating variable. The study used ‘communicating negative performance feedback’ as a servicing task, and running ‘Decision Support Systems (i.e. Computer software application that aid for making managerial decisions)’ as an operational task. Time (pre-vs. post-intervention) was a within subjects independent variable. Participants were undergraduates in the Management Studies and Finance degree programme of the Wayamba University of Sri Lanka. Participants from a single academic year were selected to increase the homogeneity of the sample. Pre and post training SE were compared across tasks and training methods using a 3x2x2 mixed factorial ANOVA model for repeated measure research designs.

Results indicated a significant three-way interaction suggesting that the condition receiving mastery experiences in their training report higher SE than the other methods of training, but that this effect is stronger for the operational task than for the service task. Thus, the effectiveness of the training method depended on the type of task as well as the training method. Analysis of main effects also indicated that irrespective of method, the training increased self efficacy for both types of tasks. The results suggest that irrespective of the type of task, training programmes should include mastery experiences and the result of such experiences, with respect to increasing trainees confidence in their ability to perform the task, are likely to be especially helpful for operational tasks relative to servicing tasks.