



The Variation Effect of Gender on the Motivation, Social Support and Goal Orientation of the Trainee in Malaysia

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ABSTRACT

The present study aims to analyze the variation effect of gender on the motivation, social support and goal orientation of the trainee in Malaysia. The study collects as sample comprises trainees at “GIATMARA”, a semi-government owned training institution. Altogether 21 training centers in peninsular Malaysia were involved in the study. The data analysis was based on responses from 245 female and 96 male respondents. The data were collected via a questionnaire survey. The questionnaire contains measures which were adopted from past studies. Overall, it was found that female trainees registered higher mean values than males across all the key research variables and the differences were significant for all variables except goal orientation. The theoretical and managerial implications of the findings are discussed.

Keywords: Training effectiveness, Gender, Support, Self – Efficacy, Training Motivation

1. INTRODUCTION

Training is defined as a planned learning experience designed to bring about permanent change in an individual’s knowledge, attitudes or skills (Campbell, et al. 1990; Noe, 2010). Several researchers have suggested further assessment of the training function within the organizational system (Campbell, 1998; Mathieu et al., 1992; Noe, 2010). Several others have proposed training gains transfer effects and training effectiveness models that contain both individual and organizational contextual factors as antecedents of learning and transfer of learning and the (Baldwin and Ford, 1988; Brehmer et al. 2012; Colquitt et al., 2000; Mathieu and Martineau, 1997).

Although the “bottom line” for most training programs is effectiveness, little attention has been devoted in studying the reason of training programs are effective for some individuals and ineffective for others. A number of training

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literatures have suggested that trainee ability and motivation combines to determine training effectiveness (Colquitt et al, 2000; Noe and Wilk, 1993; Mathieu et al, 1992). It has also been proposed that more specific variables, such as social, peer, subordinate and supervisor supports, affect transfer behavior (e.g., Baldwin et al., 2000; Tracey et al. 2001). Facticeau et al. (2005) found that peer support predicts training effectiveness.

Apart from little attention has been given to training effectiveness on individual, there is also lack of attention given on whether there is a gender difference among the individual trainees.

Empirical studies on gender variations have been consistently conducted across various disciplines such as psychology, organizational behavior, education and sociology. In the field of organizational behavior, for instance, authors have looked into gender differences and similarities with respect to employee motivation, behaviors and attitudes at the work place. The importance of these studies needs no further elaboration given the fact that today women occupy a significant place of employment in many countries across the globe and their participation in economic life is steadily increasing (Norsiah, 2011).

In Malaysia, reports from the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development (MWFCD) reveal that the number of women in the workforce currently stands at 47 per cent over the past 30 years. More women are now employed in modern sector employment. A similar trend could also be observed in the field of education where current female enrollment at all levels of education and various disciplines is comparable to that of males.

The rising phenomenon of women's employment brings along interesting implications for research and management at the workplace. The impact will be very much anticipated on organizational goals, objectives and policies. Gaps, variations, or disparities in terms of behaviors, attitudes and motivation between males and females would naturally influence to a certain degree the formulation and implementation of policies in various fields such as employment, training, education, social, welfare, business, economics, etc. Thus, this paper attempts to look into gender variations across four variables or concepts: trainee motivation, social support, self-efficacy and goal orientation. These variables are often linked to the outcome of training which includes the effectiveness of training, transfer of knowledge and skills, etc. The findings, which are reported in this paper, represent part of the findings obtained from a larger study which looks into training effectiveness. Specifically, the focus of this paper will be on the extent to which females and males differ in respect of these research variables.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Conceptual Framework

The study variables mentioned above are part of the components encompassed in a more holistic research framework proposed by Colquitt et al. (2000). The framework is as depicted in Figure 1. As can be seen from the figure, the framework integrates training, motivation with environmental factors, social support (parent motivation, teachers' and friends' support), performance goal orientation, self-efficacy and training outcomes (learning, transfer, generalization, and maintenance). According to (Colquitt et al. 2000 ; Weissbein D.A et al. 2011), motivation to learn has a direct effect on learning outcomes and should then impact practice activities as well as he/ she has learned to the job in the transfer setting. Additionally, the authors claimed that individual characteristics and situational factors have direct and indirect effects on motivation to learn and learning outcomes.

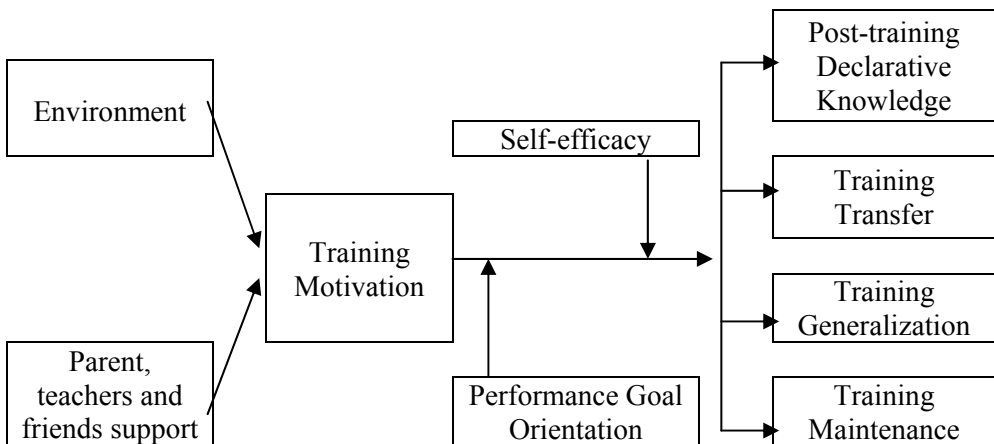


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

2.2 Training Motivation

Training, motivation or motivation to learn refers to the desire of the trainee to learn the content of a training program (Noe, 1986; Tai, 2006). In a much more precise term, (Colquitt et al. 2011 Zanoboni et al. 2012) define the concept as the direction, intensity, and persistence of learning-directed behavior in the training context. In their comprehensive review of the literature on the concept, and in stressing the importance of motivation in training, Colquitt et al. (2009; 2011) concluded that “training, motivation explained incremental variance in training outcomes beyond the effects of cognitive ability” and the persistent effort come from the motivation and the intensity of effort. Motivation to learn will impact on

transfer two pathways of enhanced knowledge acquisition and increased post training practice (Weissbein et al. 2011).

Empirically, many studies have been conducted on training and motivation (examples, Hidi, 2001; Krapp, 1999; Schiefele, 1999; Zaniboni et al. 2012). In these studies, motivation was assumed to affect performance by influencing the manner of individuals distribute or allocate their efforts among different tasks (Blau, 1993; Kanfer, 1990; Katzell & Thompson, 1990). The trainees who are motivated to learn are more likely to practice skills after training. Actual practice of behavior as well as mental rehearsal after training leading to higher levels of training transfer (Weissbein et al. 2011; Jodlbauer et al. 2011). Jodlbauer et al. (2011) found that organization that motivates their employees result in successful transfer.

On the relationship between motivation and gender variations, Vandebroek et al. (2008) found that, compared to men, older women's motivation to learn with e-environment is relatively higher when young children are present in the family. Additionally, developmental research indicates that gender differences in motivation are evident early in school, and increase for reading and language arts over the course of the school.

2.3 Goal Orientation

Goal orientation refers to the goals pursued by individuals in achievement situations (Chiaburu and Marinova, 2005). According to Dweck (1999) the concept which originated in the educational psychology literature in the early 1980s represents a personal disposition to pursue either learning or performance goal orientations in achievement situations. On another note, Brett & Vandewalle (1999) defines the concept as a mental framework for how individuals respond to and interpret achievement situations. The significant role of goal orientation could be seen through its influences on individuals' cognitive and behavioral patterns in achievement setting (Dweck and Leggett 1988).

Most studies on goal orientation confirm that mastery goals are related to adaptive patterns of learning and motivation (Pintrich, 2000; Wolters, 2004). In a study by Gutman (2006), it was established that mastery goals could be more influential in determining achievement and motivation compared to performance goals. According to Gutman, individuals who are focused on mastery goals are oriented toward learning and understanding the content or task, while individuals who are focused on performance goals are oriented toward doing better than others and demonstrating their competence.

In a study by Middleton and Midgley (2000), it was revealed that African American girls showed a stronger learning goal orientation as opposed to African American boys. The authors, however, found no significant difference in goal

orientations among European American students. Hence, the findings are somewhat contingent upon racial variations.

Meanwhile, Meece and Jones (2001), reported no main effects for gender across mastery and performance goal scales. On another note, Vandenberg et al. (2008) found that, compared to men, older woman's motivation to learn is relatively higher when young children are present in the family.

2.4 Self-Efficacy

The literature is filled with many definitions of self-efficacy. (Wood & Bandura 1989 ; Bandura, 2012), for example, defines it as 'self-belief in one's capabilities to exercise control over events to accomplish desired goals'. Besides, self efficacy belief affects the quality of human functioning through cognitive, motivational, affective, and decision process. While Omrod (2006) perceives it as the belief that one is capable of performing in a certain manner to attain certain goals, on an almost similar note, Steinberg (1998) looks at it as a person's belief about their capabilities to produce designated levels of performance that exercise influence over events that affect their lives. More specifically, this concept is referred as a judgment about one's ability to organize and execute the courses of action necessary to attain a specific goal.

According to (Noe, 2010) a high person will put effort to learn training program and more likely to learn even not conducive learning environment (e.g., noisy training room). In contrast a person in a low efficacy is more likely to withdraw psychologically and/or physically in an effort to learn. Studies on self-efficacy is abundant. Research indicates that individuals higher in self-efficacy has strong beliefs in their task-related capabilities and set more challenging goals than individuals with lower self-efficacy (Bandura, 1986). The concept has been linked with higher levels of learning, persistence, effort and achievement (Schunk, 1996, 1989). There are also claims that higher self-efficacy level leads to successful training performance (Stevens and Gist, 1997).

With respect to the influence of gender variations, some studies found that boys tend to have higher self-efficacy and expectancy beliefs than girls about their performance (Pajares, 1999). Specifically, boys were found to have stronger ability and interest in mathematics and science, whereas girls have more confidence and interest in language arts and writing (Meece et al. 2006). Further, it was suggested that gender could be moderated by ability, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and classroom context. In a study by Pajares and Valiante (2001), it was reported that middle school girls had higher writing self-efficacy than boys, even though there were no gender differences in actual writing performance. Meece and Jones (2001) reported that boys have more efficacy beliefs than girls in science-related subjects while Anderman and Young (1994) reported that girls have more learning focused and less ability focused on science

compared to boys, even though girls reported to have lower levels of self-efficacy in science.

A more recent study on internet self-efficacy by Chen & Tsai (2007) suggest that female students have lower internet self-efficacy compared to male students. Very much earlier, a research in similar area, i.e., IT conducted by Durndell et al (2000) indicated that in Western Europe males on average have more positive attitudes and self-efficacy (self-confidence) towards computing than females. Additionally, it was revealed that males were more confident than females in advanced and file and software, computer skills, although registering similar confidence for beginner skills.

2.5 Parent, Friends and Teachers' Support

Past studies have found relatively consistent evidence supporting the relationship between perceived social support and academic performance. A study by Rosenfeld et al. (2000), for example, found that students with high support from peers, parents and teachers had better grades as opposed to those without such support. Parents in particular are an important source of academic advice, encouragement, and assistance for many students. Parent involvement and emotional support or encouragement is attributions for success in academic performance (Henderson and Mapp, 2002).

Students who received high level support and encouragement from parents tend to demonstrate effort at teach difficult subjects (Hokoda & Fincham, 1995). Studies of students from the elementary school to high school demonstrate a meaningful relationship between parental involvement and the motivational constructs such as school engagement, intrinsic/extrinsic motivation, perceived competence, perceived control, self-regulation, mastery goal orientation, and motivation to read (Gonzalez-DeHass, 2005).

Meanwhile, at the workplace, according to Kontoghiorghes (2001), supervisory support and encouragement for the application of new skills and knowledge is the most important variables that were found to facilitate trainee learning and training transfer. Clark et al. (1993) suggested that peer support could be an important factor during training transfer when the job requires more interaction with others, as in the case of self-managed work teams.

Apart from the above, research evidence also points to the role of social support in enhancing training, self-efficacy, increasing trainees' mastery (learning) goal orientation, and their motivation to transfer (Chiaburu et al, 2010). Therefore, this study predicted that:

H1: There are differences between male and female students in self-efficacy in relation to training

H2: There are differences between male and female students in goal orientation in relation to training

3. METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted at “GIATMARA”, a semi-Malaysian government owned training institution which has 21 training centers dispersed all over Malaysia. Altogether, seven courses were offered in the fields of engineering, ICT, automotive, landscaping, hair and beauty and needle work. The training courses were designed for candidates seeking to enhance their skills, individuals who have lost their jobs and looking for new jobs, individuals interested to improve their skills to enhance their career, and individuals interested in skill-based entrepreneurial engagements. In this study, data were gathered from trainees attending three specific courses, namely ICT, tailoring and entrepreneurship.

3.1 Data collection

The data were gathered via questionnaire survey. Trainees from the chosen institutions were asked to complete a questionnaire survey which includes questions related to continuous learning culture, supervisor support, parents, teachers and friends support and the candidates’ training motivation.

3.2 Measures and Analytical Procedure

The measures employed in the study are all adopted from past studies. Training motivation is measured by ten questions. Goal orientation is measured by four items. Seven items measure self-efficacy while four items were designed to capture support from the candidates’ parent, friends and teachers. Demographic variables were assessed through variables such as gender, age, education background (including family members), work experience, employment status and parent’s occupation. All measures were assessed using five-point Likert scale.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Table 1 shows the means and standard deviations of each of the key research variables by gender categories. Overall, it is interesting to note that both male and female trainees registered moderate to fairly high scores on all variables, i.e., over a range of 3.8 to 4.5 (out of a maximum of 5). As can be seen in the table, the sequence in the preferences of the variables is similar for both categories with trainees’ goal orientation and motivation commanding the first two places. The statistics may suggest that trainees admitted to the training centers were

psychologically or mentally prepared to go through the program. In other words, it can be said that the trainees are somewhat focussed on what they would like to achieve when they first accepted the offer to undergo the training. This may also reflect positively on the policies and administrative procedures drawn up on the part of the training organization or sponsors with respect to the selection of the participants or trainees which includes the criteria used in selection and their advertisement of the training programs.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of the key research variables by gender categories

(a). Males

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Goal Orientation	4.4323	.63916	96
Motivation	4.1968	.52105	94
Support Parent etc.	3.9167	.77384	96
Self-efficacy	3.8387	.60581	93

Descriptive Statistics of the key research variables by gender categories

(b). Females

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Goal Orientation	4.5549	.48449	246
Motivation	4.4179	.52825	240
Support Parent etc.	4.2645	.60946	242
Self-efficacy	4.0528	.50086	241

However, the fact that relatively respondents on average scored much lower on self-efficacy could be interpreted in various ways. It could probably reflect the academic quality and personality of the trainees or, perhaps, given that they were only in the initial stages of the training, they have not yet accustomed to the new environment. Hence, it's natural and very much expected for them to react or respond in such a way.

Table 2 presents further statistics on the nature of the responses on the key research variables across gender categories. As the table shows, interestingly or surprise, the mean values recorded are higher among female trainees as opposed to male trainees on all variables. The results of the independent samples t-test conducted on the variables indicate that female respondents exhibit significantly higher mean values than the male respondents on three research variables – parental support, self-efficacy, and motivation. The only insignificant difference

recorded was on goal orientation. On, this variable, statistically even though males and females are somewhat indifferent, the mean value for the female trainees is slightly stronger. Hence, in summary, it can be claimed that, overall, females registered higher perceptions of all accounts pertaining to the key research variables.

Table 2: Results of the Independent Samples t-test of the key research variables across Gender Categories

			F	R square
Goal Orientation	Male	4.4323 (-1.914)**	10.776	
	Female	4.5549 (-1.698)**		
Support Parent etc	Male	4.1968 (-4.368)*	12.172	
	Female	4.4179 (-3.945)*		
Self efficacy	Male	3.9167 (-3.296)*	5.625	
	Female	4.2645 (-3.031)*		
Motivation	Male	3.8387 (-3.453)*	2.190	
	Female	4.0528 (-3.474)*		

Notes: Values in parenthesis is t-statistic. ***,** and * denote significant level at level 1% 5% dan 10% respectively

Tables 3 (a) and (b) show the bivariate coefficient correlations between the key research variables by gender categories. Overall, each variable correlates positively and significantly with each other for both samples, within a range of 0.4 to 0.7. Suggesting an increase in one variable would lead to increases in the other or vice-versa.

Table 3: Pearson Correlations of Key Research Variables

(a) Males

	Goal Orientation	Support Parent etc	Self efficacy	Motivation
Goal Orientation	1	0.442**	0.622**	0.704**
Support Parent etc.	0.442**	1	0.492**	0.610**
Self-efficacy	0.622**	0.492**	1	0.717**
Motivation	0.704**	0.610**	0.537***	1

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

(b) Females

	Goal Orientation	Support Parent etc	Self efficacy	Motivation
Goal Orientation	1			
Support Parent etc	0.438***	1		
Self-efficacy	0.450***	0.478***	1	
Motivation	0.535**	0.345**	0.537***	1

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 4: Results of Regressions of the Key Research Variables and Motivation across Male Respondents

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Self-efficacy	1.816 (0.247)***	1.156 (0.253)***	0.306 (0.071)***
Goal Orientation		0.347 (0.068)***	0.299 (0.064)***
Support Parent etc			0.183 (0.048)***
R square	0.515	0.625	0.678
Durbin-Watson			1.923

Notes: Values in parenthesis is standard error. ***, ** and * denote significant level at level 1% 5% dan 10% respectively

A more detailed analysis of the statistics between samples would clearly reveal that, for male trainees, correlations between social support, self-efficacy, goal orientation and motivation are fairly high (0.6, 0.71, and 0.70 respectively).

Relatively, the male respondents indicate a lower correlation between goal orientation and social support (0.44).

For female trainees, as opposed to the males, the statistics point to a relatively lower correlation between all variables. Correlations between social support, self-efficacy, goal orientation and motivation are very much lower, ranging from 0.35 to 0.53. The correlation between social support and motivation was markedly low (0.35), implying that parental and peer support do not contribute much to trainees' motivation.

Tables 4 and 5 summarize the statistics derived following a stepwise regression on the data. The independent variables were goal orientation, social support and self-efficacy, while trainee motivation was treated as the dependent variable. The regression was carried out separately for each gender category. The results in Table 4 are for male trainees and the statistical output in Table 5 representing the female trainees.

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	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Self-efficacy	1.816 (0.247)***	1.156 (0.253)***	0.306 (0.071)***
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R square	0.515	0.625	0.678
Durbin-Watson			1.923

Notes: Values in parenthesis is standard error. ***, ** and * denote significant level at level 1% 5% dan 10% respectively

Table 5: Results of Regressions of the Key Research Variables and Motivation across Female Respondents

	Model 1	Model 2
Self-efficacy	0.567 (0.059)***	0.393 (0.061)***
Goal Orientation		0.396 (0.063)***
R –square	0.288	0.393

Notes: Values in parenthesis is standard error. ***, ** and * denote significant level at level 1% 5% dan 10% respectively

For the males, the results suggest that taken together, almost 78% of the variance in trainee motivation was explained by self-efficacy, goal orientation and social support. Self-efficacy alone explained slightly more than 51% of the variance in the dependent variable. Goal orientation and social support contribute another 11% and 5% of the variance respectively.

As for the female trainees, taken together, the independent variables explained about 40% of the variance in their motivation. However, self-efficacy leads the other two variables by contributing about 29% of the variance in trainees' motivation.

5. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, several findings from the study should be worthy of getting further attentions or deliberations by practitioners engaged in managing training as well as researchers interested to find out more about the nature and implications of gender variations, particularly with respect to trainees' motivation and its relationship with social support, goal orientation and self-efficacy.

First, the fact that both male and female trainees registered fairly high on all the key research variables may suggest that social support, self-efficacy, goal orientation and trainee motivation are pertinent in predicting the effectiveness of a training program. Second, the fact that relatively respondents on average scored much lower on self-efficacy could be a cause for concern which would perhaps necessitate further evaluation. Third, the fact that female trainees demonstrate significantly higher mean values than the male respondents, essentially on all key research variables – parental support, self-efficacy, goal orientation and motivation could well reflect the need to seriously consider gender variations in designing effective approaches in training. Fourth, similar attention would be necessary in regards to the finding that may imply that parental and peer support do not contribute much to female trainees' motivation. Finally, the fact that, taken together, the males' perception of self-efficacy, social support and goal orientation explain significantly more percentage of their variance in motivation as against females would obviously demand further thought on how things could be improved to rectify the situation.

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