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MOTIVATION TO LEARN AS A MEDIATOR OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SUPERVISOR SUPPORT IN TRAINING PROGRAMS, TRANSFER OF COMPETENCY AND JOB PERFORMANCE

Azman ISMAIL *
Sofiah BONGOGOH **
Sheela Chitra CHANDRA SEGARAN ***

This study was conducted in order to measure the effect of the supervisor support and motivation to learn on employee outcomes (i.e., transfer of competency and job performance) using 100 usable questionnaires gathered from technical employees who have worked in one city based local authority in Sarawak, Malaysia (MLAUTHORITY). Outcomes of stepwise regression analysis showed the relationship between motivation to learn and supervisor support had been an important predictor of transfer of competency and job performance. Further, this result confirms that motivation to learn does act as a full mediating role in the training model of the studied organization. In addition, implications and limitations of the study, as well as directions for future research are discussed

Key words:
Supervisor
Support;
Motivation
to Learn;
Transfer
of Competency;
Job
Performance.

JEL classification: M53; M54; O15; I29; J28

INTRODUCTION

A supervisor is often viewed as an experienced leader, a problem solver and a role model at the first level of organizational management (Elangovan & Karakowsky, 1999; Ellinger, Ellinger & Keller, 2005). They often work together with their employers to design, implement and monitor the organizational policies and functions, including training programs (Comstock, 1994; Robbins & DeCenzo, 2004). The training program is a strategic function of human capital management where it focuses on developing employees' competencies to overcome daily problems that may lead to support the development and growth of an organization in the future

(DeSimone, Warner & Harris, 2002; MacNeil, 2004). In the traditional management perspective, the supervisors are given much responsibility by an employer to identify daily, routine and short-term employee deficiencies, as well as to report such deficiencies to the top management. The top management will identify the training requirements to overcome such employee deficiencies (Noe, 2007; Rodríguez & Gregory, 2005). Many scholars think that this approach is appropriately practiced in organizations that have no strategic missions and operated in a stable marketplace environment (Noe, Hollenbeck, Gerhart & Wright, 2004; Robbins & Coulter, 2005).

In the era of global competition, many organizations have shifted their

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paradigms from traditional job based training to organizational business strategies and cultures (Blanchard & Thacker, 2007; Ellinger et al., 2005). Under this approach, the supervisors are empowered by employers to effectively design and administer training programs to develop useful competencies for future organizational development.

In the design of training programs, supervisors often work together with the management team and employees in establishing objectives, selecting suitable trainers, developing lesson plans, selecting program methods and techniques, preparing materials, scheduling the program, as well as conducting training needs' analysis (Goldstein & Ford, 2002; Golemen, 2000; Nijman, 2004). In the administration of training programs, supervisors are usually referred to the management team and experienced employees to ensure that the implementation of training activities achieve the objectives (DeSimone *et al.*, 2002; Elangovan & Karakowsky, 1999; Noe *et al.*, 2004). For example, the role of supervisors in administering training programs does not only provide financial and physical facility supports, but they also have the capabilities to establish realistic learning expectations, encourage positive reinforcements, create a positive impetus for the training program, make employees feel comfortable to attend training, and increase employees' competencies and performance (Blanchard & Thacker, 2007; Brinkerhoff & Montesi, 1995; Colquitt, LePine, & Noe 2000).

SUPERVISOR SUPPORT IN TRAINING PROGRAMS

The supervisor's support is a critical organizational climate factor that may motivate or demotivate employees to enter and participate in training pro-

grams (Noe & Wilk, 1993; Quiñones, 1997). Support is often viewed as a supervisor who encourages trainees to attend training programs, helps employees before, during and after the training programs in terms of time, budgetary support and resources; involves employees in decision-making; and guides trainees in applying competencies that they learnt in the workplace (DeSimone *et al.*, 2002; Elangovan & Karakowsky, 1999; Nijman, 2004). Many scholars advocate that the ability of a supervisor to properly provide support in training programs may increase positive individual attitudes and behaviors, especially transfer of competency (Axtell, Maitlis & Yeartha, 1997; Cheng, 2000; Foxon, 1993) and job performance (Chiaburu & Takleab, 2005; Ford, Quinines, Seago & Sorra, 1992; Tsai & Tai, 2003). Transfer of competency is often defined as trainees who effectively applied the knowledge, skills and abilities that they gained from a training program to the job environment (e.g., positive behavioral changes and performing job better) (Baldwin & Ford, 1988; Gradous, 1991). Job performance is viewed as a function of the capacity to perform, the opportunity to perform, and the willingness to perform. The capacity to perform relates to the extent to which an employee possesses task-relevant skills, abilities, knowledge, and experiences. The opportunity to perform is viewed as a critical element in the performance process. The willingness to perform is referred to as the degree to which individual employees desire and will to put high effort in order to meet their job performance requirements (Eysenck, 1998; Ford *et al.*, 1992). Thus, the combination of those elements may lead to a high employee performance (Blum-

berg & Pringle, 1982; Bohlander, Snell & Sherman, 2001).

Surprisingly, a thorough review of such relationships reveals that the effect of the supervisor's support on individual attitudes and behaviors is indirectly influenced by the motivation to learn (Axtell *et al.*, 1997; Facticeau, Dobbins, Russell, Ladd & Kudisch, 1995; Tsai & Tai, 2003). Motivation is often viewed as "variability in behavior not attributable to stable individual differences (e.g. cognitive ability) or strong situational coercion" (Quiñones, 1997: 182-3), which means an individual who willing to expend efforts toward a particular set of behavior. In a training management context, motivation to learn is defined as an employee's willingness to follow, getting involved and committed to learning activities in order to achieve particular objectives (Maurer & Tarulli, 1994; Noe & Wilk, 1993; Quiñones, 1997), to exert energy toward development activities (Guerrero & Sire, 2001; Mathieu, Tannenbaum & Salas, 1992), transfer what they learn in the program onto the job (Baldwin & Ford, 1988; Facticeau *et al.*, 1995). Many scholars believe that the ability of a supervisor to provide adequate support in training programs will increase individuals' motivation to learn new knowledge, up to date skills and good moral values, this may lead to increased transfer of competency (Ismail, Bongogoh & Ayyup, 2007a) and job performance (Ismail, Chandra Segaran, Cheekiong & Guatleng, 2007b). The nature of this relationship is interesting, but little is known about the mediating role of motivation to learn in training management literature (Foxon, 1993; Noe & Wilk, 1993; Tsai, 2006). Thus, it motivates the researchers to examine the mediating effect of motivation to learn in the relationship between supervisor

support in training programs and individual attitudes and behaviours that occur in MLAUTHORITY. For confidential reasons, the name of this organization is kept anonymous.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Context of the Study

Many researchers argue that socio-cultural differentiations are among the important factors that affect the training program management in organizations (Desimone *et al.*, 2002; Goldstein & Ford, 2002). For example, one dimension of culture that can have implications for attitudes to training programs is the concept of collectivism and individualism. Collectivism is perceived as the norm and standard that practice large power distance (e.g., more hierarchical structure and centralized decision making) and emphasizes more on group interests, co-operation, loyalty and harmony. Individualism is a term used to describe the value and standard that practice low power distance (e.g., less hierarchy and decentralized decision making) and focus more on individual achievement (Hofstede, 1991; Redding & Wong, 1993).

The literature suggests that Malaysians tend to reflect collectivism culture and this can be traced in the website of the Public Service Department (PSD). For example, the government of Malaysia has established a National Institute of Public Administration (INTAN) as a human capital development centre to design and implement the various types of training programs for government departments in this country, as well as conduct certain international courses. Participants who attended the training programs are people from the top, middle and low management levels who work in the federal government agen-

cies, state government agencies and local authorities. The primary objective of a training program is to prepare public administration to support the changes of national development, vision, mission and goals (Mat, 1988; Siew Nooi, 1988; INTAN, 2007). In order to improve customers' needs at the fundamental level, INTAN first established a Center for Urban and Environmental Management in September 2000. This center was restructured to become the Local Government and District Management in January 2004. Its main function is to improve the capacity and capability of local authorities in providing services and managing resources, formulate positive changes in developing and managing local government and to meet customers' needs (INTAN, 2007).

The nature of Malaysian public sector has affected the administration of training programs in Malaysian local government. It consists of three types of local authorities: city hall, municipality council and district council. These authorities are responsible to the Ministry of Local Government and Housing. These authorities rely very much on traditional incomes from the taxes besides the federal government fund to sponsor rural and urban development projects (Jabatan Kerajaan Tempatan Malaysia, 2007). Due to the many commitments, these authorities do not have adequate budget for training programs. This situation encourages the management to send their staff (e.g., supervisor) to attend management and skills based training programs offered by professional training providers and/or INTAN. Upon returning from such training programs, they are required to conduct formal and/or informal training (e.g., coaching and mentoring) for their own staff. This approach is often practiced to create positive learning

culture that may lead to increased employees' competencies and performance.

Specifically, in the studied organization, all technical employees are entitled to attend training programs sponsored by the organization. In managing training programs, supervisors have provided technical supports (e.g., budgetary, materials, facilities) and non-technical supports (e.g., encouragement, and practicing good interaction) before, during and/or after attending training programs. These practices have been used to increase employees' motivation to learn new knowledge, skills and attitudes in training programs. The ability of employees to understand what they learn in such training programs may help employees to improve their competencies and job performance in the workplace. A thorough investigation of the interview results showed that the motivation to learn has indirectly influenced the effect of the supervisor's support on job satisfaction and job performance in the organization. For example, the ability of supervisors to provide material and moral supports have increased employees' motivation to learn, which in turn, led to increased transfer of competency and job performance in the workplace. Although numerous studies have been done, the mediating of effect of motivation to learn in the training program model of the organization is less emphasized (Ismail *et al.*, 2007a; Ismail *et al.*, 2007b). Therefore, exploration of this issue is imperative.

The Relationship between the Supervisor's Role, Motivation to Learn, Transfer of Competency and Job Performance

The mediating role of the motivation to learn in the training programs of MLAUTHORITY is consistent with the

training research literature, mostly published in Western countries. For example, Axtell, Maitlis and Yeararta (1997) examined the training transfer based on a sample of 45 trainees in UK organizations and found that motivation to learn acquired knowledge and skills had increased longer trainees' transfer of competency and performance in the workplace. Further, Tai (2006) conducted a study about training programs based on a sample of 126 employees in Northern Taiwan. This study found that the willingness of a supervisor to provide well-design training frames to employees had invoked their motivation to learn new knowledge, skills and positive attitudes in training programs. As a result, it could to increase training effectiveness, such as transfer of competency and job performance.

These findings support the notions of motivation to learn theories, namely Bandura's (1986, 1997) social learning theory and Adams' (1963, 1965) equity theory. According to Bandura (1986, 1997), an individual often learns by observing other persons (models) whom he/she believes are credible and knowledgeable will strongly invoke his/her motivation to learn acquired knowledge, skills and positive attitudes. As described in a need based motivation theory, when an individual has high level of self-efficacy (i.e., belief to his/her capability to organize and perform general and specific tasks in order to achieve particular aims), this may

lead to increased training effectiveness, such as transfer of competency and job performance (Cheng, 2000; Judge & Bono, 2001; Hysong & Quiñones, 1997; Stajkovic & Luthans, 1998) Besides that, Adams (1963, 1965) explicitly states that unfair or fair treatment styles have a significant impact on an individual's attitude and behavior. Application of this theory in training management shows employees who had received fair support (i.e., clarification, encouragement, budget and facilities) from their supervisors while applying and attending training programs will invoke motivation to learn, this may lead to increased training effectiveness, such as transfer of competency (DeSimone *et al.*, 2002; Goldstein & Ford, 2002; Yamnill & McLean, 2001) and job performance (Chiaburu & Takleab, 2005; DeSimone *et al.*, 2003). The literature has been used as a foundation for establishing a conceptual framework for this study as shown in *Figure 1*.

Based on the evidence, it seems reasonable to assume that the supervisor support will affect MLAUTHORITY employees' motivation to learn and that may increase their competencies and performance as this motivation does affect Western and other Asian employees. Thus, motivation to learn theories further suggest that if MLAUTHORITY employees perceive that their supervisors provide good support in training programs, this will invoke employees' motivation to learn. Thus, it may lead to

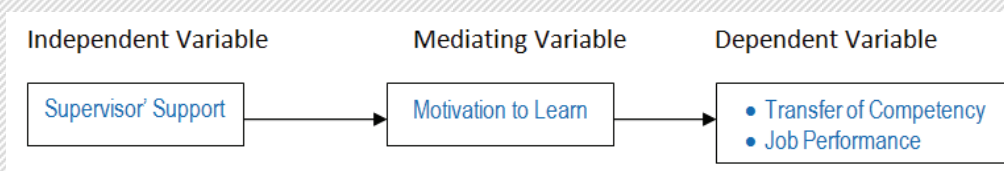


Figure 1. Motivation to Learn Mediates the Relationship between Supervisor Support in Training Programs, Transfer of Competency and Job Performance

an increased transfer of competency and job performance. Therefore, it is hypothesized that:

- H1: The motivation to learn positively mediates the effect of supervisor support on transfer of competency.
- H2: The motivation to learn positively mediates the effect of supervisor support on job performance.

METHODOLOGY

This study used a cross-sectional research design that allows the researchers to integrate training management literature, the in-depth interview, the pilot study and the actual survey as a main procedure to gather data. The use of such methods may gather accurate and less biased data (Cresswell, 1998; Sekaran, 2000). At the initial stage of this study, in-depth interviews were conducted involving six experienced technical employees, namely an experienced technician, an assistant Human Resource Manager, a Head of the Training Unit, a supervisor and two senior officers of the Technical Department. The information gathered from the interviews was used to develop the content of a pilot survey questionnaire. Next, a pilot study was done by discussing the survey questionnaires with the above participants. Their feedback was used to verify the content and format of survey questionnaires for the actual study.

The survey questionnaire was used as the main instrument. It consisted of 5 sections. Firstly, supervisor support was measured using 6 items and it was modified from training research literature (Chiaburu & Takleab, 2005; Tsai & Tai, 2003). Secondly, motivation to learn was measured using 7 items and it was modified from training program literature (Noe & Wilk, 1993; Tsai & Tai, 2003; Rodríguez & Gregory, 2005; Foxon,

1993). Fourthly, transfer of competency was measured using 4 items that were also modified from transfer of training literature (Axtell *et al.*, 1997; Rodríguez & Gregory, 2005; Tsai & Tai, 2003). Finally, job performance was measured using 5 items that were modified from job performance literature (Hvang, Hvang, & Chen, 2004; Lawler & Hall, 1970). All items used in the questionnaires were measured using a 7-item scale ranging from "strongly disagree" (1) to "strongly agree" (7). Demographic variables were used as a controlling variable because this study also focused on employees' attitudes. The back translation technique was used to translate the survey questionnaires in Malay and English; this may help to increase the validity and reliability of the instrument (Van Maanen, 1983; Wright, 1996).

The targeted population of this study was technical employees of the MLAUTHORITY. In a data collection, HR manager did not provide the list of registered employees and did not allow the researchers to distribute survey questionnaires to technical employees who work in the Technical Department of the studied organization. Considering the constraints of organizational rule, a convenience sampling technique was used to distribute 150 questionnaires to technical employees through contact persons (e.g., secretary of department heads, assistant HR managers, supervisors and/or HR managers). Of the number, 100 usable questionnaires were returned to the researchers, yielding a response rate of 67 percent. The survey questionnaires were answered by participants based on their consents and voluntary basis. The number of survey participants exceeds the minimum sample of 30 respondents as required by probability sampling technique. Thus, the data collected can be analyzed

Table 1
Respondent Characteristics (N=100)

Gender (%)	Age (%)	Education (%)	Length of Service (%)	Position (%)
Male =92	20-29 = 27	Degree = 9	1-5 years = 33	Engineer/Planner = 7
Female= 8	30-39 = 47	Diploma/STPM=20	6-10 years = 20	Leader/Supervisor = 39
	40-49 = 22	MCE/SPM = 45	11-15 years = 20	Technician = 21
	>49 = 4	LCE/SRP/PMR = 12	16-20 years = 25	Landscape/maintenance = 3
		Others = 14	> 20 years = 2	Architect = 7
				Others = 23

Note: SRP/LCE/PMR: Sijil Rendah Pelajaran/Lower Certificate of Education/Penilaian Menengah Rendah
SPM/MCE: Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia/ Malaysia Certificate of Education
STPM: Sijil Tinggi Pelajaran Malaysia

using inferential statistics (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005; Sekaran, 2000).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In terms of sample profile, *Table 1* shows the majority respondent characteristics were male (92 percent), age between 30 to 39 years old (47 percent), technicians who held Malaysian Certificate of Education (45 percent), technicians who worked less than 5 years (33 percent) and group leader and supervisor positions (39 percent). *Table 2* shows the results of validity and reliability analysis for measurement scales. The factor analysis with direct oblimin rotation was done for four variables with 22 items. Next, the Kaiser-Mayer-Olkin Test (KMO), which

is a measure of sampling adequacy, was conducted for each variable and the results indicated that it was acceptable. Specifically, the results of these statistical analyses showed that (1) all research variables exceeded the minimum standard of Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin's value of 0.6, were significant in Bartlett's test of sphericity, (2) all research variables had eigenvalues larger than 1, (3) the items for each research variable exceeded factor loadings of 0.40 (Hair, Anderson, Tatham & Black, 1998), and (4) all research variables exceeded the acceptable standard of reliability analysis of 0.70 (Nunally & Bernstein, 1994). These statistical results confirmed the validity and reliability of measurement scales used for this study.

Table 2
Results of the Validity and Reliability Analyses for Measurement Scales

Measure	Items	Factor Loadings	KMO	Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Eigenvalue	Variance Explained	Cronbach Alpha
Support	6	.85 to .90	.88	536.29, p=.000	4.69	78.21	.94
Motivation to learn	7	.76 to .85	.91	673.34, p=.000	5.45	77.92	.95
Transfer of Competency	4	.73 to .88	.86	337.69, p=.000	3.36	83.99	.94
Job Performance	5	.73 to .90	.87	432.33, p=.000	4.02	80.37	.95

Table 3 shows the results of Pearson's correlation analysis and descriptive statistics. The means for the variables are from 5.5 to 6.2, signifying that the levels of supervisor's support, motivation to learn, transfer of competency and job performance ranging from high (4) to highest level (7). The correlation coefficients for the relationship between the independent variable (i.e., supervisor support) and the mediating variable (motivation to learn) and the dependent variable (transfer of competency and job performance) were less than 0.90, indicating that the data were not affected by serious colinearity problem (Hair *et al.*, 1998). The measurement scales that had validity and reliability were used to test research hypothesis. Pearson correlation analysis was unable to determine the mediating role of motivation to learn in the hypothesized model. Stepwise regression analysis was undertaken to test the mediating hypothesis because it can assess the magnitude of each independent variable, and vary the mediating variable in the relationship between many independent variables and one dependent variable (Baron & Kenny, 1986; Foster, Stine & Waterman, 1998). According to Baron and Kenny (1986), the mediating variable can be considered when it meets three conditions: first, the predictor variables are significantly correlated with the hypothesized me-

diator. Second, the predictor and mediator variables are all significantly correlated with the dependent variable. Third, a previously significant effect of predictor variables is reduced to non-significance or reduced in terms of effect size after the inclusion of mediator variables into the analysis (Wong, Hui & Law, 1995). In this regression analysis, standardized coefficients (standardized beta) were used for all analyses (Jaccard, Turrisi & Wan, 1990). The results of testing H1 and H2 were shown in Table 4.

Table 4 shows the outcomes of testing hypotheses in Step 3. Firstly, relationship between motivation to learn and supervisor support positively and significantly correlated with transfer of competency ($\beta=.66$, $p<0.001$), therefore H1 was supported. Before the inclusion of motivation to learn into Step 2, supervisor support significantly correlated with transfer of competency ($\beta=.36$, $p<0.001$). In terms of explanatory power, the inclusion of motivation to learn in Step 3 had explained 18 percent of the variance in the dependent variable. As shown in step 3, (after the inclusion of motivation to learn into this step), the previous significant relationship between supervisor support did not change to non significant (step3: $\beta=-.17$, $p<0.05$), but the strength of such relationships was decreased. In terms of explanatory power, the inclu-

Table 3
Pearson Correlation Analysis and Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Pearson Correlation Analysis				
			1	2	3	4	5
1. Supervisor Support	5.6	.90	1				
2. Motivation o Learn	6.1	.73	.25*	.39**	1	.72**	
3.Transfer of Competency	6.0	.76	.33**	.40**	.72**	1	.66**
4. Job Performance	6.2	.71	.11	.31**	.64**	.66**	1

Note: Significant at levels *0.05;** 0.01; ***0.001

Table 4
Result for Stepwise Regression Analysis

Variable	Transfer of Competency			Job Performance		
	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
<u>Controlling Variable</u>						
Gender	.05	.04	-.01	.08	.07	.02
Age	.11	.09	.03	.10	.10	.04
Education	.05	-.03	.01	-.06	-.09	-.06
Service	-.14	-.13	-.07	-.07	-.07	-.01
Training	.12	.15	.04	.10	.11	.01
Learning	.03	.05	-.00	-.06	-.05	-.11
Position	-.19	-.15	-.11	-.03	-.01	.03
<u>Independent Variable</u>						
Support		.36***	.17*		.13	-.05
<u>Mediating Variable</u>						
Motivation to Learn			.66***			.65***
R Square	.06	.18	.56	.03	.05	.42
Adjusted R Square	-.01	.11	.52	-.04	-.04	.36
R Square Change	.06	.12	.38	.03	.02	.37
F	.85	2.48*	12.80***	.41	.56	7.18***
F Change	.85	13.12***	78.39***	.41	1.58	57.41***

Note: Significant at levels *0.05; ** 0.01; ***0.001

sion of motivation to learn in Step 3 had explained 56 percent of the variance in the dependent variable. These results demonstrate that motivation to learn does act as a mediating variable in the relationship between supervisor's role and transfer of competency in the studied organization.

Secondly, the relationship between motivation to learn and supervisor support positively and significantly correlated with job performance ($\beta=.65$, $p<0.001$). Before the inclusion of motivation to learn into Step 2, supervisor support is not significantly correlated with job performance ($\beta=-.13$, $p>0.05$). In terms of explanatory power, the inclusion of supervisor support in Step 3 had explained 5 percent of the variance in the dependent variable. As shown in step 3, (after the inclusion of motivation to learn into this step), the previous non significant relationship between supervisor support and job performance did not change to significant (step 3: $\beta=-.05$,

$p>0.05$). In terms of explanatory power, the inclusion of motivation to learn in Step 3 had explained 42 percent of the variance in the dependent variable. These results demonstrate that motivation to learn does act as a mediating variable in the relationship between supervisor support and job performance in the studied organization.

The findings of this study confirm that supervisor's support indirectly affects job performance via motivation to learn. In the studied organization, supervisors have provided adequate supports (e.g., encourage employees to attend training programs and apply newly knowledge and skills that they gain from training programs) and used good communication practices (e.g., provide feedback, encourage discussion and openly deliver information on training) when dealing with training programs. The majority of the employees perceive that such supervisors' support had increased their motivation

to learn. When employees' motivation to learn have increased this may lead to higher job performance in the MLAUTHORITY sample.

IMPLICATIONS, LIMITATIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This study provides significant impacts on three major aspects: theoretical contribution, robustness of research methodology, and contribution to the Human Resource Practitioners. In term of theoretical contribution, the findings of this study confirm that motivation to learn does act as a full mediating variable in the relationship between supervisor support and employee outcomes (i.e., transfer of competency and job performance) in the organizational sample. This outcome is consistent with studies by Adams (1963, 1965), Bandura (1986, 1977), Tai (2006), Ismail, Bongogoh and Ayyup (2007a), and Ismail, Chandra Segaran, Cheekiong and Guatlang (2007b). These findings have supported and broadened the training research literature mostly published in Western and other Asian countries. Thus, the notion of motivation to learn has been successfully applied within the training management models of the organizational sample. With respect to the robustness of research methodology, the data gathered using training management literature, the in-depth interviews, pilot study and survey questionnaires have exceeded an acceptable standard of validity and reliability analysis, thus leading to the production of accurate findings.

Regarding practical contributions, the findings of this study can be used as a guideline by the management to upgrade the effectiveness of training programs in their organizations. This objective may be achieved if the manage-

ment consider these suggestions: firstly, the supervisor's support can be sharpened if they are properly trained with up to date knowledge and skills in the training needs analysis, interpersonal communication, managing employee, change and conflict management. Secondly, supervisor's support can be meaningful if they are involved in organisational training committees. This will give them the opportunity to provide practical experiences for establishing the vision, mission, objectives and appropriate modules for training programs. Thirdly, supervisors may effectively motivate employees to attend and apply competencies that they learn from informal and formal training programs if top management hires employees that have appropriate qualifications and skills. Finally, supervisors can be motivated to increase their efforts in monitoring the development of employees' competencies if they are provided with better monetary incentives. These factors may positively motivate supervisors to support organisational and departmental training strategies and goals.

The conclusion drawn from the results of this study should consider the following limitations. Firstly, the data was only taken one time during the duration of this study. Therefore, it did not capture the developmental issues such as intra-individual change and restrictions of making inference to participants and/or causal connections between variables of interest. Secondly, this study only examines the relationship between latent variables and the conclusion drawn from this study does not specify the relationship between specific indicators for the dependent variable, mediating variable and dependent variable. Thirdly, this study only focused on particular elements of a

supervisor's support and neglected other important factors (e.g., employee's readiness, leadership styles of the supervisor and supervisors training framing). Fourthly, other training outcomes (e.g., job performance, job commitment, and job turnover) that are significant for organizations and employees are not discussed in this study. Fifthly, although a substantial amount of variance in dependent measures explained by the significant predictors is identified, there are still a number of unexplainable factors that can be incorporated to identify the causal relationship among variables and their relative explanatory power (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001). Finally, the sample for this study was taken only from one department of the studied organization that allowed the researchers to gather data via survey questionnaires. These limitations may decrease the ability of generalizing the results of this study to other organizational settings.

The conceptual and methodology limitations of this study need to be considered when designing future research. Firstly, the organizational and personal characteristics as a potential variable that can influence the effectiveness of employees' training needs to be further explored. If organizational (e.g., division and ownership) and personal characteristics (e.g., gender, length of service, education level and position) are used in research, this may provide meaningful perspectives for understanding the individual differences and similarities that affect training outcomes. Secondly, the weaknesses of cross-sectional research design may be overcome if longitudinal studies are used to collect data and describe the patterns of change and the direction and magnitude of causal relationships

between variables of interest. Thirdly, the findings of this study may produce different results if this study is done in several organizational sectors (e.g., multinational and local companies). Fourthly, as an extension of the motivation to learn, other theoretical constructs of organizational climate (e.g., transfer of training, training policy and procedures, facilities, budget and employee readiness) need to be considered because they have been widely recognized as an important link between supervisor support and training outcomes (Goldstein & Gilliam, 1990; Ismail *et al.*, 2007a; Ismail *et al.*, 2007b; Noe *et al.*, 2007). The importance of these issues needs to be further explained in future research.

CONCLUSION

This study confirms that motivation to learn does act as a full mediating role in the relationship between supervisor's support and individual attitudes and behaviors. This result relied on and extended the training research literature, mostly published in Western countries. Therefore, current research and practices within training management models need to consider the motivation to learn as a crucial aspect of organisational training system where increasing individuals' motivation to learn may strongly induce positive subsequent personal outcomes (e.g., competency, performance, satisfaction, commitment, trust, and positive moral values). Thus, these positive outcomes may motivate employees to sustain and support organisational strategy and goals.

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