

THE INFLUENCE OF EMPLOYEE PERCEPTIONS OF TRAINING ON
AFFECTIVE COMMITMENT AND TURNOVER INTENTIONS IN SME

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To my beloved grandmother, aunt and uncles for their support and sacrifices.

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study was to determine the impact of employees' perceptions of training (perceived availability of training, perceived co-worker support, perceived supervisor support and perceived benefits of training) on affective commitment and turnover intention among employees of SMEs manufacturing sector in Johor.

A quantitative descriptive method was employed through the use of online questionnaire to obtain relevant information from respondents. A total of 54 employees participated in this study. Data was analyzed using SPSS applying both differential and inferential methods. Correlation analysis and regression analysis were utilized to determine the correlation between variables.

Findings from this study demonstrated that employees who perceived higher co-worker and supervisor support tend to have lower turnover intention tendency. On the other hand, it was discovered that all four factors of perceptions of training leads to a higher level of affective commitment in employees. A negative but significant correlation exists for affective commitment and turnover intention implying that higher degree of affective commitment will lead to a lower turnover intention.

ABSTRAK

Tujuan kajian ini adalah untuk menentukan kesan persepsi pekerja latihan (ketersediaan dilihat latihan, dilihat sokongan rakan sekerja, sokongan penyelia dilihat dan manfaat dilihat latihan) komitmen afektif dan niat untuk berhenti di kalangan pekerja sektor pembuatan PKS dalam Johor.

Satu kaedah deskriptif kuantitatif telah digunakan melalui penggunaan soal selidik dalam talian untuk mendapatkan maklumat yang berkaitan daripada responden. Seramai 54 pekerja mengambil bahagian dalam kajian ini. Data dianalisis menggunakan SPSS menggunakan kedua-dua pembezaan dan kaedah inferensi. Analisis korelasi dan analisis regresi telah digunakan untuk menentukan hubungan antara pembolehubah.

Hasil daripada kajian ini menunjukkan bahawa pekerja yang dianggap lebih tinggi rakan kerja dan sokongan penyelia cenderung mempunyai lebih rendah perolehan niat kecenderungan. Sebaliknya, ia telah mendapati bahawa keempat-empat faktor persepsi latihan membawa kepada tahap yang lebih tinggi daripada komitmen afektif dalam pekerja. Korelasi negatif yang signifikan wujud atas komitmen afektif dan perolehan niat membayangkan bahawa ijazah yang lebih tinggi daripada komitmen afektif akan membawa kepada niat untuk berhenti yang lebih rendah.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

PAT	- Perceived Availability of Training
PCWST	- Perceived Co-Worker Support for Training
PSST	- Perceived Supervisor Support for Training
PBT	- Perceived Benefits of Training
TI	- Turnover Intention
AC	- Affective Commitment

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview

This chapter introduces the research work presented in this thesis. It describes the research background and explains the motivation for pursuing this work.

1.2 Background of the Study

Small and medium enterprises (SMEs) play an imperative role in contributing to the Malaysian economic growth. Particularly in developed and developing countries, SMEs contributes to a substantial fraction of the total economic activities, making SMEs one of the main economic driving forces in these countries (Zabri and Lean, 2014). Berry and Mazundar (1991) pointed out the contributions of SMEs towards the Malaysian economy, which includes the growth and establishment of large number of SMEs organizations, the augmentation of the value-added outputs, and the employment of local factors of production as well as boosting the household income in Malaysia. Regardless of these contributions, there are obstacles faced by the SMEs. The prime concern in most industries is due to lack of skilled workers (Yogeesvaran, 2005). Therefore, in order to boost their performance, it is crucial that SMEs organizations to provide training to their employees (Ahmad and Bakar,

2003). Additionally, it was found that the turnover rate in the manufacturing sector are higher compared to other SMEs sector (Watson, 2014). Turnover intention is affected by the degree of affective commitment possessed by employees. Through training, not only an employee will be able to improve their skills, but also help to develop the sense of affective commitment, which in return reduces turnover, rate in an organization.

Employee turnover is an issue that plagues every organization, regardless of the size, location and nature of the organization. Turnover is delineated as the “movement of members across the boundary of an organization” (Price , 2001:600). The term “members” indicates the employees within the organization while the term “movement” implies the withdrawal of employees from the organization. Throughout the literature, it was observed that apart from employing the term “turnover” similar terms for instance quits, exits, attrition or migration were also utilized. Contrary to the actual turnover, turnover intention is ambiguous. According to Berndt (1981), intentions reflects the proclamation of an explicit conduct of interest. Turnover intention is an employees’ personal goal to resign from an organization within a specific timeframe and it has been labelled as the harbinger to the actual turnover (Sousa-Poza and Henneberger, 2004). Judging from the literature, it can be seen that countless number of studies on the correlation between turnover intention and actual turnover has been done (Mobley, 1977). Though the actual turnover and turnover intention were assessed independently, it was stated that in the event where turnover intention increases the number of actual turnover would increase correspondingly. According to Mobley (1977), turnover intention is the reflection of an employee’s viewpoint and assessment of job options.

Employees’ intention to quit from an organization is typically affected by two components, namely the “perceived ease of movement” and “perceived desirability of movement”. Perceived ease of movement reflects an employees’ belief that there are other options or jobs available for them if they were to quit from their present organization. On the other hand, perceived desirability of movement is generally determined by the degree of job satisfaction possessed by employees. Thus, judging from the two components, it can be concluded that organizational efficiency can be

achieved by establishing a mutual relationship between the organization and employees. In an organization, mutual relationship is customarily enacted through stimulus, in particular salary and contributions. Commonly, it was assumed that by augmenting salary of employees', the rate of turnover intention would be reduced too. However, it is pertinent for managers to apprehend the fact that by raising salaries alone, it might not necessarily lead to a lower turnover rate. Rather than raising salary alone, it might be helpful for an organization to implement measures that will lead to a lower turnover (Morrell, Loan-Clarke, and Wilkinson, 2004).

It is imperative for organizations, in particular small and medium enterprises (SMEs) to procure measures that will be able to deal with turnover issues (Long, Ajagbe, and Kowang, 2014). Heaps of studies have acknowledged that provision of apposite training and development practices are resolute for an organization's triumph (Maertz, Griffeth, Campbell, and Allen, 2007; Muse and Stamper, 2007; Wiersma and Hall, 2007). Additionally, there are also studies that have established that human resource and development practices have an effect on employees' behaviour as well as attitudes (Edgar and Geare, 2005; Muse and Stamper, 2007; Pugh and Dietz, 2008). In order to ensure the success of an organization as well as to obtain a higher market share, it is crucial for an organization to forge and sustain a long-standing relationship with their employees, as they are the critical source of reliable competitive advantage.

Beach (1980) delineated training as a program where employees are able to grasp new information as well as skills for an explicit reason. Apart from grasping new information, employees will be able to pick up more knowledge on job safety, self-significance, job satisfaction as well as organizational commitment. Aside from that, training can also be demarcated as a program conducted to elicit a coveted series of employees' behaviours and attitudes for instance organizational commitment. Training programs are found to be able to solicit definite outcomes, specifically turnover intentions and employees' organizational commitment. On the word of (Gaertner and Nollen, 1989), one of the factors which influence the degree of an employees' commitment is none other than training provided by the organization. The provision of training to employees has received mixed reviews

throughout the literature. There are findings, which found that training would contribute towards a higher number of turnovers; while some other findings asserted that training is an effective instrument to retain employees in an organization (Colarelli and Montei, 1996; Becker, 1993).

Generally, turnover intention is triggered by two factors namely, organizational commitment and job satisfaction (Clegg, 1983; Karsh, Booske, and Sainfort, 2005; Lee, Huang, and Zhao, 2011). As a matter of fact, in empirical studies conducted by McIntyre, Bartle, Landis, and Dansby (2002) also Parker and Kohlmeyer (2005) further validated that organizational commitment and job satisfaction indeed have an adverse effect towards turnover intention. This finding clearly reflects that when an employee possesses high degree of job satisfaction and organizational commitment, they tend to hesitate to resign and willing to immolate for the organization (Lee *et al.*, 2011). Organizational commitment is an effectual relationship between employees' and their organization. Higher level of organizational commitment signifies the alacrity of an employee to continue working for the organization. Thus, in order for an organization to attain the benefit from providing training to their employees, it is vital for them to ensure that the training program is in line with the organizational objectives. Irrespective of the outcomes of studies conducted, most researchers have come to a mutual agreement that training is an arduous practice that has a substantial implication on the organization.

1.3 Problem Statement

Small and medium enterprises (SME) have been regarded as the backbone of the Malaysian economy as they contribute 19%, 59% and 33% towards export, employment and Gross Domestic Product (GDP) respectively. Despite of their contribution to the development of the Malaysian economy, small and medium enterprises in Malaysia do encounter predicaments in terms of employee retention as well as engaging new employees (Cardon and Stevens, 2004). Based on a study conducted by Watson (2014), it was found that generally the turnover rate in

Malaysia had raised from 12.3% (2012) to 13.2% (2013). Idrus *et al.* (2009) further added that Malaysian SMEs are ranked on top of the list of high turnover rate in the world (19% and 22% for small and medium enterprises respectively). Generally, SME faces high turnover issues due to lower degree of employer authority compared to bigger organizations where, employees tend to regard their employer as undesirable and improper (López, Manuel, Peón, José, and Ordás, 2009).

Irrespective of the size and nature of an organization, employees are deemed as a valuable asset as they are the instigator towards the success of an organization. Thus, with the intention to retain employees, it is crucial for an organization to prepare an effectual training that will augment an employees' knowledge and competencies. Arokiasamy (2013) delineated that training and development programs influences the employee turnover rate within an organization. Over the years, the importance and relevance of training in an organization has been widely acknowledged (Cheong, Rahman, and Mahidi, 2015). Alongside with the rapid development of technology, provision of training has become more imperative than ever in order for an organization to stay on par with other competitors in the industry (McClelland, 2002). Training is a paramount expenditure that an organization has to bear in exchange for them to retain their employees also to provide the leaping stone for their employees' career advancement. Marlow, Patton, and Ram (2005) demarcated that SMEs tend to disregard training which eventually leads to a higher turnover within an organization. Typically, SMEs employers neglect training as they believed that training will not bring much significance due to the size of the organization (Yahya, 2012).

Apart from the availability of training, the second factor that impacts employee turnover in an organization is the relationship between supervisors and their employees. Employees who perceived that their supervisors are supportive, fair and reasonable towards them are inclined to have a higher level of job satisfaction, which eventually decreases the turnover rate in the organization. Employees who have lack of encouragement from their supervisors to take part in training are most likely to be less satisfied with their jobs and thus, lead to a turnover. Studies have shown that lack of support from supervisors is the prime factor to turnover (Porter,

Steers, Mowday, and Boulian, 1973; Waters and Moore, 2002). Despite of findings showing that support from supervisors will be an upper hand in reducing turnover, there are findings that proved otherwise (Rahim and Psenicka, 1996; Tnay, Othman, Siong, and Lim, 2013; Zahra, Irum, and Chishti, 2013).

The availability of support emanating from co-workers helps employees to solve job-related problems, supporting their participation in training, reduce customer-related social stressors and burnout/emotional exhaustion (Karatepe, Haktanir, and Yorganci, 2010; Schaufeli and Bakker, 2004). Getting support from co-workers also influences job attitudes such as turnover intentions and job performance (Cho and Johanson, 2008). That is, frontline employees who perceive that they are one of the members of a work group and receive sufficient support from co-workers to solve their job-related problems will have positive feelings toward their jobs and wants to remain in the organization. However, there are also findings that found a negative correlation between support from co-workers for training and turnover intentions. In studies conducted by Alexander, Lichtenstein, Oh, and Ullman (1998) and Lichtenstein, Drumwright, and Braig (2004), both came to a similar conclusion where assistance from co-worker have a negative implication on turnover intention as well as on actual turnover. The number of studies conducted on the correlation between co-worker support and turnover intention is scarcely available in the literature (Ducharme, Knudsen, and Roman, 2007). Most studies conducted emphasized on support received from supervisors and the organization (Bennett, Ross, and Sunderland, 1996; Layne, 2001).

Impartment of training does not solely benefit the employees but to the organization as well (Kinicki, Carson, and Bohlander, 1992). Typically, for employees training will be able to augment their confidence level, help them to be adaptable to their workplace as well as becoming supportive towards other colleagues (Donovan, 2001). Nordhaug (1989) classified the benefits of training into personal, career and job-related benefits. From the social exchange standpoint, employees are inclined to become a member of an organization that imparts many benefits or demonstrates dedication to them (Blau, 1964). Researchers have delineated that employees are more enthusiastic to take part in training when they

believed that they are able to obtain a great deal of benefit from it (Katono, 2010). Thus, this leads to the formation of two research questions.

RQ1: What is the correlation between employee perception of training and turnover intention in SMEs manufacturing sector?

RQ2: Which factor among the perception of training influences on affective commitment and turnover intention the most?

The degree of organizational commitment within an employee is generally affected by several factors, namely, compensation and benefit packages as well as equality in work evaluation (Meyer and Smith, 2000; Paul and Anantharaman, 2004). Through numerous researches, researchers have agreed that training is an additional factor which will influence the level of organizational commitment of an employee (Ahmad and Bakar, 2003; Bartlett and Kang, 2004; Ehrhardt, Miller, Freeman, and Hom, 2011). Existing literature had established the correlation between training and organizational commitment (Bartlett, 2001; Meyer and Smith, 2000; Tannenbaum, Mathieu, Salas, and Cannon-Bowers, 1991). Then again, the correlation of training and organizational commitment has yet to be grasp entirely as it is still in the embryonic phase (Al-Emadi and Marquardt, 2007; Bartlett, 2001; Conway and Monks, 2009). Thus, this study intends to study the relationship of training and organizational commitment, in particular affective commitment.

RQ3: What is the correlation between employee perception of training and affective commitment in SMEs manufacturing sector?

Chew and Chan (2008) pointed out that the degree of commitment possessed by employees' are closely associated to their workplace attitudes and behaviours. It is crucial to pay attention to the degree of commitment within an employee, as it has some bearing on turnover intentions. Studies was conducted to associate employees' organizational commitment with turnover intention (Zhao, Wayne, Glibkowski, and

Bravo, 2007). Affective commitment holds an eminent role in the turnover literature (Anvari, Amin, Ismail, Ungku Ahmad, and Seliman, 2011) and the finding was in line with studies conducted by Griffeth (2000) and Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch, and Topolnytsky (2002). Additionally, the study established that turnover intention is the predecessor of actual turnover. Employees with higher degree of commitment are more likely to retain in an organization in contrast to employees with lower commitment. Apart from that, the availability of such study in Malaysia is scarcely available in particular for the SME manufacturing sector. Thus, the fourth research question was formulated.

RQ4: What is the correlation between affective commitment and employee turnover intentions in SMEs manufacturing sector?

1.4 Research Questions

In this study, the primary focus is the affiliation between employees' perceptions of training on affective commitment and turnover intentions within SMEs in Johor, Malaysia. The research questions are as below:

- 1) What is the correlation between employee perception of training and turnover intention in SMEs manufacturing sector?
- 2) What is the correlation between employee perception of training and affective commitment in SMEs manufacturing sector?
- 3) What is the correlation between affective commitment and employee turnover intentions in SMEs manufacturing sector?

- 4) Which factor among the perception of training influences affective commitment and turnover intention the most?

1.5 Research Objectives

The objective of this study is to enhance comprehension on employee perceptions of training and its affiliation with affective commitment and turnover intentions in SMEs within the manufacturing sector in Malaysia. Specific objectives are as follows:

- 1) To examine the association between employee perceptions of training and affective commitment among employees of SMEs
- 2) To examine the association between employee perceptions of training and turnover intention among employees of SMEs
- 3) To examine the association between affective commitment and turnover intentions among employees of SMEs in Malaysia
- 4) To determine the prime factor of perceptions of training that influences affective commitment and turnover intent the most

1.6 Scope of the Study

The research scopes of this study are as follows:

- 1) This research is focused on finding the implication of perceptions of training and affective commitment on turnover intent.
- 2) Data were obtained from SMEs manufacturing companies located in Johor.

1.7 Significance of the Study

This research aspires to study the affiliation between employee perceptions of training and organisational commitment and its effect on employee turnover intentions in chosen SMEs within Johor Bahru. From a general standpoint, this study will be a catalyst for literature. Specifically, it is beneficial to SMEs, particularly manufacturing industries, which are characterized by high employee turnover. This study would provide better understanding on the significance of training within the organisation with specific reference to manufacturing industry, as most of the skills and knowledge can be learned on-the-job. Outcomes from the study ought to assist stakeholders to notify policy as well as improve policy execution pertaining to training within small businesses.

Findings from this study not only contribute towards the theoretical aspect but it also contributes towards the managerial implications within an organization. Most managers in Malaysia perceived that providing training to their employees are unnecessary and experience possessed by employees alone are sufficient (Ahmad and Bakar, 2003). Findings from this study might alter managers of perceptions towards training and help them to realize that training is crucial in retaining

employees within their organization and in boosting the career potential as well as to improve employees work performance.

1.8 Operational Definitions

1.8.1 Employee Perceptions of Training

In this study, perception of training is measured by analysing four concepts, namely perceived availability of training (PAT), perceived co-worker support for training (PCWST), perceived supervisor support for training (PSST), and perceived benefits of training (PBT).

a) Perceived availability of training (PAT)

Perceived availability of training can be delineated in two ways; employees have access towards training programs which will be the key to improving their knowledge and abilities which are demanded for the job (Ahmad and Bakar, 2003). Perceived availability of training can also be defined as fewer obstacles for employees to take part in training programs (Bartlett, 2001). In this study, perceived availability of training refers to the degree to which employees believed that they possess access to the training prospects essential for them to obtain knowledge, skills, and expertise as required for their present job.

b) Perceived supervisor support for training (PSST)

Perceived supervisor support for training can be delineated as the degree to which supervisors appreciate their employees' contribution and care about their welfare. In this study, perceived supervisor support for training refers to the degree to which their employees deem that they are being supported from their supervisors

to take part in training and to utilize the skills obtained on the job (Newman, Thanacoody, and Hui, 2011)

c) Perceived co-worker support for training (PCWST)

Perceived co-worker support for training can be defined as fellow workers helping each other in accomplishing tasks when required by sharing knowledge and skills as well as supporting and encouraging one another (Zhou and George, 2001). In this study, perceived co-worker support for training was indicated as the levels of co-workers are willing to assist their colleagues in resolving problems or in executing a new method of working (Bulut and Culha, 2010).

d) Perceived benefits of training (PBT)

According to Al-Emadi and Marquardt (2007), perceived benefits of training is the belief which employees grasp that by engaging in training programs, they will be able to expand their network, augment job performance as well as boosting their personal development. In this study, perceived benefits of training refer to as the employees' judgement on the benefits that they will receive when they take part in training.

1.8.2 Affective Commitment

Affective commitment is the emotional attachment, recognition and engagement of an employee towards their organization (Meyer and Allen, 1991; Mowday, Steers, and Porter, 1979; O'Reilly and Chatman, 1986). According to Meyer and Allen (1997), an employee who possesses high degree of affective commitment will retain to the organization out of their own will. In this study, the affective commitment is measured established on employees' emotional affinity and identification with an organization's objectives and purpose as well as their enthusiasm in accomplishing them.

1.8.3 Turnover Intention

Turnover intention is the intention of an employee to resign from an organization voluntarily (Newman *et al.*, 2011). Bulut and Culha (2010) further added that turnover intention refers to the personal and emotional response of employees in an organization towards the working atmosphere and it does not necessarily leads to an actual resignation. In this study, the turnover intention was delineated as the total of the intent to search for another working opportunity due to the discontent towards the organization.

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