

Organizational Characteristics Affecting Online Training Motivation: Sampling from the Malaysian Safety Online Training

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Abstract

Organizational characteristics are proven to affect employees' training effectiveness; in which, organizational characteristics are seen as important factors that were studied in face-to-face training to improve the training effectiveness by creating a supportive organizational climate. Interestingly, training motivation was found to mediate this relationship by a large amount of research; hence, it is important to determine organizational characteristics that can stimulate employees' training motivation. However, limited research was done to determine organizational characteristics affecting online training motivation. Therefore, the purpose of this research is to determine organizational characteristics affecting online training motivation in an online training among employees in Malaysia using a pre-experimental research. An online training related to safety while working at home was offered as open participation; in which, a total of 73 employees were involved in this online training. Findings indicated that several organizational characteristics were significantly affecting the online training motivation including social support, followed by cultural support, and job support; however, management support was not a significant predictor. All of these organizational characteristics also explained 74.1% variance in online training motivation; in which, the online training was also proven effective. This implies that social support, cultural support, and job support are important organizational characteristics that affect employees' online training motivation. Research implications, limitations, and future research are also discussed.

Keywords: Online Training Motivation, Safety Training, Malaysian Employees, Training Program Effectiveness, Human Resource Development, Human Development, Pre-Experiment

Introduction

Training programs are organized to provide employees with competencies needed to perform current job needs (Noe, 2023). Hence, research related to factors affecting training effectiveness were done by a large number of researchers (Aziz 2018a). Interestingly, training motivation is proven to be the most important factor affecting employees' training effectiveness (Colquitt, LePine, and Noe, 2000); in which, it is essential to make sure employees are motivated in training to ensure training effectiveness. Consequently, factors affecting employees' training motivation were studied as an alternative to improve training effectiveness (e.g., Cannon-Bowers, Salas, Tannenbaum & Mathieu, 1995; Aziz, 2013; Mehner, Rothenbusch, & Kauffeld 2025). Meanwhile, studies related to organizational characteristics affecting employee training motivation and effectiveness is important because it can be used by human resource management (HRM) practitioners to create appropriate organizational climate to ensure training effectiveness (Aziz, Halim, Mohd, Selamat, Omar, Ibrahim & Derasol, 2021). However, research focusing on those factors affecting employees' training motivation in online training is very limited (Chung, Zhan, Noe & Jiang, 2022). Hence, more research is needed because the organization of online training programs has risen since pandemic COVID-19 (Aziz, Hussein, Husin, & Ibrahim, 2022).

Determining the effect of organizational characteristics is useful to make sure that the organizational environment is supporting employees' training transfer in ensuring training effectiveness (Gautam, Gautam & Basnet, 2023). Several organizational characteristics were found to be important factors affecting training motivation and effectiveness in face-to-face training with moderate to large effect size (Aziz 2018a). However, the effect of these important factors on employees' training motivation in online training have received little attention (Chung et al., 2022). In addition, some training, such as occupational safety and health is considered as very important because it deals with human life and usually organized as compulsory (Aziz & Osman, 2019). Therefore, the purpose of this current research is to study organizational characteristics affecting employees' online training motivation in an effective online training related to employees' occupational safety.

Literature Review

Previous researchers have indicated that organizational characteristics are important factors affecting training motivation and effectiveness (e.g., Colquitt et al., 2000; Aziz et al., 2021). From theoretical perspective, the Theory of Training Motivation by Colquitt et al. (2000) suggests training motivation as the most important factor affecting training effectiveness; in which, training motivation mediates the relationship between various independent variables including organizational climate and training effectiveness. Meanwhile, according to Tracey and Tews (2005), these organizational characteristics can also be interpreted as a training climate that includes management support, job support, and organizational support. Hence, organizational characteristics are demonstrated as important factors to stimulate training motivation in order to improve the training effectiveness. However, research related to organizational characteristics affecting employees' training motivation in online training is still limited (Chung et al., 2022).

Further, Aziz (2013) and Aziz et al. (2021) used training climate suggested by Tracey and Tews (2005) to determine organizational characteristics affecting employees' training motivation and effectiveness; in which, these organizational characteristics are found to affect

employees' training motivation among the Malaysian academic staff and government officers. Their research also highlighted four important organizational characteristics affecting employees' training motivation in face-to-face training including management support, job support, cultural support, and social support. Hence, these organizational characteristics can be used to determine their effect on online training motivation among employees.

Furthermore, Aziz et al. (2021) also found that organizational characteristics are important predictors to training motivation in face-to-face employee training programs that were proven effective. This has demonstrated the importance to make sure that a training program is effective before testing whether organizational characteristics have effect on the training motivation. Meanwhile, several researchers including Aziz (2016) and Estevez, Roche, Espinosa and Rodríguez (2018) compare the pre- and post-evaluation score of learning related to training content to determine training effectiveness; hence, this should also be done to determine if an online training is effective. Consistently, Kirkpatrick and Kirkpatrick (2010) also suggested comparing the score between pre- and post-evaluation to assess learning performance in determining training effectiveness. Therefore, an alternative hypothesis is constructed to be tested as:

Ha1 = Trainees' post-evaluation of acquired knowledge and attitude is significantly higher than the pre-evaluation among employees attending the safety online training at 0.05 level of significance.

On the other hand, management support is found to affect training motivation in face-to-face employee training by several researchers, including those by Aziz et al. (2021), and Sharif, Braimah and Dogbey (2023). Management support can be referred to as "the organizational system that corresponds to policies, procedures and practices that demonstrate the development efforts' importance, such as reward systems and resources to acquire and apply learned skills" (Tracey & Tews, 2005, p. 358). Aziz et al. (2021) found that management support is one of organizational characteristics that significantly affect employees' training motivation among government officers in Malaysia; meanwhile, Sharif et al. (2023) found that management support as interpreted as organizational support affects employees' training motivation among academician in private and public universities in Pakistan. However, research to verify the effect of management support on online training motivation was vague. Therefore, an alternative hypothesis is constructed to be tested as follow:

Ha2 = Management support is a significant factor affecting online training motivation among employees attending the safety online training at 0.05 level of significance.

Further, "cultural support refers to the shared perceptions of employees concerning the behaviors in an organization" (Aziz, Samah, Noah, Ahmad and Abiddin, 2011, p. 43). Cultural support was discussed as a prominent factor affecting online learning motivation by Jung (2023). It was also found to affect training motivation and effectiveness in employees' face-to-face training by Gautam and Basnet (2021) using samples among teachers in a university in Nepal. However, the effect of cultural support on online training motivation was vague. Therefore, an alternative hypothesis is constructed to be tested as follow:

Ha3 = Cultural support is a significant factor affecting online training motivation among employees attending the safety online training at 0.05 level of significance.

Furthermore, “social support is defined as drawing on the emotional and interpersonal encouragement provided by others in the workplace setting” (Aziz et al., 2011, p. 42). Like cultural support, social support was also found to be a characteristic affecting online learning motivation by most of previous researchers, such as by Yusop, Rosnan, Ismail, Jaafar, Nurfazrina and Wibowo (2022); in which, their research found that social support affect learning motivation among undergraduate students in a Malaysian public university. Social support was also found to affect training motivation among employees in face-to-face training by Gautam et al. (2023); in which, their research found that social support affects training motivation among employees in Nepal banks. However, the effect of social support on online training motivation was vague and should be tested further. Therefore, an alternative hypothesis is constructed to be tested as follow:

Ha4 = Social support is a significant factor affecting online training motivation among employees attending the safety online training at 0.05 level of significance.

Additionally, job support is defined as the characteristic of a job that is designed to have elements of continuous learning, flexibility for acquiring new knowledge and skills, and ability to utilize newly acquired knowledge and skills (Tracey and Tews, 2005, p. 358). Job support was also found to be a characteristic affecting training motivation among employees in face-to-face training by Park, Lim and Lee (2022); in which, their research found that job support affects training motivation among employees attending safety and health related training in South Korea. However, the effect of job support on online training motivation was vague and should be tested further. Therefore, an alternative hypothesis is constructed to be tested as follow:

Ha5 = Job support is a significant factor affecting online training motivation among employees attending the safety online training at 0.05 level of significance.

Methodology

To achieve the research objective, a pre-experimental design was used by organizing an open-registration of online training named “Occupational Safety During the COVID-19 Pandemic for Working from Home” on behalf of the University Kebangsaan Malaysia/UKM (The National University of Malaysia) in December 2021. The program was organized in a collaboration between UKM and the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) Malaysia. The objective of the online training was to provide trainees with general knowledge and attitude of working at home safely because most employees were asked to work from home since pandemic COVID-19.

The online training was also free of charge and advertised through both UKM and NIOSH’s social media. The organization of online training was also registered with UKM’s formal portal for student activities named i-star with code C-SKPM2093-2021-198; in which, it was managed by a group of students registered for SKPM2093 subject (Training Management and Behavior Modification) with lecturer’s supervision. The online training used in this research was organized in a day, delivered in Malay language, and invited two speakers with related expertise from each UKM and NIOSH.

Further, questionnaires used to measure organizational characteristics including the management support, social support, cultural support, and job support were adapted from Aziz (2013); in which, the questionnaire adapted by Aziz (2013) is originated from Tracey and

Tews (2005). Each organizational characteristic was measured by four items but job support was measured by three items. Sample item to measure management support was "In my organization, employees are given the opportunities to attend training that are associated with the needs for personal and professional development". Sample item to measure job support was "Acquiring new knowledge through a training program is a part of career development opportunities that is emphasized in my job". Sample item to measure cultural support was "There is a strong belief in my organization that continuous learning is important to successful job performance". Sample item to measure social support was "Most of the people in my work place believe the importance of training and that is why they always encourage the use of new training skills".

Further, to measure online training motivation, 10 items by Aziz (2018b) to measure essential training motivation were adapted; sample item was "I can't wait to get back to work to try what I have learned in this training.". In addition, the effectiveness of online training was measured using a questionnaire adapted from Zacharatos (2001) to measure knowledge (four items) and attitude (four items) for safety while working at home that were asked in pre- and post-evaluation. Sample item to measure safety job knowledge was "I know how to perform my job safely while working at home"; sample item to measure safety job attitude was "I believe that safety while working at home is an important issue.". All questionnaires were distributed to trainees using a link of google form and were constructed using dual languages including Malay and English. Research subjects need to answer the questionnaire based on 10 scales; in which, scale 1 represents strongly disagreed, and scale 10 represents strongly agreed.

A total of 73 Malaysian employees aged 18 to 57 years old and from various job levels and organizations including from government, NGO, and private sector have attended the online training on the basis of voluntary participation; in which, these participants agreed to be the research subject of pre-experiment as a part of requirement to join the online training. These participants had also signed for pre-registration a week before the online training was organized and were asked to answer questionnaires measuring organizational characteristics and pre-training evaluation of knowledge and attitude towards safety while working at home before the online training was organized. Then, in the middle of training, trainees were asked to answer questionnaires related to online training motivation. Finally, after the completion of training, trainees were asked to answer the questionnaire for the post-training evaluation of knowledge and attitude towards safety while working at home.

The SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) version 26 was used to analyze the data. A paired sample t-test was used to test hypothesis Ha1; meanwhile, Multiple Linear Regression (MLR) was used to test hypotheses Ha2 to Ha5. In addition, the Alpha Cronbach reliability analysis indicated a good internal consistency for all questionnaires among the 73 respondents; in which it has Alpha Cronbach value of 0.970 for management support, 0.913 for job support, 0.946 for cultural support, 0.949 for social support, 0.962 for online training motivation, and 0.961 for post-knowledge and attitude towards safety while working at home. Additionally, using cut-off points suggested by Pallant (2020), data were tested using additional tests and indicated that data fall under parametric assumption.

Findings and Discussion

Several organizational characteristics were indicated to have significant effect on online training motivation including social support, followed by cultural support, and job support; however, management support was not a significant predictor. All organizational characteristics also explained 74.1% variance in online training motivation and significance at 0.0001 level of significance; in which, the online training was also proven effective. Research findings supported the Theory of Training Motivation by Colquitt et al. (2000) that explains several organizational characteristics were organizational climate affecting employees' training motivation.

The online training effectiveness was determined by comparing the scores between pre- and post-evaluation of knowledge and attitude towards safety while working at home using a paired sample t-test. The results of paired sample t-test are shown in Table 1 and Table 2. Meanwhile, Figure 1 shows the mean scores for pre- and post-evaluation of knowledge and attitude towards safety while working at home. Findings indicated that there was a significant difference between the mean scores as measured before and after the completion of the online training program indicating training effectiveness.

Table 1
Paired Sample Statistics

		Mean	N	Standard Deviation	Standard Deviation Error
Pair 1	Post	8.7397	73	1.31411	.15381
	Pre	7.3356	73	1.71731	.20100

Table 2
Paired Samples Test

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
				Lower	Upper			
Pair 1 Post - Pre	1.40411	1.29611	.15170	1.10170	1.70652	9.256	72	.000

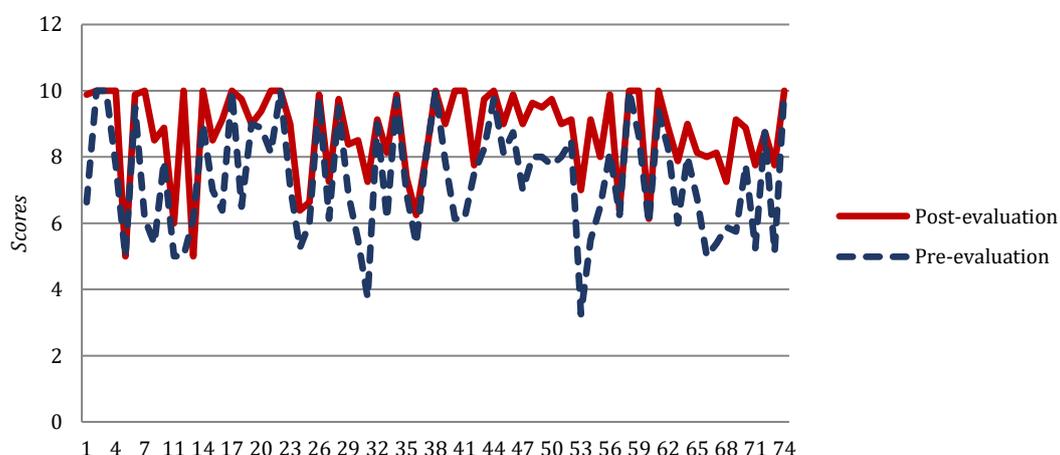


Figure 1: Mean scores for subjects' acquired knowledge and attitude towards safety while working at home as measured before and after the completion of online training

There was a significant increased of knowledge and attitude as measured before ($M = 7.3356$, $SD = 1.71731$) and after the completion of online training ($M = 8.7397$, $SD = 1.71731$) with the change of $t(72) = 9.256$, $p < 0.0001$ (two-way). The increase in mean scores was 1.40411 with 95% confidence interval for the difference between 1.10170 and 1.70652. Using the formula explained by Pallant (2020), the eta-squared statistic shows a large effect size (0.5434). Therefore, hypothesis Ha1 has failed to be rejected indicating that the scores of post-evaluation in knowledge and attitude towards safety while working at home is significantly higher than the pre-evaluation in the online training program. Finding is consistent with research that determines training effectiveness by comparing the scores of learning as measured before and after the completion of face-to-face training, including those by Aziz (2016) and Estevez et al. (2018). Hence, findings indicated that the online training of “Occupational Safety During the COVID-19 Pandemic for Working from Home” is effective.

On the other hand, the results for MLR test are shown in Table 3 to 5; in which, management support was found to be an insignificant factor affecting online training motivation ($\beta = -0.001$, $p = 0.997$). Finding is inconsistent with previous research that found management support or the organizational management affect employees’ training motivation in face-to-face training by previous researchers including Aziz et al. (2021) and Sharif et al. (2023). This might be explained by the context of training; in which, the current research was studied using an online training with the content to train employees on how to work safely while working at home. Their management might not support what they learned in the online training if those learned knowledge are used at home. The research finding is also consistent with a research by Axtell et al. (1997) that used samples from technical employees attending training related to interpersonal skills; in which, management support was found to have insignificant relationship with motivation to transfer. Findings by Axtell et al. (1997) demonstrated that the application of particular training content might not be supported by the organizational management. Hence, hypothesis Ha2 (management support is a significant factor affecting online training motivation among employees attending the safety online training at 0.05 level of significance) is rejected.

Further, cultural support was found to be a significant factor affecting online training motivation ($\beta = 0.298$, $p = 0.004$). Finding is consistent with previous research that found cultural support affects learning motivation in online learning by Jung (2023); finding also consistent with research by Gautam and Basnet (2021) that found cultural support affects training motivation in employees’ face-to-face training. Hence, hypothesis Ha3 (cultural support is a significant factor affecting online training motivation among employees attending the safety online training at 0.05 level of significance) failed to be rejected.

Furthermore, social support was found to be a significant factor affecting online training motivation ($\beta = 0.464$, $p = 0.013$). Finding is consistent with previous research that found social support affects learning motivation in online learning by Yusop (2022); finding also consistent with research by Gautam et al. (2023) that found social support affects training motivation in employees’ face-to-face training. Hence, hypothesis Ha4 (social support is a significant factor affecting online training motivation among employees attending the safety online training at 0.05 level of significance) failed to be rejected.

Finally, job support was found to be a significant factor affecting employees' online training motivation ($\beta = 0.219$, $p = 0.007$). Finding is consistent with previous research by Park et al. (2022) that found job support affects training motivation in employees' face-to-face training. Hence, hypothesis Ha5 (job support is a significant factor affecting online training motivation among employees attending the safety online training at 0.05 level of significance) failed to be rejected.

Table 1
Model Summary^b

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.869a	.755	.741	.66924	1.667

a. Predictors: (Constant), Job Support, Management Support, Cultural Support, Social Support

b. Dependent Variable: Online Training Motivation

Table 2
ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	93.880	4	23.470	52.403	.000b
	Residual	30.456	68	.448		
	Total	124.336	72			

a. Dependent Variable: Online Training Motivation

b. Predictors: (Constant), Job Support, Management Support, Cultural Support, Social Support

Table 3
Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.299	.540		2.404	.019
	Management Support	-.001	.170	-.001	-.004	.997
	Cultural Support	.286	.096	.298	2.974	.004
	Social Support	.441	.172	.464	2.558	.013
	Job Support	.167	.060	.219	2.799	.007

a. Dependent Variable: Online Training Motivation

The MLR results also show that organizational characteristics studied in the current research explained 74.1% variance in online training motivation ($R^2 = 0.741$, $p = 0.0001$); in which, according Ferguson (2009), it has a large effect on the dependent variable. Hence, it can be concluded that organizational characteristics have a large effect on online training motivation among the Malaysian employees attending the safety online training.

Research Implications, Limitations and Future Research

The current research has empirically proven that several organizational characteristics including social support, followed by cultural support, and job support are significant factors affecting employees' online training motivation; these have demonstrated that research findings supported the Theory of Training Motivation proposed by Colquitt et al. (2000). Findings are also consistent with a large number of researches done by previous researchers

that used samples from face-to-face training including those by Aziz et al. (2021), Park et al. (2022), and Gautam et al. (2023); findings also consistent with previous researchers that used samples from online learning by Yusop (2022), and Jung (2023).

The novelty of the current research is to prove that organizational characteristics affect employees' training motivation in online training; in which previous research only studied their effect in face-to-face training. These organizational characteristics can be used to provide intervention to increase online training motivation and effectiveness by creating a supportive organizational climate. However, management support was found to be an insignificant organizational characteristic affecting employees' online training motivation in the "Occupational Safety During the COVID-19 Pandemic for Working from Home"; it is believed because the training had training content that was not supposed to be applied at employees' workplace thus not supported by the organizational management.

From the perspective of Human Resource Development (HRD) field of study, several organizational characteristics including social support, followed by cultural support, and job support can be used to determine the level of organizational climate supporting employees' online training motivation. If the level of organizational climate is low, the HRD practitioners can do some intervention to improve the organizational climate in stimulating employees' online training motivation and effectiveness since nowadays the online training has been offered more. According to Aziz et al. (2021), HRD practitioners can stimulate training motivation and effectiveness by creating organizational cultures that have continuous learning culture, innovative culture, initiative culture, and employ impactful leadership practices. Additionally, social support was found to be the strongest factor affecting employees' online training motivation; hence, from the perspective of the Human Development field of study, all employees that play different roles should be able to support each other in stimulating employees' online training motivation; these include holding the role as supervisor and peers (Gautam et al., 2023; Mehner et al., 2025).

However, future research is needed to verify whether several organizational variables including management support have different effects on employees' online training motivation and effectiveness when the training contents are different. In addition, there are other organizational characteristics that were found to affect online learning effectiveness but are not studied in the current research, such as technological support provided by the organization to enhance online learning including providing stable internet connection, adequate computer labs, adequate computer/laptops, and advanced computer technology (Zalat, Hamed & Bolbol, 2021); hence, these variables should be studied in future research. Further, future research is suggested to use qualitative study since the current research only used pre-experimental research design.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the purpose of this research was to determine the effect of several organizational characteristics on employees' online training motivation since previous research had only focused on face-to-face training. Using a pre-experimental research design, data were collected among 73 Malaysian employees aged 18 to 57 years old from various organizations including government, private, and NGO (non-government organization) that attended an online training related to safety while working at home. Findings indicated that

organizational characteristics explained 74.1% variance in online training motivation; in which, the online training was also proven effective. However, only social support, followed by cultural support, and job support were significant predictors for online training motivation; however, management support was not a significant predictor. Research implications, limitations, and future research suggestions for the field of Human Resource Development and Human Development field of study were also discussed.

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