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# Effect of Administrator's Role in Training Programs on Training Motivation: Investigating the Perception of Malaysia's Largest Banking Group Employees

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#### **ABSTRACT**

A recent literature relating on human resource development and management highlights that administrators often play two important roles in planning and implementing training programs: assignment and support. The capability of administrators to appropriately implement assignment and support may induce positive personal outcomes, especially training motivation. Although the nature of this association is interesting, not much is recognized on the role of administrators as an essential determinant in the workplace human resource model. Thus, this study was carried out to examine the association between administrator's role in training programs and training motivation using self-report questionnaires collected from employees of a large bank in Malaysia. The results of SmartPLS path model analysis showed two important findings: firstly, support was positively and insignificantly related to training motivation. Secondly, assignment was positively and significantly related to training motivation. This finding confirms that support does not act as an essential determinant of training motivation in the studied organization. In addition, discussion, implications and conclusion are included.

**Keywords:** Administrator's role in training program, Training motivation, Support, Assignment.

#### 1. Introduction

Training is often viewed as a strategic human resource development and management issue (Ismail & Ibrahim, 2010; Noe, 2010). It is a form of learning (Sadler-Smith, 2006), which commonly defined as a systematic process of acquiring work-related skills, knowledge, rules and concept with the aim to improve job performance (Latif, Jan, & Shaheen, 2013). Training is important for an organization because of various reasons. From employees point of view, training provides motivation for employees to increase their commitment while at the same time leads to job satisfaction (Latif et al., 2013; Saeed et al., 2013). Training also has been found to be an important factor in influencing employees retention with an organization (Hassan, Razi, Qamar, Jaffir, & Suhail, 2013). On the other hand, in line with the purpose of improving employee's performance, training in consequence will be able to increase firm's productivity (Barba Aragón, Jiménez Jiménez, & Sanz Valle, 2014; Elnaga & Imran, 2013). Not only that, training also provides competitive advantage by producing well-trained, talented and skillful employees (Saeed et al., 2013).

In order to organize training, organization should conduct a need analysis to determine areas of improvement and types of training suitable (Hassan et al., 2013; Tabassi & Bakar, 2009). In the workplace, various types of on the job and off the job training programs are planned and implemented by employers to enhance employees' knowledge, skills, abilities and positive attitudes in order to support the organizational goals, expectations and needs (Ismail & Ibrahim, 2010; Noe, 2010; Vodde, 2012).

In managing training programs, human resource administrators will often work together with line managers to create appropriate training programs and improve the content and methods of training programs. After getting approval from top management, human resource administrators will jointly coordinate with line managers to implement the various types of training for the benefits of organization and employee (Aminuddin, 2008; Ismail & Ibrahim, 2010; Noe, Hollenbeck, Gerhartm, & Wright, 2009; Vodde, 2012). Traditionally, human resource administrators usually design many types of training

programs to develop basic skills and apply them in order to overcome immediate job problems and increase daily job performance. This training approach is suitable for organizations that operate in less competitive environments and high market stability (Ismail & Ibrahim, 2010; Noe et al., 2009; Noe, 2010). In the era of global competition, most human resource administrators have shifted their paradigms from a traditional based training to achieve organizational strategy and goals (DeSimone, Werner & Harris, 2002; Goldstein & Ford, 2002; Noe, 2010). Under this strategic approach, a traditional based training is viewed as not adequate to enable employees coping with current organizational changes (Blanchard & Thacker, 2004; Ismail & Ibrahim, 2010). In order to sustain organizational competitiveness, human resource administrators have taken proactive actions to focus on improving intangible assets and human capital by imparting new competencies, changing negative attitudes, matching knowledge and skills to organization needs, preparing employees to face new challenges, adapting with sophisticated technologies, doing a continuous improvements and promoting organizational learning (Blanchard & Thacker, 2004; Ismail & Ibrahim, 2010; Noe, 2010). If these training programs are administered properly, it will help employees to upgrade their capabilities in terms of cognitive, affective, psychomotor and good moral values. Hence, it may lead employees to maintain and support organizational strategy and goals (Ismail & Ibrahim, 2010; Nijman, Nijhof, Wognum, & Veldkamp, 2006; Noe, 2010).

A review of recent workplace training program literature highlights that successful training administration usually has two key components, namely support and assignment (Ismail et. al., 2010; Tsai & Tai, 2003). Support is broadly viewed as administrators highly encourage employees to attend training programs, help employees before, during and after training programs in terms of time, budgetary and resources, involve employees in decision-making, and guide trainees in applying competencies that they have learned when entering the workplace (DeSimone et. al., 2002; Nijman et al., 2006; Noe, 2010). On the contrary, assignment is broadly viewed as administrator's role in giving instruction either mandatorily or voluntarily for employees to attend training program. Mandatory assignment refers to instruction for employees to compulsorily attending a training program assigned to them. Mandatory assignment is usually implemented when administrators feel that the training is deemed important to be attended by employees in order to perform their job thus meeting the organizational goals. On the other hand, voluntary assignment is frequently referred to the choice for employees to attend or not to attend training programs assigned to them (Ismail & Ibrahim, 2010; Machin & Treloar, 2004; Tsai & Tai, 2003). Motivation on the other hand refers to an individual willingness to make an effort to achieve something (Tabassi & Bakar, 2009). Training motivation is generally defined as individuals desire to learn necessary knowledge, current skills and new abilities through training programme and applying it in performing their job (Analoui, 1999; Ismail et al., 2009; Machin & Treloar, 2004; Noe, 2010). A high motivation is strongly important for an individual attending a training programme in order to reap off the full benefit of the programme (Tabassi & Bakar, 2009).

Within the workplace training model, many scholars think that support, assignment, delivery and training motivation are distinct, but strongly interrelated constructs. For example, the ability of management to adequately provide support, appropriately giving assignments and correctly select delivery modes may motivate employee to attend and learn in the workplace training programs (Chaloner, 2006; Machin & Forgaty, 2004; Tsai & Tai, 2003). Although the nature of this relationship is interesting, little is explained about the role of administrators as an essential determinant in the workplace training research literature (Chaloner, 2006; Machin & Forgaty, 2004). Many scholars argue that the role of administrators as majority of the discussions have been on the internal properties of administrator's role in organizations. These studies employed simple correlation method as a mean to evaluate selected employee demographic perceptions toward administrator's role in training administration, and measure the association between administrator's role in training administration and training outcomes. Yet, the magnitude and nature of the relationship between administrator's role in training programs and training outcomes are left explained in training administration research literature. Consequently, these studies have not provided adequate empirical evidence that may be used as guidelines by practitioners to set up current action plans for maintaining and achieving their organizations' vision, missions and goals in knowledge based economy. Therefore, based on this situation this study is conducted to further discover the nature of the relationship between training training administrators and training motivation.

## 2. Objective of the Study

This study has twofold objectives: first, is to examine the relationship between support and training motivation. Second, is to examine the relationship between assignment and training motivation.

#### 3. Literature Review

Several studies have been conducted using an indirect effects model to investigate the relationship between training administration and training motivation based on different samples. For example, Tsai & Tai (2003) explored the perceptions of 184 employees belonging to 18 banks who attended government-sponsored training programs in Northern Taiwan, while Machin & Fogarty (2004) studied the perceptions of 137 trainees from Queensland Police Service in Australia towards training administration. Chaloner (2006) on the other hand look into the perceptions of 100 participants from the non-UK sites of the aircraft manufacturer Airbus on the same matter. Outcomes from these surveys reported that the readiness of administrators to provide adequate support (e.g., encouragement and materials), and implement appropriate assignment decisions (e.g., voluntary and mandatory) had been major determinants of training motivation in the respective organizations (Chaloner, 2006; Machin & Fogarty, 2004; Tsai & Tai, 2003). In addition to that, Ismail, Mohamed, Sulaiman, and Sabhi (2010) focus on the perceptions of 110 employees attending a training program in East Malaysia and found that administrators' support plays an important role in increasing enthusiasm and motivation to learn among employees. Not only that, Hassan et al. (2013) also found that administrators' play an important role in increasing training motivation.

These studies support the notion of motivation theory. For example, Maslow's Need Hierarchy Theory assumes that individuals are motivated to achieve or maintain various goals within five sets of needs including basic needs, safety, love, esteem and self-actualization. In the work environment, upon fulfilling the lower level needs, employees strive to achieve self-esteem and self-actualization which among others need support in terms of training in order to achieve it (Ramlall, 2004). On the other hand, Baldwin and Ford's (1988) transfer theory explains that helping is an essential factor that motivates employees to learn and apply what they have learned in the workplace. Besides that, Adam's (1963) equity theory posits that fair treatment is a major factor that motivates an individual to perform task. Thus, Locke and Latham's (1990) goal setting theory highlights that clarity of goals may guide an individual to perform job. Almost similarly, Vroom's expectancy theory posits that an individual willingness to act in a certain way is influence by their expectation on the outcome (Ramlall, 2004). In a training administration model, the essence of these theories suggests that fair treatment and clarity of goals will increase if administrators able to properly provide support and make assignment decisions in training programs. As a result, it may lead to enhanced trainees' motivation to attend and learn necessary knowledge, up to date skills, new abilities and positive attitudes in the training programs.

Based on the literature, it was hypothesized that:

H1: Support positively related to training motivation

H2: Assignment positively related to training motivation

### 4. Methodology

This study used a cross-sectional research design that allowed the researchers to integrate the training administration research literature, the semi-structured interview, the pilot study and the actual survey as a main procedure to gather data for this study. As recommended by many scholars, the main advantage of using this procedure may improve the inadequacy of single method, as well as upgrade the ability to gather accurate data, decrease bias data and increase quality of data being collected (Cresswell, 1998; Ismail et al., 2010; Sekaran & Bougie, 2011). This study was conducted at one of the largest banking group in Malaysia. At the initial stage of data collection, survey questionnaire was drafted based on the training program literature. After that, the semi-structured interviews were conducted involving five employees in the management and professional group in order to understand the nature of administrator's role in training programs and training motivation, as well as the relationship between such variables in the organization in the context of this study. Further, information gathered from the interview method was used to improve the content and format of survey questionnaire for an actual study. A back translation technique was used to translate the survey questionnaire into English and Malay versions in order to increase the validity and reliability of research findings (Cresswell, 1998; Ismail et al., 2010; Sekaran & Bougie, 2011).

The survey questionnaire used in this study has two sections: first, support has 3 items, and assignment has 3 items that were modified from training administration literature (Goldstein & Ford, 2002; Ismail & Ibrahim, 2010; Ismail *et al.*, 2009; Machin & Fogarty, 2004; Noe, 2010; Tsai & Tai, 2003). Second, training motivation has 3 items that were modified from training motivation literature (Goldstein & Ford, 2002; Ismail & Ibrahim, 2010; Ismail *et al.*, 2009; Machin & Fogarty, 2004; Noe, 2010; Rodrigues & Gregory, 2005; Tsai and Tai, 2003; Tai, 2006). All items used in the questionnaires were measured using a 7-item scale ranging from "strongly disagree" (1) to "strongly agree" (7).

Demographic variables were used as controlling variables because this study focused on employee attitudes.

A convenience sampling technique was employed to distribute 200 self-report questionnaires to employees who work in the studied organization. However, only 113 usable questionnaires were returned to the researchers, yielding 51.5 percent of the response rate. The survey questionnaires were answered by participants based on their consent and a voluntary basis. The number of this sample exceeds the minimum sample of 30 participants as required by probability sampling technique, indicating that it may be analyzed using inferential statistics (Cresswell, 1998; Sekaran & Bougie, 2011). As recommended by prominent scholars, the SmartPLS 2.0 was employed to analyze the psychometric of survey questionnaire data and thus test the research hypotheses (Henseler et al., 2009; Riggle et al., 2009).

## 5. Findings

Overall, the majority of respondents were males (65%), ages between 26 and 35 years old (48.5%), married employees (60.2%), executive level and above (54.4%), bachelor degree holders (43.7%), and employees who worked from 6 to 10 years (27.2%).

The confirmatory factor analysis was performed to determine the psychometric properties of survey questionnaire data. Table 1 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 (Henseler et al., 2009). Besides that, all constructs had the values of AVE square root in diagonal 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-1. The Results of Convergent and Discriminant Validity Analyses

Variable	AVE	Support	Assignment	Training Motivation
Support	0.6199	0.7873		
Assignment	0.7534	0.4991	0.8680	
Training Motivation	0.8406	0.3904	0.6037	0.9168

Table 2 shows that the correlation between items and factors had higher loadings than other items in the different constructs. The loadings of the four variables were greater than 0.7 in their own constructs in the model, indicating that the validity of measurement model met the criteria (Henseler et al., 2009). Besides that, the values of composite reliability and Cronbach's Alpha were greater than 0.8, indicating that the instrument used in this study had high internal consistency (Henseler et al., 2009; Nunally & Benstein, 1994). These statistical analyses confirmed that the measurement scales met the acceptable standard of validity and reliability analyses.

**Table-2.** The Results of Factor Loadings and Cross Loadings for Different Construct

Construct/ Item	No. of Items	Factor Loadings	Composite Reliability	Cronbach Alpha
Support	3	0.853399 to 0.894293	0.828775	0.729584
Assignment	3	0.704745 to 0.896222	0.901607	0.846976
Training Motivation	3	0.858772 to 0.954051	0.940449	0.904990

Table 3 shows the results of Pearson correlation analysis and descriptive statistics. The means for all variables are from 4.2 to 5.0, signifying that the levels of support, assignment and training motivation ranging from high (4.0) to highest level (7). The correlation coefficients for the relationship between the independent variable (i.e., support and assignment) and the dependent variable (i.e., training motivation) were less than 0.90, indicating that the data were not affected by serious collinearity problem (Hair, Anderson, Tatham & Black, 2006). Thus, these statistical results provide further evidence of validity and reliability for the measurement scales used in this research.

Table-3. Pearson Correlation Analysis and Descriptive Statistics

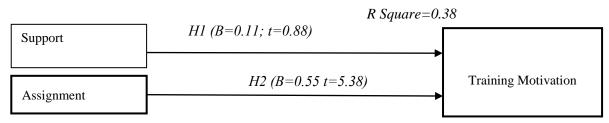
Variable	Mean	<b>Standard Deviation</b>	Pearson Correlation Coefficients (r)		
			1	2	3
1. Support	5.0	1.0	1		
2. Assignment	4.4	1.4	.46*	1	
3. Training Motivation	4.2	1.3	.34**	.56**	1

**Note:** Significant at \*\*p< 0.01 Reliability Estimation is showed in a diagonal

Figure 1 shows that the inclusion of support and assignment in the analysis had explained 38 percent of the variance in training motivation. Specifically, the results of hypothesis tests displayed two important findings: first, support positively and insignificantly correlated with training motivation ( $\beta$ =0.11;t=0.88), therefore H1 was not supported. Second, assignment positively and insignificantly correlated with training motivation ( $\beta$ =0.54;t=5.38), therefore H2 was supported. Overall, the results confirm that administrator's role in training programs does act as an essential determinant of training motivation in the studied organization.

Independent Variable (Administrator's Role in Training Programs)

Dependent Variable



**Figure-1.** The Outcomes of SmartPLS Path Model Showing the Relationship between Administrator's Role in Training Programs and Training Motivation

**Note:** *Significant at t* > *1.96* 

In order to determine a global fit PLS path model, we carried out a global fit measure (GoF) based on Wetzels et al.'s (2009) guideline as follows: GoF=SQRT{MEAN (Communality of Endogenous) x MEAN (R<sup>2</sup>)}=0.53, signifying that it exceeds the cut-off value of 0.36 for large effect sizes of R<sup>2</sup>. This result confirms that the PLS path model has better explanatory power in comparison with the baseline values (GoF small=0.1, GoF medium=0.25, GoF large=0.36). It also provides strong support to validate the PLS model globally (Wetzels et al., 2009).

#### 6. Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrates that support does not act as an essential determinant of training motivation, but assignment does act as an essential determinant of training motivation in the organizational sample. In the context of this study, administrators have planned and implemented training programs based on the standard operating procedures in order to motivate employees to appreciate and obligate with their duties and responsibilities. The majority of respondents believed that the levels of support, assignment and training motivation are high. This indicating that administrators have provided appropriate physical and moral support, although this effort is viewed by some trainees as insufficient to enhance trainees' motivation to attend and learn necessary knowledge, up-to-date skills, new abilities and positive attitudes in the training programs. In contrary, the readiness of administrators to implement assignment decisions is seen as adequate and it has enhanced employees' motivation to attend the training program and learn necessary knowledge, skills, abilities and attitudes.

The implications of this study can be divided into three categories: theoretical contribution, robustness of research methodology, and practical contribution. In terms of theoretical contribution, this study highlights two important findings: first, assignment does act as an essential determinant of training motivation in the studied organization. This result is consistent with studies by Tsai and Tai (2003), Machin and Fogarty (2004) and Chaloner (2006). Second, support does not act as an essential determinant of training motivation in the studied organization. A careful observation of the semi-structured interview results shows that this finding may be influenced by external factors: first, administrators have mandatorily assigned employees to attend training programs in order to fulfill yearly training schedules. Although this training assignment is done according to the organizational policy, majority respondents

feel that the content of training programs is not related with their job. Second, administrators have provided physical facilities according to the organizational procedures, but majority respondents feel that the facilities provided are not appropriate with the requirements of training programs. These factors may overrule the influence of training support on training motivation in the workplace.

With respect to the robustness of research methodology, the survey questionnaire used in this study has met the acceptable standards of validity and reliability analyses; this may lead to the production of accurate and reliable findings. In terms of practical contributions, the findings of this study can be used to improve the design and administration of training programs in organizations. This objective will be achieved if management emphasizes on the following aspects:

First, administrator's should be exposed to effective leadership style. By having a good leadership skill, administrator would know on how to communicate and inspire employees in achieving organization's vision, to understand and develop people, also to establish appropriate environment (Leithwood, Day, Sammons, Harris, & Hopkins, 2006). A good leader would be able to contribute in developing the capacities and capabilities of staff, in which one of the way is by motivating them to attend training. Second, as support is positively related to training motivation, although in the case of this study is not significant, organization therefore still need to provide appropriate support in order to encourage employees to attend, learn and apply knowledge, skills and attitudes gained from training. Various types of training support could be given among others including support in terms of time allocation in attending training, financial and resources assistance, as well as providing opportunities for employees to apply the knowledge, skill and abilities that they have learned after attending the training program. Third, as assignment is not only positively related but also significant in influencing training motivation, it is therefore important for administrator's to ensure that appropriate assignment is practice. In order to do this, selecting the right employees for the right training programs is important. A Training Needs Analysis should be conducted so that each and every employees training needs could be identified. The relevance of training to individual employees is not only important in encouraging employees to attend training, but also in influencing training transfer (Pidd, 2004). Considering all of these suggestions, if it is implemented, hopefully it may motivate employees to appreciate and support the workplace training program.

#### 7. Conclusion

This study confirmed that training support does not act as an important determinant of training motivation. A thorough investigation of the semi-structured interview outcomes shows that this result may be influenced by external factors: first, majority of the interviewed respondents perceive that administrators have provided physical support that are not suitable with the requirements of training programs, and given less encouragements to employees in training programs. Second, most of the interviewed respondents believed that the administrators have different abilities and objectives in providing physical and moral support in training programs. Due to these differences, respondents are not able to see how the benefits of training support may attract, retain and motivate employees who work in different job categories to participate in training programs. This situation may overrule the effectiveness of training support in the workplace training program. Conversely, training assignment does act as an important determinant of training motivation. This result also has supported and broadened training administration literature mostly published in Western countries. Therefore, current research and practice within the workplace human capital development model needs to consider training support and training assignment as key components of the training administration domain. This study further suggests that the capability of administrators to appropriately provide support and make assignments in training programs will strongly invoke positive employee outcomes (e.g., competency transfer, job satisfaction, and job performance). Consequently, these positive outcomes may lead to maintained and supported organizational strategy and goals.

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