

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN WORKPLACE LEARNING AND EMPLOYEES' PERFORMANCES IN THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the current study was to elaborate the workplace learning and employees' performances in the United Arab Emirates. The study had the purpose to contribute new knowledge to the existing literature available on the workplace learning and job performances. It also highlighted the contemporary literature on the topic specifically formal and information learning, as well as performance related to tasks and contexts. The research explained and highlighted the role of training and development on employees' performances to improve the quality of task process. An empirical study was conducted and data was collected through questionnaire. The present study aimed to contribute new knowledge to the existing literature on workplace learning and job performances. Particularly, the study analysed contemporary literature on workplace learning and job performances, specifically formal and informal learning as well as employee task performance and contextual performance. The study hypothesized that informal, incidental and formal workplace learning had direct positive significant relationships with employee task and contextual performance. Findings of the study revealed that adopting effective techniques of workplace learning and techniques can improve employees' performances. The study, further, showed that the informal, formal and incidental workplace learning had direct and positive impact on employees' task and contextual performance. The study discovered that there was a significant positive relationship between workplace learning including formal, informal and incidental learning, and job performances including task performance, contextual performance and counterproductive work behaviour. It also found that there was a positive relationship between result-oriented cultures with two types of job performance but there was a significant relationship between team-oriented culture and task performance. Furthermore, the moderating effect of innovation, communication and people-oriented culture on the relationship between incidental workplace learning and contextual performance was significant.

Keywords: Workplace learning, informal workplace learning, incidental workplace learning, task performance, contextual performance, counterproductive work behaviour, organisational culture

INTRODUCTION

The employees are considered as the backbone of any profitable business organisations. How an organisation successfully achieves its goals depends on the performance of employees. Organisations have accepted the fact that in order to achieve sustainable development, human resource can be considered as a major source (Aragon-Sanchez et al., 2003; Park, 2009). Employees are the most important and valuable assets in organisations. They are not only responsible for making organisations reputable in the competitive market but also have greater impact on profitability. On the other hand, if employees are not properly trained they are unable to understand and develop skills set that is important for the accomplishment of tasks. Employees who obtain proper learning opportunities perform the best on their jobs. They are highly motivated and likely to keep their jobs for longer time period than those employees who do not have opportunities for learning (Jiménez-Jiménez & Sanz-Valle, 2011). Learning in terms of human resource development shows that the learning is the only effective way to develop human resources within organisations. The competitive business environment in the 21st century requires companies to gain competitive advantages and achieve success with that advantages. Workplace learning can be used as an effective tool by managers to gain competitive advantages in the current highly competitive business environment (Cromwell & Kolb, 2004; Heilmann, 2007; Rothwell, 2002).

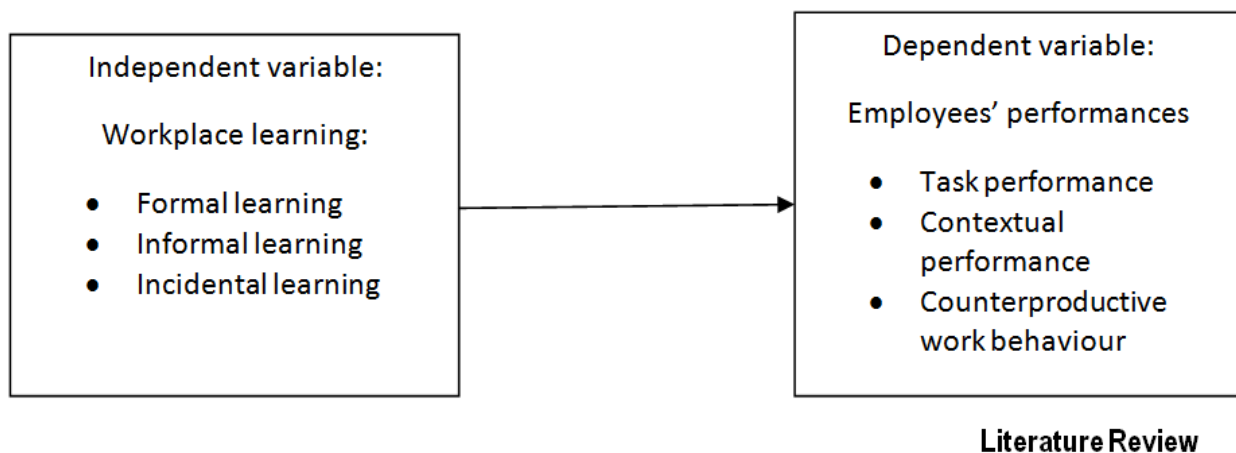
Workplace learning has three main elements: formal learning, informal learning and incidental teaching (Park, 2009). Workplace learning is considered as the process of providing opportunities to learn effective skills, information and communication methods, and workplace education that is significantly important to accomplish work related tasks and also provide workplace and professional development opportunities to employees (Shuck, Ghosh, Zigarimi, & Nimon, 2013). In the current business environment, it is important to gain competitive advantages for sustainable market development and capabilities, competencies, and skills of employees have been considered as a major method of gaining competitive advantages (Meyer & Allen, 1991). In order to develop the required knowledge, abilities and skills of workforce to perform well on jobs, it requires efficient and effective learning opportunities. These opportunities also enhance employees motivation and commitment to their work. The training and workplace learning depend on the actual nature of work to be performed by employees; organisations plan proper trainings in order to optimize growth and development of employees. Many organisations implement by putting resources in developing skills for employees and empower employees to

accept uncertain conditions (Bednall, Sanders & Runhaar, 2014). On the other hand, employees put their efforts and loyalty by fully participating in activities of organisations in such learning programs. Employees fully apply their best knowledge and skills for achievement of organisational strategic goals (Pajo, Coetzer, & Guenole, 2010). Learning is not only important from organisational point of view but also from individual point of view that are deciding up organisations (Colarelli & Montei, 1996; Becker, 1993). It means that workplace learning not only increase employees' job-related knowledge and providing knowledge about the market trends, but also give employees to clarify the organisational objectives and strategic goals. Nowadays, organisations have changed with advanced technology and flexible working environment with knowledge people may embrace. According to Lin (2008), it is necessary for employees to continuously update skills, expertise and knowledge on regular and continuous basis.

Performance of employees at workplace is referred as successful completion of tasks with efficiency and effectiveness. In any firms, trainings, workshops and learning opportunities are provided at different levels of management to increase the performance of the organisational processes and individual performances. The level of coordination with the above mentioned process can provide strategic and competitive advantages to the organisation. In fact, organisations looking to enhance competitive advantages actually understand the importance of workplace learning and its link to improve job performances of employees (Cromwell & Kolb, 2004). Researches conducted in this area give evidence that organisations that provide workplace learning options have positive impact on the performance of both employees and organisations (Rothwell, 2002; Cromwell and Kolb, 2004; Heilmann, 2007). Organisations are rapidly facing new challenges and tough competitions at the global level. In order to cope with these challenges, organisations need to design proper programs of learning skills from time to time (Tai, 2006). The learning programs will help organisations to provide improved learning atmosphere among employees and to give them skills to successfully cope with situations of challenges (Jones, Woods & Guillaume, 2016). Organizational cultures can also have different dimensions in terms of power culture, role culture and hierarchy culture. Power, information system within organisation and flow can have impacts on organisational hierarchy and systems. These are the aspects of power culture, hierarchy culture and role culture. In a power culture, one leader can make rapid decision and controls strategies of decision making. But the power culture requires a strong deference to the leader who is in charge of the organisation. The role culture can be seen when the functional culture is created, where employees within an organisation know their jobs, reports to their superiors and value accuracy and efficiency above all. The hierarchy culture is considered the same as the role culture, in which the system is highly structured. The focus is on doing things right, with efficiency and being stable. Employees working within an organisation need to be committed towards the collective objectives as part of

the task cultures and clan cultures. In case of task cultures, the team members need to be expert in order to solve organisational problems. A matrix is developed in case of these type of cultures. It is due to the fact that task is important and the number of small teams are in play. In the clan culture, employees work like a family will focus on mentoring doing things together and nurturing. The organisational culture has links with employees' performances and productivity. A right culture can be developed with proper managerial intentions and leadership roles.

Theoretical framework of research



Workplace learning:

The concept of workplace learning has been defined in many studies according to different perspectives. Generally it is considered as perspectives of workforce capability enhancement. Nadler (1970) defined that the workplace learning is considered as an important element of human resource development model (HRDM). They have also concluded that human resource development is a system which comprised of all those activities that help to add worth of workforce in an organization. It also helps in bringing the behavioral reforms with the help of learning programs. In this regard, trainings are considered as an important element for workplace learning. Jacobs and Park's (2009) defined workplace learning as a process of different educational and learning programs that are related to work accomplishments. According to Cairns and Malloch (2011), workplace learning is a different concept in organizations from class room based learning. Workplace learning is a collaborative process which occurs in the social context (Brown & Duguid, 1991). Workplace learning is a process through which individuals, organizations and teams are provided opportunities to learn skills get knowledge and adopt attitudes with the help of continuous interaction within an organization and within teams to solve business problems and to improve performances (Moon & Na, 2009). Many studies have taken workplace learning as a formal learning process during job by an employee (Farouk, Abu

Elanain, Obeidat & Al-Nahyan, 2016; Wilkins, 2001) but other aspects of the workplace learning are still to be explored with the context of employees' performances. Other dimensions of the workplace learning are formal learning, incidental learning and informal learning (Daryoush, Silong, Omar & Othman, 2013; Marsick&Watkins, 2015). Formal learning as the name depicts is a type of learning process which is supported and provided by the management of organizations (it is pre-planned). Management of the organizations is responsible for the determination of learning process in case of formal learning. In contrary to that, unstructured and non-institutional types of workplace learning are known as informal learning and it normally occurs through daily routines of employees. In case of informal learning, employees have options to make choices in the learning processes as per their personal interests, preferences and personal characteristics (Marsick & Volpe, 1999).

Employees' performances

The ultimate goal of a business is to improve performances which help in achievement of retaining and acquiring of talented pool as well as to attain the market leadership. Job performances can be defined as activities and human behaviours which are directly or indirectly linked to organizational goals and aims (Motowildo, Borman, & Schmit, 1997).

Employee's performance is not a consequence or result of an action; rather it is described as a direct action or behaviour (Campbell, McCloy, Oppler, & Sager, 1993). There are two main concepts involved in defining employee's performance given by Gilber (1978). According to him, the term performance means individual development of employee and effectiveness of the whole system. The second concept involved here is the behavioural concept. According to behavioural concept, the changing system focused on work of individual employees but little consideration should be paid to his attitude (Gilbert, 1978). Previous studies considered employee's performance as a result of human behaviour not an independent factor which contributes to the organizational goals. Organizations can improve job performances of employees if they have control over the employees' behaviours (Barrie and Pace, 1998). Considering these definitions, a more comprehensive definition is provided by Jones (2006) that while assessing the performance of an employee his/her attitude and behaviour both should be considered as important characteristics of employee's personality. There are different dimensions of employees' performance that have been discussed in the previous literature. For an example Campbell et al. (1990), identified eight factors of a job performance model which are applicable in almost all types of jobs. A task performance is related to the technical side of the job which involves effort of employees to complete a task. The second broad category is the contextual performance which does not related with the technical know-how of any job. Borman and Motowidlo (1993) defined two broad categories of performance: task performance and

contextual performance. The first category is related to providing products or services with expertise and later category is about activities which help to support the technical part of a job and called contextual performance: coordination and planning etc. The definition of task performance covers the activities that are carried out to contribute to the organization's technical functions either directly or indirectly (Borman & Motowidlo, 1993). All other activities which are not covered under the definition of task performance are called contextual performance: facilitating peer and team performance (Campbell, et al., 1990; Van Dyne & LePine, 1998), defending, supporting, and endorsing organizations' objectives (Borman & Motowidlo, 1993) interpersonal communications (Murphy & Shiarella, 1997), courtesy and civic virtue defined by Dennis (1988), spreading goodwill by George and Brief (1992). In contrary to these two positive aspects of the employee's performance there is one negative measure also attached to the performance of the employees which is called Counter productive work behaviour (CWB). Counterproductive work behaviour is a negative trait which hampers the performance of the employees.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The current study was based on the concept of empirical research methods and developing quantitative measures to develop the effect of workplace learning on performance of employees. The current research dealt with the numerical figures as well as questionnaires were collected to obtain detailed information about the problem under investigation.

The target population for the study was employees working in organisations formed and established in the United Arab Emirates. The target population means the number of people from which data is collected and studied. As the target population is usually high and in current case, it is very large, so the study was based on selection of a sample from the whole population. According to the Ministry of Economy, a total number of 6,330,540 employees work for all organisations in the United Arab Emirates. Furthermore, according to the statistics released by the Federal Competitiveness and Statistics Authority, 2.33% of the total workforce work in Federal Government entities, 8.28% of the total workforce is working in the local governments and 4.67% of the total workforce work in the shared government (government and corporations combination) entities. From the analysis above, it was found that 15.28% of the total workforce which is 6,330,540 was the target population for the current study. A table was analysed to determine suitable sample size as presented by the Krejcie and Morgan (1970). It was discovered that the population size fell between 500,000 and 1,000,000. Based on the confidence level and margin of error, the sample size was 384 participants.

The instrument used for the current research comprised of questionnaire with structured items or questions related to employees' performance, workplace learning and organisational culture. The

questionnaire was developed to capture the data from the employees according to the perceptions of their workplaces as learning environments and the impact on the performance. Three different adapted questionnaires were used to draft a new questionnaire according to the conditions and valid dimensions of variables. Validity and reliability of these dimensions were confirmed to obtain relevant dimensions of the problem under investigation. The questionnaire used in the study was based on items from different questionnaires, for example, questionnaires of organisational culture is used (OC) as used by O'Reilly et al.'s study (1991), Hofstede et al., (1990 and Verbeke, (2001), second questionnaire of employees' work performance (Individual work performance Questionnaire – IWPQ) developed by Koopmans (2013) consisted of seven items for task performance, twelve items for contextual performance, and eight items for counterproductive work behaviour (total of 27 items) and questionnaire of workplace learning (consisting of 17 items as identified by Rowden (2002) was used in combination to check the impacts of desired hypothesis.

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

In the bid to obtain empirical information on whether the independent variables: formal learning, informal learning and incidental learning, significantly affected the dependent variables: task performance, contextual performance and counterproductive work behaviour, the t-test was used to test the relevance and significance of the parameters of the independent variables to dependent variables. The first analysis was based on the basic hypothesis to determine the relationship between dependent and independent variables. The proposed model and hypothesis were tested using Smart PLS (partial least square). The figure below tested the basic hypothesis to determine the initial relationship between dependent and independent variables. As per path analysis, formal learning had statistically significant relationship with task performance ($\beta = 0.429$, $\rho < 0.05$), and contextual performance ($\beta = 0.233$, $\rho < 0.05$) but insignificant relationship with counterproductive work behaviour ($\beta = - 0.033$, $\rho > 0.05$). This relationship is statistically significant at 5% level of significance. Basic analysis of relationship between variables revealed that informal learning is statistically significantly related to task performance ($\beta = 0.247$, $\rho < 0.05$), contextual performance ($\beta = 0.247$, $\rho < 0.05$) and counterproductive work behaviour ($\beta = - 0.240$, $\rho < 0.05$). This relationship is significant at 5% level of significance. Incidental learning is found to be insignificantly related with task performance ($\beta = - 0.066$, $\rho > 0.05$), contextual performance ($\beta = 0.012$, $\rho > 0.05$) and counterproductive work behaviour ($\beta = - 0.061$, $\rho > 0.05$).

Independent Variables	Dependent Variables	Results	Relationships
Formal learning	Task performance	Significant	Positive
	Contextual performance	Significant	Positive
	Counterproductive work behaviour	Insignificant	Negative
Informal learning	Task performance	Significant	Positive
	Contextual performance	Significant	Positive
	Counterproductive work behaviour	Insignificant	Negative
Incidental learning	Task performance	Insignificant	Negative
	Contextual performance	Insignificant	Positive
	Counterproductive work behaviour	Insignificant	Negative

CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that if an organisation is willing to improve the task performance and contextual performance of the employees, it is necessary to improve the formal learning. But, at the same time, the task performance will negatively impact the counter productive work behaviour of employees. The current paper also reviews the literature available on the topic of workplace learning and the job performance including three different types of workplace learning: formal learning, informal learning and incidental learning with an impact on the job performance including task performance, contextual performance and counterproductive workplace behaviour. Based on the current research, it can be concluded that the positive and directly significant relationship exists between the workplace learning and task performance and also between the workplace learning and the contextual performance. There is a positive but insignificant relationship between the workplace learning and counterproductive work behaviour. It is highly encouraged to conduct an empirical study to check the relationship and impact of workplace learning and organisational performance because it is the organisation that will gain advantage of any improved job performance. The study will also contribute towards the existing studies and literature of the human resource management and development theoretically. Furthermore, the current study will practically provide an insight to the management and governmental officials to set strategies of workplace learning in order to improve the

performance of the employees. Based on the findings and results of the current research, appropriate policies and course of actions can be designed at appropriate level to improve the performance of the employees in the United Arab Emirates. The job designs can be enhanced and properly structured in order to provide opportunities of growth in the workplace through effective strategies of workplace learning because it will improve the job performance of the employees.

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