

The Analysis of The Effect of Individual Characteristics and Supervisor Support on Motivation and Learning Transfer

Agni S. Mayangsari^{1*}, Jusuf Irianto¹ and S. E. Anis Eliyana¹

¹Human Resource Development Department, Post Graduate Program, Airlangga University, Indonesia.

Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration between all authors. Author ASM designed the study, wrote the protocol and wrote the first draft of the manuscript. Authors JI and SEAE managed the literature searches and method of analysis. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is: (1) To determine and analyze the effect of individual characteristics on employee's motivation to transfer; (2) To determine and analyze the effect of individual characteristics on learning transfer; (3) To determine and analyze the effect of supervisor support on employee's motivation to transfer; (4) To determine and analyze the effect of supervisor support on learning transfer; (5) To determine and analyze the effect of motivation to transfer on learning transfer. This type of study is explanatory research while collecting primary data through questionnaires distribution to 185 employees and 81 immediate superior in a tuna processing company in Indonesia who have attended a Leadership Development Program, a soft skills training, done in February 2013 to July 2014. Sampling technique used is stratified sampling method. In this study there are two independent variables analyzed: individual characteristics and supervisor support; an intervening variable: motivation to transfer; and the dependent variable: learning transfer. The collected data analyzed by using PLS (Partial Least Square). The results obtained are (1) Individual characteristics has significant effect on employee's motivation to transfer; (2) Individual characteristics has significant effect on learning transfer; (3) Supervisor

*Corresponding author: E-mail: a_mayangsari@yahoo.com;

support has significant effect on the employee's motivation to transfer, (4) Supervisor support has significant effect on learning transfer, (5) Employee's motivation to transfer has significant effect on learning transfer. From the focus group discussion it can be suggested that the management should establish a tool to measure and evaluate the learning transfer of a soft-skills training in order to better capture the success of a training transfer. The management should also integrate the training program to the personnel system, for example using the training record for determining the promotion and / or the bonuses distribution, etc.

Keywords: Individual characteristics; supervisor support; motivation to transfer; learning transfer.

1. INTRODUCTION

Training and development has a unique role in the history of Human Resource Development (HRD) profession (Swanson and Holton) [1]. Eventhough the reason in giving training almost the same all over the world, the number of training done is different from nation to nation. For example, in Asia excluding Japan, the training expense per employee starts from \$241 to \$359 in Japan and \$724 in United States. The total number of training hours also vary from 26 hours in Asia to more than 49 hours per employee per year in Europe (Dessler and Huat) [2]. Then, the failure in transferring the knowledge and skills learned in the training room to workplace is a serious problem costs billions dollars per year (Baldwin and Ford) [3].

The success in transferring skills and knowledge from training room to workplace, is one of the key challenges faced by the instructors and organizations (McGuire and Jorgensen) [4]. The research done by Georgenson [5] states that only ten percent of these training expenditures result in transfer of training to the job. Most of organizations all over the world, have a problem with transfer of training in the workplace and, whatever the level of training, when training does not transfer, it is likely that employees waste theirs and their organization's time (Seyler, Holton, Bates, Burnett and Carvalho) [6].

One of the most prominent tuna processing company in Indonesia, that is a joint venture company between a leading tuna brand owner in Japan and one foreign firm that has as many as 1920 employees, faces this challenge. The employees training record in 2013 states that this company spent as much as Rp. 185,524,264.00 and \$ 534.00 with total training hours in 2013 as many as 575 hours. However, the learning transfer from the training room to workplace is still questionable.

Training is necessary to help workers qualify for a job, do the job or advance, but it is also essential for enhancing and transforming the job, so that the job actually adds value to the enterprise (Davis and Davis) [7]. In other words, we can see the successful of learning transfer from the job performance evaluation. However, the annual job performance evaluation of this company shows no significance advancement and yet some sections show decline performance as seen in Table 1.

Table 1. Job performance evaluation 2012 – 2013

Section	Average score 2012	Average score 2013
Cold storage	65.0	69.0
Raw material	67.0	75.0
Cleaning	69.0	68.0
Packing	72.0	72.0
Seamer	65.6	69.8
Seasoning	73.9	74.6
empty can	70.0	68.0
Ware house	65.8	67.0
PPIC	77.0	78.6
QC	76.0	74.0
R&D	83.0	72.8
Maintenance	78.0	67.0
Boiler & WT	73.0	77.5
Fish Meal	72.8	74.0
Fish Juice	68.0	74.8
Office	76.7	77.0

Therefore, the main objective of this study is to find out the cause of low motivation to transfer and learning transfer in this company. The secondary purpose of this study is (1) To determine and analyze the effect of individual characteristics on employee's motivation to transfer; (2) To determine and analyze the effect of individual characteristics on learning transfer, (3) To determine and analyze the effect of supervisor support on employee's motivation to transfer, (4) To determine and analyze the effect

of supervisor support on learning transfer, (5) To determine and analyze the effect of motivation to transfer on learning transfer.

2. INDIVIDUAL CHARACTERISTICS, SUPERVISOR SUPPORT, MOTIVATION AND LEARNING TRANSFER

Individual characteristics that shapes employees' behavior that influence motivation are initiative, performance and career actualization (Robbins) [8]. As Robbins suggests individual characteristics consists of (1) biographic characteristics (2) ability characteristics (3) personality characteristics and (4) learning characteristics.

Biographic characteristics consists of age, sex, marital status and length of service. Age is considered to have relation with motivation and the ability in learning. The older an employee, the lower motivation and job performance learning ability he has. Male and female is also believed results to different motivation and ability. Marital status is also seen to be an aspect that may affect the attitude of an employee toward his/her job. Length of service is also considered to reflect to the job performance.

Ability characteristics refer to an individual capacity to accomplish any assignments in the work place. This ability comprises intellectual ability and physical ability. The third part of individual characteristics is personality ability which concerns on the behavior of an individu when interacts with others. A study done by Ghezanda, R., Sunuharyo, and Susilo [9] found that individual characteristics has positive and significant effect to employee's motivation partially and simultaneously. Based on this reasoning, the following is suggested:

Hypothesis 1: individual characteristics has significant effect on motivation.

Furthermore the fourth part of Robbin's theory, the learning characteristics, occurs at any time and chance. Learning is any relatively permanent change of individual behaviour that occurs as a result of life experiences. This definition similar to the explanation of learning transfer that is, the application of knowledge, skills and attitudes learned from training on-the-job and subsequent maintenance of them over a period of time (Baldwin dan Ford) [1]. That is why the fourth part of Robbins' theory is not being discussed as

part of individual characteristics in this study since this variable will be part of learning transfer variable.

To understand the transfer of training process, one needs to understand every factors affecting trainees during the training process and after training when they return to the workplace (Nikandrou, Apospori, and Papalexandris) [10]. Baldwin and Ford [3], in their seminal model identify trainee/individual characteristics, training design and work environment as factors affecting the transfer of training process. Similar to what Robbins proposed, and what Baldwin and Ford found, Burke dan Hutchins (2007) stated that individual/trainee characteristics play a powerful role in the transfer of training. Based on this reasoning, the following is suggested:

Hypothesis 2: individual characteristics has significant effect on learning transfer.

Yet, another important component of motivation and learning transfer is supervisor support. Supportive supervisor behaviors include emotional support; instrumental support; role modelling-behavior; and creativity work-life management (Hammer, Kossek, Yragui, Bodner, and Hansen) [11].

Emotional support appears when the supervisor listen and show their subordinates he care about their work-life demands. When a supervisor reacts to employee's work-life demand on a daily basis or whenever it is needed, he is engaging in the second dimension of support, instrumental support. Role modelling behavior occurs when supervisors actively demonstrate how to balance their work-life behaviors on the job. Creative work-life management takes place when a supervisor rearranges a work day in order to enhance employee effectiveness on the job and off the job. A study done by Facticeau, Dobbins, Russel, Ladd and Kuddish [12] shows a direct positive relationship between supervisor support and motivation to transfer. Based on this reasoning, the following is suggested:

Hypothesis 3: Supervisor's support has significant effect on motivation to transfer.

Baldwin, Ford, and Naquin [13] define supervisor support as an active participation, meaning that supervisor needs to do more than states the importance of learning. Rather, they should actively participate in and lead training and on-the-job application training. Xiao [14]

found supervisory behaviour affect training transfer more than any other organizational variables.

Jones [15] states that the direct superior of an employee has the biggest effect to the behavior of trainees in implementing what is learned in the training. Employees who perceived a greater degree of support from their immediate superior, has better learning transfer, in applying the new knowledge and skills learned from training to the workplace. Based on this reasoning, the following is suggested:

Hypothesis 4: Supervisor support has significant effect on learning transfer.

Motivation in this research refers to motivation to transfer that is a willing possessed by employees (trainees) to use the knowledge and skills learned from the training program (Noe and Schmitt) [16]. To measure the effect of motivation on learning transfer, this study uses the indicators suggested by by Victor Vroom. The expectancy theory argues that the strength of a tendency to act in a certain way depends on the strength of an expectation that the act will be followed by a given outcome and on the attractiveness of that outcome to the individual (Vroom) [17].

Expectancy is the strength of a person's belief about whether a particular outcome is possible. In his theory, Vroom suggests that motivation is determined by three factors: expectancy, instrumentality and valence. Vroom states that an outcome is positively valent if the person believes that it holds high instrumentality for the acquisition of positively valent consequences and the avoidance of negatively valent outcomes. People will be motivated when they believe that effort will lead to performance, they can see a clear link between performance and certain results and the results are important for them.

Tziner, A., Fisher, M. Senior, T. and Weisberg, J. [18] states that motivation is the most powerful contributor for training results. Facticeau, Dobbins, Russel, Ladd and Kuddish [12] mentioned that for transfer to occur, trainees must believe that they are capable of learning (expectancy), that their effort to learn will change their performance (instrumentality) and that a change in their performance will lead to valued outcomes (outcome). Based on this reasoning, the following is suggested:

Hypothesis 5: Motivation has significant effect on learning transfer.

The five hypthoheses is suggested based on the model proposed by baldwin and ford [3] and modified by the authors as shown in Fig. 1.

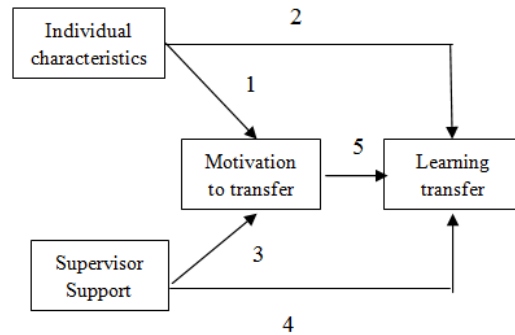


Fig. 1. Hypothesized model demonstrating the effect of individual characteristics and supervisor support on motivation to transfer and learning transfer

3. METHODS

This is an explanatory research that explains the causal effect between researched variables through a hypotheses examination (Ghozali) [19], using questionnaire as an instrument to provide inexpensive, efficient and accurate information. The population of the study are 313 workers consist of managers and title holder who had attended Leadership Development Program Training, a soft skills training, from February to June 2014.

This study is using partial least square (PLS) method proposed by Wold [20] – second order factor model with the variable: the exogenous variables or independent: individual characteristics (X_1), supervisor support (X_2); intervening variable: motivation (Z); and endogenous variable or dependent variable: learning transfer (Y).

3.1 Individual Characteristic

A thirteen-item scale developed by Robbins [8] was used to assess individual characteristics. The items reflected three of four aspects of individual characteristics: 1) biographic characteristics; 2) ability characteristics; and 3) personality characteristics.

3.2 Supervisor Support

A fourteen-item scale developed by Hammer, Kossek, Yragui, Bodner, and Hansen [11] was used to assess supervisor support. The items reflected four aspects of supervisor support: 1) Emotional support; 2) Instrumental support; 3) Role modelling behavior; and 4) creative work-life management.

3.3 Motivation

A six-item scale developed by Vroom [17] was used to assess motivation. The items reflected three aspects of expectancy motivation: 1) Effort - Performance; 2) Performance - outcome; and 3) Valence.

3.4 Learning Transfer

A five-item scale developed based on Baldwin and Ford [3] was used to assess learning transfer. The items reflected two aspects of learning transfer: 1) Skills transfer; and 2) knowledge transfer.

To avoid biases, the data are obtained from different sources, i.e the employee and the supervisor of the selected employee (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, Podsakoff) [21]. To test the hypotheses of interest in this study, employees completed a self-report questionnaire measuring individual characteristics, supervisor support and motivation. The immediate superior (supervisor) of the employee completed a questionnaire measuring learning transfer of the employee.

The sample consists of 185 workers and their 81 direct superiors. Of these individuals, 40 employees and 6 direct supervisor, did not complete the questionnaire, providing a final sample size of 145 employees and 75 direct supervisors. The sample defined using stratified sampling technique, show that approximately 54% were women and held various positions within the company (e.g., assistant manager, junior manager, group head, section head, team head, unit head, senior staff, staff, or junior staff). Approximately 55% of the respondents were graduated from senior high school and 45% were diploma or other. Approximately 65% of the respondents have job tenure with this company that last for more than 15 years, and 35% vary from: less than 5 years; 5-10 years and 10 – 15

years of service. Approximately 31% of the respondents were 36-40 years old, 28% between 31–35 years old, 27% more than 40 years old, 10% between 26-30 years old and 4% between 21–25 years old. Approximately 88% of the respondents were married and 12% were single or other.

The steps in PLS method are as follow: Step (1) indicators elimination for first order variables construct, step (2) First order construct elimination on the second order construct, and step (3) Finding the T-Statistic between variables of second order construct.

The evaluation for model indicator is using the convergent validity. This measurement is employed to see if the indicators of a construct, centralized or distributed, evenly vary on proportion. The evaluation is based on the value of loading factor. Convergent validity will be valid when the loading factor > 0.7. However, on the initial study, loading factor value 0.5 to 0.6 is acceptable (Chin) [22].

Evaluation on the first order construct is measured from composite reliability. It will be acknowledged when the value of composite reliability >0.7 (Chin) [22]. The result of composite reliability of this study is presented in Table 2. The evaluation on the first order construct of this study is also evaluated using T-Statistic test as presented in Table 3.

Tabel 2. Composite reliability construct variables

Construct variables	Composite reliability
Ability characteristics	0.876
Personality characteristics	0.808
Individual characteristics	0.763
Emotional support	0.939
Instrumental support	0.869
Role modelling behavior	0.941
Creative work-life management	0.913
Supervisor Support	0.951
Expectancy	0.928
Instrumentality	0.752
Valence	0.819
Motivation	0.879
Learning transfer	0.932
Skills transfer	0.918
Knowledge transfer	0.933
Biographic characteristics	1

Table 3. R-square construct variables

Variables	T-statistic	Significance	R-square
Individual characteristics -> motivation	8.432	Significance	0.516
Supervisor support -> motivation	2.98	Significance	
Individual characteristics -> learning transfer	1.134	Not significance	0.012
Supervisor support -> learning transfer	0.328	Not significance	
motivation -> learning transfer	0.803	Not significance	

The inner model evaluation is employed the T-statistic test and R-square test. The interpretation of R-square of PLS is similar to that of regression method. The R-square value describe how the first order construct may explain the variance of second order construct.

4. RESULTS

The statistics analysis results show that (1) Individual characteristics has significant effect on motivation, (2) Individual characteristics has no significant effect on learning transfer, (3) supervisor support has significant effect on motivation, (4) Supervisor support has no significant effect on learning transfer, and (5) Motivation has no significant effect on learning transfer. From the R-Square value, it is stated that variable of motivation is affected by individual characteristics and supervisor support as much as 51.6% and the other 48.4% affected by other variables.

For deepening the study, a focus group discussion was held attended by 11 participants from various positions within the company. From the FGD, it was found that individual characteristics, supervisor support and motivation have significant effect to learning transfer. The discussion found that individual characteristics to be positively related to motivation and training transfer, indicating that the younger the employee and the higher the education, the better ability and personality characteristics will result to higher motivation and better the learning transfer. Supervisor support was found to be positively related to motivation and learning transfer, indicating that employee who perceived a greater degree of support from their immediate superiors reported greater motivation and application of the new skills and knowledge in the workplace. Motivation was also found positively related to learning transfer, indicating that the greater motivation of the employees, the better learning transfer in the work place.

From the FGD, it can be concluded that it is not only individual characteristics, supervisor support and motivation but also training method, integrated training achievement to reward and punishment system, and co-worker support have effect to learning transfer. The FGD also mentioned that the like-dislike factors happened within the company, may also effect the analysis result, since the data of learning transfer of the employee were obtained from their immediate superior (supervisor) and the evaluation of learning transfer did not implement a two-way communication tracks between employees and their immediate superiors. From the result of the study, the authors suggest the final model demonstrating the effect of individual characteristics and supervisor support on motivation and learning transfer as shown in Fig. 2.

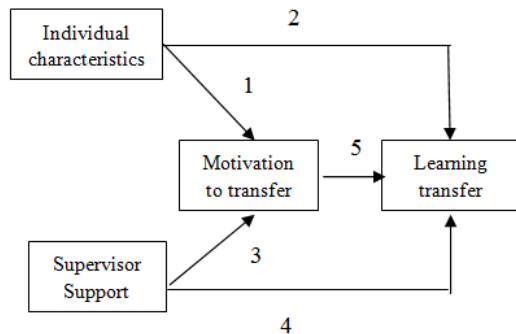


Fig. 2. Final model demonstrating the effect of individual characteristics and supervisor support on motivation and learning transfer

5. DISCUSSION

From the composite reliability value of construct variables, it can be determined that from 37 items or questions given in the questionnaire, only 32 items are significance to measure the variables of the study. The individual characteristics variables used that consists of 3 dimensions, has finally only 2 dimensions valid to measure the variables, i.e the ability characteristics and the personality characteristics

with T-statistics test >1.96 and composite reliability > 0.7 .

From the statistic test, the biographic characteristics can not be used in this study, since the most sample of the population have similar biographic characteristics. Therefore, this indicator viewed as a non valid indicator by the statistic test to measure the variables. The other variables, supervisor support; motivation and learning transfer with their indicator construct, have value of T-statistics test >1.96 and composite reliability >0.7 , so they are all valid to measure the respective variables.

The statistic test of the effect of individual characteristics to motivation shows a significant result with T-Statistics more than 1.96, it is 8.432. This results are similar to the FGD results and support the study result of Suswati (2012) [23] that suggests individual characteristics has positive and significant relation to motivation. Those who have good ability characteristics will have better motivation to transfer skills and knowledge obtained from the training. Those who have good personality characteristics will be easier in having so good relationship with supervisor, subordinates and co-worker that help them to implement the skills and knowledge learned from the training.

The statistic test of the effect of supervisor support to motivation also shows a significant result. The T-statistics value 2.98 that is more than 1.96 indicates a significant effect. These results are similar to the FGD results and support the study results of Facticeau, Dobbins, Russel, Ladd and Kuddish [12] that suggest supervisor support has positive and significant relation to motivation. Those whose immediate superiors give better role modelling behavior, emotional and intrumental support as well as creative in work-life balance will gain better motivation to transfer.

The statistics test of the effect of individual characteristics to learning transfer shows not significance effect with T-statistics value less than 1.96, that is 1.134. This result is different from the result study done by Burke and Hutchins [24] that states individual characteristics has an important role in learning transfer process. The effect of supervisor support is not significant in this T-statistics test, i.e 0.328. This result is different from a study done by Xiao [14] that suggests the behavior of the supervisor has bigger effect to learning transfer than any other

organizational variables. The effect of motivation on learning transfer is found not significant as well. The T-statistics value 0.803 indicates that the effect is not significant since it is less than 1.96. However, Tziner, A., Fisher, M. Senior, T. and Weisberg, J. [18] state that motivation is the most powerful contributor for training results.

The FGD found that these differences (the effect of individual characteristics, supervisor support and motivation to transfer on learning transfer) may result from the incorrect data collection method. The data obtained in this study are from different sources in order to avoid bias (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, Podsakoff) [21]. The individual characteristics, supervisor support and motivation are obtained from the employees, while the learning transfer data are obtained from the employees' supervisors.

From the group discussion it can be concluded that when the data are obtained from different sources, some conditions may influence the analysis result. Among others: the like-and-dislike factors that occur among the supervisor and the employee within the organization, the different perception in filling the questionnaire due to the difference of biographic characteristics, the standard in evaluating the learning transfer since the training program taken as the object of the study was a soft skills training and no two-way communication in filling the questionnaire between the supervisor and the employee.

The data collection that were obtained by questionnaires distribution may also give some inaccuracy data. This method was not able to capture the real conditions of learning transfer which is the evaluation from the immediate superiors to employees' ability in implementing new knowledge and skills learned in the training to workplace. Such data would be better obtained using a structured interview method rather than questionnaire distribution technique.

6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The degree of support and encouragement offered to trainees will affect the rate of training transfer. Clark, Dobbins and Ladd [25] found that trainees were more motivated to learn when they perceived that their training, related to performance in their current job, would provide them with an opportunity for future advancement.

From the result of the FGD it can be suggested that the management should establish a tool to measure and evaluate the learning transfer of a soft-skills training program in order to better capture the success of a training transfer process. The management should then relate or integrate the training achievements of the employees to the personnel system, for example using the training record for determining the promotion and/or the bonuses distribution, etc.

7. DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

From this research it is indicated that the work climate plays an important role in the transfer of training process. Some factors in the work environment should be taken into account for measuring learning transfer: co-worker support; the integration of training programs within the company personnel system, *e.g.*, relating the training achievements with promotion system; and availability of training follow-up, and pre and post training evaluation.

To better capture the real condition of learning transfer the reseacher should obtain the data not by distributing the questionnaire but by digging information using a structured interview method.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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