

TRAINING AND JOB PERFORMANCE: THE MODERATING ROLE OF
PERCEIVED ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT

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Dedicated to my late father, whom I got the inspiration from.

Al Fatihah

If I could turn back time...

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ABSTRACT

Training is defined as the acquisition of new knowledge which later improves job performance after attending a training program by following the flow of process of reaction to the training, learning, change in behavior, and increased performance as the result. The increased of job performance is influenced by many factors including the work environment. However, the influence of the social exchange factor in the workplace, known as perceived organizational support, on increased job performance has not been adequately explored. This study has been conducted to address this gap specifically to explore the moderating effect of perceived organizational support on the relationship between training and job performance. The data of this study has been collected through survey. The data was analyzed and it is revealed that perceived organizational support has an important role as a predictor to job performance but not as a moderator as proposed in this study.

ABSTRAK

Latihan didefinisikan sebagai pendapatan pengetahuan baru yang mana seterusnya dapat meningkatkan prestasi kerja selepas menghadiri program latihan dengan mengikuti proses reaksi terhadap latihan, pembelajaran, perubahan sikap, dan peningkatan prestasi sebagai hasil latihan. Peningkatan prestasi kerja dipengaruhi oleh banyak factor termasuk persekitaran kerja. Walaubagaimanapun, pengaruh pertukaran social di tempat kerja, yang dikenali sebagai sokongan organisasi dilihat, terhadap peningkatan prestasi kerja masih belum diterokai dengan mendalam. Kajian ini telah dijalankan untuk menyiasat jurang tersebut terutamanya dari segi kesan moderator daripada sokongan organisasi dilihat dalam hubungan antara latihan dan prestasi kerja. Data daripada kajian ini telah dikumpul daripada survey. Data telah dianalisis dan telah didapati bahawa sokongan organisasi dilihat mempunyai fungsi penting terhadap prestasi kerja tetapi tidak sebagai moderator seperti yang telah dicadangkan di dalam kajian ini.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of study

Nowadays, we believe that an organization's success can be achieved through people or human resources (Pfeffer, 1994). This shows that the skills and performance of people are critical. Many organizations spend much money on training, with the belief that training will improve their employees' performance and hence the organization's productivity. According to Swanson (1995), for Human Resource Development to become a core business process, performance is the key. Training is a core issue with respect to linking individual change to the requirements of the organizational system. Therefore, it is believed that training makes a difference in organizational and individual performance.

The government of Malaysia has a vision for the nation to become fully developed by the year 2020 (Mohamed, 2003). In order to achieve this, Malaysia requires a knowledgeable and skillful workforce to compete successfully in meeting the challenges. Thus, developing human capital is a top priority of the Malaysian government (Hashim, 2001).

The public sector also plays a vital role as an enabler and facilitator of private initiatives by providing efficient delivery systems and a customer-focused service. These

roles lie with the approximately 1.3 million government employees working in the public sector in positions from clerical to top executives (Public Service Department of Malaysia, 2006). To ensure that these employees are equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills, the Malaysian government has given particular attention to workplace training as a tool for improving employees' job performance. This included programs such as management training (e.g. human resource management, strategic management, and financial management), computer training (e.g. visual basic, database management), and general training (e.g. writing skills, better spoken English) (National Institute of Public Administration Malaysia, 2009).

Key to the success of training program initiatives is the extent to which trainees use their training on the job. Researchers and practitioners have acknowledged that training can lead to an improvement in an individual's job performance. (Holton, Bates, and Ruona, 2000). This, in turn, represents the essence of return on investment (ROI) of training.

The acquisition of knowledge and skills gained in training is of little value if the new characteristics are not taken back to the job setting or are not maintained over time. It has been reported that a mere 10 percent of the investment in training is returned in performance improvement (Garavaglia, 1993). Despite the reported problems in the research literature, workplace training is still viewed as a primary strategy by organizations to gain a competitive advantage. This is because, the goal of training is for employees to master the knowledge and skills learned, and this is argued as being critical for successful job performance.

An employee is responsible to perform in their job where the performance of that employee influences the performance of the overall organization. Kenney *et al.* (1992) reported that employees' performance is measured by the performance standards set by the organization. Good performance indicates how well employees performed on the assigned tasks. Usually, in every organization, there are some expectations from the

employees with respect to their performance. When they perform up to the set standards and meet the organizational expectation, they are considered good performers. Thus, training positively influences employee performance through the development of employee knowledge, skills, ability, competency, and behavior (Benedicta and Appiah, 2010).

According to organizational support theories, high perceived organizational support (POS) tends to improve work attitudes and engender effective work behavior for two reasons. First, the beneficial effects result from a process of social exchange. They seek to repay this favorable treatment. Thus, employees become more committed and harder working (Eisenberger *et al.*, 1986). Moreover, if an organization gives adequate training, resources, and support from the management, it is more likely that members would both want their organization to succeed and be more capable of helping their organization succeed.

In conclusion, training needs to be emphasized in all organization as it leads to committed employees and further increase the productivity of the organization. Transfer of training is important for employees because their new learned skills, knowledge, and attitudes can be applied in their job, increase performance, and later increase job satisfaction.

1.2 Background of INTAN

Institute of Public Administration or better known as INTAN (Institut Tadbiran Awam Negara) is a training center for the Malaysian government officials. INTAN has been given the mandate and responsibility of the government to train civil servants in federal government agencies, state, federal and state statutory bodies and local authorities. Apart from the training of civil servants, INTAN also provides consulting

services related to training and courses to INTAN customers consisting of government agencies in country and also from abroad.

Each year, the institute will organize courses such as Induction, Mandatory, Professional Development, Efficiency Improvement, Assessment, Certification, Diploma, Masters, and also in collaboration with the University. Moreover, the institute will send INTAN training project book and INTAN training project calendar to part or all of the Training Unit or the departments of all ministries. In addition, the institute will also send brochures and related information regarding courses and training from time to time. Any application must use the application form which is included.

INTAN is actually founded to provide space for civil servants to increase performance while in service through courses and training from time to time. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the institute to provide training and courses to all civil servants either the federal or the state government. INTAN does not set guidelines of priority in providing services. However, each year, 60% of the participants of the course are made up of the support group, while 40 % is from the management and professional group.

To meet the needs of particular preparations, Wives of the Senior Governments Officials in the public sector category (JUSA) in attending official functions of governments INTAN also organizes courses on etiquette, and protocol to their wives.

In INTAN, all civil servants is required to undergo coaching training in order to qualify them to become instructor or coach at the institute. So all the coaches or instructors are INTAN's staffs. However, in certain circumstances where the institute does not have the expertise, then Foreign Service is acquired.

1.3 Problem statement

Training is important for employees in most organization as the employees are the assets for the organization. For many years, people have debated about the effect of training towards the level of job performance. The positive effects of training have been proved by for example Holton, Bates, and Ruona (2000).

However, there is a bunch of organizations more that do not conduct training program because of some reasons including lack of expertise and expenses. Of the variety of the studies covering different aspects of training, some observe a general agreement that lack of understanding of training needs assessment and training evaluation inhibits human resource development (HRD) initiatives in that particular country.

The absence of these practices may have contributed to a belief that returns on investment (ROI) on training investment is illusive. Zakaria and Rozhan (1993) examined the HRD practices in the manufacturing sector in Malaysia and found that among 44 percent of surveyed firms conducting formal training, 23 percent of them did not conduct a training needs analysis at the first place due to lack of expertise among training managers.

To make this worse, the upper level of the management of the organization fails to identify the other factors of improved employees' performance specifically perceived organization support (POS). Thus, the level of job performance of the employees could not be observed and improved.

Many people think that most organizations conduct training. Sadly, training in smaller organizations is given low priority because of the managers' inability to see the tangible benefits of training. This is confirmed by Hashim (2001) who found that

training evaluation was reliant on reactive measures such as trainees' feedback and observation rather than on other ROI measures. A study conducted by Saiyadan and Ali (1995) found that measurement of training effectiveness was inconsistent in Malaysian firms and that most Malaysian managers did not have formal education in management, which impacted negatively on their training efforts.

In another study of 54 Malaysian manufacturing firms and 46 service sector firms, Poon and Othman (2000) found that although the organizations developed basic processes such as training needs assessment and training evaluation, implementation of these processes was handled poorly. Furthermore, training needs analysis was found to be based on past data such as job content or company records to identify training needs rather than current audits of skills gaps. Training evaluation relied on rating sheets handed out at the end of training programs to trainees and were thus highly subjective.

In Malaysia, the government has given attention to workplace training as a tool for improving employees' job performance. The programs available include management training (INTAN, 2009). At first glance, it may seem like it is the training alone that improve job performance. It is doubted that the element of POS is being emphasized in maximizing the job performance among the employees.

If the organizations continue to neglect the importance of training, they will lose to competition. Gravaglia (1993) reported that 10 percent of the investment in training is returned in performance improvement. Workplace training is therefore viewed as a primary strategy by organizations to gain competitive advantage.

Good employees lead to successful organization as stated by Ghani (2006). Organizational support is one of the most important organizational concepts that keep employees in the organization, since organizational support is known as a key factor in increasing job performance of employees. Colakoglu, Culha, and Atay (2010) reported that employees supported by their organization feel this support is given because they

are valuable employees for their organization. Employees who feel their organization value and appreciate them are satisfied with their job and attached to their organization. If the employees do not perceive support from their organization, they may feel abandoned and tend to leave the organization which may lead to turnover problem.

HRD researchers have acknowledged that the role of training has changed from a program focus to a broader focus on learning and creating and sharing knowledge (Noe, 2005). Employees are expected to acquire new skills and knowledge, applies them on the job, share the information with fellow workers, and improve their job performance, while the organization is expected to deliver support which the employees needed.

However, in the context of Malaysian public sector, research investigating how training could play its role in improving job performance has been neglected. The quantitative approach of this study is appropriate to the stated problem. In this study, the level of performance, relationships between training, job performance, and POS are investigated. Moreover, the role of POS as a moderator is also studied. A group of government servants who attended a training program in INTAN is surveyed to determine their level of performance and the relationships between training, job performance, and POS.

This thesis, therefore, is set in the research gap with the aim of contributing to the HRD discipline in Malaysia through a comprehensive study of impact of training and perceived organizational support to promote job performance in the Malaysian public sector.

5.5 Conclusion

Research findings show that the level of Job Performance among the respondents is high after attending a training program organized by INTAN namely Kursus Diploma Pengurusan Awam (DPA) 1/2013 even though there are a very small number of respondents who achieve moderate and low level of performance. The findings of this research also show that there is a significant relationship between training and job performance. A relationship between perceived organizational support and job performance is also identified in this study. In addition, the findings of this study also prove that perceived organizational support does not moderate the relationship between training and job performance. These findings not only provide an overview and awareness about job performance but also can be used as a guideline in developing strategies to improve employee training to be more effective.

Overall, in order an employee can achieve high level of job performance; there are many more other factors that contribute to that other than training alone. Thus, the existence of perceived organizational support needs to be studied in detail from various angles to determine its effect on training and job performance. In addition, the response rate and honesty of the respondents also play an important role in determining the outcome of this study. The higher the response rate, significant association will be stronger between training and job performance.

Finally, it is hoped that the findings of this research can be made reference material for further studies and can help and give benefits to management in order to build a successful and dynamic organization.

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