

THE EFFECT OF WORKPLACE ENVIRONMENT ON EMPLOYEE'S LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Sarah Sabir Ahmad*¹, Norsyuhada Wazir¹, Azfahane Zakaria¹, Mhd Azmin Mat Seman²

*¹Faculty of Business Management
University Teknologi MARA, Malaysia*

²Politeknik Sultan Abdul Halim Mu'adzam Shah, Malaysia

Email:sarah342@uitm.edu.my

Corresponding author*

Received: 23 May 2021

Accepted: 25 October 2021

Published: 10 November 2021

ABSTRACT

Workplace environment plays a significant role in an organization. Most of the difficulties faced by employees are related to the workplace environment. The level of efficiency of employee's learning and development can be augmented through developing a conducive working atmosphere in the organization. The objective of this study is to determine the relationship of the workplace environment on employee's learning and development. The research was conducted at Penang Port Sdn. Bhd. A closed ended questionnaire using Google Form was adapted and established to get feedback from the target audience and SPSS was utilized for analysis to derive results from the collected data. From the Multiple Regression analysis, it was observed that two factors training and development and employee engagement has a relationship with employee's learning and development. Therefore, it is suggested that enhancing the training, development and engaging employees in company activities are helpful in developing a working environment that has a positive impact on employee's learning and development in the organizations.

Keywords: *workplace environment, employee's learning and development, employee engagement, supervisor support, training and development*

INTRODUCTION

Penang Port Sdn. Bhd. (PPSB) is one of the corporate units formed under the Privatization Policy of the Malaysian Government. Penang Port is the premier gateway within its surrounding region

for foreign trade. Penang Port provides the best application for service and technology at the most viable price. This business operates every day, 365 days a year, and 7 days a week, with 3 shifts 24 hours a day. Penang Port is a very strategic port and is also directly linked to the east coast of Peninsular Malaysia via the East-West Highway, due to the easy access of all the major economic regions in the world. Since it takes just 30 minutes to get from the port to Bayan Lepas International Airport, Penang Port also serves very well as a modal sea-air option for cargo transportation. Employee's learning and development of Penang Port Sdn. Bhd. is the most important aspect towards maintaining the profit made by the company. Because of that, it is vital to determine the workplace environment variables that may have a significant effect on the learning and development of the employees. Employees devote a significant portion of their time at work; hence, the workplace environment is an important component of employees' working life and in one way or another it affects them. It is concluded that employees who are happy with their work environment will contribute to more positive learning and development in their job performance (Kamarulzaman *et al.*, 2011). To add on, the most relevant dependent variables in industrial and organizational psychology are the success of employees. Based on previous studies, it can be determined that the workplace environment is critical in the enterprise and has a high effect on workers with distinct aspects. The supervisor support, training and development and employee engagement are the factors of the workplace environment in an organization that could affect the employee's learning and development. Due to the adverse impact of the environment on its outcomes, workers work in an unsafe and unhealthy workplace, which affects the overall effectiveness of the organization (Chandrasekar, 2011). Based on the issues stated above, the aim of this study is to determine whether the factors of the workplace environment, which are supervisor support, training and development and employee engagement could affect the employee's learning and development.

It is hoped that the findings could be utilized to improve on the working conditions of employees which leads to their learning and development. It also demonstrates that the results of this study would allow the company to know how to resolve employee and workplace problems and to recognize office design as a significant factor in increasing the development of employees. For enriched results, the study is expected to include information and steps to enhance the work environment of employees.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Impact of Office Environment on Employees Learning and Development

As studied by Bakotic and Babic (2013), the workplace climate often affects employee satisfaction, as workers tend to work in a less dangerous working environment. Gunaseelan and Ollukkaran (2012) found that it would have a positive effect on the learning and development level of employees on how well employees interact with their work environment. McGuire and McLaren (2009) found that a working environment has a powerful effect on the well-being of workers and creates interaction, teamwork and creativity and improves job satisfaction. In researching the effect of the indoor climate, Roelofsen (2007) found that the indoor environment has a great impact on job efficiency, and because of improving working conditions, the level of performance can be increased from 5 to 15 percent. Besides, workplace level also affects the stress of employees as

Preiser, W. and Vischer, J. (2006) says that a good working atmosphere can lead to better fit between workplace space and employees and leads to improved actions and emotions related to stress.

Goudswaard *et al.* (2012) highlighted work life balance, psychological conditions at the level of motivation, social dialogue, management, and leadership coherence in defining factors that constitute a healthy working atmosphere and a good working environment leads to increased organization productivity. Ali, A.Y.S. *et al.* (2013) found that by keeping working conditions and the working environment up to a certain threshold level, employee's learning and development can increase and consequently decrease if the workload rises from above a certain threshold level. To add on, Haynes (2008) found the behavioral components of the working environment have a greater effect than the physical components of the working environment and encourage innovation and the transfer of transactional information in an environment where the degree of interaction is strong.

Supervisor Support

Ekhsan, M. *et al.* (2020) define supervisor support as the support provided by superiors to strengthen the importance of activity values of learning and development so that they can help identify resources to help specific tasks and clarify career goals. Supervisors can heighten their employees thrive through adopting a management style suitable for deeper organizational connectivity (Kahn & Heaphy, 2014). Employees' well-being is influenced by supervisor activities including their desire to preserve jobs with the employer organization (Harter & Adkins, 2015). Forbes.com (2019) found out that workers do not leave businesses, they leave managers. Support from a supervisor refers to the degree to which supervisors respect the efforts of workers and care for their welfare (Rasheed *et al.*, 2013). The supervisor support effect is likely to be accomplished through a leader-member sharing process that encourages employee health and retention through addressing employee psychological needs (Gilbert & Kelloway, 2014; Hetland *et al.*, 2011). Employees considered to be assisted by their supervisor experience a thriving sense of workplace and physical, psychological, and social well-being (Seligman, 2018). Next, supervisors can improve the prosperity of their workers by embracing a management style appropriate for deeper organizational connectivity (Kahn & Heaphy, 2014), job satisfaction, work dedication and general employee well-being (Kahn & Heaphy, 2014). (Mor Barak *et al.*, 2009). Supportive supervisor may inspire workers to become more involved in their jobs by fostering a sense of purpose in their job roles (Ryan & Deci, 2011; Kahn & Heaphy, 2014).

On the other hand, studies have established those unsupportive supervisors create negative effects on employee retention (Harter & Adkins, 2015; Forbes.com, 2019). Supervisor support facilitates changes in employee's level of affective commitment which lead employees to retain in the organization. Basuil *et al.* (2016) also identified that supportive supervisors generate a common reality with employees that enhances affective involvement. Bhatnagar (2014) explained that a high degree of perceived supervisor support generates social capital and relationship networks that minimize voluntary employee turnover and enhance organizational performance. Therefore, the supervisor represents the company, and they serve as a direct connection to the mission and aim of the organization.

Training And Development

Education and training for employees are one of the factors that determine the work results of employees because it can increase the knowledge and skills that employees already have (Ekhsan, M. *et al.*, 2020). Training is an on-going and continuous process which aims to achieve better employee's learning and development through improving employee attitude and the way employees behave at work (Mozael, 2015). It is also an action of upgrading employee skills for a specific task. To add on, steps taken to improve knowledge, skills and capability of an employee is known as training. It is essential for training to take place in any organization to ensure employee's skills are always at par with the market standard especially in today's era of fast changing environment and technology, and to constantly uphold the quality of work (Zahra *et al.*, 2014; Otuko *et al.*, 2013).

With training, employees would be able to adapt to the ever-changing situation and manage daily work operations while maintaining or even improving their job performance, as training prepares employees to be ready for any huddles and reduces employee resistance to change (Shafini *et al.*, 2016). A well-trained employee will always be aware of his abilities, duties and responsibilities. The skills acquired can be efficiently utilized which will enable him to work towards the goals of the organization. The previous studies indicate that human resource management strategies and organizational success have a clear positive relationship (Purcell *et al.*, 2007).

According to Swart *et al.* (2012), bridging the performance gap relates to the introduction of a related training intervention to build new employee skills and capabilities and increase employee's learning and development. He further elaborates the definition by explaining that training allows companies to comprehend that their employees do not perform well and that their expertise, abilities, and attitudes must also be formed. There may be different explanations for poor employee's learning and development, such as workers may no longer feel inspired to use their talents, or may not be positive enough in their abilities, or they may be facing conflicts between work and life. All the above considerations must be considered by the company when determining the most suitable training action, which allows the organization to unravel glitches and increase the level of motivation of employees to engage and meet company standards by demonstrating the desired performance.

Employee Engagement

In today's workplace, employee engagement has emerged as one of the main challenges. Employee engagement will continue to challenge organizations especially those with complexity and strict rules (Mishra *et al.*, 2014). This factor tests the management because engagement is a key element in preserving the vitality, survival, and profitability of the company (Albrecht *et al.*, 2015; Fardale & Murrer, 2015). Organizations with highly involved workers have higher earnings than those that do not (Society for Human Resource Management, 2014). Also, highly engaged employees improved customer loyalty, revenue, and employee's learning and development (Ahmetoglu *et al.*, 2015).

The organization must manage its human capital efficiently, inspire workers to retain their high loyalty and deep commitment to the company to succeed and sustainable growth in rapid market development and tight competition (Chanana, N. (2020); Markos and Sridevi, 2010). Other researchers have reviewed the application of the concept of engagement at the workplace. Arrowsmith and Parker (2013) and Townsend *et al.* (2014) they essentially describe engagement as the participation of the employee's mental, physical, and cognitive work, and their degree of employee engagement can be seen from their passion and commitment in their workplace. It means that workers have a deep dedication to the business or a strong connection to it and it is expected that their learning and development will increase.

Mishra *et al.* (2014) recommended three items to be done by leaders to build and sustain employee engagement with the organization. Firstly, is consistency where leaders must be consistent in providing employee feedback and instruction. Secondly is effective communication, emphasizing that leaders must convey the company's vision, project plan and policy as best as possible and third is to combat or clear out rumours, which means that the leaders must explain the background of his decision and policies, and no added negative interpretation.

METHODOLOGY

This research is quantitative and correlational in nature. It is a non-contrived and cross-sectional study. According to Sekaran and Bougie (2016) unit of analysis is perceived as the aggregation level of the data collected through the next data analysis phase. Unit of analysis is the major entity that is being analysed in a study. It is the 'what' or 'who' that is being studied. In this analysis, it focuses on the impact of the office environment on employee's learning and development. Therefore, the unit of analysis for this study is individual.

The population of the respondents for this research are the employees of Penang Port Sdn Bhd which are about 1000 people. According to Chambers and Skinner (2003), the sampling unit is identified as the basic unit, for instance person, household, pill around which a sampling procedure is planned. Since, there are about 1000 of employees that work in Penang Port Sdn Bhd, hence, the research selected all the employees as the population of this study. With reference to Pedhazur as cited by Sekaran and Bougie (2016), good research exactly covers the sample size that is less than 500 and exceeds 30 respondents. Therefore, 100 units of questionnaire were distributed to all employees at Penang Port Sdn Bhd. Convenience sampling, which is a type of non-probability sampling, was employed for this study in which individuals are sampled simply because researchers have "convenient" data sources, and it was employed for the sampling process of this study.

Data were collected using questionnaires that were adapted from various past studies. The questionnaire method was chosen because a large sample would be targeted. The questionnaire was also used because large data can be collected within a limited period and the researchers can gather all the completed answers quickly and effectively. The questionnaire was distributed using Google Form via WhatsApp and telegram to the whole population of the Penang Port. Upon achieving 100 respondents, the form was restricted to receive any more responses.

FINDINGS

Table 1.1 Reliability Analysis

Study Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	No. of Items
Supervisor Support	.841	5
Training and Development	.851	5
Employee Engagement	.816	5
Employee Performances	.832	5

Table 1.1 above showed the result of Reliability Analysis for the variables in this study. From the above table, the researcher found that all the variables are good as according to the rule of thumb by Sekaran and Bougie (2016) which stated the value should be above 0.7. It means that the instrument used in collecting the data was reliable and understandable by the respondents.

Table 1.2 Frequency Analysis

Items		Frequencies	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	46	48.4
	Female	49	51.6
Age	20 – 29 years	25	26.3
	30 – 39 years	38	40.0
	40 – 49 years	23	24.2
	50 years & above	9	9.5
Marital Status	Single	22	23.2
	Married	70	73.7
	Divorced	3	3.2
Education	SPM and below	35	36.8
	Certification	4	4.2
	Diploma / STPM	36	37.9
	Degree	17	17.9
	Master	3	3.2
	PhD	0	0
Length of Services	Less than 1 year	20	21.1
	1 – 3 years	16	16.8
	4 – 7 years	22	23.2
	8 years & above	37	38.9

Training Attended	Once	23	24.2
	2 times	10	10.5
	3 times	3	3.2
	4 times	9	9.5
	5 times	14	14.7
	6 times	9	9.5
	7 times	3	3.2
	8 times	10	10.5
	9 times	2	2.1
	10 times	5	5.3
	11 times	5	5.3
	12 times	1	1.1
	14 times	1	1.1

The response rate for this study was 100% as it was collected internally among the Penang Port employees. The managers encouraged their employees to answer the questionnaire within the time given. Referring to the table 1.2 above, showed the results for the frequency analysis of the gender, age, marital status, education background, length of services and training attended. The respondents for this study are 95 employees of Penang Port Sdn. Bhd.

For this study, out of the 95 respondents, 51.2% were from female employees, 40% (38 respondents) are in the age of 30 to 39 years old, 73.7% were married and 37.9% were Diploma holders. Most of the respondents (38.9%) have 8 years and above working experiences in this company and 24.2% have attended only once training program during their services in the company.

Table 1.3 Multiple Regression Analysis

Independent Variables	Standardized Coefficients Beta (β)	t	Sig.
Supervisor Support	.087	.905	.368
Training and Development	.550	5.274	.000
Employee Engagement	.319	3.147	.002

R = .931

R Square = .867

Adjusted R square = .863

Durbin Watson = 1.588

By referring to table 1.3, the Multiple Regression Analysis *R* shows a substantial correlation between the three independent variables and dependent variables ($R = .931$). The *R* – square (R^2) value identifies the portion of the variance accounted for by the independent variables that are approximately .867 of the variances in the employee’s learning and development is accounted for by supervisor support, training and development and employee engagement. This value indicates that these three factors explain training transfer by 86.7%. It means that 86.7%

changes of dependent variable which is employee's learning and development can be explained by the three independent variables, supervisor support, training and development and employee engagement.

The Beta (β) values indicate the relative influence of the variables that is, training and development have the greatest influence on employee performances ($\beta = .550$, $p < 0.01$), followed by employee engagement ($\beta = .319$, $p < 0.05$) but supervisor support ($\beta = .087$, $p > 0.05$) shows no significant relationship with employees learning and development. The direction of influence for all the three variables is positive.

DISCUSSION

This study was conducted to assist Penang Port Sdn Bhd to identify the impact of workplace environment on employee's learning and development in the company. The purpose of conducting this research is to identify the relationship between dependent variables which is employee's learning and development and independent variables which are supervisor support, training and development and employee engagement. The first aim of the study was the relationship between supervisor support and employee's learning and development. It was identified that there is no relationship between supervisor support and employee's learning and development. It contradicts with much past research discussed earlier (Ekhsan, *et al.*, (2020); Forbes.com (2019); Seligman, 2018). It may be deemed too due to different cultural background, possibly employees in Malaysia prefer to work more independently once they understand their tasks. So, supervisor support is not much needed, and it turns out to be insignificant.

Next, the second objective is the relationship between training and development and employee's learning and development. This study established that there is a significant relationship between training and development and employee's learning and development. So, the hypothesis is accepted because according to Swart *et al.* (2005) and Shafini *et al.* (2016), bridging the learning and development gap relates to the introduction of a related training intervention to build new employee skills and capabilities and increase employee capabilities in learning and development. Training programs can permit employees to change their attitude towards the job, which is also a significant factor for improving their efficiency.

For the third aim, which is the relationship between employee engagement and employee's learning and development, this research indicates that there is a significant relationship between employee engagement and employee's learning and development. It might be due to when employees are engaged, they are aware of their responsibilities in achieving organizational goals and motivate their co-workers for the accomplishment of those objectives. As indicated earlier, highly engaged employees in organizations may improve customer loyalty, revenue, and employee productivity. (Ahmetoglu *et al.*, 2015).

RECOMMENDATION

From the study above, a few recommendations have been identified which are:

Schedule a one-on-one brainstorming meeting between the employee and the supervisor

For workers who are engaging, like direct reviews, this is a perfect strategy that would make them feel comfortable expressing their own perspectives and opinions. It's also a chance to collaborate and ensure that the employee and supervisor are transparent. The status of their output should always be understood by both the supervisor and staff. If output is suffering, or it's just time for a change, it can really make a difference to apply best practices for both parties to increase the quality and efficiency of work.

Training doesn't end at on boarding

Initially, new hires receive a lot of attention and direction during their boarding period, but this should not be the only training obtained by employees. Continuous training is a vital aspect of keeping workers motivated, gradually learning, and developing themselves. Besides, they'll feel empowered in new ways to think and work. Often, when something is fresh and daunting, it's difficult to maintain too much knowledge. Continuous contextual learning preparation helps workers to receive refreshers and follow-up information in the event of something overlooked during initial boarding.

Foster a positive work environment

Employees who are satisfied with their workplace environments are also higher performing. When the workplace is clean and tidy and the people around the workplace are inspiring and optimistic, it will make the employees comfortable and motivated to learn and expand their capabilities. A more productive environment can be fostered by encouraging employees to customize and de-clutter their workplace. This also implies that team morale is increased and constructive contact within the team is ensured.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of the study is to identify the relationship between supervisor support, training and development and employee engagement and the employee's learning and development in Penang Port Sdn Bhd. The questionnaire has been circulated via Google form to all the research respondents. The analysis methods used to achieve the research objectives are Frequency analysis and Multiple Regression Analysis.

Two out of three variables of the workplace environment were identified to have a positive significant impact on employee's learning and development. It can be concluded; the workplace environment is one of the most critical components influencing the efficiency of workers within an organizational environment. The factors training and development and employee engagement

are helpful in developing a workplace environment that has a positive impact on employees' performances in the organization. As employees that are motivated, their ability to learn and grow will increase and achieve the desired outcomes and goals of the job which in turn will lead the organization as a whole to be successful.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors would like to thank the Penang Port Sdn Bhd. for all the co-operations and assistance for this study to be conducted. Also thank you to all individuals that have been directly or indirectly involved with this study.

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Dr Sarah Sabir Ahmad is a senior lecturer from the Faculty of Business Management with more than 15 years of experience in teaching. Currently holding the position of the Head of Postgraduate Unit in UITM Kedah. Her interests are focused on Human Resource, Marketing, Research Methods and Organizational Behavior. Enthusiastic and energetic when learning new things.

Dr Azfahane Zakaria is a senior lecturer at the Faculty of Business and Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Cawangan Kedah. She graduated from University Utara Malaysia with a PhD in Public Management. Her research interest is in the area of Leadership, Employee Engagement, Self-Development, and Change Management.

Norsyuhada Wazir is a graduated bachelor's degree students with high enthusiasm in research work. She is currently pursuing her master's degree in UITM Kedah.

Dr Mhd Azmin Mat Seman is a senior lecturer currently holding the position of Deputy Director of Academic Support. He has interest in various areas in research and learning new technique for conducting research.