



Faculty of Cognitive Sciences and Human Development

**THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PERCEIVED EMPLOYEE
TRAINING TRANSFER AND POST-TRAINING EMPLOYEE
ENGAGEMENT LEVEL**

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Bachelor of Science with Honours

(Human Resource Development)

2020

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Final Year Project Report

Masters

PhD

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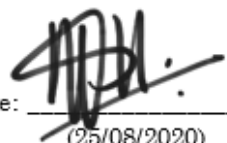
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**THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PERCEIVED EMPLOYEE TRAINING
TRANSFER AND POST-TRAINING EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT LEVEL**

NG LEI TING

This project is submitted
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for a
Bachelor of Science with Honours
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The project entitled 'The Relationship between Perceived Employee Training Transfer and Post-training Employee Engagement Level' was prepared by Ng Lei Ting and submitted to the Faculty of Cognitive Sciences and Human Development in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Bachelor of Science with Honours (Human Resource Development).

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ABSTRACT

Employees are valuable assets to any organization and their performance has a direct impact on overall organizational achievements. Among other strategies employed by the aviation industry, employee engagement has emerged as a critical driver of business success in today's competitive marketplace. To achieve this, training and training transfer play a key role in grooming workforce to drive their performance at all levels. This reading helps to ascertain the role of training transfer factors to enhance employee engagement which will, in turn, lead the aviation sector to better decision-making. It supports the works to enhance training interventions and transfer efforts in the aviation sector. The study was carried out on the employees working at all levels in aviation organizations, specifically those acquired training activities. Questionnaire data was gathered from 280 employees of aviation organizations in Selangor, Malaysia. The data was analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Pearson's correlation test and multiple regression test were used to test the research hypotheses. The results indicated that all the factors of perceived employee training transfer, trainee characteristics, training design and work environment, had a significant relationship with post-training employee engagement level. Moreover, training design was identified as the dominant training transfer factor to influence employee engagement level after training. These results highlighted the importance of controlling training transfer factors at optimum level to create the best conditions for trained employees to transfer their acquired knowledge, skills and abilities to the actual work context. This study also provides the opportunity for future researchers to increase the scope of research pertaining to training transfer and employee engagement.

Keywords: training transfer, trainee characteristics, training design, work environment, employee engagement, aviation sector.

ABSTRAK

Tenaga kerja merupakan aset yang bernilai kepada mana-mana organisasi dan prestasi mereka mendatangkan kesan yang langsung pada pencapaian organisasi secara keseluruhan. Antara strategi-strategi lain yang digunakan oleh industri penerbangan, keterikatan pekerja telah muncul sebagai pemacu kritikal untuk menjayakan perniagaan dalam pasaran yang semakin kompetitif kini. Bagi membangunkan keterikatan pekerja, program latihan dan pemindahan latihan memainkan peranan yang penting untuk menggalakkan pekerja dan meningkatkan prestasi mereka dalam pelbagai aspek. Kajian ini membantu untuk menekankan peranan factor-faktor dalam mempengaruhi pemindahan latihan dan menguatkan keterikatan pekerja yang seterusnya akan menerajui sektor penerbangan untuk menambahbaik proses pembuatan keputusan. Kajian ini juga menyokong usaha untuk meningkatkan keberkesanan intervensi latihan dan pemindahan latihan dalam sector penerbangan. Kajian ini telah dijalankan dengan melibatkan pekerja-pekerja dalam industri penerbangan tanpa mengira peringkat, khususnya mereka yang pernah terlibat dalam program latihan. Untuk mendapatkan data, borang soal selidik telah dijawab oleh 280 orang pekerja yang bekerja dalam syarikat penerbangan di Selangor, Malaysia. Data yang diperolehi telah dianalisis menggunakan *Statistical Package for Social Sciences* (SPSS). Ujian pekali korelasi Pearson 'r' dan regresi berganda telah digunakan untuk menguji hipotesis kajian ini. Dapatan kajian menunjukkan bahawa terdapat hubungan yang signifikan antara faktor-faktor pemindahan latihan iaitu ciri-ciri individu pelatih, reka bentuk program latihan dan persekitaran tempat kerja, dengan keterikatan pekerja pasca program latihan. Selain itu, reka bentuk program latihan telah didapati sebagai faktor pemindahan latihan yang dominan bagi mempengaruhi keterikatan pekerja. Kajian ini mengenal pasti kepentingan untuk mengawal faktor-faktor yang mempengaruhi pemindahan latihan pada tahap optimum dalam mewujudkan keadaan yang terbaik bagi pekerja yang pernah dilatih untuk mengaplikasikan pengetahuan, kemahiran dan sikap yang diperolehi daripada

program latihan dalam konteks kerja sebenar. Kajian ini juga memberi ruang kepada pengkaji pada masa hadapan untuk meluaskan lagi skop kajian mengenai pemindahan latihan dan keterikatan pekerja.

Kata-kata kunci: pemindahan latihan, ciri-ciri individu pelatih, reka bentuk program latihan, persekitaran tempat kerja, keterikatan pekerja, sektor penerbangan.

CHAPTER ONE

Overview of Study

1.0 Introduction

Employees are any organization's primary asset. It cannot be denied that they have positive roles in striving corporate success. Generally, it is accepted by all modern organizations that a well-trained workforce is a critical success factor. Training is a systematic approach to develop and enhance employees' knowledge, skills and abilities in order to increase effectiveness of organizations (Aguinus & Kraiger, 2009). It is a human resource development (HRD) practice which is often deemed and proved as a broad collection of activities that contribute to continual learning and development of general job- and career-related skills (Boon, Den Hartog, Boselie & Paauwe, 2011). To engage and retain employees in the organizations, employers nowadays are willing to invest huge amount of money annually to train its employees for future business needs. For most organizations, training is actually a costly investment and it is fair for employers to ensure that their investments in training could bring them maximum returns.

In relation to that, effective training transfer must occur for these unique assets to maximize professional efforts, build strong bonds and generate a highly engaged workforce. Unfortunately, the degree to which skills and knowledge learnt in training are transferred to work settings had been shown to be somewhat limited. Training transfer is not satisfactory, especially in developing countries. The concept of employee engagement is becoming more and more important nowadays in ensuring the effectiveness of HRD practices to implement individuals' and businesses' success (Sims, 2002). Therefore, training transfer is a key construct to discourse organizational concerns in engaging employees.

While previous studies had enhanced our understanding of how training could be related to engagement, there is no conclusion as to why training transfer relates to employee engagement. This showed that the research space had not been fully explored to date. Past researchers identified a broad range of training transfer factors, which each enhances training transfer, individually. Investigating the factors in isolation is problematic for a few reasons. Firstly, the researchers could have little consideration of the differences of each factor when adding potential factors into their analyses. A number of factors may overlap conceptually and it is difficult to clarify the role of each factor in the transfer mechanism which eventually influences employee engagement. Besides, exploring the factors individually limits the extent to which researchers can prove that the factor is practically crucial. Some may overshadow others or have specific effects, so it is important to include a thorough range of potential factors within literature in order to fully understand the process through how perceived employee training transfer affects their engagement level.

The present study aimed to address these issues by drawing from and testing a proposed model of training transfer to influence post-training employee engagement level. The conceptual underpinnings of Baldwin and Ford's transfer of training model (1988) was used to help organize a range of training transfer factors that each implied a specific aspect that connected training transfer with employee engagement, positively or negatively. Based on the quadrants of this model, the training transfer factors were divided into three categories. In specific, the factors of trainee characteristics, training design and work environment, were identified to occupy a specific quadrant each and related to engagement.

Additionally, a framework was developed to better understand how perceived employee training transfer impacted on post-training employee engagement level. As individuals appraised the factors, it helped to untangle why organizational factors like training were linked to important employee outcomes like engagement. This study drew on the model

of Baldwin and Ford (1988) to suggest that employees will evaluate the extent to which they have optimum input factors for effective training transfer and respond to having applied training transfer to the workplace. Clarifying these pathways will aid practitioners to enhance employee engagement, strengthen the investment in training and support training transfer, particularly during periods of economic strain and organizational change.

In sum, this study proposed and tested a model that related perceived employee training transfer to post-training employee engagement level. In doing so, the study helps to clear up the research space that links employees' perceptions of HRD practices with employee outcomes as well as bring clarity to HRD literature.

1.1 Background of Study

The worldwide trends in organizational HRD practices are changing dynamically. Employers are now more concerned with employee engagement than with cost cut off. Engaged workforce plays a significant role in driving the organizations towards achieving goals, causing employee engagement to be an important factor to appraise and manage the workforce performance (Rich, Lepine & Crawford, 2010). More organizations are awakening to the need to develop their employees' intellectual capital to gain competitive advantage in an increasingly challenging economic environment (Burke & El-Kot, 2010). The need to retain valued employees has urged the employers to focus on employees' development via training as a way to engage them.

Training is a systematic approach to increase employees' aptitudes, skills and abilities to carry out specific jobs (Jucius, 1955). The core purpose of training is to improve employees' performance resulting in enhanced organizational performance. Job-related competencies are

conveyed, developed and adjusted to workplace settings among trained employees. Training is also considered as an attempt with proper planning to smooth learning progress of employees' professional knowledge, skills and abilities (Noe, Hollenbeck, Gerhart & Wright, 2010). However, the trainings' outcomes must be perceived by trainees as effective and of value to them to cause positive effects on key employee attitudes (Sahinidis & Bouris, 2008).

Training effectiveness had been investigated in association with a number of training outcomes. One of the frameworks used to identify and categorize training outcomes is a four level frameworks that was developed by Kirkpatrick (1996). The framework consists of four components which include reactions, learning, behaviour and results. Reactions refer to trainees' satisfaction level about training, learning is the acquisition of knowledge, skills and abilities, behaviour is trainees' improvement on work behaviour and results refer to the business results attained by trainees. This model remains to be the most popular method of representing criteria to assess and determine training effectiveness due to its simple and practical approach (Leach & Liu, 2003).

As summarized in this model, training evaluation begins with level one, after which as time and resources will allow, should continue through levels two, three and four, in sequence. Level three pays attention towards measurement of the degree to which trainee transfer and apply new knowledge and skills to workplace. This level investigates how trainees behave differently at work after participating in training. Analysing the change helps to work out if trainees have applied the knowledge, skills or abilities obtained from training in workplace. This evaluation level poses critical issues that address training transfer process. Problems arise when the employees do not utilize what they learned during training to perform actual job tasks and this results in causing the training activities to be effortless on the organizational performance. Training is only regarded as effective if the investment made could be justified and training could be successfully transferred to the work settings (Bjerregaard, Haslam &

Morton, 2016).

Given the significance of HR in organizations, employee engagement is seen as an important aspect at workplace in contributing to attain competitive advantage. Additionally, training was evidenced to be linked with higher levels of employee engagement (Aguinis & Kraiger, 2009). This is because training can strengthen the social exchange relationship between employers and employees (Dysvik & Kuvaas, 2008). In past studies, five dimensions which included company management, communication, job role, team work and collaboration and learning and development, had been investigated to have a significant effect on employee engagement (Mansoor & Hassan, 2016). The positive bond between training transfer and post-training employee engagement level was indicated in past research (Mousa, Zumrah & Nashief, 2017; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004; Sonnentag, 2003).

Thus, by receiving training and continually transferring training, employees can have positive and full of energy job-related state of mind that is perceived through increased enthusiasm, dedication and absorption. However, most of the past studies virtually revolved around the perceptions about overall effectiveness and satisfaction of trainees with the training received (Afroz, 2018; Huang & Su, 2016; Siddiqui & Sahar, 2019) and not about the impact of individual components of training transfer process specifically. While it can be concluded that the previous studies were having lack in investigating the relationships between perceived employee training transfer and post-training employee engagement level, especially in Malaysian context.

Furthermore, the study was done to involve employees from selected organizations in aviation sector. The aviation industry is confronted with plenty of challenges concerning security. Aviation accidents still cannot be prevented although there are advanced developments in aeronautical technology and weather forecasting. News about plane crashes,

mechanical failure, loss of control and missing aircrafts due to human errors such as pilot and maintenance error, can still always be heard. Correspondingly, proper training measures are essential to serve as means for preventing aviation accidents. Successful training transfer of employees from aviation sector is therefore of utmost importance to improve safety management in daily operations of the industry. However, little emphasis was put on aviation sector in the training transfer literature. Thus, this study was conducted as to highlight the needs to enhance training transfer which lead to improved engagement level among trained employees in Malaysia's aviation sector by considering important variables in transfer process and improving the quality of training.

1.2 Problem Statement

In the following section, issues regarding previous studies in related field which include the knowledge gaps, empirical gaps and practical gaps, will be highlighted accordingly.

First, the correlation between components of HRD and employee engagement is largely missing on general grounds. This knowledge gap arises because engagement is a relatively new concept and has gained prominence starting from the past two decades (Ahmed, Phulpoto, Umrani & Abbas, 2015). Likewise, employee training as one of the HRD components also seems to be received little attention in empirical studies due to psychological nature of the engagement concept. Over the years, majority of studies were conducted to explore the relationship between overall training effectiveness and employee engagement (Aktar & Pangil, 2017; Ashar, Ghafoor, Munir & Hafeez, 2013). According to Kirkpatrick (1998), HR practitioners focused less on post-training evaluation of behaviour and results. Most of the research paid attention in evaluating trainees' reactions and learning after training (Choi, Lee & Jacobs, 2015). Past research also showed that 88.3 percent of training providers in Malaysia

focused on evaluation of overall training effectiveness (Hashim & Sharif, 2016). Thus, this study helps to explore the evaluation of employees' behaviour after training (training transfer).

Also, there was little attention being paid to how antecedents of effective transfer of training would influence employees' engagement level. Training inputs factors examined include trainee characteristics, training design and work environment. These antecedent factors were selected based on the results of previous studies (Baldwin & Ford, 1988; Holton & Baldwin, 2000; Rouillier & Goldstein, 1993; Tracey, Tannebaum & Kavanaugh, 1995). In fact, as identified by Burke and Hutchins (2008), the report of best practices in transfer of training is still scarce and often not necessarily reliable. In Malaysia, despite the limited discussion on this issue in research (Baharim, 2008), the employees have realized the importance of acquiring and transferring new knowledge, skills and abilities to their work settings.

To understand the problems of transfer, a thorough investigation of the factors revolving transfer has to be conducted. Thus, this study aims to obtain a clear understanding of what is meant by transfer and the degree to which training are transferred to the workplace. In terms of research, Baldwin and Ford's model of training transfer (1988) which covered the most important sets of factors with trainee characteristics, training design and work environment, was mostly used. Most scholars generally agreed that Baldwin and Ford's pioneering work and their model formed the basis for the abundant subsequent research and studies. Thus, following their efforts, this study fills the gap to test whether the use of their model is appropriate in current settings. It can also be identified how the different sample, criteria and designs used in current literature influences the understanding of training transfer mechanism.

Apart from that, empirical gaps arise as most studies were only conducted in certain countries and thus restricting the scholars with limited scope of study. Past studies conducted to explore training transfer in developing countries are inadequate. Most of the previous studies

were done in Western-based private companies (Chiaburu & Lindsay, 2008; Tharanganie, 2013). Thus, it is lack of accuracy in understanding the issues of perceived employee training transfer and post-training employee engagement level in context of other countries which have different cultures and work systems compared to organizations in the Western countries. Culture had been identified as one of the most significant factor to predict organizational members' efforts in transferring training because behaviours, beliefs, interests and desires can affect training effectiveness (Noe, 1986).

Besides, research related to this issue is still scarce in the context of organizations of aviation sector in Southeast Asia countries, particularly in the Malaysian context. This addressed the practical gap in previous studies as they were more focused on hospitality sector (Ling & Nasurdin, 2014), education institutions (Raja Kasim & Ali, 2011) and civil defence force (Nazli, Nisa, Khairudin & Hizam, 2018; Sipon, Nazli, Zumrah & Khairudin, 2017). In such studies, the construct of training were described in a very general manner, thus failing to provide insights more specifically into how and why training produced results at organizational level. Therefore, more in-depth studies regarding relationships between antecedent factors of training transfer and employee engagement among employees of Malaysia's aviation sector are appreciated.

In short, a model was proposed and tested in this study to investigate the connection between perceived employee training transfer and post-training employee engagement level. This contributes to training-related literature and brings clarity to HRD research by addressing the gaps indicated in past studies.

1.3 Research Objectives

The **main objective** of this study was:-

To investigate the relationship between perceived employee training transfer and post-training employee engagement level in selected aviation organizations.

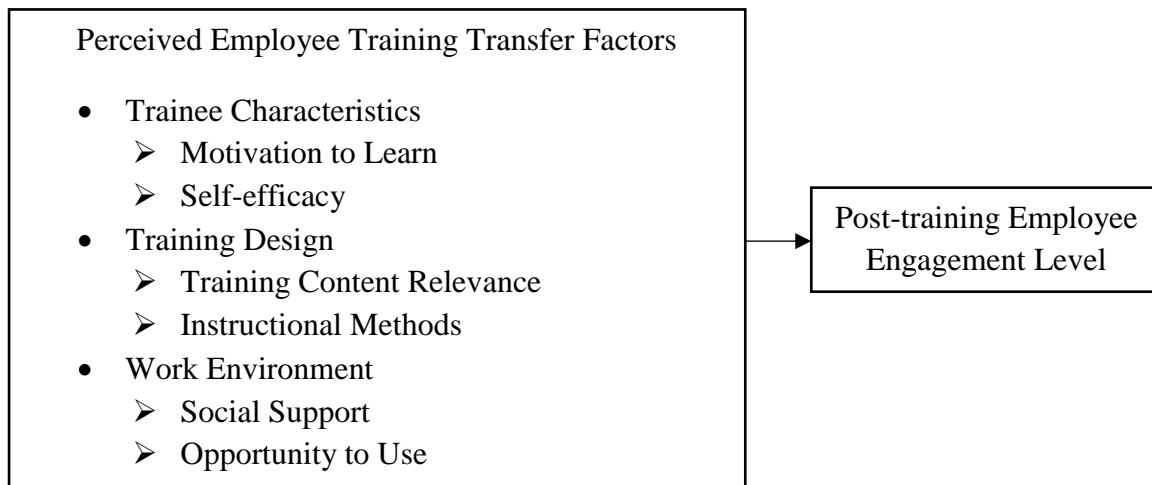
The **specific objectives** of this study were to:-

- i. To study the relationship between trainee characteristics and post-training employee engagement level.
- ii. To study the relationship between training design and post-training employee engagement level.
- iii. To study the relationship between work environment and post-training employee engagement level.
- iv. To identify the dominant training transfer factor that influence post-training employee engagement level.

1.4 Research Hypotheses

- i. There is a significant relationship between trainee characteristics and post-training employee engagement level.
- ii. There is a significant relationship between training design and post-training employee engagement level.
- iii. There is a significant relationship between work environment and post-training employee engagement level.
- iv. There will be a dominant training transfer factor that influences post-training employee engagement level.

1.5 Conceptual Framework



Source: Adapted from Baldwin & Ford, 1988.

1.6 Definitions of Terms

Several important terms were defined conceptually and operationally to provide a better understanding on the scope of this study. The terms were arranged based on the research title and framework.

1.6.1 Perceived Employee Training Transfer

Conceptual Definition

Perceived employee training transfer is the extent to which the competencies employees acquired in the course of the training activities are transferred and applied to their workplace settings as well as how the new competencies are utilized to boost their performance and productivity (Ibenu, 2016). The success of a training is largely dependent on employees' perception. If the employees perceive that the newly knowledge could help them perform better, they will set to transfer training to their jobs (Rahman & Rahman, 2013). Transfer takes place when the employees adjust their learned behaviour from training to actual work settings