

# The Linkage between Training and Development and Co-Worker Support towards Employee Engagement in Hotel Industry

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**Abstract-** In order to motivate employees to be more engaged at work, there is a need to further examine the work variables that enable such. This study is carried out to identify the factors that affect employee engagement; that is the relationship between training and development and co-workers support towards employee engagement. Data were collected through printed and online questionnaire and distributed to 400 respondents among hotel employees. Data were then analyzed using Statistical Analysis System (SAS) program to conduct descriptive analysis, reliability test, Pearson Correlation and Multiple Linear Regression to interpret the collected data. The findings showed that co-workers support bring the most significant relationship towards employee engagement in hotel industry. This result is supported by previous studies and several suggested recommendation have also been discussed.

**Index Terms-** training and development, co-worker support, employee engagement

## I. INTRODUCTION

Employee engagement is an important key element in ensuring the successfulness of an organization. Hence, it is no surprise that engaged employees in 21st century has become a hot topic of discussion in corporate circles (Siddhanta & Roy, 2010). According to Bersin (2014), 78 per cent of business leaders rated retention and engagement as important. He believes that any businesses which able to engaging its people and make employees love their existing work will be able to gain competitive differentiator within the business.

According to Rothmann and Rothmann (2010), employee engagement can affect employees' mind set with regard to their personal initiative and learning. In addition, they also figured out that employee engagement brings lots of positive outcomes to the organizations such as motivation, commitment, low turnover rate and others. Furthermore, according to Gallup (2004), they categorized employee engagement into three different categories. Engaged employees are the type of employees whom will feel passion on their job and willing to work hard. In contrast, the non-engaged employees are mostly unwilling to put extra or more effort on their job by doing the jobs that already arranged for them. The third type is actively disengaged employees.

Generally, employees' knowledge, skills and abilities need to keep current to match with the requirement of the job.

Hence, training and development program are essential to ensure the employees' competencies are updated. According to Aguinis and Kraiger (2009), training and development activities will bring positive effects toward organization and their personal goal. Moreover, better training and development may increase the confidence and self-efficacy among employees to perform well in the job (Wang, 2005). Managers can promote high level of employee engagement by giving appropriate training and development to the employees.

On another note, employees work as a team had become one of the common features in modern organizations (Jungert, 2012). Members in team able to work more independently among themselves; correspond and organize each and everyone's actions in order for them to reach their goals. One of the effects that can be seen through team and coworkers support is in reducing the traditional hierarchical relationship between employers and employees through the work collaboration. Moreover, developing friendship at workplace among those employees and coworkers strengthen the engagement of the employees (Tews et al, 2013).

In the foreground, among the Southeast Asian countries, Malaysia is one of the lowest employee engagement levels over the past five year (2013-2009). In general, Southeast Asian countries have achieved a high employee engagement level over the past five year, as Malaysia has yet to achieve in terms of employee engagement if compared with the neighborhood countries. In addition, Malaysia experienced a bad moment in 2012, as the percentage of engagement drops to 60%, which the research speculate this attributed to the uncertain political and economic environment leading up to the 2013 election. But the report stated that, Malaysia will have a better employee engagement scores in the future. Undeniably, employee engagement has been a research platform for the researcher to explore and eventually this may lead engagement to have better recognition among the corporate organization (Andrew & Sofian, 2012).

Given these points, the main purpose of this study is to examine the work variables that affect engagement among employees, that is to identify the relationship between (i) training and development and (ii) co-workers support; toward employee engagement.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

Firstly, engagement in the work field was conceptualized by the author Kahn (1990). He defined

engagement as “the harnessing of organization members engage themselves to their roles; in engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performance” (p. 694). In similar vein, the term engagement can be defined as an “individual’s involvement and satisfaction, as well as enthusiasm for work” (Harter, Schmidt, & Hayes, 2002, p. 269). Similarly, Corporate Leadership Council (2004) notified that employee engagement as “the extent to which employees commit to something or someone in their organization, how hard they work, and how long they stay as a result of that commitment” (pp. 5).

In addition, in general, the underlying concept of employee engagement can be categorized into three dimensions. First, Rothbard (2001) added the concept idea into two components, such as attention and absorption. The attention can be illustrated as cognitive availability and the statistic that every single individual may spend time to think about the role. Besides that, absorption can be identified as engrossed in a role which intensity of one person focuses in a role. Secondly, another concept of engagement was led by burnout researchers, Maslach and Leiter (1997) and Maslach et al. (2001), who conceptualized engagement as the opposite of or the positive contract to the three burnout dimensions: cynicism, exhaustion, and sense of inefficacy (Gonzalez-Roma et al., 2006; Shuck, 2010). Furthermore, Schaufeli et al., (2002) provided a third approach for work engagement, a different perspective and view to the engagement-burnout continuum theory. According to this, engagement can be defined as a “positive, fulfilling, work related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption” (Schaufeli et al., 2002, p. 74). Vigor can be categorized by mental resilience and high level of liveliness when carry out the duty or working role, hence this may help to increase the willingness of subordinates towards their work task. Moreover they will become more persistence when facing some ongoing difficulties during the progress (Salanova & Schaufeli, 2008). Dedication, the next element, refers to a strong recognition with a work task and is written off as by a sense of importance, motivation, encouragement, dedication, enthusiastic, and also a sense of self-importance and challenge. Lastly, absorption can be described as characterized by being completely intense or focus particularly in their job scope, whereby time constraint and facing numerous difficulties with unfasten themselves away from work (Laura, 2010).

## TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

Rothwell & Sredl (1992) defined employee training as a short-term learning intervention voluntary to build or enhance a match between current job requirements and single individual knowledge, skills, and attitudes. Furthermore, they further stated that training helps people to meet minimally acceptable job requirements or refine, upgrade, and improve what they do. Chen (1995) defined employee training as method used to transfer skills, knowledge, and work attitude from the experienced craftsman. Nadler & Nadler (1989) defined employee training as learning, provided by employers to employees that are related to their present jobs. Training is primary concentrate on evaluating, assuring, and helping develop, through planned learning, the key ability that allow single individuals to perform their current work role.

Truelove (1992) further defines development as a path whereby an individual learns from occurrence will be more valuable. The objective is to lend a hand to public to utilize the skills and knowledge that provided by tutoring and exercising, not only for their present career or job as well as future career. Development also reflects some concepts e.g. greater maturity, development of emotion and increase self-assurance.

## CO-WORKER SUPPORT

Iverson (1999) defined co-worker support as “the degree of consideration individuals receive from members of their social network” (p. 402). Furthermore, co-worker can be illustrated as sharing knowledge among one another as well as providing encouragement and support (Zhou & George, 2011). In addition, co-worker support can be further elaborated as social support given towards the subordinates by coworker in the working field (Wright, 2009). Poon (2011) study stated that co-worker provided a belief towards social supports. Social support is a significant development tools to enhance proper employee engagement in social organization (Ng & Sorensen, 2008). As the social support can be categorized into four components, such as instrumental support (e.g assist other with job task), emotional support (e.g provide support), informational support and appraisal support (Langford et al., 1997).

Maslach et al. (2001) and Saks (2006) have confirmed that perceived organizational support and justice are important in employee engagement. In addition, Arora and Kamalanabhan (2010) stated that employee that gain fully support from the employer or co-worker is likely to experience more psychological support in their working environment.

## TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT, CO-WORKER SUPPORT AND EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

According to Salminen et al., (2014), Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model is the association between job resources, optimism and work engagement. This model can be used to identify possible linkage between training and development and co-worker support and employee engagement. The JD-R model furthermore clarify that the linkage connecting task resources and job demand is significant in judge the fundamental in developing employee engagement (Bakker et al., 2006). The model signifies that job resources will create more influence on employee engagement whenever the demands of jobs are consider high (Bakker et al., 2006). According to Salminen et al., (2014), the basis of JD-R model is evoke two different psychological processes on job demands and resources, which are job strain and motivation. Job resources may be encourage and impel and enhance in individual right through maintain, gathering and amassing of resources (Hobfoll, 1989). The fact was Job resources refer to job appearance that is capable in the fostering of personal development, achievement of job mission or goal (Bakker& Demerouti, 2007).

Malik et al. (2013) stated that training and development is considered as a key element to raising employee engagement. They further noted that the improvement of fresh skills and knowledge will ultimately apply into their job performance to enhance employee engagement. In similar vein, Sahinidis & Bouris (2008) proved that when employees perceived that training and development is effective, it shows a strongly

positive relationship with motivation, job commitment and job satisfaction. In the light of JD-R model, training and development can be regarded as job resources, in which the ones provided by the organizations to employees to stimulate learning and development.

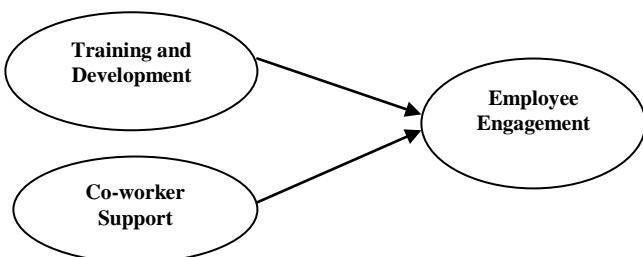
On another note, Wright (2009) highly believed that an individual which highly engaged with the companion of co-worker, will continue engaged themselves in work field. Kahn (1990) also mentioned that individuals who are supportive among each other in the organizations are able to take risks and challenges even though negative consequences might be happened. He also further mentioned that employees would feel safer once they have the support from their team members. Thus, these supportive actions from co-workers will foster the employees' willingness to engage themselves fully in the organizations. Similarly, like training and development, co-worker support is also categorized as job resources. Job resources might be discovered according to the point of corporate (e.g., job opportunities, increment, earnings), the organization of the work (role clarity) in interpersonal and (supervisor and coworker support) (Bakker, et al., 2007).

Co-worker support and employee engagement can also be explained by Social Exchange Theory (SET). Saks et al (2006) concluded that SET provides an essential foundation to enlighten the reasons for employees in choosing to turn into engagement in their employment. When employees are given those supports from coworkers in an organization and received adequate training and development, they feel more obliged and willing to engage themselves. Similarly to the definition of Kahn (1990) of engagement, employees would feel obliged to bring themselves more deeply as the repayment for the coworkers support and training and development actions.

As conclusion, employees who are able to enhance their knowledge and skills through training are most likely to be fully engage and adaptive to their work field, because of the satisfaction on completed the new assignment and increase their future employability (Lockwood, 2007). Similarly for co-worker support, an affiliation that existed among team and coworkers support toward employee engagement.

## CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

Figure 1: The proposed Conceptual Framework for the Study



## III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### SAMPLING AND DATA COLLECTION

Data were collected from a convenience sample of 400 employees working at three to five stars hotels in Penang, Malaysia. Questionnaires were distributed to targeted respondents through both physical conduct and online survey. Self-administered questionnaire is being chosen and carried out in this research. The close-ended question were designed based on the Likert scale method which enable respondents to choose the closest answer to their viewpoint by given specific and limited-alternative responses. A total of 36 items were developed in the questionnaire. The questions are adopted from various sources of previous research papers conducted by other research and some modifications were made in order to fit with research objectives. The questionnaire was divided into three categories. Part A consists of six questions to ask about demographic information of the respondents, while Part B is about factors of training and development and co-workers support which consist of 20 questions. Part C is about the employee engagement which consists of ten questions.

### STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

The collected data was used for calculating the average, percentage and the distribution of frequency. Percentage of tables and graphs is used to describe the analysis. Age, gender, education level etc. also had been tested in this research study.

Reliability test was also conducted, in which a coefficient which known as Cronbach's alpha used to point out how excellent the independent variables and dependent variable positively or negatively correlated to one another. The nearer the Cronbach's alpha is to the digit 1, the advanced the reliability between the independent and dependent variables. The strength of the linear relationship between independent and dependent variables is measured with the use of the technique of Pearson's Correlation. The numbers consisted in the Pearson's Correlation which ranges from -1.00 to +1.00 representing an association between the variables.

Furthermore, Multiple Linear Regression (MLR) is a method that used the test whether there is a relationship among the independent and dependent variables. It used in the direction of justify or explain the independent variables (training and development, coworker support) are having a significant variation towards the dependent variable (employee engagement). This technique is to be chosen since it allows all the simultaneous studies of the independent variables interval with one single dependent variable (Ghani & Ahmad, 2011).

### DATA ANALYSIS

#### DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS

A total of six questions in Section A were asked with regards of demographic information of respondents. The demographic information questions are included gender, age group, education level, stars rating of hotels, working experience and employment status.

For gender, 47.5 percent is male respondents and 52.5 percent is female respondents. Majority of the respondents are in the range of age between 20 to 29 years old, which is 58.25 percent. The second largest percentage is for age group of 30 to 39 years old, which is 26.25 percent. The eldest respondents are minority participated in the research which is 40 to 49 years old

and 50 or older years old. The percentage is 9.50 percent and 4.00 percent respectively.

For education level, most of the respondents are high school graduate, which is 36.00 percent. The second rank is the respondents from college graduate with 31.25 percent. Followed is Bachelor graduate which is 26.50 percent. Master Degree and other education level is occupied the minority, which are 3.00 percent and 2.75 percent.

For hotel star ratings, majority of respondents are working in five stars hotel, which is 62.50 percent. 32.50 percent and five percent are working in four stars and three stars hotels respectively.

For the demographic information of working experience, most of the respondents are working less than one year, which are 36.25 percent. 32.00 percent respondents working more than one year but less than two years. 25 percent are working for 2 years but less than three years and 10 percent of respondents are working more than four years.

Lastly for employment status, majority of respondents are full time employees. There are 89.25 percent for full time and part time employees are 10.75 percent.

### RELIABILITY TEST

Based on the result that we gained through SAS software, the highest independent variable was coworker support relationship which standing at the point of 0.913. This variable shows that we gained a very good reliability result. In addition, the second of Cronbach's Alpha shows that employee engagement which gained a 0.867, this also construct as a good reliability test. Lastly, the training and development figure show that we managed to approach 0.843. As a result, the variable also indicates as a good reliable test. All the independent and dependent variable were managed to achieve the result that more than 0.8. Table 2 summarizes the result.

Table 2: Reliability Test Value for Independent and Dependent Variables

Dimension	No of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Training and Development	10	0.843
Co-worker Support	10	0.913
Employee Engagement	10	0.867

### PEARSON ANALYSIS

Table 3 below shows the correlation coefficient between training and development and employee engagement is 0.843746 with a p-value of less than 0.001 ( $<0.001$ ). It shows that training and development have a strong positive relationship with employee engagement. Thus, conclusion of well-established training and development will have higher engagement among employees.

Table 3 below shows the correlation coefficient between coworkers support and employee engagement. From the table, the Cronbach's coefficient alpha is 0.912552 with a p-value that less than 0.001 ( $<0.001$ ). It also has a strong relationship between coworker support and employee engagement. Thus, we may

conclude that coworkers support will enhance the engagement of the employees.

Table 3: Correlation between Independent and Dependent Variables

Employee Engagement	Training and Development		Co-worker Support
	Pearson Correlation	0.84374	0.912552
	Sig. (2 tailed)	0.001	0.001
	N	400	400

### MULTIPLE LINEAR REGRESSION ANALYSIS

Training and Development ( $<0.001$ ) and Coworkers support ( $<0.001$ ) are all significantly affecting employee engagement.. This is because all the p-value are less than 0.001 ( $<0.001$ ) which are too small that can be determined. The hypotheses for this research study are support by the result above.

In addition, the research study also had shown the standardized coefficients Beta value. This value is used to test each of the independent variable (training and development coworkers' support) in affecting the dependent variable (employee engagement). Among these two independent variables, coworkers support ( $\beta=0.3629$ ) is the most significant factors in affecting the engagement of employees. Whereas, training and development show a lower beta that value than the other independent variable ( $\beta=0.3578$ ).

Table 4: Analysis of Variance

Analysis of Variance					
Source	DF	Sum of Squares	Mean Square	F Value	Pr > F
Model	2	42.84751	21.42376	153.82	<.0001
Error	397	55.29409	0.13928		
Corrected	399	98.14160			
Total					

Table 5: Model of Summary of R Square

Root MSE	0.37320	R-Square	0.4366
Dependent Mean	3.78600	Adjusted R-Square	0.4338
Coefficient Variable	9.85743		

Based on Table 5, R square shows the percentage of the independent variables to illuminate dependent variable's variations. Independent variables (training and development and co-worker support) can explain 43.66% of the variations in dependent variable (employee engagement) in this study. Nevertheless, 56.34% is left unexplained in this research which means other important additional variables in explaining employee engagement that have not been considered in this research.

#### IV. DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Based on the findings in this research, the results show that employee engagement has positive relationships with the two independent variables which are training and development and co-workers relationship. Besides that, all the two variables namely; training and development and co-workers relationship have shown significant relationship with employee engagement.

For training and development, it is therefore sufficient to mention that employees need more training and development to strengthen and promote engagement among employees. - Managers and HR practitioners need to create a good training and development system for their employee. This is because in the study, a significant number of respondents ranked a high vote for the training and development of their organizations. This already prove the importance of training and development to the employee within the organization therefore, managers or employers need to consider designed more effective training and development program for employees. Several studies also support the notion that by providing necessary of training and development to the subordinates it will bring benefits to their organization. Training and development is one of the effectiveness of human resource policies in any organization. As it is known, human resource (workforce) forms an important asset to an organization and when treated well as treasure, it makes up the most vital competitive advantage for any firm.

The second variable is co-workers relationship. With a good co-workers relationship it may help to develop both the individual and organization. Therefore, it is worth recommending to managers and employees to pay more attention on team and co-workers relationship. Several studies also support the notion that good co-worker relationship will lead the organization to a better stage.

For managers, it is therefore important to put in place training and development programs and other learning activities for employees to familiarize with the organizations. This is possible through a series of employee empowerment and involvement to prepare them for the future. Employees in this case will feel appreciated and engaged and that their efforts and presence in the organization is needed. This will enable the creation of new talents within the workforce hence increasing effectiveness and engagement of employees.

In conclusion, the results for both of the independent variables (training and development and, coworker support) also getting the significant positive relationship with employees engagement. These two independent variables are able to enhance the employee engagement in hotel industry. Thus, the result generated in our research can use to guide for future researcher who are willing to figure out the factors will significantly influence to the employees' engagement in hotel industry.

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