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THE ROLES OF EMPLOYEES COACHING TOWARDS EMPLOYEE OUTCOMES

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ABSTRACT

Employees' coaching is an effective management tool to enhance employees' performance and development. Since 1980, a number of researchers have noted the value of the employees' coaching relationship, but there is still little evidence regarding what makes employees' coaching to be effective in Malaysia. Therefore, the study looked at the role of leader coach (supervisory coaching behaviour and autonomy support) toward enhancing employees' motivation (employees' self-efficacy) and performance to explore this topic in-depth. Again, the purpose of an immediate supervisor as a coach in a practice context is to help employees to consider how they might work and behave differently with a more effective behaviour and thus lead to better outcomes, without a reliance on the formal authority the manager possesses. The outcomes of using PLS-SEM path model analysis showed three important findings: First, the relationship between supervisory coaching behaviour was not correlated with employees' self-efficacy. Second, autonomy support was positively correlated with employees' self-efficacy; and third, employees' self-efficacy indirectly influences employees' performance.

Keywords: *supervisory coaching behaviour, autonomy support, employees' self-efficacy and performance*

INTRODUCTION

Study on coaching employees began in the 1980s, where the role of the supervisor as coach was discussed. This opportunity was taken by the immediate supervisor to motivate employees thus guiding them towards achieving better performance (Hagen, 2012). In addition, the roles of the immediate supervisor as a coach also predict a strategy and changing relationship between the immediate supervisors and subordinates (McLean *et al.*, 2009). The importance of employees coaching is to mould the employee towards an expected behaviour and achievement of better performance.

Employees' coaching is often related to effective managerial tool and mechanism to enhance employees' development (Jane *et al.*, 2010). In the practice of employees coaching, an immediate supervisor implements coaching behaviour practices, purposely to help their subordinates to achieve the standard organisational goals and to increase their job-related performance. For example, each employee has his or her own target and standard of performance that need to be achieved (based on organisational key performance indicator). Besides, the concept of Managerial Coaching is named as a new effective management and leadership behaviour in organisations. It has been recognised as a relatively new practice for Human Resource Development (HRD) and management whereby it contributes to the importance of enhancing employees' productivity and development (Ellinger *et al.*, 2014; Egan T, 2013).

Traditionally, immediate supervisor implements managerial coaching practice as a way to solve daily job weaknesses and increase daily performance of their employees and teams (Bacon & Spear, 2003; Feldman, 2005; Kampa-Kokesch & Anderson, 2001; Rekalde *et al.*, 2015). Nonetheless, despite the importance of this coaching approach, it may not be strategic for the future. Coaching is one of the tools that aims to contribute and assist in the development of strategies of the personal and professional growth of manager (Rekalde *et al.*, 2015). In an era of global competition, many excellent organisations have shifted their paradigms from a traditional job based managerial coaching to contemporary based managerial coaching to support their organisations' strategies and cultures (Analoui, 1999; DeSimone *et al.*, 2002; Ellinger *et al.*, 2014). Under this new coaching

approach, management and supporting staff are aware that they need to work together in improving the quality of employees' roles and functions as well as to motivate them to learn new knowledge, up-to-date skills, latest abilities, and other capabilities consistent with their organisations' needs and expectations (Sherman, & Freas, 2004; Peltier, 2012).

Surprisingly, extant studies in workplace coaching practice revealed that the ability of the management to appropriately behave as coach and to manage autonomy support in the design and administration of managerial coaching may have a significant impact on employees' internal motivation (Egen, 2013; Johansson *et al.* 2014). From a training management perspective, employees' internal motivation such as employees' self-efficacy is defined as an interest and attitude that influence the trainees to attend, learn, and master the knowledge, skills, and abilities as well as to have a positive attitude towards their fields. This content explains that the employees believe and have confidence in their ability to transfer what they have learnt from trainings or supervisor to the organisation (Johansson *et al.* 2014).

In organisational coaching model, many scholars believe that supervisory coaching behaviour, autonomy support, and employees' motivation are distinct but interconnected concepts. For example, the management ability to coach and adequately provide support to employees may lead to greater employees' motivation in organisation (Johansson, 2014; Pousa *et al.*, 2015). Although the relationship has been widely discussed, the role of managerial coaching as an important determinant has been given less attention in organisational training model. This situation may be caused by several factors. First, coaching activities in the organisation are not clear. Usually, coaching duties are carried out directly by manager or directly reported to the employees. Due to problems in terms of time constraint, coaching is reported to be a common activity and is not emphasised in detail; and despite coaching duties served as an essential service, these duties have not been evaluated for specific objectives (Bass & Bass, 2008; Gilley, 2000; Pousa *et al.*, 2015). Second, since the implementation of managerial coaching involves those middle and lower-income group of employees, the concern about the role of managerial coaching is not widely discussed. This is because most organisations nowadays are more interested in the development of their senior and executive employees who greatly

impact the direction and strategic development of the organisation through managerial coaching research (Ellinger *et al.* 2014; McLean *et al.*, 2009).

UNDERPINNING THEORIES AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

A review of the recent literature regarding the workplace training highlights that an effective managerial coaching has two salient features: supervisory coaching behaviour and autonomy support (Ellinger *et al.*, 2005; McLean *et al.*, 2009; Kim *et al.*, 2013:2014). From the managerial coaching perspective, supervisory coaching behaviour is defined as an effective managerial and leadership practice that advances employees learning and performance (Kim *et al.*, 2013; 2014). For example, a direct relationship between coach and coachees through effective and clear direction of task can help the coachees to improve their performance with their internal motivation. Autonomy support is broadly defined as management practices that provides physical and moral support to employees before, during, and after managerial coaching practices (Merwe & Sloman, 2013) and results from previous research showed that a highly supportive management can enhance employees' engagement and performance in performing their tasks (Rekalde *et al.*, 2015). Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura 1977) explained that the coaching practices influenced the employees' judgments of self-efficacy, and also strengthened the employees' trust in their abilities for specific task. During the coaching process, immediate supervisor and employees work together to tackle the work situation and prepare some feedback of the evaluation. Therefore, the support from an immediate supervisor helps the employees to increase their confidence in implementing the actions (Pousa *et al.*, 2015). This statement is supported by a study conducted by Pousa *et al.* (2015) on 122 financial advisors in Canada, and by Anthony's (2013) study on 49 couples counselling workers in Australia. The outcomes of these surveys reported that the capability of the management to plan appropriately and behave as a coach and support had been an important predictor of employees' internal motivation (self-efficacy) in a work environment. Hence, it was hypothesised as:

H1: The roles of managerial coaching positively related to employees self-efficacy.

H1a: Supervisory coaching behaviour is positively related to employees’ self-efficacy.

H1b: Autonomy support is positively related to employees’ self-efficacy.

Furthermore, according to path-goal theory (House, 1996), when the immediate supervisor practices an effective management and leadership behaviour, employees commonly react with positive attitude and performance-related responses. In addition, directive and supportive styles are presented by effective leadership behaviour (House & Mitchell, 1974). This is also supported by several studies which were conducted using indirect effect model to investigate the supervisor coaching roles based on different samples such as the perception of 122 financial advisors in Canada (Pousa *et al.*, 2015), perception of 343 public healthcare workers in Sweden (Kim *et al.*, 2013), and a study on 411 lecturers at three polytechnics in Malaysia (Ying-Leh *et al.*, 2015) The outcomes of these surveys indicated that the readiness of the management to play appropriately the roles as a coach and prepare a full support to the employees can increase their self-confidence in performing tasks, and indirectly improve their performance. Hence, it was hypothesised as:

H2: Self-efficacy positively related to employees’ performance.

The relationships among the study variable are depicted in Figure 1. Both predictive variables which are supervisory coaching behaviour and autonomy support have direct relationship between employees self-efficacy and employees performance.

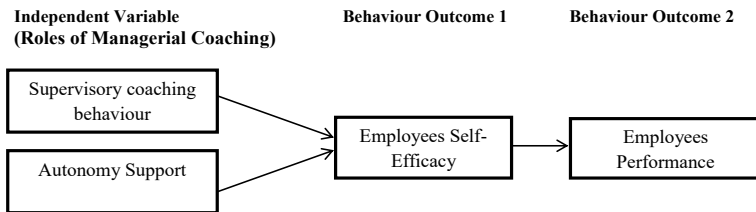


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

METHOD

This study utilised a cross-sectional research design, which allowed the researcher to integrate the employees coaching literature, the semi-structured interview, pilot study and the actual survey as the main procedure to data collection. This procedure may help the researchers to gather accurate data, decrease bias, and increase the quality of data being collected (Sekaran & Bougie, 2013). Data were collected using questionnaires from a purposive sample of 120 employees working at *Unit Pemodenan Tadbiran dan Perancangan Pengurusan Malaysia* (MAMPU) and *Kementerian Kemajuan Luar Bandar dan Wilayah* (KKLW), located in federal government, Malaysia. At the initial stage of this study, a semi-structured interview was conducted involving two (2) experienced line supervisors and three (3) experienced support staffs in the management department of the studied organisation. Information gained from this interview method was used to understand the nature and features of the workplace employees coaching practices, self-efficacy and employees' performance as well as the relationship between such variables in the context of this study. Next, a survey questionnaire was drafted based on the employees coaching literatures. These employees were selected using purposive sampling technique because they already have working experiences for at least six (6) months, and have experience of working together with their immediate supervisor. Besides, the information gathered from the pilot study helped the researcher to improve the content and format of the questionnaires for the actual study.

The questionnaire consisted of three (3) major parts: first, supervisory coaching behaviour has 20 items adopted from the research literatures related to the open communication, team approach, value people over task, accept ambiguity, and facilitate development (McLean, 2005: 2008; Park, 2008). Besides that, autonomy support has ten items that have been modified from the literature study with the support of autonomy (Gillet *et al.*, 2012; Jungert *et al.*, 2013). The dimensions used to measure this concept are in terms of moral support and material such as financial assistance, the welfare of individuals and families, involvement of employees in decision-making, and guidance provided to workers in applying learned competencies. Second, self-efficacy has eight items adopted from Parker (1998) and has been modified from previous literature studies related to employees' self-efficacy. Third, employee performance was represented by

15 items that have been modified from the literature studies with the support of the in-role and extra-role performance. The dimensions used to measure this concept were taken from the aspects of whether it could contribute to employees' holistic performance (William's & Anderson's 1991). All items used in the questionnaire were measured using a 7-item scale ranging from "very strongly disagree/dissatisfied" (1) to "very strongly agree/satisfied" (7). Demographic variables were used as controlling variables because this study only focused on employee perception.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) was employed to assess the validity and reliability of questionnaires' data, and further test the research hypotheses. The main advantage of using this method is because it may deliver latent variable scores, avoid small sample size problems, estimate complex models with many latent variable, manifest variables and error terms, also handle both reflective and formative measurement models (Henseler *et al.*, 2009). The path coefficients for measuring a structural model uses the standardised beta (β) and *t* statistics ($t > 1.65$). The value of R² is used as an indicator of the overall predictive strength of the model. The value of R² is considered as follows: 0.19 (weak), 0.33 (moderate), and 0.67 (substantial) (Chin, 1998; Henseler *et al.*, 2009).

Respondents' characteristics

Table 1 shows that majority of respondents are females (65.8%), aged between 25 to 34 years old (62.5%), degree holders (33.3%), employees who served from 5 to 14 years (10.8%) and employees who had monthly salaries of between RM1000-RM2499 (43.3%).

Table 1: Participants' Characteristics (n=120)

Participants' Characteristics	Sub-Profile	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	41	34.2
	Female	79	65.8
Age	< 25 years old	5	4.2
	25 to 34 years old	75	62.5
	35 to 44 years old	31	25.8
	45 to 54 years old	6	5
	> 55 years old	3	2.5
Education	<i>Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM)</i>	21	17.5
	<i>Sijil Tinggi Pelajaran Malaysia (STPM)</i>	8	6.7
	Diploma	38	31.7
	Degree	40	33.3
	Master	13	10.8
Length of Service	< 6 months	-	-
	6 months to 2 years old	5	4.2
	3 to 4 years old	7	5.8
	5 to 14 years old	13	10.8
	15 to 24 years old	8	6.7
	> 25 years old	4	3.3
Monthly Salary	< RM1000	-	-
	RM 1000 to 2499	52	43.3
	RM 2500 to 3999	41	34.2
	RM 4000 to 5499	16	13.3
	RM5500 to 6999	5	4.2
	RM 7000 >	6	5

Measurement Model

Table 2 shows the result of reliability analysis for the instrument. The value of composite reliability and Cronbach Alpha were greater than 0.8, indicating that the instrument used in the study had high internal consistency (Henseler *et al.*, 2014). Besides, the composite reliability value also ranged from 0.883 to 0.949, which also explained that 0.70 or greater is considered accepted (Fornell and Larcker, 1981) and thus it can be concluded that the measurements are reliable. The values of variance inflation factor for the correlation between the independent variable (supervisory coaching behaviour and autonomy support) and the dependent variable (self-efficacy and employees performance) are less than 5, showing that the data are not affected by serious collinearity problem (Hair *et al.*, 2012).

Table 2. Results of Reliability Test

Variables	Items	Item Loading	Cronbach's alfa	Composite Reliability	Variance Inflation Factor (VIF)
1. Supervisor behaviour coaching	20	0.497-0.768	0.944	0.949	3.688
2. Autonomy support	10	0.731-0.840	0.929	0.939	3.688
3. Self-efficacy	8	0.614-0.763	0.852	0.883	1.001
4. Performance	15	0.583-0.772	0.905	0.918	1.000

Table 3 shows the results of convergent and discriminant validity analysis. All constructs have the values of AVE larger than 0.5, indicating that they met the acceptable standard of convergent validity (Barclay *et al.*, 1995; Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Henseler *et al.*, 2009). Next, the discriminant validity of the measures was assessed by examining the correlations between the measures of potentially overlapping constructs. Besides that, the item should load more strongly on its own construct and the average variance shared between each construct should be greater than the variance shared between the construct and other construct (Wang *et al.*, 1999). Practically, discriminant validity reported Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) results. The HTMT values using 0.85 is a relevant threshold level. However, the threshold value for conceptual similar constructs is 0.90 (Hair *et al.*, 2014).

Table 3: Results of Convergent and Discriminant Validity Analyses

Variables	AVE	1	2	3	4
1. Supervisory coaching behaviour	0.504	0.846			
2. Autonomy support	0.609	0.880	0.760		
3. Self-efficacy	0.608	0.607	0.741	0.752	
4. Performance	0.565	0.637	0.624	0.560	0.659

Structural Model

Figure 1 shows the outcomes of testing a direct effect model using PLS-SEM path model. The inclusion of supervisory coaching behaviour and autonomy support in the analysis explained 47% of the variance in dependent variable. Specifically, the results of testing the research hypotheses displayed two important findings: first, supervisory coaching behaviour is insignificantly correlated with employees’ self-efficacy ($\beta=0.038$; $t=0.238$); therefore, H1a is not supported. Besides, autonomy support is significantly correlated with employees’ self-efficacy ($\beta=0.719$; $t=4.349$); therefore, H1b was supported. Second, employees’ self-efficacy is significantly correlated with impact of employees’ behaviour outcomes which is employees’ performance ($\beta=0.616$; $t=6.902$); therefore, H2 was supported. Overall, the results demonstrate that supervisory coaching behaviour is not an important determinant of employees’ self-efficacy, and autonomy support is an important determinant of employees’ self-efficacy in the studied organisations. Further to the above hypothesis testing, a test of accuracy of the estimate (predictive relevance) using Stone-Geisser, the Q2 test had been carried out as specified: $q2 = Q2 \text{ included} - Q2 \text{ excluded} / 1 - Q2 \text{ included} = 0.331$ (Hair *et al.*, 2012); and it was found that the Q2 (self-efficacy = 0.187; employees performance = 0.146) is above the standard, which is greater than zero (Henseler *et al.*, 2009). Therefore, these findings generally support the expected accuracy SmartPLS route model used in this study.

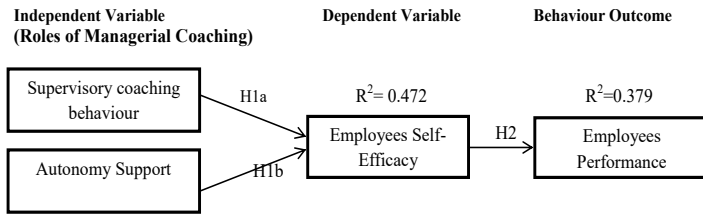


Figure 2: Result of the path analysis

IMPLICATIONS

The finding of this study shows that supervisory coaching behaviour did not act as an important determinant of employees' motivation. While the autonomy support did act as an important determinant of employees' motivation in the studied organisation. In the context of this study, majority of the respondents perceived that the stronger the supervisory coaching behaviour, the higher the autonomy support and employees' motivation is. This indicates that supervisory coaching behaviour is actively practiced in organisational activities; but it is unable to enhance employees' motivation. This situation may be caused by many supervisors who do not show a clear attitude as a coach in Malaysia mainly due to a more individualistic culture (Ying-Leh *et al.*, 2015).

The implications of this study can be divided into three major aspects: theoretical contribution, robustness of research methodology and practical contribution. In terms of theoretical contribution, this study reveals two important findings: First, autonomy support has been able to increase employees' internal motivation. This finding also supports and extends the studies by Gillet *et al.* (2013) and Jungert *et al.* (2013). Second, supervisory coaching behaviour has not been able to increase employees' internal motivation (employees' self-efficacy). A thorough review on the outcomes of the semi-structured interview in this finding may be affected by external factors: first, respondents who have different service and personal backgrounds may have different values and judgments about the impact of implementing coaching behaviour in organisations practices. Second, the nature of government work culture emphasizes on tall structure, high centralisation and high distance power, hence all the instructions referring

to the main task structure have been set. Therefore, the guidance practices by the leaders were not found clearly, referring on supervisor attitude and behaviour. With respect to the robustness of research methodology, the questionnaire used in this study has met the requirements of validity and reliability analyses. This may lead to its ability to produce accurate and reliable findings.

Regarding the practical contribution, the findings of this study can be used as a guideline by the immediate supervisor to improve the design and administration of leadership management practices of government employees'. This objective will be met if the management focuses on the following aspects: first, the immediate supervisors should be given a proper leadership training to ensure they are prepared to guide the employees in the workplace. Lack of leadership training to the heads, will cause them to be less aware of the importance to guide the employees in their daily work. Second, appropriate training content can help the immediate supervisor, especially to guide the employees toward the achievement of the objectives of the organisation. Third, managerial coaching practices should be used as a practice that takes place during working hours, where direct guidance within working hours can help to improve the understanding and clarity of a task carried out (Hagen, 2012; Kim *et al.* 2014). Thus, in order to provide credible leaders who are effective and efficient, leaders in organisations need to draw up a leadership training syllabus that must be taken by all personnel, according to rank and position held. These activities will directly train the leader or manager to be the coach to his or her subordinates.

CONCLUSION AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This study proposed a conceptual framework based on the managerial coaching practices research literature. The exploratory factor analysis showed that the instrument of this study had met the acceptable standards of validity and reliability analyses. Furthermore, PLS-SEM model analysis confirmed the outcomes of Managerial Coaching measurement such as supervisory coaching behaviour and autonomy support. Based on the results, supervisory coaching behaviour does not have a significant correlation with employees' self-efficacy; therefore H1a is not supported. Besides that, autonomy support significantly correlated with employees' self-efficacy, and

therefore H1b is supported. In addition, the effect of employees' internal motivation influence to employees' behaviour outcome such as performance, and indirectly H2 is supported. The conclusion drawn on the basis of these findings must take into account the limits of the conceptual framework and methodology of the study. First, the cross-sectional method used in this study could not detect the dynamic changes and patterns of relationships between variables, and variables that are more specialised in the study sample. Secondly, this study does not highlight the relationship between specific indicators for the independent variables and the dependent variables. Finally, this study uses only 120 respondents from federal government offices (MAMPU and KKLW) selected through purposive sampling technique. Therefore, this study only seeks to anticipate the pattern of the relationship between the dependent variables of the study in general and it may not be generalised to different organisations.

For future discussion, a research on the expected limitations could be used as a guide to improve the study. Among the actions that can be taken: First, some personal and organisational characteristics should be explored in greater depth as these can be better in showing the impact of the implementation of the managerial coaching on the employees. Second, the design methodology of research that is more reliable such as a longitudinal study should be used to collect data, elaborate pattern of relationships, the direction and degree of firmness of the relationship between independent variables and the dependent variable. Third, future research should include more respondents from various departments to ensure the accuracy and validity of the findings. Fourth, the independent variables and the dependent variables also need to be taken into account in future studies, whereby selected variables can contribute to the novelty concept. Besides, indirectly it may also be interesting to discuss the variable's relationship with the framework. If the above proposals are taken into account, it could help to produce more robust findings in the future.

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