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Effects of Training on Employee Performance: A Case Study of Bonjus and Khatib & Alami Companies

Ali Halawi & Nada Haydar

Abstract

The aim of this paper is to understand the effects of training on the performance of employees from two Lebanese companies - Bonjus Company and Khatib & Alami Company. Currently, organizations rely on improved capability, skills, and knowledge of talented employees to achieve positive performance. Despite employing already experienced employees, human resource managers still design training and development programs to make employees learn and acquire skills, ability, and knowledge about their responsibilities. This is done with the understanding that employees form the backbone of organizations. However, it is still unclear on how Lebanese companies achieve the level of education and training for their employees. The study collected primary data from a sample of 303 respondents. The researcher visited a sample of respondents from their workstations to administer questionnaires. The findings, however, showed that the two companies from Lebanon design different training programs. The two companies design training programs that focuses on short-term skills and development programs for long-term abilities. Some of the programs include organizing programs outside the workplace, attending workshops, participating in department activities, and watching others. Consequently, training programs benefited employees as well as the two companies. Employees cited that they were able to develop inner satisfaction, received positive evaluation feedback, understood how to achieve a quality output, and developed career beyond classwork. Nevertheless, management noted that they experienced challenges of implementing training programs because of fear to spend more resources, communication, bureaucracy, less support from top-level managers, and failure to have structures. The implications of the findings for practice were highlighted.

Keywords: Training, employee, development, performance.

Introduction

Across the world, organizations have sought to rely on improved skills, knowledge, and capability of the talented workforce to create competitive advantage (Shu-Rung & Chun-Chieh, 2017). To develop the desirable skills, knowledge, and capability of employee and

position them to perform their responsibilities, managers in charge of human resource training design different training programs (Lakra, 2016). Such training programs not only target to improve the familiarity of employees about their responsibilities, but it also helps to encourage employees to develop more commitment towards their job. Huang & Jao (2016) explained that organizations design training programs to prepare their employees to perform their jobs correctly and according to the laid down standards. Organizational personnel design training sessions to ensure that they optimize the potentials of employees. Khan & Baloch (2017) opined that majority of organizations prefer to invest in different programs that create new skills through long-term planning. This is to enable them adapt to any current and future uncertainties. Therefore, they ensure that they improve the performance of their employees through superior levels of commitments and motivation.

It is of great significance to note that employees are the backbone of any organization. No matter how big or small the organization is, employees are the true determinants of how successful or how incompetent an organization will turn out to be. Therefore, having an adequately trained workforce is vital to ensure that the workplace has the right employees that have been professionally trained and qualified to do their tasks properly. But the problem here is that the economy is very dynamic in nature, and organizations are expected to give more output than they had given before. All this demand places strain on the managers and in turn they are forced to pressurize their employees for better performance and output levels. However, to have a productive workforce, it is absolutely essential that employees get the adequate training they require. In return, Organizations are compelled to implement updated employee training strategies every now and then, with an intention to increase the productivity of employees.

Background and Literature Review

According to the World Bank, Employee training is a program aimed at helping employees gain specific skills and knowledge. The acquired knowledge and skills are provided to assist employees in improving their job performance (World Bank, 2011). Training is developed through organized programs that ensure employees are given skills that are essential in the job market. Therefore, before embarking on this kind of training, it is important for any agency to first understand the needs of employers. Take for example, Lebanon, both government and private agencies (Khoury et al., 2014) undergo training. This approach helps in training as many employees as possible to make them qualified for better jobs. There are

also other essential reasons why employee-training programs are developed. For instance, training makes it easier for an organization to retain good talents that helps in the growth of profits. With great talents, an organization can overcome challenges of operation. In return, the employers lay down well-developed strategies, and great milestones are reached in regards to performance. Although employee training should not only be offered to attract better jobs, it should also be supportive towards achieving organizational strategic path.

According to Jaoude (2015), organizations providing high-level training have been able to realize three times increasing profits compared to competitors. However, to possess such high impact programs and employees is not simple; it requires a mixture of alignment and planning. This involves developing and designing training in a manner that meets the organization's top goals. Furthermore, employee training should be based on gaps in the job market. This is done through identification of what employees possess regarding skills and the ideal ones required for the job. Through this approach, training can effectively be offered based on motivation, skills mastery, and giving critical thinking skills to employees. Lastly, training should be done based on practical and class lessons to produce effective and sustainable skills in the workforce (Urdinola, 2013).

Employee Training Programs

Globally, organizations have been enrolling their employees in training programs to enhance their skills, knowledge, and capabilities. Most of them facilitate the training through the development of programs with the ability to meet their employee's needs. However, Khan et al. (2011) stated that some firms provide their employees with opportunities to enroll in training programs established by another firm. Accordingly, the previous studies have shown that if well implemented, the internal programs are more effective than the external ones. The difference emanates from the fact that the internal programs are designed in such a way that they respond to pre-determined training needs (Jehanzeb & Beshir, 2013). The external programs are designed for a diverse population from different organizations, and thus, they are relatively less effective (Khan et al., 2011). Aguinis & Kraiger (2009) found out that the external programs are not always ineffective. In some cases, they are better than the internal training programs since they impart new and essential knowledge/skills that an organization may not have information about.

Therefore, when designing training programs, firms focus on providing the employees with opportunities for the development of general and specific skills. The programs are meant to make available sales, technical, communications, organizational development, management development, career development and supervisory development training, among others. As Valle et al. (2009) explained, the training is not provided to the lower-level employees only, but also to the managers and supervisors. Some forms of training, such as sales training, are suitable for the employees. Conversely, management training is likewise offered to the managers to enhance the skills needed for their roles. Also, supervisory training is provided to the supervisors. Further, communication and career development training can be offered to the employees, the managers, and the supervisors. Gerpott et al. (2017) explained that the management and supervisor training can be provided to the employees in lower levels that are set to be promoted.

The implementation of training programs is done while taking into consideration the method of skills and knowledge development that is needful. Huang & Jao (2011) noted that there are two key training methods, namely; behavioral and cognitive training. Thus, a firm selects the most suitable method that should be implemented in the training program. However, Elnaga & Imran (2013) explain that the two methods can be applied in the same program at the same time. The cognitive method involves the provision of theoretical training to the employees or managers. The theoretical information is provided to the trainees through verbal or non-verbal communication or both. Quartey (2012) elucidate that the firms that offer cognitive training focuses on the enhancement of the knowledge and skills of the trainees and also influences their attitudes through stimulating learning.

Examples of cognitive approaches are lectures, program instruction, computer-based training, discussions, and use of an intelligent tutorial system. On the other hand, the behavioral method involves the use of practical approaches to provide training. These practical approaches facilitate a change in the behaviors of the trainees. Thus, Khan & Baloch (2017) gave the explanation that the behavioral approaches are suitable for skill development. Examples of the behavioral approaches are role-played in basket techniques, equipment stimulators, case studies, business games, behavioral modeling and games, and simulations. Khan & Baloch (2017) further describe that some of the approaches categorized under the cognitive method, such as computer-based training, have a tendency to facilitate skills development, in addition to the acquisition of knowledge. In the same vein, some of the

approaches classified under the behavioral method, such as case studies, provide knowledge as well as skills.

Huang & Jao (2016) identified two strategies that are integrated into managerial and employee training, namely; off job training and on-the-job training. Off-the-job training entails providing training to the employees or managers in a context away from the site, where the skills and knowledge gained are to be applied (Huang & Jao, 2016; Yasin & Gomes, 2010). The strategy requires the trainees to leave their work-responsibilities and concentrate on training. Conversely, on-the-job training is undertaken in the workplace as the trainee handles work responsibilities. In such training, a more experienced employee or manager can act as the instructor. Alternatively, an organization can hire a professional instructor to provide the training. Huang & Jao (2016) also stated that the formal training in a context away from the workplace can be used to support the job training. As such, the two strategies can be applied together. The previous studies have shown that during the recent years, most organizations have shown an increased preference for off job training (Khan et al., 2011). The change has been facilitated by limitation associated with the on the job training, such as lack of opportunities for group discussion, lack of adequate training facilities, and the presence of hostile internal environment for training. More so, the training techniques vary depending on the training strategy that is adopted. On-the-job training techniques include mentoring, coaching, demonstrations, job rotation and team building exercises (Matsuo, 2014). Examples of the off job training techniques are brainstorming, discussions, case studies, behavior modeling, conferences, and lectures. Some of the techniques such as demonstrations, however, can be applied in both the work settings and away from work.

Training programs should be designed with the careful consideration of different factors that influence choices for training methods. By doing so, chances of achieving the desired goals increases tremendously. The choices for the suitable methods can be determined by human factors such as the presence or availability of a trainer (Erixon & Wahlström, 2016). Other influential factors include subject area (Quartey, 2012), training objectives (Aguinis & Kraiger, 2009), time and materials availability (Khan et al., 2011), and principles of learning (Khoury et al., 2014). Erixon & Wahlström (2016) described four stages of implementation of training programs, namely; training needs assessment, development of training program design, implementation, and evaluation.

Purpose and Scope

This paper focuses on Lebanese companies in order to understand the effects of training on employee performance. Therefore, in addition to this broader aim, the key areas of focus include;

1. To find out types of training programs used by Lebanese companies.
2. To find out the benefits of proper training programs among the Lebanese companies.
3. To explore the challenges of implementing proper training programs used by the Lebanese companies.

This study will look at how managers are investing in their human capital, to gain a competitive advantage and retain their position in the market. Two Lebanese companies, Bonjus Company and Khatib & Alami Company, will be used as case studies. Employee training is a new strategy widely practiced in the Lebanese market. However, there has been inadequate research regarding the subject. Thus, the main objective of this study is to find out the challenges and benefits of proper employee training programs.

This research will be a good resource for Lebanese companies wanting to improve their training programs and increase their productivity. The study will also give an insight to different training methods and their outcomes on the organization that could help organization managers to see the best-fit training program for their organization. Obviously, this will surely increase the organization's productivity and ultimately their profit.

Research Hypotheses

H1: Lebanese companies design different training programs to develop their employees

H2: Training programs have positive impact on performance of employees at workplace

H3: Different challenges experienced among HR managers affect implementation of training programs in companies

Limitations

Despite the successful completion of the research, there were a few limitations encountered especially during the collection of data. The first limitation experienced was the

unavailability of time for the respondents to participate in the interviews. The second limitation was language barrier as most employees on the subordinate level could not understand some English terms used in the interviews, especially those terms relating to human resource management. The third limitation was the insufficient secondary sources on employee training in Lebanese companies. The fourth limitation, however, was finances. The researcher spent a lot of money visiting different companies to gather information. Due to the busy schedules of the employees, it was hard to interview many respondents at the same time.

Methodology and Design

The study attempted to collect data from two groups. The first group comprised of managers in charge of human resources and those that take part directly or indirectly in training, development, and performance evaluation. The second group consisted of lower-level employees working in different departments. However, the nature of such an arrangement made it possible to apply snowball and simple sampling techniques respectively.

This paper adopted the use of questionnaire instruments to collect primary data from employees of Bonjus Company and Khatib & Alami Company in Lebanon. The sampling approach made it easier to access all the targeted respondents. Although, due to the fact that majority of the respondents had a busy schedule of attending to their daily operations at their workstations, we opted to use a drop-off/pick-up technique to collect primary data. Other scholars have succeeded in using this technique (Steele et al., 2007). For instance, according to the previous study conducted by Jackson-Smith et al. (2016), the technique involved delivering self-administered questionnaires to the workstations of respondents and the doorsteps of their offices.

The major aspect of the survey methodology requires a face-to-face communication with the respondents. During the first communication, we first introduced ourselves and explained the objective of our study as indicated in the introduction section of the survey questionnaires. Then, we left the questionnaires with the respondents with the promise that we would come back after two weeks to pick them. However, there were also other cases where we could not find the respondents either at their offices or workstations. In such cases, we opted to slide the questionnaires underneath the door with a note promising that we would come to pick the questionnaires. We considered a grace period of two weeks bearing in mind that a majority of the respondents could not find time to respond to the questionnaires within a short period.

Secondly, we also wanted to achieve a high response rate. Besides, the collection process became successful because of quick follow-ups. We ensured that we made some telephone calls or send short-text-messages (SMSs).

While we could have used other techniques to collect the data, drop-off/pick-up technique provided some advantages. First, we managed to make face-to-face contact and initiate verbal communication with samples of respondents. The approach was most applicable in cases where the respondents were at their workstations and offices. For example, we managed to explain to them the objective of our study and the reason why we had selected some of them. Also, we got the opportunity to communicate with individual respondents while reading an introduction and my cover letter that we had already used to obtain acceptance from the company's top management.

Furthermore, we decided to use the snowball-sampling technique on the basis that we found it difficult to identify specific managers working in the human and resource department. Most importantly, we wanted to pin point those that had participated directly or indirectly in training and development programs in the two case study companies. While following the guidelines provided by Saunders et al. (2009), we made use of four stages to recognize managers to participate in this study. The first step involved making contact with one or two managers from the population. The second step requires asking them to provide assistance to identify other respondents working in the same department. Similarly, the third step entailed asking the new respondents to give support to identify other new respondents. We only stopped when we could not identify other cases, and the sample was large enough to manage.

Data Analysis and Findings

The data analysis was conducted through a process from the coding to the results. According to Mayer (2015), data analysis begins from data cleaning, coding, input, and analysis.

Data cleaning was done to remove all missing variables that respondents either failed to fill or could not be read and understood. On the other hand, coding was done to assign binary numbers to all certain variables/items. The binary numbers were used as labels (Graue, 2015).

Based on the nature of objectives, the paper applied the IBM SPSS v. 20 to analyze primary data. For example, section 2 of the questionnaires requested respondents to select among the

multiple response choices by ticking the type of training strategy they had used. The analysis involves defining variables sets to come up with multiple response sets. Hence, descriptive statistics were used to find out the level of mean and dispersion of three value (standard deviation, minimum, and maximum values). The second analysis involves bivariate correlation to understand the relationship between training and level of performance.

Findings

It is apparent that human resources managers from the two companies design training programs that focuses on short-term skills. At the same time, they design development programs to allow employees develop their long-term abilities. Besides, irrespective of the type of training program that management uses, Molina & Ortega (2003) explain that every human resource personnel follow three major steps. First, one needs to assess the needs of an organization and the current skills that employees have. This first approach ensures that management takes stock of skills to understand how to determine the training needs. Second, the concerned personnel must design training activities that can help meet the already identified needs. This means the organizations have to develop different training programs that align with the identified needs. Lastly, the third step involves conducting an evaluation of the training to ascertain the effectiveness of the training in achieving set goals.

Specifically, management from the two companies adopts the first strategy of training as a general form of training. Taylor & Vaught (2016) are in support of this step. Additionally, human resource personnel from the two companies ensure that employees across all the functional units benefit from information regarding their responsibilities and functions. To illustrate this, some of such information accessible to employees in different departments covers what human personnel expect from individual employees. An example is how to embrace employees that comes from a different cultural background, and how they can respond in cases of discrimination. Aguinis & Kraiger (2009) posited that any company that implements this strategy must first collect information from their employees to understand the needs of a company.

The findings support the second step that management takes to design different training programs. For example, the design of a questionnaire allowed respondents to give their opinions on Likert scales as to whether or not they agreed that the company have succeeded in adopting training programs. The above results collaborate with other empirical studies and

secondary literature that has attempted to explore different training and development. Meyer (2010) explains that irrespective of the size and area where a company operates, human personnel can design different strategies to equip their employees with the needed skills, abilities, and knowledge. Furthermore, he outlines them as orientation, on-the-job, apprentice programs, off the job, online training, job simulation, and vestibule training. Mason & Wetherbee (2004) concluded in their study that sought to understand different leadership training program through which organizations, libraries, and nonprofit foundations have developed various programs.

Most importantly, organizations enroll their personnel in classes, libraries, and seminars to learn leadership skills. Schmidt (1994) recommends that organizations need to embrace non-traditional training programs. They should include the use of day-to-day assignments that make managers assign employees with experienced supervisors, utilize digital technology to refer employees to where they can access online materials for learning, and enrolling some employees in short-term lectures such as leadership classes.

An empirical study by Callahan & Watson (1995) tries to understand practical training and development programs used to train librarians. They maintain that some needs experienced by librarians across the world include; challenges of evolving technology, an ever-increasing demand for new services, and reduction in budgets. Furthermore, organizations also experience needs such as automation, reevaluation of services offered to students, and expansion of libraries. They concluded that major practical approaches includes encouraging librarians to attend seminars, attend workshops through agencies, attend computer classes, and being assigned to experienced supervisors.

Discussion

The importance of such training programs has been utilized to achieve the needs of individual employees and that of the company. The findings revealed in the current study show that the two companies got the opportunity to design programs that could make employees benefit from new skills and advancement. They were found to form important determinants of inner satisfaction among employees as well as life-long learning, quality output, and interpersonal relationship. In this paper, therefore, the analyzed data confirms that management from the two companies had opportunities to design training and development programs. Thus, this

could assist them to have a positive influence in developing their careers beyond the theories gained in the classroom.

Most importantly, training provides employees with the needed skills, abilities, and knowledge to perform the jobs according to the company procedures. Consequently, this ends up enhancing confidence among employees regarding their abilities and satisfaction while performing their jobs. Zhao et al. (2014) explains that satisfied employees always find a reason to deliver beyond their expectations. Different training programs that employees go through enable them to learn about the requirements of serving customers for the two companies. Ultimately, this has a strong influence on their satisfaction level, which in turn increases productivity and profitability. The above discussion indicates that providing employees with a well-designed training and development program helps them to become more profitable and to gain more satisfaction while performing their jobs.

The findings presented in this section also support previous results that training plays an important role in predicting effective and continued commitment (Butler & Lobley, 2016). The opportunity for employees to start developing their career beyond what they have learned in class accounted for 30.5%. This implies that training programs are good indicators of the willingness to spend more by investing in employees. While at the same time, it is a sure way of making employees develop a high level of commitment towards their work places. Such a commitment is likely to inspire employees to achieve life-long learning.

Moreover, the challenges of implementing proper training programs among the Lebanese companies refer to the fact that most of the companies in Lebanon have put in place measures in their quest to not only develop skills, knowledge, and ability among employees, but also to ensure that such skills transform into returns on investment (ROI). It is important to note the suppress management efforts that is directed towards designing programs that enhance their employees.

For example, on a five-point Likert scales from 1 to 5 (1 = strongly agree, ... 5 = strongly disagree), majority of respondents indicated that their company still grapple with the issue of taking long to identify resources that can assist employees to implement training initiatives. Even though it is understandable that the management from the two companies could be using different programs to develop skills among employees, some tangible and intangible resources must support the implementation of such programs.

Training requires financial support, training rooms, experienced trainers, and time. However, delays in identifying key resources have made the company to implement programs within a stipulated time frame. The above findings are also coupled with the fear that by spending more on employees, the company might incur more losses. Organizing programs such as inviting keynote speakers to talk about the specified topic would require the company to pay such speakers. Similarly, making reservations on the conference and seminary rooms means that a company has to pay for accommodation. Not all of these expenses and others not mentioned here indicate that the company will be willing to sponsor training programs.

According to the findings, a majority of respondents agreed that issues of bureaucracies made communication and structures hinder effective implementation of training programs. The findings were in support of other previous studies that maintain that organizational structures and bureaucracy formed important problems in hindering training. For instance, Burkard et al. (2012) posited that issues revolving around organization structures and bureaucracy tend to subject employees to look for other means of creating their satisfaction from other line managers before the company achieves its goals. A strong agreement among employees on these statements is a sure indicator of how different companies in Lebanon have failed to achieve the training and development of their employees on time. A study by Friedman (2014) echoed the importance of initiating communication in an environment where managers and employees can enforce free and effective communication. Thus, effective communication has been found to support openness and trust among employees. Consequently, this allows employees to communicate by sharing ideas when performing group work, teamwork, or when offering orientation training.

Organizational culture always serves a critical role in facilitating the implementation of different programs. Weber et al. (2016) argued that organizations with cultures that limit any proposed changes are also likely to fail to implement new training initiatives no matter how critical the training might be. A majority of respondents were found to support this item. They indicated that the workplace has restrictive measures that hinder management from taking needed changes. Hence, this ends up affecting the implementation of an entire program. Similarly, Syrnyk (2012) explains that employees are likely to resist any form of changes through hidden fears. In fact, such employees are always willing to do anything to ensure that their company does not execute the needed changes.

Friedman (2014) explains that management support is also a factor that makes organization come up with strategies whose implementation requires the efforts of other employees. This implies that an absence of management support would lead to derailing activities needed to achieve an identified goal. Maxwell et al. (2012) posited that execution of any training program must depend on funding to buy needed resources. Thus, failure of management support could also be the source of delays in identifying needed resources. Based on the fact that the two companies do not get full management support, this paper could as well deduce that majority of organizations in Lebanon do not get full support from managers in charge of human resource, operations, and other functional units.

To sum it all up, effective communication explained above helps employees initiate support from managers. However, when an organization lacks effective communication, this can derail training programs.

Conclusion and Recommendations

To begin with, through proper training, the organization creates and improves the nature of the present workers. The training will influence the conduct of employees and their working abilities resulting in improved performance and further productive changes that serve to build the performance of the employee. Training additionally has a noteworthy part of the employee performance by instilling in them the important skills required to perform different tasks in the organization.

The organization can consider training employees in critical thinking, central leadership, teamwork, and relating to people bringing about beneficial firm-level results. Training is also an important tool for the company to patch up the performance of all the employees for the organization's development and success by expanding employee productivity. It is useful to both the employees and the employers of a company. However, an employee will turn out to be more proficient and beneficial on the chances that he is trained well. Training is fundamental to expand efficiency as well as to inspire and motivate employees by telling them how essential their occupations are and giving them all the data they need to make their output better.

Most employees have a few shortcomings in their working environment skills. Therefore, a training program enables them to fortify those skills that every employee needs to progress.

This diminishes any frail connections inside the organization that depends intensely on others to finish important work assignments.

Moreover, an employee who gets the vital training is better able to execute tasks assigned to him/ her. He/she turns out to be more mindful of safety measures and legitimate methods for basic errands. The training may likewise build the worker's confidence since he/she has a more grounded comprehension of the business and the duties of the activity. This confidence may bring about outstanding performances and new ideas that will help to exceed expectations. Continuous training additionally keeps the employees on the cutting edge of industry improvements. Employees who are able and willing to change the standards of the company enable the organization to hold a position as a leader and to become a solid competitor inside the business.

Further, an organized training and development program guarantees that employees have a dependable experience and background knowledge. The consistency is especially pertinent to the organization's essential policies and procedures. All workers should know about the procedures and expectations of the organization. This incorporates security, discrimination, and administrative undertakings. Putting all employees through regular training in these sections guarantees that all staff individuals at least have exposure to the data.

Finally, employees with access to training and development programs have the favorable position in different organizations that are forgotten and left to look for training opportunities all alone. The investment in training that an organization makes shows the workers that they are valued. The training further creates a supportive working environment. Employees may access the training they would not have thought about or sought out themselves. Accordingly, employees who feel challenged and appreciated through training opportunities may feel more satisfied with their job. This motivates them to become more innovative and thus improving their performance.

Based on the above, the study recommends that a company should set aside time for employees to undergo interviews by adjusting their shifts. Moreover, the company can ensure that the employees respond to all questions asked on the questionnaire by encouraging them that it will be for their own benefit.

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