

Research Article

# Importance of Staff Training in a Libyan Oil Organisation, with Special Reference to the Libyan National Oil Corporation

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## Abstract

*The study examines the effectiveness of in-service staff training with special emphasis on staff of the Libyan National Oil Corporation (NOC). The study adopts quantitative approach for the collection of data, using a questionnaire. A methodical review of the literature relevant to staff training has been carried out, analysed and discussed. The aim of the present study was to: “evaluate the effectiveness of training of staff at National Oil Corporation (NOC), Libya.” The objectives were to: examine current training programmes and to assess their values to trainee staff and to know whether staff need to update their technical skills, or learn new methods of undertaking their tasks, identify reasons motivating staff to attend training courses, identify whether training courses are relevant to the needs and requirements of trainee staff, identify whether training is based on the goals, objectives, or plans of the organisation, or whether they are general in nature, and to check whether performance has improved, and identify whether training has helped libyanise semi-skilled and skilled staff within the Corporation by the provision of effective training programmes.*

**Keywords:** Training in a Libyan Oil Organisation, Libyan National Oil Corporation, staff training, Overall quality.

## Nomenclature

NOC= National Oil Corporation. MSC= Manpower Services Commission. LIPETCO= Libyan General Petroleum Corporation. ISD= Instructional System Development. CRI= Criterion Referenced Instruction. PBT= Performance-Based Training. SKA= Skill, Knowledge, or Attitude. CIPP= Context, Input, Process, Product. TVS= Training Validation System. IPO= Input, Process, Output, Outcome. KSAs= Knowledge, Skills and Abilities.

## 1. Introduction

Training has become the focus on a great attention in many countries all over the world. Its importance is particularly amplified in areas relating to development and management. Nonetheless, while training has become a universal phenomenon in both public and private institutions, relevant bodies and agencies in Libya have ignored this important phenomenon and only until recently have they perceived its significance as a means of raising the standard of management competence and effectiveness. Training should not only be provided for existing staff to boost their skills and competence in their field, but should also be provided for new recruits.

New staff should go through induction activities to familiarise them with the way the organisation works, its culture and other issues relating to both the organisation and the new starters. Robertson (2003) maintains that staff induction activities provide new staff with the information they require, how to get them up to speed on how the organisation operates, introduce them to the organisation’s culture, and other issues relating to the organisation and its environment.

But, what does training mean? Bramley (1996) maintains that a definition of the word ‘training’ is needed to help people think about what they are to evaluate. Earlier, Bramley (1986) argued that there is no generally accepted definition of the word training, citing three well-known definitions by The Department of Employment (1971): “The systematic development of the attitude/knowledge/skill/behaviour patterns required by an individual to perform adequately a given task or job;” Heinrichs (1976): “Any organisationally initiated procedures which are intended to foster learning among organisational members in a direction contributing to organisation effectiveness;” and Goldstein (1980): “The acquisition of skills, concepts or attitudes that result in the improved performance in an on-the-job environment.”

In Libya, particularly in the context of training within the oil industry sector, neither adequate information exists nor is training evaluated. There is a

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substantial lack of research on training and its evaluation in Libya. The oil industry in Libya is the major source of national income, and due to this gap in our understanding and importance of training within this key industry, the idea of undertaking a training evaluation study materialised. It is hoped that the outcome of this study will help identify these gaps in our understanding and identify the needs of training in this important sector and the improvement of training given to staff. In fact, there is an urgent need to evaluate training at the oil industry sector in order to highlight its points of strengths and points of weaknesses, and to develop these weaknesses in order to offer high quality training programme. The researcher believes that there training within the National Oil Corporation is lacking, or at least, limited, inadequate training is offered to some employees which have contributed to staff under-performance. The issue here is to evaluate the current training efforts, if any adequate training has been provided, and to identify training needs within the organization.

## 2. Specification of the problem

In order achieve the research objectives (Chapter One), questions relating to the study topic have been formulated, as follows:

- What are the factors that have an impact on the effectiveness of staff training at the Libyan National Oil Corporation? To answer this question participants are asked a set of questions relating to the extent of the usefulness of the training programme(s) they attended to them and to the Corporation, for instance, in relation to relevance of staff training to their job.
- Are existing training projects based upon the goals, objectives or plans of the Libyan National Oil Corporation? If not, do existing projects need further development to achieve these goals, objectives and plans? In order to answer this question, also a set of questions are formulated to measure this factor, for example, in relation to whether or not staff training programmes have met the Corporation's objectives.
- What are training methods and approaches employed at present? Questions will be asked to identify the training methods and approaches used.
- What are the adequate methods and approaches to be implemented to achieve the development of existing training projects? Questions will also be asked to identify methods and approaches that are relevant to respondents' jobs.

## 3. Research Design

Research design is the science of planning procedures for conducting studies so as to get the most valid finding (Vogt, 1993). Researchers need to assess their

specific research design before they start their research. However, it is argued that researchers often fail to give adequate attention to research design issues, possibly because of their inability to identify design as their first, or as their most important step in developing research proposal (Hakim, 1987). Hakim (p. xi) defines research design as: "The point at which questions raised in theoretical or policy debates are converted into operational research projects and research programmes which will provide answers to these questions".

Oppenheim (1992, p. 6) defines research design as "The basic plan or strategy of the research, and the logic behind it, which will make it possible and valid to draw more general conclusions from it." Accordingly, research design should tell how sample will be drawn, what sub-groups it should include, what comparisons must be measured, and how these measures will be related to external events. Research design is concerned with making problem researchable by setting up study in a way which will produce particular answers to particular questions. The first step is research design is to identify a research problem or issue (Collis and Hussey, 2003). Identifying research problem is always an exploratory and reiterative part in the research. The common approach in academic research is to take into account the literature on the research topic and identify any gaps given that such literature will indicate original areas to research.

Hakim's definition indicates that there are two types of research design; theoretical research and policy research. Theoretical research relates mainly to the causal processes and explanation, and that the variables or the factors considered are often abstract or purely theoretical constructs for which operational definitions and indicators of varying degrees of perception and validity are developed. Policy research, on the other hand, relates to knowledge of action, and the long-term aim is in line with the famous statement that it is more important to change the world than to understand it.

## 4. Research Purpose

Research purpose can be described as being exploratory, descriptive, analytical or predictive. Exploratory research is conducted into a research problem or issue when very few or no earlier studies exist to which information can be referred (Collis and Hussey, 2003). Robson (2002) maintains that exploratory research is a valuable means of finding out what is happening to seek new insights; to ask questions and to assess phenomena in a new light. Zikmund (2000) also indicates that exploratory research is often carried out in order to clarify the nature of ambiguous problems. The aim of this type of study is to look for patterns, ideas or hypotheses, rather than testing or confirming hypothesis (Collis and Hussey, 2003). The approach to research is generally very open and focuses on collecting a wide range of data and impressions.

Saunders et al. (2007, p. 133) identify three main ways of undertaking exploratory research: a search of the literature; interviewing ‘experts’ in the subject; and conducting focus group interviews.

**5. Sampling**

The key concept of sampling is that by selecting some of the elements in a population, researchers can draw conclusions concerning the whole population. A population element is defined as “the subject on which the measurement is being taken. It is the unit of study,” and a population as “the total collection of elements about which we wish to make some inference” (Cooper and Schindler, 2000, p. 163).

Sampling is undertaken for many reasons:

- Lower cost, as it is economically advantageous to take a sample rather than a census (Cooper and Schindler, 2000). The study population might be hundreds of employees that would take months to complete the field survey, if the researcher wants to involve all of them in the present study. Therefore, a sample drawn from this population can be involved and asked to fill in the

questionnaires, and from the survey findings inferences can be made.

- Achieving greater accuracy of results using a sample. Deming (1990, p. 26) argues that the quality of a study is often better with sampling than with a census, suggesting that: “Sampling possesses the possibility of better interviewing (testing), more thorough investigation of missing, wrong, or suspicious information, better supervision, and better processing than is possible with the complete coverage.”
- Other reasons include speed of data collection, availability of population elements, and sample versus census (Cooper and Schindler, 2000).

**6.Data Analysis and Interpretation**

This chapter provides an analysis of the questionnaire findings regarding on-the-job training of employees of the Libyan National Oil Corporation and other issues underlined in the aims and objectives of the present study (Chapter One, Section 1.1). It also endeavours to explain pattern of responses expressed by research participants in the light of the relevant literature.

*6.1 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents*

Demographic characteristics of respondents

Occupation		Less than one year	1 - 3 years	3 - 6 years	More than 6 years
Administrator				3.1	
Engineer	9.4	18.8	31.3	9.4	9.4
Skilled Employee	9.4	6.3	6.3	3.1	9.4
Semi-skilled Employee	3.1				
Age	%	Educational Qualifications			%
25-30 years	21.9	Secondary School Certificate			37.5
31-35 years	43.8	Bachelor Degree			56.3
36-40 years	31.3	Master's Degree			6.3
41-45 years	3.1	Ph.D.			
46-50 years		Others			
Gender					
Male	100.0%	Female			-
Nationality					
Libyan	100.0%	Others			-

All respondents well males and Libyans. This is not surprising in the context of the Libyan National Oil Corporation, in which engineering jobs and skilled and semiskilled employees are all male, due to the nature of the oil corporation operations.

Demographic characteristic of customers of the study respondents are given in Table 4.1. Administrators represented a minority of 3.1% of the sample, who have been working for a period of time ranging between three and six years. Semi-skilled employees also represented similar small minority, who has been working for the Corporation for less than one year. One-quarter of respondents were skilled employees,

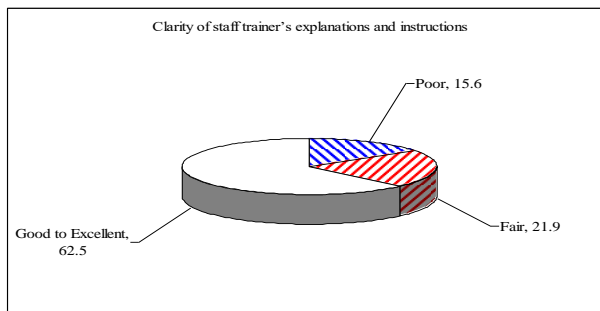
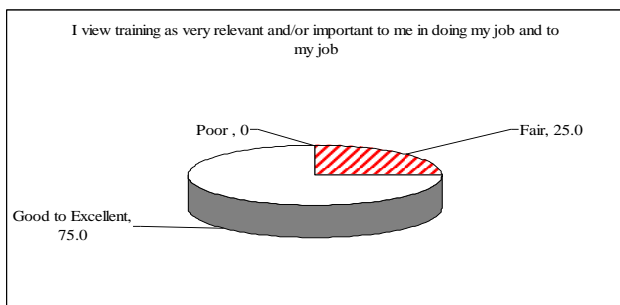
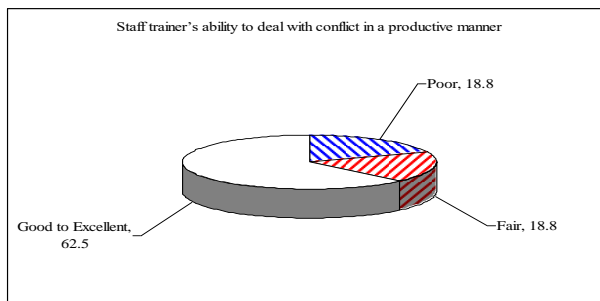
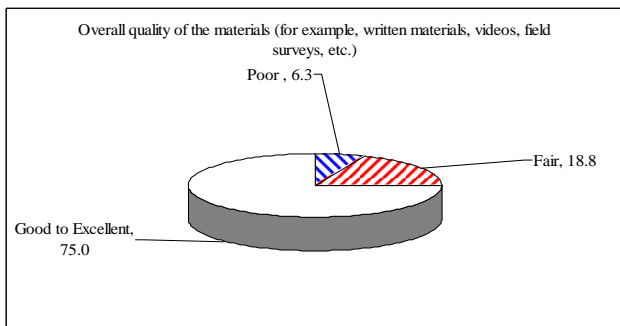
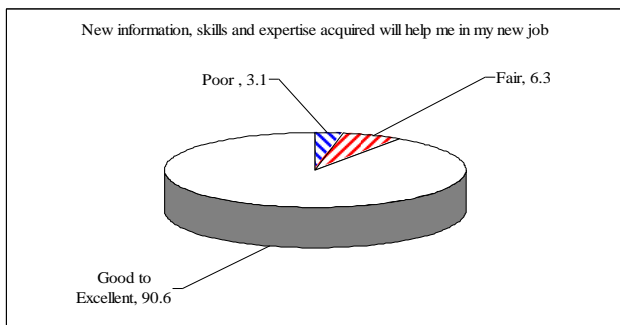
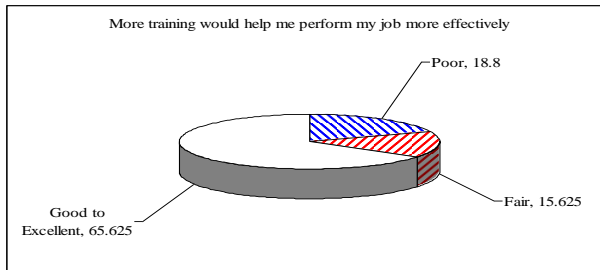
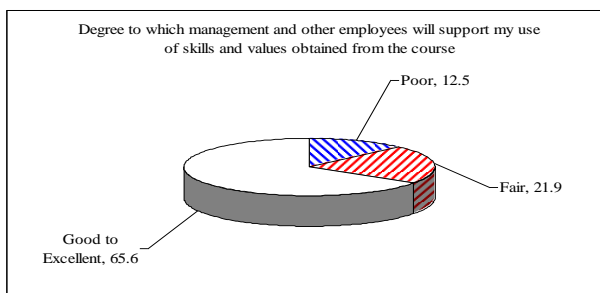
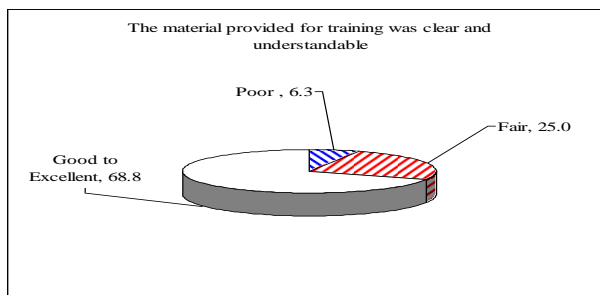
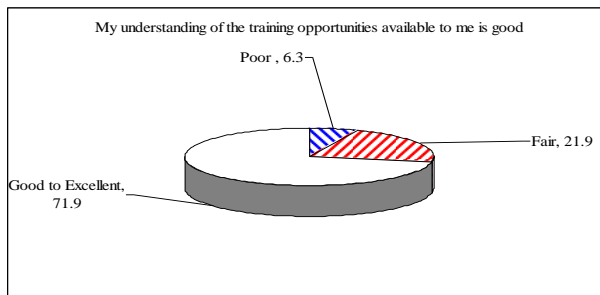
who have been working for the Corporation for varying periods of time ranging from less than one year and more than six years. More than two-thirds of respondents (68.8%) were engineers, who have also been working for the Corporation for varying periods of time ranging from less than one year and more than six years.

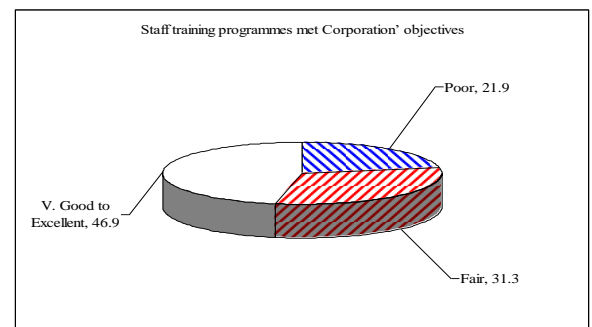
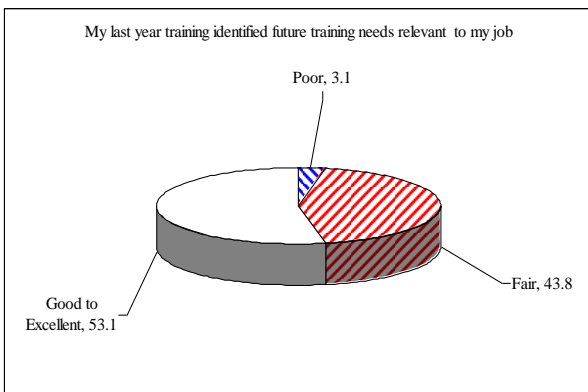
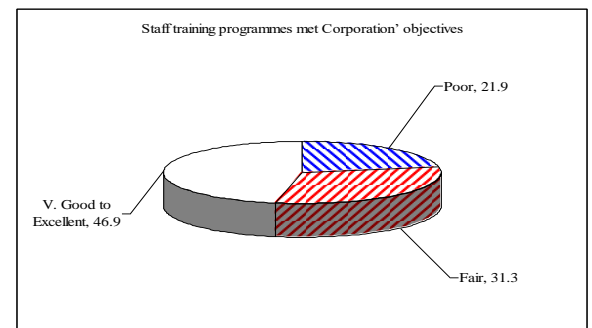
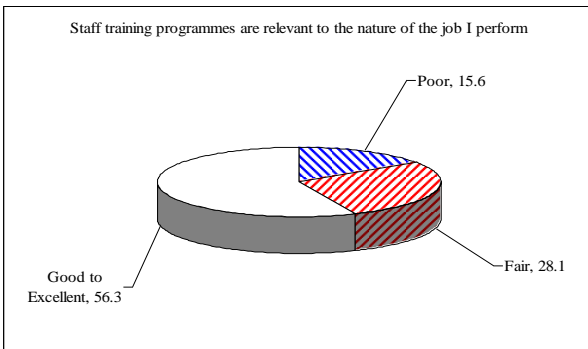
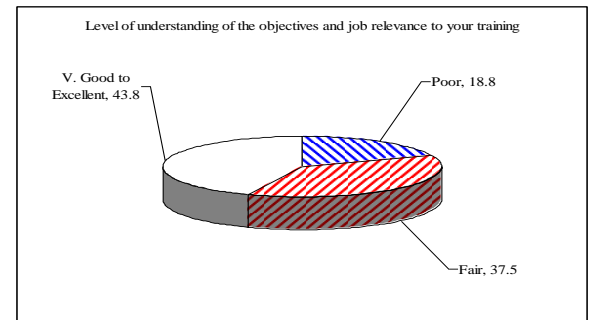
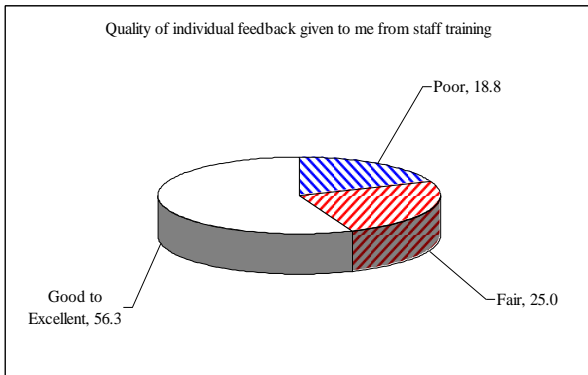
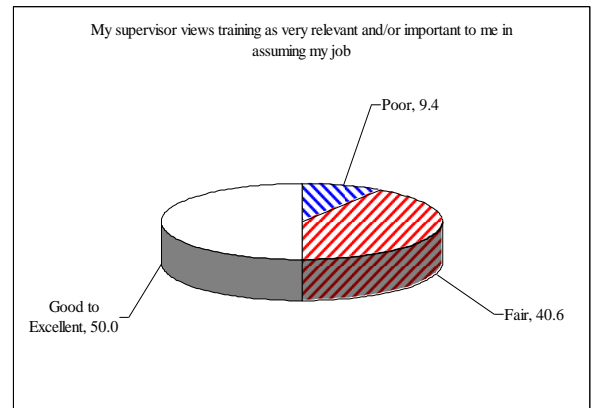
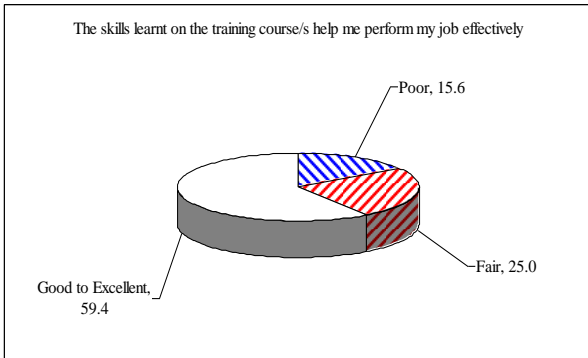
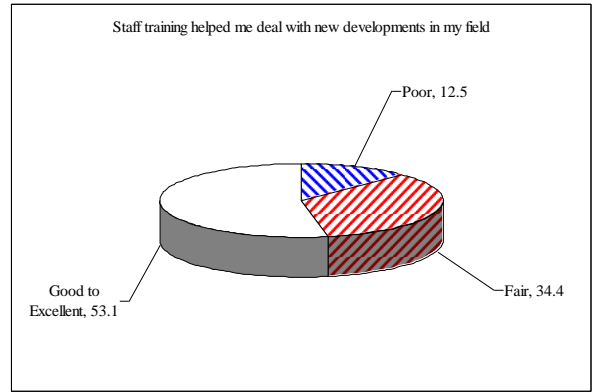
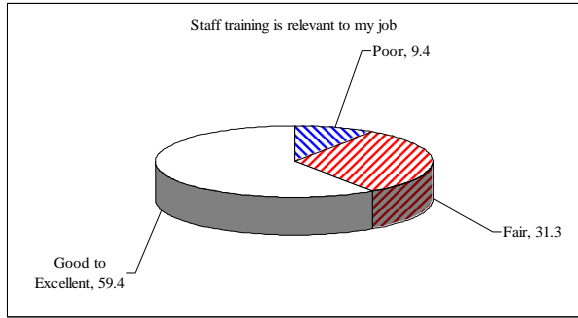
The table also clearly illustrates that the greater majority of respondents (97.0%) were young, between less than 25 years and 45 years of age, the remaining 3% were between 46 and 50 years of age. This age range indicates that they are all in their employment age and much lower than the retirement age of 60 in Libya.

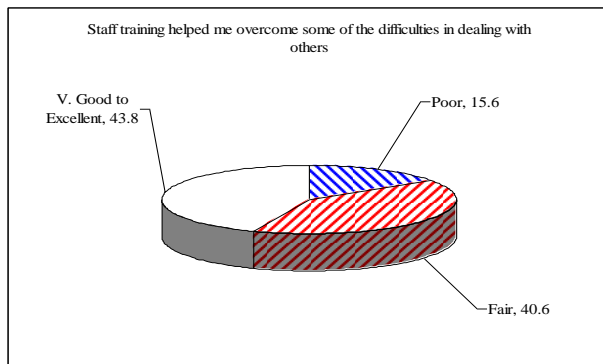
The greater majority had either Bachelor degrees (56.3%) or Secondary School Certificate (37.5%), and only a small minority had Master's Degrees (6.3%)

6.2 Evaluation of Training as Perceived by Respondents

Respondents were asked to express their evaluation of a set of 33 statements by rating them from poor (1) to excellent (5). Responses to these statements are presented in Table 4.2 and illustrated in Figures. Few respondents rated these statements as being Excellent or Very Good, but most respondents rate them as Good; hence, 'Good', 'Very Good' and 'Excellent' ratings were combined together, and referred to in the text as 'Good' to 'Excellent'. However, it must be noted that for 11 out of the 33 (34.4%) statements, respondents scored 0% for their 'Excellent' rating of these items, and for 6 out of the 33 statements (18.8%), respondents scored between 3.0% and less than 10.0% for their 'Excellent' rating of these six items.







## Conclusions

Based on the research findings, analysed, and their discussion, it is possible to conclude the following:

The greater majority of respondents were young, between less than 25 years and 45 years of age. This age range indicates that they are all in their employment age and much lower than the retirement age of 60 in Libya. Since they are all Libyan nationals, then it is anticipated that they would serve the corporations for many years, if not decades to come. Hence, their training and development will in the long run benefit the Corporations as well as the staff themselves.

- The majority of respondents were highly satisfied with many training issues, rating their satisfaction as being 'good' to 'excellent', and many of them referred to their satisfaction as being 'fair', including the following:
  - ◆ Information, skills and expertise acquired help staff in new jobs.
  - ◆ Overall quality of training material.
  - ◆ Relevance and/or importance of training in doing job.
  - ◆ Understanding of training opportunities.
  - ◆ Clarity and understanding of material provided for training.
  - ◆ Degree of trainee's support by management and colleagues.
  - ◆ More training helps employees perform jobs more effectively.
  - ◆ Staff trainer's ability to deal with conflict in a productive manner.
  - ◆ Clarity of staff trainer's explanations and instructions.
  - ◆ Staff training relevance to trainee's job.
  - ◆ Skills learnt on training courses help perform jobs effectively.
  - ◆ Quality of individual feedback from staff training.
- Staff training programmes are relevant to the nature of job respondents perform.
- Many participants were not very keen about several training issues than those reported above. Only between 50% and 57% of the respondents referred to their satisfaction as being 'good' to 'excellent', whereas more of them described their satisfaction as being 'fair'. These issues include the following:
  - ◆ Previous year training identifies future training relevant to the job.
  - ◆ Staff training helped respondents deal with new developments in their field.
  - ◆ Supervisors' view of training relevance/importance to trainees.
  - ◆ Staff training programmes met corporation' objectives.
  - ◆ Staff training duration was adequate and effective.
- Participants were even less keen about a large number of training issues, recording their lowest level of satisfaction concerning the issues, whereby only between 37% and 44% were satisfied with these issues, rating them as 'good' to 'excellent', whereas a high percentage of respondents rated them as being 'fair'. These issues include the following:
  - ◆ Level of understanding of the objectives and job relevance to your training
  - ◆ Staff training helped me overcome some of the difficulties in dealing with others
  - ◆ The degree to which respondents thought that the objectives of staff training had been achieved
  - ◆ The degree to which the staff training respondents had participated met his expectations
- Only 25% of respondents rated their satisfaction with the item: "staff training is effective in raising standards of trainees" as 'good' to 'excellent', whereas 68.8% of them rated their satisfaction as being 'poor'.
- Most or the majority of respondents were dissatisfied with the following issues:
  - ◆ Staff trainer's overall effectiveness.
  - ◆ Responses to staff training raised the effectiveness of staff performance
  - ◆ Staff training programmes met my personal aspirations
- More than three-fifths of respondents require training owing to the fact that they had been employed for some time and need to update their knowledge and expertise in their field.
- More than two-fifths of respondents indicated that they required training for promotion to a higher post, whereas slightly more than one-fifths of them

required training due to their recent graduation from their last academic study.

- To sum up, it can be concluded that the Libyan National Oil Corporation need to attend better on-the-job training programmes so as to fill in the gaps in their satisfaction with their training.

It can be finally concluded that research questions have been answered and research aims and objectives been achieved

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