PERCEPTIONS ON WORK ENVIRONMENT AS FACTOR INFLUENCING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF HUMAN RESOURCE TRAINING PROGRAM - THE DATAI LANGKAWI

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Abstract - The main purpose of the study was to investigate The Datai Langkawi employees' perceptions on the work environment as factor influencing the effectiveness of training program. A total of 45 employees involved in the program were selected as respondents. The findings of the study concluded that the work environment is perceived by the employees as factor influencing the effectiveness of the training program. The study also indicated that the employees also perceive all the four aspects representing the work environment factor influenced the effectiveness of the training program namely the social support, opportunity to perform, rewards system and organizational culture.

Keywords - Work environment, Human resource, Training program, Effectiveness

I. INTRODUCTION

Human resources are the key asset in organizational survival and particularly to the training and development decisions, thus plays a vital role in the hospitality operation [1]. As a service intensive and significantly relies on its human resources, the hotel needs the involvement of staff from all departments to operate smoothly. Additionally, training is considered as an essential part of the human resources in the hospitality industry. Although, increasing developments have taken place in training programs, there is still a long way to go in terms of research and innovation. According to several studies, although great investments are spent every year on the initiation and preparation of training programs for the purpose of improving knowledge and skills and for gaining competitive edge, a mere 10% of the knowledge and skills acquired from training are made use of by employees on the actual job and employees fail to effectively apply their skills in training on their work environment [2, 3, 4]

This existing gap between the training programs content and the application to actual tasks can be attributable to several reasons which can be divided into three main categories: individual factors [2], work environment, and the training process [5]. For the improvement of training cost efficiencies, the hotel sector needs to acknowledge the factors that impact training effectiveness and to determine those that promote or prevent changes in behavior [6]. Following management's assessment of these factors, strategies can be created targeted at achieving positive transfer and continuous employment of learned skills in the work environment [7]. There is lack of evidence in literature showing that training programs transfer knowledge and skills to actual jobs in terms of significant changes in behavior [2]. Therefore, this failure to transform training investments into significant improvements in on the work environment behavior and performance has become a serious issue in organizations spending billions of dollars annually on training and development [2, 5]. As mentioned earlier, despite the number of studies in literature which tackled the concept of transfer of training, only a few of them investigated the individual, environmental and training process factors linked with knowledge and skills transfer. To reiterate the problem, the training program trainees fail to transfer the knowledge and skills that they learn in training to actual work environment and this carried serious implications for the employees, hotel management and the guests.

1) Background of the Study – The Datai Langkawi

The Datai Langkawi is a destination resort situated on the mystical island of Langkawi, Malaysia. The resort was built in a lust tropical rainforest and jungle which surrounding with wildlife and endemic species such as Dusky langurs, Tokay geckos and Sunda Colugos. The Datai Langkawi offering breathtaking views through beautiful rooms, suites and villas with private verandahs. The landscapes of the resort provide seamlessly nature rainforest adventure and experience to the guest. Well known as the best luxury hotel in the world, The Datai Langkawi has also won several awards for instance Best Hotel in the World in 2001, Best Luxury Hideaway Resort in Asia at the World Luxury Hotel Awards 2015 and ranked 27th on Readers' Travel Awards 2015 by Best Condé Nast Traveler [8].

2) The Training Program - Executive Advance Certificate In Hospitality Management Program

To meet the ever changing demand of upmarket travelers all over the world and stiffer competition, The Datai Langkawi has undergone an upgrading activities of its premise and management known as The Datai Invest in People Program [9]. The program is a holistic approach to upgrade and improve the existing staff's supervisory and management skills via a three prong approach of attitude alteration, skills development and knowledge enhancement. One of the important aspects which has been given attention by The Datai Langkawi' management is to provide a professional development program to the staffs in order to improve supervisory and management skills, increase economic efficiency, promote innovations, improve work processes and enhance productivity. Hence, a special program was developed by the appointed consultant, Overview Sdn. Bhd. and expertise from the School of Tourism, Hospitality and Event Management, Universiti Utara Malaysia. The training program is named - Executive Advance Certificate in Hospitality Management Program.

3) Research Objective

The objective of this study is to determine the perceptions of The Datai employees on the work environment as factor influencing the effectiveness of the training program.

II. METHODOLOGY

Questionnaires were distributed to 45 employees of The Datai Langkawi at the end of the training program. The questionnaire utilized for this study included three sections. However, this paper presented the second section of the questionnaire which involved asking the respondents to indicate their perceptions of the tourism and hospitality skills for successful graduates' employability in the industry. The questionnaire used Likert five point scale from "strongly disagree" (1) to "strongly agree" (5). The questionnaire was divided into two parts to answer the objectives of the study. PART I included the demographic profiles of the respondents namely gender, educational level, number of years working in the hotel industry, number of times attended training program in a year and position at the hotel. PART II required the respondents to rate their perceptions on the work environment as factor influencing the effectiveness of the training program. 14 items were adopted and adapted from Kirkpatrick and Kirkpatrick [10] based on the four levels evaluation training model.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 depicts the findings regarding the respondents' background. Majority of the respondents are male (71.1%) and the remaining are female (28.9%). Most of them were graduated from high school (62.2%) and followed by having diploma certificate (24.4%). Few of them had finished their undergraduate (6.7%) and postgraduate (2.2%) studies. The question further asking them to indicate the number of years they had been working in the hotel industry. The findings showed that most of them had been working between 6 – 10 years (28.9%), followed by between 16 – 20 years (22.2%) and above 21 years (10.0%). As for the number of training program they had attended in a year, the findings of the survey revealed that majority of the respondents had attended less than five training programs in a year (73.3%). Only few stated that they had attended more than 11 training programs in a year (11.1%). Additionally, the findings of the survey indicated that majority of the respondents hold a supervisory post at the hotel (64.4%), followed by the managerial post (22.2%) and the remaining hold other positions (13.3%).

TABLE 1
RESPONDENTS' BACKGROUND

Items	Frequency	Percentage
Gender:		
Male	32	71.1
Female	13	28.9
Education:		
High school	28	62.2
Diploma	11	24.4
Undergraduate	3	6.7
Postgraduate	1	2.2
Others	2	4.4
Number of years working:		
Under 1 year	1	2.2
1 – 5 years	7	15.6
6 – 10 years	13	28.9
11 – 15 years	5	11.1
16 – 20 years	10	22.2
Above 21 years	9	10.0
Number of training attented in a year:		
Less than 5 times	33	73.3
6 – 10 times	7	15.6
More than 11 times	5	11.1
Position at the hotel:		
Managerial	10	22.2
Supervisory	29	64.4
Others	6	13.3

Table 2 highlights the findings of the survey regarding the perceptions on the work environment factors which involved the social support, opportunity to perform, reward system and social cultural. It can be seen from the findings on the social support factor

that 51.1 percent of the respondents found the supervisors of the training program support their efforts to acquire new skills whilst 26.7 percent of them were neutral about the statement. More, 53.3 percent also believed that their subordinates are receptive toward the use of new skills and additionally 15.6 percent were strongly agreed with the statement. The findings also showed a large percentage of agreement regarding the supervisors' expectation to apply the skills. 68.9 percent of the respondents were found to be strongly agreed and 62.2 percent agreed that the supervisors expect them to apply the skills they gained from the training program.

As for the opportunity to perform factor, the findings revealed that 60.0 percent of the respondents agreed that they are encouraged to try new techniques based on the training program. 55.6 percent of the respondents also found that they have adequate equipment to perform new skills during the training program whilst on the other aspect about 24.4 percent of them were neutral about the statement. Further, the findings of the survey indicated that 64.4 percent of the respondents agreed that they also have adequate time to perform the new skills which they have learnt during the training program. Similarly, 64.4 percent of them also agreed that the training program have provided them with skills which they can use in their everyday work. In fact, 22.2 percent of the respondents were strongly agreed with this statement.
The work environment factor has also included the reward system as one of the factors influencing the training program. The findings of the survey highlighted that only 42. 2 percent of the respondents believed that the training program increases their chance of getting a promotion. Additionally, 28.9 percent of them found the statement as neutral. Meanwhile, 53.3 percent of the respondents found that the supervisors appraise them for their performance on the training program with 22.2 percent of them stated it as a neutral statement. Additionally, the findings showed that only 40.0 percent of the respondents agreed that the managers provide incentive for those who only perform after the training program. The findings also revealed that 37.8 percent of the respondents found this statement as neutral.

Finally, the findings regarding the organizational cultural factor indicated that 53.3 percent of the respondents agreed that the management encourage them to engage during the training program. More, 24.4 percent of them were strongly agreed with the statement. The findings of the survey further revealed that 48.9 percent of them believed that the management discusses the objective of the program before the training. However, the findings also showed that 26.7 percent of them found the statement as neutral. Additionally, the statement on discussion with the trainees regarding the unforeseen barriers revealed that 46.7 percent of the respondents agreed that the management has discussed the issue whilst 33.3 percent found it as a neutral statement. Finally, 53.3 percent of the respondents believed that the management provides both positive and constructive feedbacks to subordinates about their job performance during the training program.

TABLE 2
PERCEPTIONS ON WORK ENVIRONMENT FACTOR

Work environment factors	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Social support:					
My supervisor is supportive of my efforts to acquire new skills.	0.0	0.0	26.7	51.1	22.2
My subordinates are receptive toward my use of new skills from the training program.	2.2	0.0	28.9	53.3	15.6
The supervisor expects me to apply the skills I gained in the training program.	0.0	0.0	8.9	62.2	68.9
Opportunity to perform:					
I am encouraged to try new techniques after the training program.	0.0	2.2	13.3	60.0	24.4
I have adequate equipment to perform new skills in my job.	0.0	0.0	24.4	55.6	20.0
I have adequate time to perform new skills I have been trained.	0.0	0.0	17.8	64.4	17.8
I learned skills in the training	0.0	0.0	13.3	64.4	22.2

program that I intend to use in my everyday work.					
Reward system:					
Attending the training program increases my chance of getting a promotion.	4.4	2.2	28.9	42.2	22.2
The supervisor gives appraise to participants if they perform after the training program.	4.4	2.2	22.2	53.3	17.8
The manager provides incentive for participants who apply what they have learned during the training program.	4.4	2.2	37.8	40.0	5.6
Organizational cultural:					
The management encourages employees to engage during the training sessions.	2.2	2.2	17.8	53.3	24.4
The management discusses the objectives of training program before the training begin.	2.2	6.7	26.7	48.9	15.6
The management discusses with the trainees the unforeseen barriers to apply trained skills.	0.0	6.7	33.3	46.7	13.3
The management provides both positive and constructive feedbacks to subordinates about their job performance.	2.2	4.4	24.4	53.3	15.6

CONCLUSIONS

The findings on the work environment significantly consistent to previous studies which also noted that social support as factor influencing the effectiveness of training program [11, 12, 13]. Further, the findings also similar to other studies regarding the opportunity to perform where it was noted that this factor also influenced the effectiveness of the training program [11, 12, 14]. The opportunity to perform probably is seen by The Datai Langkawi employees as valuable aspect which the management had provided them including the provision of time and equipment which eventually could assist them to provide professional service to the guests.

Additionally, the reward system is also found by The Datai Langkawi employees as significant factor influencing the effectiveness of the training program. Several studies had highlighted that reward system is vital in managing employees [11, 15, 16, 17]. (Hence, the findings of the study probably show that the employees would be more encourage to work harder when the management of the hotels would consider rewarding them continuously. However, there are few previous studies which indicated contradict findings to this current study on reward system. For instance Cheng and Ho [18] and Xiao [19] have noted in their studies that the reward system did not demonstrate significant influence on the training program.

The findings regarding organizational culture are also found to be consistent to other studies. Previous studies have indicated that organizational cultural influenced the training program similarly to the current study [2, 17]. The findings would probably suggest that The Datai Langkawi empoyees recognize the organizational culture of the hotel and value the policies and strategies related to their tasks. In contrast, the findings did not support previous findings by Mohd Shariff and AlMakhadmah [11] where they noted that organizational culture of the hotel insignificantly influenced the effectiveness of training program for employees at Aqaba Special Economy Zone Authority ASEZA.

A training program known as An Executive Advance Certificate in Hospitality Management Program was developed by the Overview Sdn. Bhd. and conducted by the academic staff of the School of Tourism, Hospitality and Event Management, Universiti Utara Malaysia to provide knowledge and train new skills to the employees of The Datai Langkawi. To evaluate the effectiveness of the program, a study was

conducted by taking into account factors which may influence the effectiveness of the training program namely the work environment, individual and training process. The findings of the study have fulfilled the main objective of the study as stated in the earlier part of the report. It can be concluded that the three factors significantly influence the effectiveness of the training program.

Looking into the current findings concerning factors influencing the effectiveness of training program for The Datai Langkawi employees, it is recommended that several future studies should be conducted to confirm if the trend found in this study would continue in other training programs. Among others, further study should be undertaken to determine whether the trainees maintained the learned skills and change behavior over time in a specific training program, which can be conducted through longitudinal studies of training effectiveness. More, another study which compare the findings across times and assist the hotels in examining the findings should also be conducted to strengthen the existing findings from the literature.

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