

RESEARCH ARTICLE

THE EFFECT OF TRAINING TOWARDS EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE: AN EVIDENCE FROM A PUBLIC UNIVERSITY IN MALAYSIA

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ABSTRACT - Employees are the true determinant of the success or competency of an organization. An adequately trained workforce is important to ensure the workplace has the right and valuable employees. Employees in the education sector need the training to improve their performance as they face limitations or challenges to be creative in completing a task. Despite the increasing effects on the training of organizational employees by organizations, there is still limited literature on human resource development issues in developing countries. The study is focused on the effect of training towards employee performance in a public university in Malaysia. Consequently, all the necessary data were collected from primary sources using questionnaires from 244 respondents. This study employed a quantitative approach and found that induction, technical, and soft skill training positively influence employee performance in the case company. In addition, the study recommended future research in training and development strategies, assisting the employees in understanding the relevance of training towards employee performance, monitoring the performance to ensure employees are on track to achieve the best performance, growing and maintaining the employee's performance to ensure the organization and personal goal can be achieved.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Employees are a vital asset in each organization, and training is one of the core strategies for its effectiveness in an organization (Wesemann, 2022). The training effort is organized to train people to learn and practice the learning. Effective training programs could increase employee self-efficacy (Liu et al., 2022). However, to ensure the training is effective, proper materials, appropriate training modules, the interest of trainee quality instructor, and creative training methods are needed. Organizations should strive to endeavor the best they can in business to have efficient employees and be effectively functional. Organizations must monitor their employees' performance to strategize and plan the training strategy (Islam et al., 2021). It is important not to ignore the prevailing evidence on the progress of knowledge in the corporate business world. The growth is not only on the improvements of technology or a combination of production factors but increased efforts towards the development of organizational human resources is also important. Pursuant to that, organizations are responsible to enriching employees' job performance and implementing training and development (Manzoor et al., 2019). Employees are the backbone of any organization, regardless of how big or small the organization are, and they are the true determinant of the success or competency of an organization (Srivastava & Pathak, 2019). An adequately trained workforce is important to ensure the workplace has the right and valuable employees (Islam et al., 2021).

The employees in the education sector need training to improve their performance as they face limitations or challenges to be creative in completing a task (Odilovich et al., 2020). According to Antony et al., (2018), inadequate learning is one of the reasons for failure in task delivery, hence proving that training is important to enhance their knowledge and skill and enable the employee to deliver their job properly. According to Aldhukair and Abunar (2021), despite the increasing effects on the training of organizational employees, there is still limited literature on human resource development issues in developing countries. Hence, this study performed a case study among the administration staff in a public university in Malaysia. Earlier, the public university's Human Resource Department (HRD) conducted a survey to their employees as the HRD received several complaints from the users on the poor performance of their administration employees. The survey revealed that lack of training was the main contributor to this poor performance. Although several training efforts were conducted by the HRD in the organization, the administration employees highlighted the reasons for not joining the training due to time constraints, limited offers, and repetitive training.

The theoretical and empirical data presented in this study will aid academicians and practitioners in deciding the best way to develop training strategies for employee performance. In practice, the findings of this study will give several recommendations to the organization to better understand the training needs to improve employee performance. The literature was discussed in this paper. Following that, the quantitative data analysis and discussion were addressed. Finally, the implications, findings, limitations, and future research ideas will be presented.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 *Theoretical Framework*

Edwin Locke introduced the goal-setting theory in 1968 (Locke & Latham, 1990). It recommends that individual goals established by an employee play an important role in motivating them. Difficult and explicit goals led to higher performance when compared to vague do-your-best goals. This theory states that goal setting is linked to task performance. Self-efficacy in this theory refers to self-confidence that the employee has the potential to perform a task. In contrast, goal commitment assumes that an individual is committed to the goal that has been set. This theory is suitable to use in this study as it is a theory that recommends that individual goals established by an employee play an important role in motivating them. Having a clear and challenging goal will help employees to perform better. Together with self-commitment, a great output could be achieved. Employing this theory, this study could examine the weaknesses in training that could affect employee performance and any improvement that could be done in future.

The interaction of three elements influences motivation of work environment, what the performer thinks, and what the performer does (Bandura, 1986). Social Cognitive Theory describes the influence of individual experiences, the actions of others, and environmental factors on individual health behaviors. A social cognitive theory provides opportunities for social support through instilling expectations and self-efficacy and using observational learning and other reinforcements to achieve behavior change. This theory has seven key elements; self-efficacy, behavioral capability, expectations, expectancies, self-control, observational learning and reinforcements. This study employs this theory as it explains a unique way in which individuals obtain and maintain behavior while also considering the social environment in which individuals perform the behavior based on a person's experience.

2.2 *Employee Performance*

Employees are the backbone of any organization, regardless of how big or small the organization is and are the true determinant of the success or competency of an organization (Wesemann, 2022). Pursuant to that, having an adequately trained workforce is important to ensure that the workplace has the right and valuable employees. The employees need to be trained professionally and qualified to do their job (Bahodirovich & Romilovich, 2021). However, in this highly dynamic economy, companies are expected to produce more than they did earlier. All this demand will strain the managers and force them to pressurize their employees for better performance (Cooke, Wang, & Bartram, 2019). To have a good productive employee, it is important to provide adequate training (Cooke et al., 2019; Bahodirovich & Romilovich, 2021). Thus, organizations must implement updated employee training strategies to increase employee productivity.

Increasing organization competency resulting the organization being able to stand confronting expanded rivalry, financial influence, and change in innovation in the competitive market. Innocent, Uzoamaka, and Levi (2017) said that well-performing employees contribute to an organization's efficiency and success. With that, the organization must make a strategy to improve and consistently measure the performance from time to time, as it is a basic step to be taken. Performance is one of the benchmarks used to determine performance quality (Wolor et al., 2020). Employee performance is the result of work related to success and failure in an organization (Sopiah et al., 2020). Organizations must continually review and revise the connection of skills, performance and training (Odilovich et al., 2020). By attending training, it is believed that employees will gain new knowledge and could practice it at their workplace (Liu et al., 2022). To measure employee performance, the case company (i.e., a public university in Malaysia) uses an Annual Performance Report (APAR) conducted annually for each employee. Employee performance has been evaluated on ongoing basis and covers various areas such as work ethic and individual achievements. This present study uses APAR to measure employee performance to measure the effectiveness of the training program.

2.3 *Training*

With current technological advancement and globalization, human resources managers need to look for more evidence to justify the investment in training programs (Abdeldayem & Aldulaimi, 2020). Training increases employee competency and productivity as the business continues (Liu et al., 2022). To increase employees' performance, up-to-date training is the key to success. Training could evaluate the existing performance of employees with the standard performance required by an organization (Abdeldayem & Aldulaimi, 2020; Al Karim, 2019). Resultantly, the gaps between the two could be removed and helps to achieve the standard requirement. Training increases organizational productivity and safety (Ozkeser, 2019). Enhancing employees' job performance could be done through training that has been intervened and planned to improve an employee's productivity and ultimately create organizational effectiveness (Odilovich et al., 2020).

Most organizations acknowledge the significance of training to improve employee performance (Islam et al., 2021). Training is a learning process to acquire specific knowledge and skills for certain jobs or tasks. This explains that training is necessary to develop employees' knowledge and skills to perform efficiently. Employees obtain interpersonal skills,

technical skills and solid knowledge through training to perform their job efficiently. Lack of training programmes leads to lower employee performance (Sireesha, Ahmed, & Venkatesh, 2019). Organizations usually have long-term planning, investing in building new abilities, skills, and knowledge at the workplace, preparing the employee to cope with the future (Islam et al., 2021). One accounting-related scholarly by Bananuka, Mukyala, and Nalukenge (2017) stated that performance could be affected when employees are not motivated and not supported to enhance their careers.

In this present study, the case company (i.e., a public university in Malaysia) has implemented numerous strategies for employee motivation, assessment and development to acknowledge and enhance employee performance. They conducted training consisting of conference, seminar, workshop, attachment, forum, camp, and talk that employees attended to ensure efficient and effective training. Adapted from previous research, Huluka (2018), training was divided into three types; induction training, technical training, and soft skill training.

2.4 Induction Training

For newly recruited staff, induction training is essential (Huluka, 2018). With good induction training, the newly recruited staff are retained and could settle in quickly for a productive role (Okorie & Musonda, 2020). During the induction training, staff will have basic training about work and the organization, for instance, the mission and vision of the organization, work schedule, employee benefits, discipline matters, dress code, and many more. New staff need to understand the organization's values and philosophy, personnel practices, health and safety rules and the job they will do with a clear understanding of the standard operating procedure, timeline and expectations. They must learn new skills to preserve and implement organizational culture, standards, rules and performance (Khanam, Ali, & Zulifiqar, 2020). It is a method to strengthen the induction level's effectiveness for new employees to develop the organization's valuable resources (Campbell & Groenbeck, 2018). In addition, newly hired employees will get to know the other newly hired employees, thus inviting them to be part of the organization. Induction training will be the platform for them to build real relationships with staff from different departments and, thus, will enhance their communication skills. Hence, the first hypothesis is developed.

H₁: Induction training has a positive impact on employee performance

2.5 Technical Training

Technical skills have played an important role in business ever since. However, they do not seem to be sufficient to effectively address the challenges of the labour market (Moore & Morton, 2017). Technical skills are the abilities and knowledge needed to perform specific tasks. It is essential to provide employees with the knowledge and train them with the relevant skill sets required to perform the job (Huluka, 2018). It usually relates to mechanical, information technology, mathematical, and scientific tasks. Technical skills are required in the workplace as it will be a routine task based on the employee's job description. Technical skills are important because every job relies on different tools and processes. In each job, specific skills or expertise are needed so the job can be done efficiently. The required skills are often a significant prerequisite to performing the job successfully. Thus, the second hypothesis is depicted.

H₂: Technical skill training has a positive impact on employee performance.

2.6 Soft Skills Training

Soft skills consist of an extensive list of abilities, ranging from operational to interpersonal. These include, but are not limited to, communication skills, teamwork, good decision-making or problem-solving, and many more (Dolce et al., 2020). Soft skills have come together with hard skills, and combining these two skills will produce good employee quality (Succi & Canovi, 2020). Soft skills are important to ensure the success of most employees because most jobs require the employee to engage with others in some way (Franco-Ángel, Carabali, & Velasco, 2023; Succi & Canovi, 2020). Soft skills are vital in customer-based jobs. Employees will have direct contact with the customer daily. It takes several soft skills to listen to customers and provide them with helpful and polite service (Dolce et al., 2020). Soft skills can be used in the workplace, such as communication, creative thinking, work ethic, teamwork, time management, problem-solving, critical thinking and many more (Aziz & Zaidoune, 2022). According to Dolce et al. (2020), soft skills are non-technical skills that will impact workplace performance. Therefore, the third hypothesis is formulated.

H₃: Soft skill training has a positive impact on employee performance

2.7 Conceptual Framework

From the literature review, the conceptual framework is developed as depicted in Figure 1.

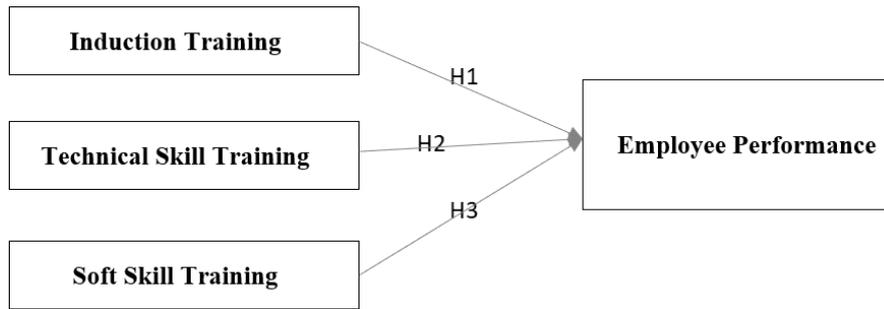


Figure 1. Conceptual framework

3.0 METHODOLOGY

This study employed a quantitative approach to achieve the goals of this study. This study focused on testing the hypothesis of a conceptual model that covered the correlation among several variables. The measurement development section stated that all the measurement items used a 5-points interval scale. Each measurement item was designed to examine a specific content and was developed referring to previous research. The unit of analysis involved is individual as they are involved in specific skills and knowledge, require training to enhance their skills and are believed to provide sufficient information for this study. The population for this study were 670 administrative employees in a public university in Malaysia comprising various departments such as IT, Human Recourse, Finance, Food and Beverage, and Administration. Convenience sampling was chosen as the sampling technique as it offers a fast, easy, and economical way to obtain the data. In addition, with this sampling method, all population elements have an equal and independent chance of being included, the researcher does not need to know the true composition of the population beforehand, and it is easy to apply all probability plans (Jawale, 2012).

In identifying the sample size, Krejcie and Morgan sampling tables were used. From the result, a minimum of 242 samples are required for data analysis. Google Forms was used to collect the data from the employees in the case company. In total, 244 respondents had successfully answered the questionnaire with a 36% response rate. The data are presented, analyzed and interpreted using percentage, frequencies, mean, standard deviation, and ANOVA tables using Standard Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 28. The demographic data of the respondents is tabulated in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic data of respondents

Demographics	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	124	50.8
Female	120	49.2
Age		
20-25	27	11.1
26-35	95	38.9
36-45	69	28.3
46-55	46	18.9
Above 55	7	2.9
Education Level		
SPM	11	4.5
Diploma	119	48.8
Degree	89	36.5
Master Degree	23	9.4
PHD	2	.8
Working Experience		
1-3 Years	47	19.3
4-6 Years	64	26.2
7-10 Years	55	22.5
More than 10 Years	78	32.0

4.0 RESEARCH FINDINGS

Pearson’s correlation coefficient was computed to determine the significant relationship between training and employee performance. Table 2 shows the Pearson correlation result on the relationship between the type of training and employee performance.

Table 2. Correlation result

Independent variable	Performance
Induction	0.711
Technical skill	0.641
Soft skill	0.759

Table 2 shows a significant positive relationship between induction training and employee performance (i.e., $r = .711$, $p < 0.01$). The correlation between the two variables was highly positive, implying that induction training has a high positive correlation with employee performance. Thus, the first hypothesis (i.e., induction training has a positive impact on employee performance) is accepted as for technical skill training (i.e., $r = .641$, $p < 0.01$). The magnitude of correlation/relationship between the two variables was moderate. This implies technical skill training has a moderate and positive correlation with employee performance. Thus, the second hypothesis (i.e., technical skill training has a positive impact on employee performance) is accepted as there is a moderate relationship between technical skill training and employee performance. The third hypothesis (i.e., soft skill training has a positive impact on employee performance) shows that there is a significant positive relationship between the variables (i.e., $r = .759$, $p < 0.01$). This implies technical skill training has a high positive level of correlation with employee performance. Thus, the hypothesis is accepted.

As there was a positive and significant relationship between induction training, technical skill training and soft skill training with employee performance, the strength of the predictive relationship between the variables was further investigated. Regression analysis was conducted due to significant associations among the constructs and used to study the correlation more closely and to examine the effects of independent variables towards the dependent variable. Multiple regression analysis was performed to see the extent to which the explanatory variables explain the variance in the explained variable.

Table 3. Regression analysis Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.790 ^a	.625	.620	.39748

Based on Table 3, the value of R (i.e., 0.790) is the multiple correlation coefficient between the independent variables consisting of induction training, technical skill training, and soft skill training and the dependent variable, employee performance. Therefore, the three independent variables explain 62.5% variation in the dependent variable. In other words, these three independent variables are unable to explain the remaining 37.5% of the variation in employee performance. A positive and significant for all values implies that the model summary is significant and shows logical support to the model. The model is statistically significant, and the p-value is less than (i.e., 0.01). This explained that the independent variable influences the fitness of the model in explaining employee performance could be considered.

Table 4. ANOVA^a

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	63.149	3	21.050	133.232	<.001 ^b
Residual	37.918	240	.158		
Total	101.067	243			

- a. Dependent Variable: Employee Performance
- b. Predictors: (Constant), Soft Skill, Technical Skill, Induction Training

The study also conducted ANOVA to identify the extent of the relationship between the three independent variables (induction training, technical skill training and soft skill training) and the dependent variable, employee performance and the result established that the p-value, which is 0.001 in the table, is lower than the fixed level of significance or alpha level of 0.05 used specified in SPSS for this analysis. The alternate hypothesis is accepted, and the null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that induction, technical, and soft skill training will positively impact employee performance.

Table 5. Coefficients of regression analysis

Construct	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
	B	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.
(Constant)	.579	.184		3.147	.002
Induction Training	.303	.065	.293	4.676	<.001
Technical Skill Training	.093	.060	.095	1.552	.122
Soft Skill Training	.478	.070	.468	6.864	<.001

The coefficient of regression analysis is conducted to determine if the result of ANOVA statistics is reliable. The result shows that the p-value is 0.00, lower than the alpha level of significance of 5%. Thus, it can be inferred from this result that the ANOVA Statistic is correct. The hypothesis was accepted, while the null hypothesis was rejected, meaning that training significantly impacts employee performance at the public university.

5.0 DISCUSSION

This study investigates the importance of induction, soft, and technical skill training on employee performance. The current study developed four direct hypotheses to empirically test a framework based on a theoretical framework. Based on the findings, it was determined that three factors (H_1 , H_2 , and H_3) have a positive relationship with employee performance. Based on this finding, the organization needs to have a clear path in training and development strategies, assisting the employees in understanding the relevance of training towards employee performance, and monitoring the performance to ensure employees are on track to achieve the best performance. From the first hypothesis, it is concluded that induction training is an important factor in employee performance. This finding is aligned with several previous researchers. Induction training provides knowledge and skills to the promoted, transferred, and re-categorized staff. It is important to convey to the newly recruited staff and for management to get to know their staff and enhance employee integration at the workplace through socialization (Mchete & Shayo, 2020). In addition, Gupta (2018) reported that orientation training is an important investment that impacts how employees behave in groups and builds a sense of working as a team to accomplish common goals.

The second hypothesis investigates the technical skills to improve the employee's skills while performing their job and leads to better performance of the employees. Technical ability has leveraged a significant impact on work performance. In contrast, the needs for existence, relationships, and the need for ability are enough evidence to conclude that each variable significantly impacts work performance (Anggiani, 2017). Similarly, according to Aldhukair and Abunar (2021), good technical skill ability makes employees capable of continuing to grow and increasing work performance significantly. Finally, the third hypothesis explores soft skill training to improve employee performance. Results have shown that this relationship is significant. This finding is alignment with the result from Anggiani (2017) which mentioned that the soft skill variable significantly influences employee performance and proposed that soft skill is more important than technical skill. According to Schutte et al., (2001), individuals with high emotional intelligence perform better. In other words, performance will be positive for employees with high emotional intelligence and will have negative performance when emotional intelligence is low. Soft skill training is necessary to be attended by all employees as it is the most important basis for each employee to have.

6.0 CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The study's outcome shows that training significantly influences employee performance. This study identifies several managerial implications in the management practices of the organization. First, if the training content is enhanced and the types of training are diversified, it could increase employee performance. Secondly, if training is one of the measurement methods, thus employees must be offered and encouraged to attend external training to learn extra and wide information and knowledge. Participating in external training will expose the employees to other environments that could help in increasing their performance more efficiently. Third, offering numerous training indirectly will enhance the employee's skills. Thus, employee performance could be better.

To achieve the effectiveness of employee performance, implications that arise and need to be handled by the organization are;

- 1) To improve the training and development strategies.
- 2) Helping the employees to understand the relevance of training towards employee performance
- 3) Monitor the performance to ensure employees are on track to achieve the best performance
- 4) Growing and maintaining the employee's performance to ensure the organization and personal goals can be achieved

There are several limitations while conducting this study. Firstly, the study is conducted only in one organization. The second problem faced by the researcher was to have cooperation from the administrative employees as they are busy as it was during the peak season when much work must be done at the end of the year. Thus, the researcher must consistently

approach the employees to ensure they answered the questionnaire. The third problem is that the study is quantitative, and measurement is fully based on the result questionnaire result. Thus, future research can extend this study to the qualitative method to have a better result from both methods.

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