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INVESTIGATING EXTENT TO WHICH COMPANIES' ENVIRONMENT ARE SUPPORTIVE FOR TRAINING TRANSFER IN SAUDI ARABIA

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ABSTRACT

Saudi Arabia companies have started to recognize important role of their human capital in ensure their organizational competitive advantage which lot emphasis has been placed on their workforce training and development. The training transfer is considered key valuable measures in assessing training success, this study aims to investigate the extent to which Saudi companies 'work environment support training transfer. The study investi6gated this relationship through focused on examining four selected work environment factors: peer support, supervisor support, opportunity usage and performance coaching. The study had been conducted on well-known petrochemical company based in Saudi Arabia which quantitative methodology had been carried out with questionnaire. There were 20 respondents were collected which key finding reported that company culture has indeed facilitated training transfer, where all factors were highly rated by all participants. The study also reported that along with work environment factors, trainees' characteristics and training design factors had played an important role in influencing training transfer.

INTRODUCTION

As organizations strive to grow and maintain their success, one core element to attaining that is through the continuous investment in the training and development of their human capital (Salas et al., 2009). Even though evidence suggests that training and development contributes greatly in improving the employees' and organizational performance, there is little evidence to how successful they are (IBM,2008). As reported by previous studies, the extent of

the actual knowledge and skills being use by employees in the workplace are estimated around 10 to 20 percent of the overall knowledge and skills gained from training (Cromwell et al., 2004, Kirwan et al., 2006, Lim et al., 2006 and Grossman et al., 2011).

According to Chang et al. (2013), as long as the knowledge and skills obtained from training programs are not being applied in the workplace, the training is doomed as ineffective (Chang et al., 2013). Therefore, one approach to examine the success of training and development in organizations is through measuring the extent to which training transfer is actually happening and what factors are facilitating its attainment.

As training transfer is considered one of the key elements in determining the effectiveness of training programs (Wen et al., 2014), a lot of emphasis should be directed towards it, especially when assessing training success. Training transfer is a very critical issue for many Human Resource Development (HRD) professionals (DeSimone et al., 2002), where it is influenced by variety of variables across different organizational settings. Training transfer variables can either promote or demote the transfer process (Edward, 2013).

However, the primary focus in this study revolves around the work environment factors; specifically: peer support, supervisor support, opportunity to use, and performance coaching variables (Holton et al., 2000). The study aimed to investigate the extent to which Saudi companies 'work environment support training transfer.

METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in one largest petrochemical corporation in Saudi Arabia which their service division based in Jeddah. The population were 58 employees which 30 respondents were met the inclusion criteria and willingness to participate in the study. The study used simple random sampling method which the respondent was selected randomly based on their availability. All respondents had opportunity to withdraw their involvement any time and kept confidential.

The data were collected using quantitative research method which primary instrument used was questionnaire. The questionnaire included three types of questions (closed ended, open ended and scale questions). The primary intention was used more convenient method to collect the data and company restriction of internet access and time constraint, hence study concentrated at Jeddah only.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

In Fig. 1, most respondents were males (90%) compared to females' respondents (10%). The result showed female introduction in the workplace is still barely new to Saudi work environment.

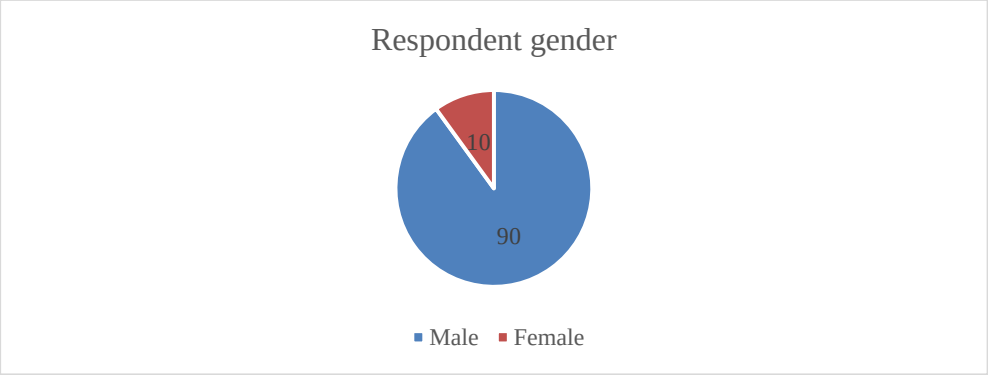

Fig. 1. Respondent gender.

There were 35% respondents aged between 41 years and 50 years old and 25% respondents aged between 20 years and 30 years and aged between 51 years and 60 years old as shown in Fig.2.

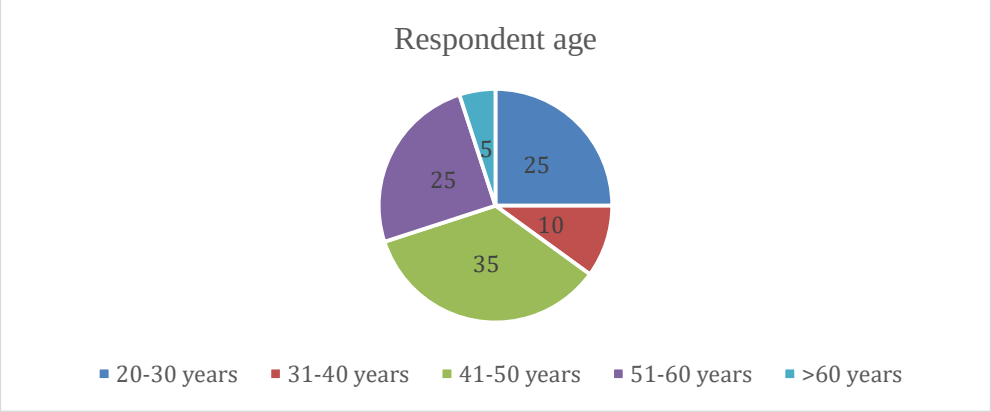

Fig. 2. Respondent age.

Besides, 50% respondents had their bachelor degree while 35% respondents had high school. Meanwhile, 15% had completed postgraduate level as shown in Fig.3.

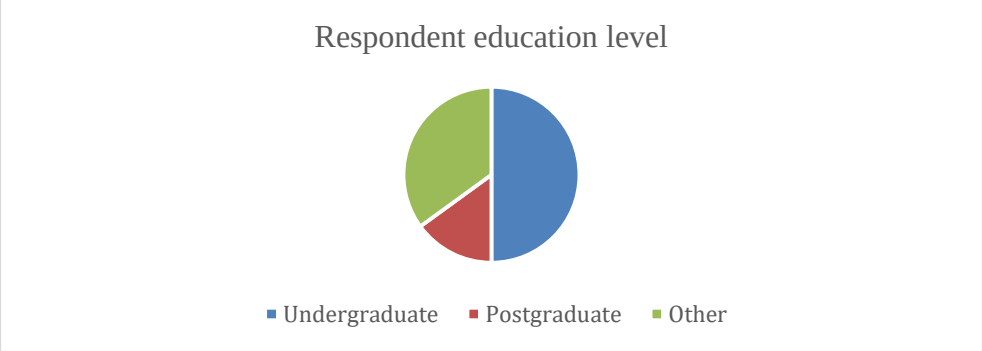

Fig. 3. Respondent education level.

In Fig.4, there were 60% respondents had worked in the company more than 15 years and 25% respondents who worked less than 5 years. Meanwhile, 10% respondents were worked between 11 years and 15 years and 5% respondents who worked with company between 5 years and 10 years.

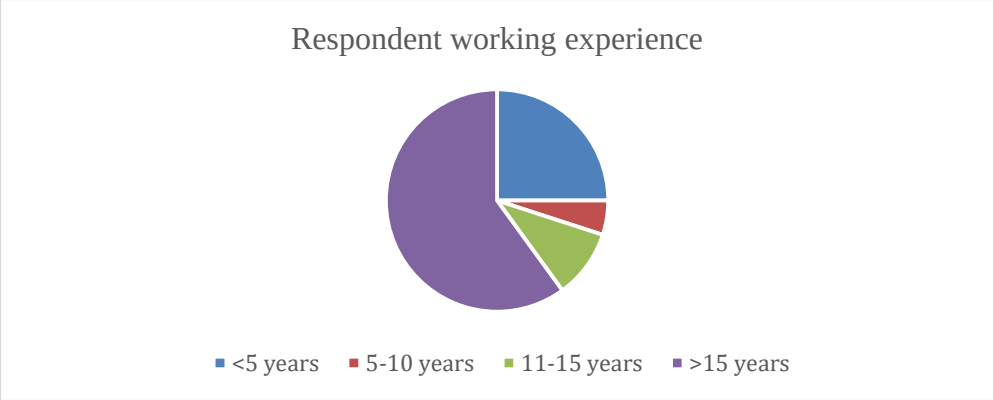

Fig. 4. Respondent working experience.

Based on these results showed most respondents were males who aged between 41 years and 50 years. Besides, most respondents had completed undergraduate and worked almost 15 years in the company.

In this questionnaire was assigned specific number of questions which the assessment used was five measurement scale level (1=strongly disagree; 2= disagree; 3=neutral; 4= agree and 5= strongly agree). The peer support consisted four questions which employees were asked to give their preference on each question based on three measurement scale level (1-disagree; 2=neutral and 3= agree).

Based on Fig. 5, the first question aimed to assess whether respondents' colleagues appreciate respondents use of new learning. Most respondents agreed and only 20% respondents answered disagreed on peer support. Meanwhile, second question addressed peer support in term of their efforts to encourage respondents to apply new learning to the job. For this question, no respondents disagreed toward this question. However, 75% respondents answered agreed and 25% respondents answered neutral on second question.

The third question measured whether peers showed expectation in applying their knowledge to the job. 65% respondents answered agreed and 25% respondents answered neutral on third question. Meanwhile, final question on peer support influence in term of peer patience toward respondent efforts in apply their knowledge in their job. Most respondents (70%) answered agreed and 20% respondents answered neutral on peer support influence. In summary, peer support factor in influence training transfer was received great attention in the company.

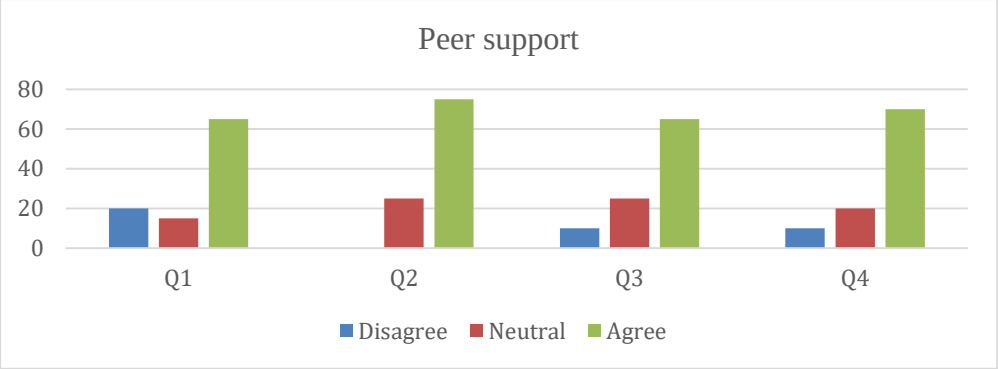

Fig. 5. Peer support.

In Fig.6, the supervisor support consisted of six questions which each employee was asked to give their preference on each question. The first question assed this factor aimed to evaluate whether respondent supervisor took the effort to meet with them regularly, mainly to help solve their problems regarded their usage of new learning on the job. Most respondents had agreed to this question and only 5% respondents had disagreed with this question.

Meanwhile, second question assessed whether respondent supervisor met with them, however another sole reason of discussed way to apply their learning on the job. The third question evaluated whether respondent supervisor showed interest in their training. Most respondents had agreed on the statement.

In additions, extent to which supervisors set goals for respondents to apply new learning on the job. 60% respondents agreed and 35% respondents answered neutral. Besides, another question examined respondents received positive feedback from their supervisors for applying their newly acquired learning on the job. 75% respondents had agreed on prior statement and 15% respondents had neutral toward this question.

The sixth question investigated whether supervisors helped respondents set realistic goals for their job performance based on their training.70% respondents agreed that their supervisors helped their respondents set realistic goals. The result showed respondents supervisors did some effort and time to encourage them to apply their newly acquired learning on the job.

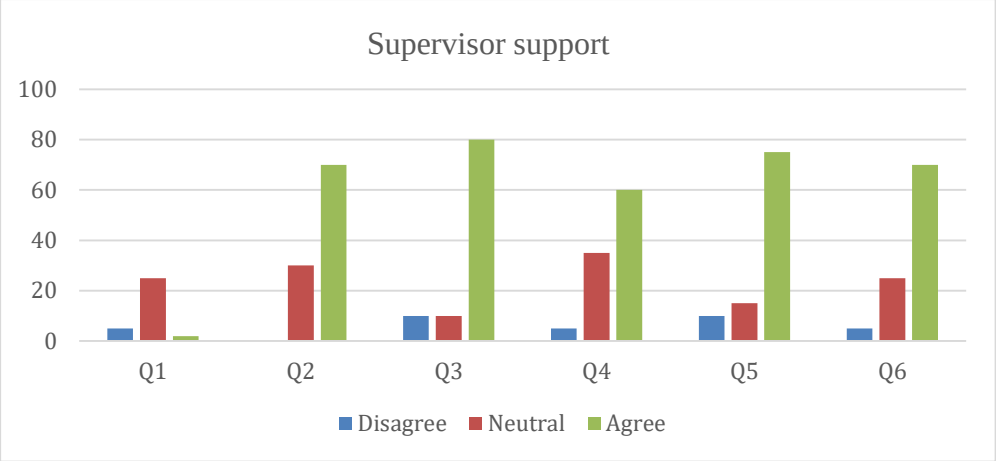

Fig. 6. Supervisor support.

In Fig.7, opportunity to use learning was third factor which consisted 8 questions. The first question aimed to assess extent which respondents' necessary resources and material had to apply in their job. There were 65% respondents agreed and 5% respondents answered disagreed.

The second question examined which respondents' ability to use their skills and learning on the job. 80% respondents were agreed and 15% respondents were disagreed on this question. Meanwhile, third question on the respondents needed to apply their learning were available for them after training. 70% respondents agreed and 20% respondents answered neutral with this statement.

Meanwhile, fourth question measured whether respondents perceived that the respondents had opportunity to apply their learning on their job. 80% respondents were agreed and 5% respondents were disagreed with this statement. Besides, fifth question examined whether respondents perceived that respondents had sufficient human resources to allow respondents to utilize their newly acquired skills. There were 50% respondents agreed and 35% respondents were neutral with this statement. The sixth question examined whether work budget limitation had prevented respondents from applying their new knowledge in their job. There were 35% respondents answered neutral and 50% respondents agreed that work budget limitations had indeed been an obstacle to their learning.

Seventh question examined respondent preference on their company current staffing level was sufficient to apply their learning. 55% respondents were agreed and 10% respondents disagreed with this statement. The eight-question investigated difficulty accessed material and supplied necessary their knowledge in their job. 50% respondents were agreed and 40% respondents disagreed with this statement. Hence, the result had revealed that opportunity to use their knowledge in the company.

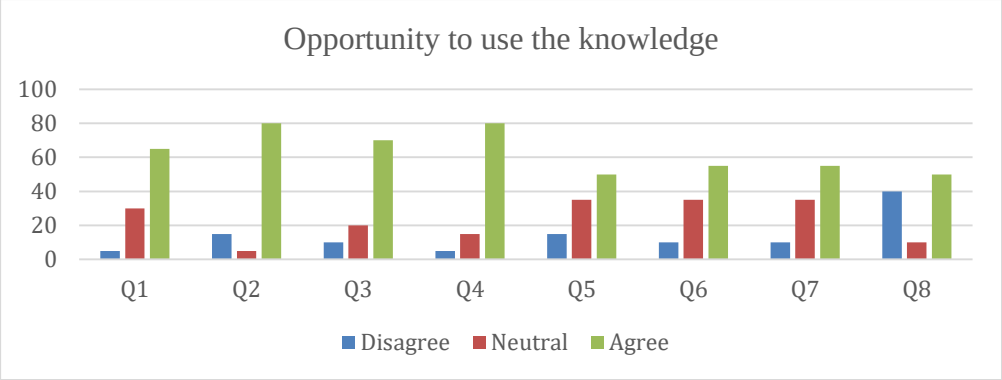

Fig. 7. Opportunity to use the knowledge.

In Fig.8, performance coaching was last factor examined which had 7 questions. First question toward performance coaching aimed to evaluate whether respondents had received positive feedback after training. There were 60% respondents and 35% were answered neutral toward this statement. In additions, second question questioned on extent to which respondents had received suggestions on their job performance improvement. 50% respondents had agreed and 15% respondents were disagreed toward this statement. The third question assessed whether respondents received advice on job performance.60% respondents agreed and 10% respondents disagreed on this statement.

Furthermore, fourth question examined whether respondents had been given pointers by individual to help respondent in job performance improvement. 55% respondents were agreed and 30% respondents answered neutral on this statement. Fifth question investigated whether respondents knew who should help respondents in apply their knowledge in their job. 60% respondents had agreed and 40% respondents were neutral on this statement. Sixth question determined respondents had asked help from others on their job performance. Most respondents agreed and 35% respondents answered neutral on this question. Last question on regular conversation with others on their job performance. 65% respondents agreed and only 5% respondents found disagreed on this statement. The performance coaching was one work environment factors that company was fostered.

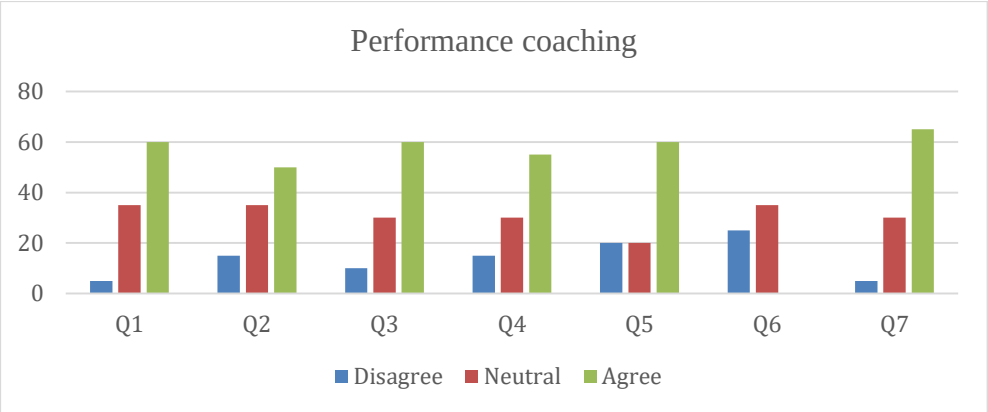

Fig. 8. Performance coaching.

Most respondents reported that able to apply their newly acquired learning to their job (80%) while 20% respondents reported otherwise. On other hand, second question reported mixed result that influenced transfer process specifically by respondents who were able to transfer their knowledge. The key reasons that helped facilitate their transfer of learning which mostly related to the training design and personal characteristics. In contrast, respondents who unable to transfer their learning had clearly associated work environment factors as main obstacles in limiting their transfer specifically management support.

Discussion

The study was divided into three parts included demographic, work environment factors (peer support, supervisor support, opportunity to use the knowledge and performance coaching) and training transfer. Most respondents were males aged between 41 years old and 50 years old. Most respondents had completed their undergraduate level and worked in the company for more than 15 years. The working environment factors analysis revealed that all selected factor was received good amount of attention by the company. Besides, training transfer analysis was positive which most respondents reported that able to apply their knowledge in their job. The training transfer analysis also revealed that training design and individual characteristic had aided in facilitating transfer process which absence of certain work environment factor had resulted in difficulties of transfer.

Four work environment factors evaluated in this study had been selected based on Holton and Bates Learning Transfer Inventory System LTIS (1997) which had supported by various studies and best good measurement in evaluating learning transfer (Holton et al., 2000).The study found the company had supportive work environment which adapted the factors such as peer support, supervisor support, opportunity to use knowledge and performance coaching. Besides, the result also showed respondents were indeed abled to apply their knowledge in their job. Based on previous studies, there was evident that positive relationship between selected work environment factors and training transfer.

In additions, the employees had own perspective on their thinking toward their learning transfer. Most respondents had identified both personal characteristics and training design related factors as main reasons in the transfer facilitation. Several previous studies highlighted the fact that each factor played an important role in learning transfer influencing (Edward, 2013, Holton, et al., 2000 and Lim et al., 2006).

CONCLUSION

In conclusions, there was positive supported Saudi companies' role in facilitating transfer of training in terms of four selected work environment factors. Even though, the study had supported the relationship between work

environment factors and training transfers, other factors were highlighted signifying their role in facilitating transfer of learning.

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