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Relationship between Managers' Training Assignments and Trainees' Perceived Value in a Defence Based Higher Education Institution

(Hubungan antara Tugasan Latihan yang diberi Pengurus-pengurus dengan Nilai Persepsi Pelatihpelatih di Sebuah Institusi Pendidikan Tinggi Berasaskan Pertahanan)

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ABSTRACT

The primary objective of this study is to investigate the relationship between managers' training assignments (i.e., mandatory and voluntary) and trainees' perceived value. A survey method was employed to gather 142 usable questionnaires from a group of military officers, namely military cadet officers in a defence based higher education institution, Malaysia. The outcomes of SmartPLS path model showed two important findings: first, relationship between mandatory significantly correlated with trainees' perceived value. Second, relationship between voluntary significantly correlated with trainees' perceived value. This result confirms that the ability of managers to properly implement mandatory and voluntary assignments in encouraging employees to attend and learn in training programs has been an important predictor of trainees' perceived value in the organizational sample. Further, this study provides discussion, implications and conclusion.

Keywords: Training assignment, perceived value, defence based Higher Education Institution.

ABSTRAK

Objektif utama kajian ini adalah untuk mengkaji hubungan antara penugasan latihan yang diberi oleh pengurus-pengurus (iaitu, mandatori dan sukarela) dengan rasa berguna pelatih-pelatih. Satu kaedah soal selidik telah digunakan untuk mengumpul 142 soal selidik boleh-pakai daripada sekumpulan pegawai tentera, yaitu, pegawai kadet tentera di institusi pengajian tinggi yang berasaskan pertahanan di Malaysia. Dapatan yang diperolehi menggunakan model "SmartPLS path" menunjukkan dua penemuan penting: pertama, hubungan antara mandatori berkait rapat dengan rasa berguna pelatih-pelath. Kedua, hubungan antara sukarela berkait rapat dengan rasa berguna pelatih-pelatih. Keputusan ini mengesahkan bahawa keupayaan pengurus-pengurus untuk melaksanakan dengan betul tugasan mandatori dan sukarela dalam menggalakkan kakitangan untuk menghadiri dan belajar dalam program latihan telah menjadi peramal penting kepada rasa berguna pelatih-pelatih dalam sampel organisasi. Selanjutnya, kajian ini menyediakan perbincangan, implikasi dan kesimpulan.

Kata kunci: Penugasan latihan, rasa berguna, Institusi Pendidikan Tinggi berdasarkan pertahanan.

INTRODUCTION

Training is a strategic human capital development and management where it is primarily implemented to enhance the capability of trainees' competencies in order to achieve organizational strategy and goals (Ismail et al., 2011; Mondy et al., 2014; Noe, 2011; Tai, 2006). This training objective will be achieved if management may properly implement assignments in the organizational training program. Many scholars like Tsai and Tsai (2003), and Ismail et al. (2011, 2012) view that managers often use two assignment styles in managing training programs: mandatory and voluntary. Mandatory assignment is often viewed as a compulsory training assignment where individual have no choice or execuse, but they must attend training programs that are assigned to them. This assignment is usually made by managers because they feel that individuals must attend a very important training program that can meet their organizational strategy and goals (Baldwin & Magjuka, 1991; Tsai & Tai, 2003). Conversely, voluntary assignment is often seen as alternative training assignment where individuals have choices whether they want to attend or not to attend training programs that are assigned to them. This assignment is usually made by managers because they feel that individuals know better which training programs are realy useful and may help them to fulfill their organizational needs and expectations (Ismail et al., 2011; Saks & Belcourt, 2006; Tsai & Tai, 2003).

Interestingly, a thorough review of successful training administration practices highlights that the ability of management to properly implement mandatory and voluntary assignments may have a significant impact on training outcomes especially trainees' perceived value (Ismail et al., 2011; Tsai & Tai, 2003). According to many scholars, such as Mathieu and Martineau (1997), Noe (2011) and Ismail et al. (2011), trainees' perceived value is often defined as individuals perceive that assigned training programs as benefits, appropriateness and usefulness. Within a training program model, many scholars view that mandatory, voluntary, and perceived value are distinct, but highly interrelated concepts. For example, the ability of managers to properly implement mandatory and voluntary assignments in order to encourage trainees attending training programs may lead to an enhanced their appreciations and acceptance of the training programs (Ismail et al., 2011; Tsai & Tai, 2003).

Even though this relationship is important, little is known about the role of managers' training assignments as an important predictor of trainees' perceived value in the organizational training research

literature (Mathiue & Martineau, 1997; Tsai & Tai, 2003). Many scholars argue that the role of managers' training assignments as an important predicting variable is less emphasized in previous studies because they have much described the characteristics of managers' training assignments, employed a simple correlation method to assess general individual attitudes toward managers' training assignments, and neglected to quantify the magnitude and nature of the relationship between managers' training assignments and trainees' perceived value in the training administration models. Consequently, these studies have not provided adequate empirical research findings to be used as guidelines by practitioners in understanding the complexity of training assignment and formulating strategies for improving the effectiveness of training programs in agile organizations (Ismail et al., 2011; Tsai & Tai, 2003). Hence, this situation motivates the researchers to further discover the nature of this relationship.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

This study has two major objectives: first, is to measure the relationship between manager's mandatory assignment and trainees' perceived value. Second, is to measure the relationship between manager's voluntary assignment and trainees' perceived value.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Several recent studies were conducted to investigate managers' training assignments based on different samples, such as a group of employees in a nuclear plant (Mathieu & Martineau, 1997), 184 employees who served at 18 banks in Northern Taiwan (Tsai and Tai, 2003), and 100 employees at a city based local authority in Sarawak (Ismail et al., 2011). Findings from these studies reported that the ability of managers to properly implement mandatory and voluntary assignments in inspiriing employees to attend and learn in training programs had been an essential predictor of trainees' perceived value in the respective organizations (Ismail et al., 2011; Mathieu & Martineau, 1997; Tsai & Tai, 2003).

These studies support the notion of motivation theory. Firstly, Adam's (1963) equity theory posits that perceived fair treatment in exchanging distributing outcomes may positively affect individual actions. Besides that, Vroom's (1963) expectancy theory reveals that understanding about the value of outcome may positively affect individual behavior. Application of

these theories in a training administration model shows that perceive fair treatment and appreciate value of outcomes will be enhanced if managers able to properly implement mandatory and voluntary assignments in encouraging employees to attend and learn in training programs. As a result, it may lead to increased trainees' perceived valuable in organizations (Ismail et al., 2011; Mathieu & Martineau, 1997; Tsai & Tai, 2003).

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

The literature has been used as foundation of developing a conceptual framework for this study as illustrated in Figure 1.

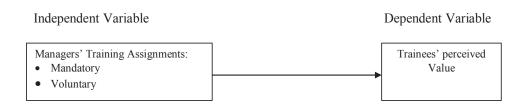


FIGURE 1. The conceptual framework

Based on the framework, it was hypothesized that:

H1: Manager's mandatory assignment positively related to trainees' perceived value.

H2: Manager's voluntary assignment positively related to trainees' perceived value.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study used a cross-sectional research design that allowed the researchers to integrate training program literature, the pilot study and the actual survey as a main procedure to gather data. Using such methods may gather accurate data, decrease bias and increase quality of data being collected (Cresswell, 1998; Sekaran & Bougie, 2010). This study was conducted in a defence based higher education institution in Malaysia which are under the Ministry of Education and officially collaborated with the Ministry of Defence in order to attract, recruit and select post secondary students who achieved high academic excellent to become military cadet officers. These cadet officers are later hired as military officers and are bound to military laws and orders, and eligible to get salary, allowances and perks as described in their employement contracts. After they have graduated with good bachelor degrees and obtained qualified military training certificates from this institution, they will be promoted as full time officer and must serve with certain periods in the Ministry of Defence. For confidential reasons, the name of this organization is kept anonymous. At the initial stage of data collection, a pilot study was done by discussing the importance, relevance, clarity and suitability of survey questionnaire with four participants, namely one military training officer, one first cadet officer, one second year cadet officer and one third year cadet officer in the institution. Further, a back to back translation technique was used to translate the survey questionnaires to English and Malay languages in order to increase the validity and reliability of research instrument (Cresswell, 1998; Sekaran & Bougie, 2010).

Measures

The survey questionnaire used in this study had two sections. First, mandatory assignment had 4 items and voluntary assignment had 3 items that were adapted from training assignment literature (Ismail et al., 2011, 2012; Mathiue et al., 1993; Mathiue & Martinue, 1997; Tsa & Tai, 2003). The dimensions used to measure mandatory assignment are empathy, willingness to learn and advantage of compulsary training program. Conversely, the dimensions used to measure voluntary assignment are selection and participation in training programs. Finally, perceived value was measured using 6 items that were modified from training benefits literature (Baldwin & Magjuka, 1991; Mathieu & Martineau, 1997; Ismail et al., 2011; Noe, 2011; Tsai & Tai, 2003). The dimensions used to measure perceived value are suitability, understanding and usefulness of training programs. All items used in the questionnaires were measured using a 7-item scale ranging from "strongly disagree/dissatisfied" (1) to "strongly agree/satisfied" (7). Demographic variables were used as controlling variables because this study focused on employee attitudes

Sample

Unit of analysis for this study is military cadet officers in a defence higher education institution, Malaysia. The researchers had obtained an official approval to conduct the study from the head of the organization and also received advice from him about the procedures of conducting survey in his organization. Based on this information, the organization has practiced a secrecy policy and in order to overcome the constraint in collecting data for this study, a convenient sampling technique is appropriately employed (Cresswell, 1998; Sekaran & Bougie, 2010). For example, the sampling technique was choosen in this study because the head of the organization had not given the list of military cadet officers and this situation did not allow the researchers to use a random sampling technique. Next, 150 survey questionnaires were distributed using a convenient sampling technique to the cadet officers who ready to participate in this research project. Of the number, 142 usable questionnaires were returned yielding 94.7 percent of the response rate. The survey questionnaires were answered by participants based on their consents and a voluntarily basis.

Data Analysis

The SmartPLS version 2.0 as recommended by Henseler et al. (2009) was employed to analyse the survey questionnaire data. The main advantage of using this method is to produce latent variable scores, avoid small sample size problems, estimate every complex model with many latent and manifest variables, hassle-stringent assumptions about the distribution of variables and error terms, and handle both reflective and

formative measurement models (Henseler et al., 2009). The procedure of data analysis is: first, confirmatory factor analysis was used to assess the validity and reliability of instrument. Second, Pearson correlation analysis and descriptive statistics were employed to estimate the validity and reliability of constructs. Third, test the hypothesized model. The outcomes of this test will clearly show the significant relationship between the independent variable and dependent variable if the value of t statistic larger than 1.96 (Henseler et al., 2009). Then, a global fit measure is conducted to validate the adequacy of PLS path model globally based on Wetzels et al.'s (2009) global fit measure. The value of R2 is used as an indicator of the overall predictive strength of the model. The value of R2 are considered as follows; 0.19 (weak), 0.33 (moderate) and 0.67 (substantial) (Chin, 1998; Henseler et al., 2009). Further, a global fit measure is conducted to validate the adequacy of PLS path model globally based on Wetzels et al.'s (2009) global fit measure. This result confirms that the PLS path model has better explaining power in comparison with the baseline values (GoF small=0.1, GoF medium=0.25, GoF large=0.36). If the results of testing hypothesized model greater than the cut-off value of 0.36 for large effect sizes of R², showing that it adequately support the PLS path model globally.

FINDINGS

Respondent Characteristics

Table 1 shows that majority respondents were males (75.8%), ages between 20 to 21 years old (65.3%), Malay (96.9%), studied at year 1 and 2 (68.8%), attended theory and practical based training program (71.1%), and studied at Faculty of Defence & Management Studies (85.2%).

TABLE 1. Respondent characteristics (n=142)

Respondent Profile	Sub-Profile	Percentage (%) 75.8 24.2	
Gender	Male Female		
Age	18 to 19 years old 20 to 21 years old 22 to 23 years old 24 to 25 years old	2.7 65.3 25.3 6.7	
Year of study	1st year 2nd year 3rd year	34.4 34.4 31.3	
Race	Malay Indian Others	96.9 1.6 1.6	
Type of Training	Theory Theory and practical	28.9 71.1	
Faculty	Faculty of Defence & Management Studies Faculty of Science & Defence Technology Faculty of Engineering	85.2 7.8 7.0	

Validity and Reliability Analyses for the Measurement

The survey questionnaire had 13 items which refer to 3 constructs: mandatory (4 items), voluntary (3 items), and perceived value (6 items). The outcomes of confirmatory factor analysis generally showed that the instrument used in this study met the acceptable standards of validity and reliability analyses. Specifically, Table 2 shows the results of convergent and discriminant validity analyses. All constructs had the

values of average variance extracted (AVE) larger than 0.5, indicating that they met the acceptable standard of convergent validity (Barclay et al., 1995; Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Henseler et al., 2009). Besides that, all constructs which had the diagonal values of $\sqrt{\text{AVE}}$ were greater than the squared correlation with other constructs in off diagonal, showing that all constructs met the acceptable standard of discriminant validity (Henseler et al., 2009).

TABLE 2: The results of convergent and discriminant validity analyses				
Construct	AVE	Mandatory	Voluntary	Perceived Value
Mandatory	0.7197	0.8426		
Voluntary	0.7772	0.0467	0.8815	
Perceived Value	0.7300	0.7196	0.1914	0.8544

Table 3 shows the factor loadings and cross loadings for different constructs. The correlation between items and factors had higher loadings than other items in the different constructs. The variables loaded more strongly on their own constructs in the model, exceeding

the specified minimum, 0.7 (Chin, 1998; Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Gefen & Straub, 2005; Henseler et al., 2009). In sum, the validity of measurement model met the criteria.

TABLE 3. The results of convergent and discriminant validity analyses

Construct/Item	Mandatory	Voluntary	Perceived Value
Mandatory	'		
b1	0.793923	0.216027	0.588533
b2	0.810062	0.001264	0.560949
b4	0.860198	-0.122329	0.590502
b8	0.923234	0.059250	0.691951
Voluntary			
b11	0.107134	0.873721	0.180489
b12	-0.021190	0.912953	0.142205
b13	0.023648	0.857168	0.176585
Perceived Value			
c1	0.498828	-0.023962	0.786154
c2	0.656350	0.213254	0.900467
c3	0.624659	0.265161	0.862152
c4	0.670842	0.106343	0.867915
c5	0.641547	0.159758	0.888768
c6	0.571946	0.216073	0.815344

Table 4 shows the results of reliability analysis for the instrument. The composite reliability and Cronbach's Alpha had values greater than 0.8, indicating that the

instrument used in this study maintained high internal consistency (Henseler et al., 2009; Nunally & Benstein, 1994; Sekaran & Bougie, 2010).

TABLE 4. Composite reliability and cronbach's alpha

Construct	Composite Reliability	Cronbach Alpha
Mandatory	0.910987	0.868810
Voluntary	0.912723	0.856849
Perceived Value	0.941821	0.925777

Analysis of the Constructs

Table 5 shows the results of Pearson correlation analysis and descriptive statistics. The mean values for the variables are from 4.4 to 5.5, signifying that the levels of mandatory, voluntary and perceived value ranging from high (4) to highest level (7). The

correlation coefficients for the relationship between the independent variable (mandatory and voluntary assignments) and the dependent variable (perceived value) were less than 0.90, indicating that the data were not affected by serious collinearity problem (Hair, et al., 1998).

TABLE 5. Pearson correlation analysis and descriptive statistics

Construct	Mean	Standard Deviation	Pearson Correlation Analysis		
			1	2	3
Mandatory	5.5	.73	1		
Voluntary	4.4	1.42	.15	1	
Perceived Value	5.4	.78	.73**	.32**	1

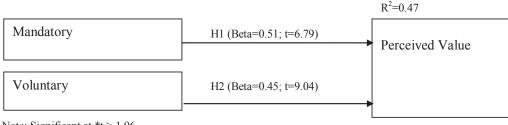
Note: Significant at *p<0.05; **p<0.01; **p<0.000

Reliability Estimation is Shown in a Diagonal

Outcomes of Testing Hypotheses 1 and 2

Figure 2 shows that the inclusion of mandatory and voluntary in the model analysis had explained 47 percent of the variance in dependent variable. Specifically, the outcomes of testing research hypotheses using SmartPLS path model showed two important findings: first, the mandatory positively and significantly correlated with perceived value (β =0.51;

t=6.79), therefore H1 was supported. Second, voluntary positively and significantly correlated with perceived value (β =0.45; t=9.04), therefore H2 was supported. n sum, this result confirms that the ability of managers to properly implement mandatory and voluntary assignments in encouraging employees to attend and learn in training programs have been an important predictor of trainees' perceived value in the studied organization.



Note: Significant at $*t \ge 1.96$

FIGURE 2: Outcomes of SmartPLS Path Model Analysis

In order to determine a global fit PLS path modeling, a global fit measure (GoF) were carried out based on Wetzels et al.'s (2009) guideline as follows: GoF=SQRT{MEAN (Communality of Endogenous) x

MEAN (R²)}=0.49, indicating that it exceeds the cutoff value of 0.36 for large effect sizes of R². It also provides adequate support to validate the PLS model globally (Wetzel et al., 2009).

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The findings of this study confirm that managers' training assignments act as important predictors of trainees' perceived value in the studied organization. In the context of this study, majority respondents perceived that the levels of mandatory assignment, voluntary assignment and trainees' perceived value are high. In this situation, the ability of managers to properly implement such training assignments in encouraging employees to attend and learn in training programs has enhanced their perceived valuable about the workplace training prog

The implications of this study can be divided into three major categories: theoretical contribution, robustness of research methodology, and practical contribution. In terms of theoretical contribution, the findings of this study highlight that managers' training assignments have been essential predictors of trainees' perceived value in the studied organization. This result is consistent with the notion of Adam's (1963) equity theory and Vroom's (1963) expectancy theory, as well as has also supported and extended studies by Mathieu and Martineau (1997), Tsai and Tai (2003), and Ismail et al. (2009). In sum, this study has provided a great

potential to understand that the ability of managers to appropriately implement mandatory and voluntary assignments in encouraging employees to attend and learn training programs can enhance their feelings of important about training programs in the studied organizations.

With respect to the robustness of research methodology, the survey questionnaires used in this study have satisfactorily met the standards of validity and reliability analyses; this may lead to the production of accurate and reliability research findings. In terms of practical contributions, the findings of this study may be used to improve training administration in organizations. In order to achieve this objective, managers should give more focus to improve the following aspects: firstly, update training contents and methods. For example, current training contents should be improved in order to strengthen trainee competencies in terms of cognitives, emotions and good moral values besides solving technical and daily management problems. Application of such competencies in facing challenging job will be enhanced if trainees can be properly trained by using practical training methods, such as team building, role play and cross-cultural case studies. Secondly, change recruitment policy. For example, managers should

give more priority in recruiting workers based on emotion and cognitive compentencies than academic qualifications. This recruitment policy may help to hire intelligent and talented candidates to fulfill important positions and their experiences may be use to train and guide executives and junior managers in organizations. Thirdly, adjust performance appraisal system. For example, the focus of current performance appraisal should emphasize more on developing the capability of individuals to attend and learn new knowledge, upto-date skills and abilities, as well as positive attitudes than physical skills and paper works. If trainees able to improve their abilities during training programs they should be given better recognitions and appreciations. If employers heavily consider these suggestions it may motivate trainees to support and commit with the workplace training program.

CONCLUSION

This study proposed a conceptual framework that was developed based on the workplace training literature. The instrument used in this study satisfactorily met the standards of validity and reliability analyses. The outcomes of SmartPLS path model confirmed that managers' training assignments (i.e., mandatory and voluntary assignments) did act as important predictors of trainees' perceived value in the studied organization. This result has also supported and broadened the previous training program literature mostly published in Western countries. Therefore, current research and practice within the training administration model needs to consider mandatory and voluntary as a key dimensions of the workplace training domain. This study further suggests that the ability of management to properly implement mandatory and voluntary assignments in encouraging trainees to attend and learn necessary knowledge, up to date skills, new abilities and positive attitudes can enhance their feelings of important in the workplace training program. Further, this positive perceptions may lead to maintained and supported the organizational strategy and goals in an era of globalization.

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