Research Article

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Predictors of training and job performance of 3-star and 4-star hotel front-line employees

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Abstract

This study highlighted the importance of job performance of front line employees in hotels on performing their tasks. The job performance of front line employees at workplace is important because they are a group of employees that deal and confront with demands and needs from hotel guest that stay at the hotel. Therefore, it is important for the human resources at the hotel to provide training programme for the front-line employees to enhance their knowledge, skills and abilities. The factors that related to conduct the training include training participant, content and method. This study was conducted at 3 and 4-star hotel in Klang Valley area and Sabah state. Out of 400 distributed questionnaires as the main instrument of this study to the sample of front line employees, including food and beverage department, front office department and house-keeping department, only 277 questionnaires were valid for further analyses. The findings of this study were confirmed by IBM Statistical Packaging for Social Science version 20.

Keywords:

Training, participant, content, method, job performance, front line employees

1   Introduction

Employees are important for the competitive advantage among organizations in the same businesses because of their high motivation, satisfaction and commitment (Dominguez-Falcon, Martin-Santana, & Saa-Perez, 2016). Employees also expected to give a good first impression and to ensure the guests to visit the hotel for the first time and put an effort to retain the guests to be their regular hotel guest. Therefore, employees in the hotel considered as need to perform a marketing strategy which they need to have a high motivation, satisfaction and commitment (Baum & Kong, 2006). In Malaysian hospitality industry, a study by Zulbahari and Alias (2014) found that there are four major causes for employees at the hotel to leave their jobs; lacking career advancement opportunities, lacking alternative to secure other positions, excessive work load which means the employees at the hotel experience multi-tasking and stress at workplace. As a conclusion, it is important to retain the hotel staff especially front-line employees in performing their jobs so that they are able to require good interaction or services towards hotel guests (Dominguez-Falcon et al., 2016).

Front line employees at the hotel were experiencing burnout, stress and depression (Chiang, Birtch, & Cai, 2014) because the nature of their duties at the workplace, such as long working hours, poor remuneration, lack of social interaction within the working environment and limited training activity (Robinson, Kralj, Solnet, Goh, & Callan, 2016). Therefore, this study is necessary to be conducted to identify the predictors of training that influenced job performance of front line employees in order to assist them in performing their job.

The general objective of this study is to measure job performance of front line employees through its relationship with participant, content and method. The specific objectives of this study are i) to determine the relationship between participant and job performance; ii) to determine the relationship between content and job performance and; iii) to determine the relationship between method and job performance.

2   Literature Review

2.1 Predictors of training - participant

Subhash and Praveen (2014, p. 50) claimed that the ability of trainee to practice the knowledge, skills and abilities into job and career plan was influenced by "attitudes, interest, values and expectation of the trainees and the training environment". This is because many participants identified as having no interest or desire to participating in training activity. Additionally, even though they are recognized as lack in performing their task, they did not put any priority to improve their weaknesses through provided training because they fail to instil the positive attitudes, interest, values and expectation on what they want to be in the future. In

other words, without willingness to participant in training activity will prevent them to learn and gain any competencies. Besides that, the desire and capabilities of participants are important to determine the effectiveness of training (Palameta, Myers, Gyarmati, & Voyer, 2011).

2.2 Predictors of training - content

Training also considered effective when the learning content and delivery affecting the training programme (Palameta et al., 2011; Subhash & Praveen, 2014). This means that the learning content inside the training programme must be delivered to the participants and should result in the desired outcome. Training also considered as effective when the training programme conducted should beyond the expected outcomes (i.e. training objectives) for the organization benefits. In hotel setting, the training objectives either a general or specific objective (Watson, 1988). For instance, to give a better understanding on a new approach to perform service quality among front line employees (general objective), and to develop communication skills among hotel's operator (specific objective). Discusses about the suitability of the training content, the training needs assessment (TNA) identified as a tool used by organizations to identify skill gaps among employees (AlYahya & Mat, 2013) purposely to design an appropriate content (what to learn during training). This tool is necessary to be conducted before implementing a training programme. In other words, TNA can be used as a solution to implement strategies related to the implementation of training (Martin, Kolomitro, & Lam, 2014). TNA can be done by administered questionnaire to acquire information from employees regarding the suitability of training content. Further, in order to identify a specific training content, trainer also can conduct an interview with employees and management (Watson, 1988).

2.3 Predictors of training - method

Ahammad (2013) describes that the training method should contribute to the effort in achieving training programme goals and objectives. Besides that, a suitable training method used greatly influences the effectiveness of training programmes (Kim & Kizildag, 2011). Tuzun (2005) classified the training methods into two which are off-the-job training method and on-the job training method. The off-the-job training method designed when the training programme conducted in an external situation of the actual work environment and done with a group of people instead of individuals. In contrast, on-the-job training method is preferred when training programme aiming at developing specific knowledge and skills that can be applied into the job and emphasizing individual learning. Imani, Tavakkoli and Salagegheh (2013) further explain the on-the-job training as a training that encourage the trainee to do actual tasks at actual workplace that require actual tools, equipment and materials, whereas off-the-job training is a training that require the trainee to involve in training that away from actual workplace. It gives opportunity for trainee to pay attention to the training such as training that requires brainstorming to generate ideas.

2.4 Job performance

Diab and Ajlouni (2015) together with Alshery, Ahmad and Alswidi (2015) stated that performance is the ability of workers to perform their task within the given time. That means, if the employees are given one hour, they should finish their tasks in that particular time. In other words, their performance can be identified by comparing their ability to complete tasks with their first or initial tasks (Khan, 2010) within the given time as performance outcome. There are also several researchers that define performance based on their own understanding and judgement. According to Wasiu and Adebajo (2014), and Sila (2014), performance is an activity of employees in completing their task using right attitudes and at the right time to achieve goal of tasks. Besides, Wasiu and Adebajo (2014) claimed that through the capability, goal setting and hardworking resulting an excellent performance.

3   Methodology

3.1 Participants and procedures

The respondents of this study included front line employees from three main divisions which are front office, housekeeping and food and beverages at 3 and 4 star hotels in Klang Valley area and Sabah state that worked in a full time basis. The type of questionnaire that was used in this study is a personally administered questionnaire where the researcher distributes the questionnaire to the respondents (Sekaran & Bougie, 2013).

3.2 Measures

A 5-item instrument used to measure participant factor, 5-item used to measure content factor, 5-item used to measure method factor and 10-item used to measure job performance. All items of training factor were adopted from the work of AlYahya and Mat (2013), while items for job performance were adopted from the work of Alshery et al. (2015) and Zeglat, Aljaber and Alrawabdeh (2014).

3.3 Data analysis

This study used an IBM Statistical Packaging for Social Science version 20. Exploratory factor analyses were conducted to identify the dimensions represents the concept and item represent the dimensions of the concept (Sekaran & Bougie, 2013). After EFA was conducted, the multiple linear regression analyses were conducted to determine the relationship of several independent variables towards dependent variable. Other than that, multiple linear regression uses to identify the best predictor among training factor towards job performance (Pallant, 2005).

4   Results

4.1   Profile of respondents

Out of 400 distributed questionnaires to the selected hotel of 3 and 4 stars, 313 questionnaires (78.3%) were responded. However, 277 questionnaires (69.3%) were valid and usable to further analyses. The balances of 36 questionnaires (9%) were rejected due to the double marking on scaling and incomplete responses received from respondents.

4.2   Findings

There are 5 items to each predictor of training which is participants, content and method. Through the exploratory factor analysis, the fifth item of participant factor was included in a same group together with the item in content component. However, the item shows a low factor loading and cannot represent the component, hence the item was dropped. While the fifth item of content showed that it is included in a same group with the item in participant component. Therefore, the item should be measured in participant factor. Although the item changes in their component, Hair, Black, Babin and Anderson (2010) suggested that it is acceptable by giving a new leading theme but still use the same theme. While all the items in method factor were retained for further analysis. After exploratory factor analysis was done, the multiple regressions conducted. The inspection on multicollinearity, normality, linearity, homoscedasticity and outliers has been done before further identifying the relationship among the predictors of training towards job performance. In this study, the correlation coefficients between participant and job performance is r = 0.526, content and job performance is r = 0.550, and method and job performance is r = 0.519 which is > 0.3 (Pallant, 2005) and < 0.7 (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001). Thus, there is no problem with multicollinearity. From the results of linearity, the scatterplot among independent variables (participant, content and method) and dependent variable (job performance) shows linearity or a straight line, thus indicate the absence of curvilinear relationship.

Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson and Tatham (2006) suggest the normal probability P-P plot as a reliable approach used to assess the normality as almost all the points or cases in this study lies in the straight diagonal line from the bottom left to top right of the graph, thus considered as a normality. To assess the homoscedasticity, the scatterplot of regression standardized residuals is inspected which mostly the score of this study are distributed roughly in rectangular shape along the 0 point. For the inspection of outliers, through scatterplot, the standardized residual value is between 3 and -4 (x-axis), -3 and 4 (y-axis). However, no action was taken to "clear" the outliers because there are only few cases involved (Pallant, 2005). Based on the multiple regression results, there are at least significant relationships between independent variables (participant, content and method) towards dependent variable (job performance). All predictor of training produces an Adjusted R^2 = 0.397, p < .001,

which means 39.7% of the variation in participant, content and method can be explained by job performance and job performance depends on participant, content and method. Additionally, the beta coefficient value shows a positive regression weight with participant (Beta = 0.239, p = .000 < .05), content (Beta = 0.296, p = .000 < .05) and method (Beta = 0.210, p = .001 < .05), thus indicates participant, content and method are significant predictor of job performance. Therefore, the strongest predictor in explaining the job performance is content factor with higher Beta value which is 0.296; second is participant with value 0.239 and lastly method with value 0.210. Table 1 shows the relationship between predictor of training towards job performance.

Table 1: Relationship between predictor of training towards job performance

Predictor of training	Beta value	Sig
Participant	0.239	0.000
Content	0.296	0.000
Method	0.210	0.001
Adjusted R^2	0.397	

*Note: *p < .05, Dependant Variable = Job Performance*

5   Discussion

Nowadays, the job performance of front line employees at the hotel becomes important as they are the first group that meet and greet the arrival guest into the hotel (Baum & Kong, 2006; Sriyam, 2010). The ability of front line employees to serve the hotel's guest is importantly influenced by the predictor or factor of training included participant, content and method. As mentioned in the findings, all three predictors of training have a positive relationship with job performance which means all three predictors are suitable in influence job performance of front line employees at 3-star and 4-star hotel. Among the three predictors, content factor is the most influential predictor of job performance, secondly is participant factor and lastly is method factor. Content identified as influence job performance because the delivered content during training programmes achieving particular objectives (Palameta et al., 2011; Subhash & Praveen, 2014). For instance, to give a better understanding on a new approach to perform service quality among front line employees (general objective), and to develop communication skills among hotel's operator (specific objective) which can increase performance of employees at the hotel.

Participant also influence job performance of front line employees because during training programme employees can enhance their knowledge, skills and abilities (Elnaga & Imran, 2013) by setting a personal goals and desire as well as capabilities (Palameta et al., 2011). For method factor, Ahammad (2013) describes that method should contribute to the effort in achieving job performance of employees. By emphasizing both types of on-the-job and off-the-job method, front line employees at

hotel might have a chance to learn task directly and indirectly which provide advantages and disadvantages towards job performance of employees. Therefore, practitioner can take note about the important of these predictors of training so that job performance of front line employees at the hotel can be improved continuously and provide a satisfy services towards hotel's guest.

6   Conclusion

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that all three predictors included participant, content and method have a positive relationship with job performance of front line employees at 3 and 4-star hotel. It is crucial for the practitioner to be able to consider the importance of training to increase job performance of employees. Other than that, employees who responsible that working at the hotel must take advantage in participating training programme conducted for them. They should take initiative to grab the opportunity to be ready, learn and practice what they learn so that they can increase or improve their own performance.

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