RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SUPERVISOR’S ROLE AND JOB PERFORMANCE: DOES MOTIVATION TO LEARN ACT AS A MEDIATING ROLE?

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RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SUPERVISOR'S ROLE AND JOB PERFORMANCE: DOES MOTIVATION TO LEARN ACT AS A MEDIATING ROLE?

By:

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ABSTRACT

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SUPERVISOR’S ROLE AND JOB PERFORMANCE: DOES MOTIVATION TO LEARN ACT AS A MEDIATING ROLE?

Sheela Chitra A/P Chandra Segaran

This study was conducted to examine the mediating role of motivation to learn in the relationship between supervisor’s role and job performance. Data were collected through in-depth interview and survey questionnaires. For the survey method, 100 usable questionnaires were collected from technical employees who are working at the Technical Division of Dewan Bandaraya Kuching Utara, Sarawak (DBKU). The outcomes of stepwise regression analysis showed that the inclusion of motivation to learn in the analysis had increased the effect of supervisor’s role (i.e., support and communication) on job performance. This result demonstrates that motivation to learn does acts as a full mediating role in training management model of the organization. In addition, implications of this study to training management theory and practice, methodological and conceptual limitations, as well as directions for future research are elaborated.
ABSTRAK

HUBUNGAN ANTARA PERANAN PENYELIA DAN PRESTASI KERJA: ADAKAH MOTIVASI UNTUK BELAJAR BERTINDAK SEBAGAI MEDIATOR

Sheela Chitra A/P Chandar Segaran

Kajian ini adalah megkaji peranan motivasi untuk belajar sebagai mediator dalam perhubungan antara peranan penyelia dan prestasi kerja. Data kajian ini di kumpul melalui kaedah temu bual dan borang soal selidik. Sejumlah 100 borang soal selidik telah berjaya dikumpulkan daripada pekerja teknikal yang berkhidmat di Bahagian Teknikal, Dewan Bandaraya Kuching Utara, Sarawak (DBKU). Keputusan pengujian hipotesis menggunakan analisis regresi stepwise menunjukkan bahawa apabila motivasi untuk belajar dimasukkan ke dalam analisis ia telah meningkatkan kesan peranan penyelia (sokongan dan komunikasi) terhadap prestasi kerja. Hasil kajian ini mendapati bahawa motivasi untuk belajar bertindak sebagai mediator sepenuhnya dalam model program latihan di organisasi tempat kajian. Selain itu, Implikasi kajian terhadap teori, metodolgi, batasan-batasan kajian, kerangka konseptual dan cadangan untuk kajian akan datang dibincangkan dalam kajian ini.
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

This chapter contains eight sections. The first section is the background of the study. The second section discusses the problem statement while the third section reveals the objectives of this research study. As for the fourth section, the conceptual framework is presented and in the fifth section the hypothesis of this research study is stated. The sixth and the seventh section of this chapter are the importance of the study and also the definitions of terms. The eighth section in this chapter is the conclusion.
1.1 Background of the Study

Supervisors as the essential part of the management are often referred as a qualified and experienced leader, problem solver, and important character in developing technical and human skills. They are also referred as a role model at the first level of the organizational management. (Pfeffer, 1998; How, 1994; Elangovan & Karakowsky, 1999; Bittel, & Newstrom, 1992). They play an important role in designing, implementing and monitoring training programs by working closely with their employers. (How, 1994). Supervising managers are given critical role in designing and administer different types of training program and it is done to increase employees’ competencies and job performance. (DeSimone et al., 2002 Mac Neil, 2004; Simons et al., 1999). Supervisors play an important role as a training planner, mentor, setting objectives, selecting competent trainers, developing lesson plans, selecting program methods and techniques, preparing equipment, arranging the training agenda and also conducting training needs analysis. All these are done in the designing of training program, (DeSimone et al., 2002; Goleman, 2000; How, 1994). Supervisors administer training program by acting as a manager in order to make sure that the training activities are able to achieve the objectives (DeSimone et al., 2002; Elangovan & Karakowsky, 1999; How, 1994).

As the world of globalization move forward, many organizations have engaged into structural changes where horizontal work structures are being implemented besides emphasizing on simple work processes and establishing creative team works (Ellinger, Ellinger & Keller, 2005; Mac Neil, 2004). These eventually developed supervisors to establish realistic learning expectations ensure conformability among the employees to attend training, and to improve employees’ job performance. They no longer just provide financial and budgetary support. (Golemen, 2000; Brinkerhoff & Montesino, 1995)

Providing training itself and facilitate learning problems through on-the job training, mentoring for newly appointed staff and orientation training for new
employees are also part of the new roles of supervisors (DeSimone et al., 2002; Mondy et al., 2002; Simons, Harris & Bone, 1999). Responsible supervisors who are able to implement their critical roles in training programs may motivate employees to improve organizational and employees’ performance (Rodrigues & Gregory, 2005; Mondy, Noe & Premeaux, 2002; Tsai & Tai, 2003; MacNeil, 2004).

1.2 Problem Statement

Early studies about training management focus the duties and responsibilities of supervisor in designing and administering training programs (Ellinger et al., 2005; Guerrero & Sire, 2001; Tsai & Tsai, 2003). For instance, according to Pfeffer (1998) in a classical management approach, the roles of supervisor in training program are to recognize and resolve problems of employees’ deficiencies in work performance. The higher-level management will take the entire responsibility to overcome deficiencies in design and administration of training program (How, 1994). Supervisor as the middle person between the top management and employees. identify employees who need training and the type of training they need and later suggest their names to the top management (Mondy, Noe & Premeaux, 2002; Ibrahim, 2001).

Supervisor’s role went through some changes in the contemporary management approach. Training programs are designed and administered to support organizational strategy and goals. The roles of supervisor become more focus on the development of their subordinates in terms of their knowledge, skill, abilities and attitudes, ensuring the accountability for training design, (e.g.: determining the content of the training program and lesson plan) and lastly enhancing involvement in training needs analysis. (Goldstein & Ford, 2002; Nijman, 2004). The role of supervisor in training program has been described in detail in these findings. However, the supervisor’s role in giving impact on individual attitudes and behavior is has been less emphasized (Chiaburu & Takleab, 2005; DeSimone et al., 2002; Tsai & Tsai, 2003).
Lately supervisors have more complex and multipart roles in managing employees' performance. Recent studies in training management revealed that the supervisor's role may influence employees' job performance. (Tsai & Tsai, 2003) For instance, support and communication are identified as two important types of supervisor role in training program. Supervisors' effort in implementing these two important roles may increase employees' job performance. (Chiaburu & Takleab, 2005).

A thorough study on this relationship shows the effect of supervisor's role on employees' job performance is indirectly affected by motivation to learn (Nijman, 2004; Chiaburu & Takleab, 2005). This relationship revealed that supervisors' ability to support trainees (e.g. encouraging and guiding) and openly communicate the training information (e.g. feedback and discussion) to the trainees, will increase trainees' motivation to learn, as a result lead to increased job performance (Tsai & Tsai, 2003). Not much information is known about the mediating role of motivation to learn in training management, although the relationship has been discussed in past studies. (Chiaburu & Takleab, 2005; Nijman, 2004; Baldwin & Ford, 1988). Therefore further research need to be carried to find out does motivation to learn act as a mediating variable in the relationship between supervisor's role and job performance.

1.3 Research Objectives

1.3.1 General Objective

The general objective of this research study is to examine the mediating role of motivation to learn in the relationship between supervisor's role and job performance.

1.3.2 Specific Objectives

1. To quantify the mediating effect of motivation to learn in the relationship between supervisor support and job performance.
2. To quantify the mediating effect of motivation to learn in the relationship between supervisor communication and job performance.

1.4 Conceptual Framework

Figure 1: Relationship between Supervisor's role, Motivation to learn and Job Performance.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Independent Variable</th>
<th>Mediator</th>
<th>Dependent Variable</th>
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<td>Supervisor's Role</td>
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<td>• Support</td>
<td>Motivation to Learn</td>
<td>Job Performance</td>
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This framework shows that Motivation to Learn plays an important role as a mediator in the relationship between Supervisor's Role (Supervisor Support and Supervisor Communication) and Job Performance. This framework is used as a guideline to establish research hypotheses.

1.5 Research Hypotheses

H1: Motivation to learn positively mediates the relationship between supervisor support and job performance.

H2: Motivation to learn positively mediates the relationship between supervisor communication and job performance.
1.6 Importance of the study

The importance of the study is divided into three main areas such as to the theory, to the research methodology and to the Human Resource Practitioners.

1.6.1 Importance to the Theory

Past theories have not highlighted the correlation between the supervisor’s role in training program, motivation to learn and job performance. Those theories failed to explain how training and development program affect job performance through motivation to learn. Therefore, this study is done to further elaborate such relations. The Equity theory and Expectancy theory are the two major theories that are able to provide strong support to prove the relationship between supervisor’s role, motivation to learn, and job performance. The outcomes of this research study can be used to further support the existing theories in training and development program.

1.6.2 Important to the Research Methodology

The combination of literature findings, survey questionnaire and in-depth interview will minimize the mistakes in data collection procedure. The reliability and validity of the research study will be increased and this lead to production of more accurate results. Besides that, this research study may benefit the future researcher and it can also be a guideline to those new researchers.

1.6.3 Important to the Human Resource Practitioner

This study is important for the practitioner to find out does the role of supervisor increase the motivation to learn among the trainees and it later increases their job performance. The result of this research study will provide empirical evidence to managers and employees or trainees that they need to know in order to improve trainees’ motivation to learn. It also helps managers and
supervisors to amend and improve the training policy besides deeply understanding the roles of supervisor in training program. The managers and also the supervisors may use the result of this study to further improve their roles in training program as one of HRD intervention for employees' performance problem in the organization.

1.7 Operational Definition of the Terms

1.7.1 Supervisor support

A supervisor encourages trainees or employees to take part in training program, participate in decision making, and guide them to implement their newly learned knowledge skills in their workplace.

1.7.2 Supervisor communication

A supervisor delivers general and specific information about training program, provides appropriate feedback, conducts discussion with trainees and provides explanations regarding the tasks to be learned.

1.7.3 Motivation to learn

The willingness of trainees or employees to participate and to get involved in learning new knowledge, skills and attitudes and later apply it into their daily job in order to increase their job performance.

1.7.4 Job performance

The outcome of the trainee's effort in their respective job upon returning from the training program.
1.8 Conclusion

This chapter had discussed the overview of the study, and it's important to the theory, research methodology and to the HR practitioners. Chapter 2 will discuss theoretical and empirical evidence that may support the relationship between supervisor's roles, motivation to learn and job performance.
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter consists of six sections. The first section explains about the role of supervisor in training and development program. The mediating variable motivation to learn and the dependent variable job performance are discussed in the second and third section. The fourth and fifth section will discuss about the theoretical and the empirical evidence in supporting the relationship between supervisor’s role, motivation to learn and job performance. The sixth section is the conclusion.
2.1 Elements of Supervisor’s role

Supervisor’s role is consist of two major elements are such as Supervisor Support and Supervisor Communication.

2.1.1 Support

Supervisor support is defined as the level to which supervisor encourages and help employees to use the knowledge, skill and abilities gained in training program (Nijman, 2004). Positive support, reinforcement and encouragement to employees before, during and after a training program are part of supervisor support and it may increase employees’ commitment to take part in training programs, influence employees’ self-satisfaction, and motivate them to learn in training programs (Scermerhorn, Hunt & Osborn, 1991; How, 1994; Hornby, 2000). Such supervisor supports should be practiced in order to achieve the objectives of the training programs. (Elangovan and Karakowsky, 1999).

Supervisor’s support and encouragement to the employees to attend training programs may increase employees’ level of motivation to learn. This later leads to employees’ readiness to apply the newly acquired knowledge and skills from the training into their job (Xiao, 1996; Baldwin & Magjuka, 1997; Brinkerhoff & Montesino, 1995; Facteau et al., 1995).

Besides that, supervisor support in terms of encouraging and assisting the trainees to identify suitable situations to practice and to apply their newly acquired knowledge and skills may increase employees’ motivation to learn and it is capable to deliver positive job outcome. Employees perceived that such continuously support from their supervisor significantly influence their motivation to attend more training programs in the future (Hanzawati, 2005; Elangovan & Karakowsky, 1999; Brinkerhoff & Montesino, 1995 Machin & Treloar 2004; Nijman, 2004; Foxon, 1993).
Study on transfer of training identified that the more employees perceive organization support, such as supervisors support in training programs, the more the value is prominent to them, thus they are more likely to be motivated to participate and learn in training and development activities. This indicates that there is a positive relationship between supervisor support, trainees’ motivation and transfer outcomes, such as job performance (London & Mone, 1999; Brinkerhoff and Montesino, 1995; Cromwell and Kolb, 2002; Facteau, 1995).

In conclusion, supervisor support are consist of encouragement for attending and participating in training program, and also guidance and encouragement to learn and apply learned knowledge and skills. Such supervisor supports are believed to have an important impact on trainees’ learning motivation and later towards job performance.

2.1.2 Communication

Communication is defined as the activity or process of expressing ideas or feelings of giving people information. It is the process of using verbal and non-verbal cues to negotiate a mutually acceptable meaning between two or more people within a particular context and environment (Lumsden & Lumsden, 1993; Hornby, 2000).

Effective communication is the most critical and important element in conducting training programs like On-the-Job training, coaching and mentoring (Sisson, 2001; Trenholm & Jensen 1992; Rue and Byras, 2004). Supervisors must possess good interpersonal communication skills as they are closely involved in delivering training objectives, training schedule, training procedures, training contents, and the training task. (Wei-Chi Tsai & Wei-Tao Tai, 2003; Van der Klink, 2001).

Supervisors are responsible in providing necessary information to the trainees in order to increase their familiarity with the training content. They also
must have the capability to enlighten and communicate the importance of learning new competencies and the positive outcomes of attending training programs. All this may motivate employees to attend and to learn in training program. This later lead to increased job performance as the employees are more likely know what it is expected from the training program and the benefit that they would received (Tai, 2006; DeSimone et al., 2002; Foxon, 1993; Gibb, 2003; Baldwin & Magjuka, 1991; Rue & Byras, 2004; Yeong, 2000).

Supervisor communication also includes giving appropriate and constructive feedback, as they are the most significant sources for employees on their performance. Feedback is identified as one of the most essential strategies to improve learning. Past research mostly addressed two themes in communication and the two themes are upward distortion and feedback (Daniels, Papa, & Spiker, 1997). Jablin (1979), reviewed and summarized some studies of this type which indicated generally that employees’ who are unsure about the training program will provide more responsive feedback to superiors.

The proper and constructive feedback encouraged individual learner to build up self-regulatory skills that may boost their ability to take a broad view of their learning. Consequently, employees’ motivation to learn and the willingness to apply what have been learned during the training to their daily job gets increased (Martocchio & Webster, 1992; Lim & Johnson, 2002; Machin 2000; Rodrigues & Gregory, 2005).

Besides that, the practice of communication openness in discussion between supervisor and employees or trainees is an important device to ensure that trainees’ motivation to learn will result in increased job performance (Lim & Johnson, 2002; Yeong, 2000) This practice provides opportunities to the employees to raise questions in discussion session and this effective communication between two parties will lead to increased motivation to learn. This feelings will overcome trainees’ fear or uneasiness of learning new KSA and