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## Article

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## Provided in Cooperation with:

Expert Journal of Business and Management

*Reference:* Ehsan Saeed Idrees Yaqoot/Wan Shakizah Wan Mohd. Noor et. al. (2017).  
Antecedents of training effectiveness in Bahrain. In: Expert journal of business and  
management 5 (1), S. 13 - 21.

This Version is available at:

<http://hdl.handle.net/11159/1373>

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# Antecedents of Training Effectiveness in Bahrain

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*This study focuses on antecedents of the training programmes' effectiveness at public sector organizations in Bahrain. A Kirkpatrick model is utilized as a partial research framework and tested as the dependent variable training effectiveness in this study. This study further examines the relationship between the independent variables, trainer and social support toward training effectiveness. The survey instrument was developed for data collection and the questionnaires were distributed to the staff working in the public sector in Bahrain. The total usable questionnaires are 128. The study adopts a quantitative approach using SPSS statistic approach. The outcomes also discover that both antecedents have a positive and a significant relationship with the training effectiveness at various Kirkpatrick's levels.*

**Keywords:** training effectiveness, trainer, social support, training factors

**JEL Classification:** M53, M54

## 1. Introduction

The Bahraini government is an applicant leader of hi tech technology for practical applications and activities. That needs very demanding technical specialization and a sequence of complicated process, to run. Millions of dinars have been invested by the government to earn this technology. This technology is like everything else and it has its requirements. It needs qualified operators and users to make use of it. Therefore, human resources professional at the public sector has a substantial conception to employ and train the suitable workforces to operate this technology. The outcomes of this study identify the characteristic needed for the training programs to be successful. This would as well give answers to common issues related to the field of employee's development and training. Also, it brings focus to the agenda of the country's workforce progress. There are many associated directly or indirectly training antecedents that may or might not produce any impact into the process individually or if collaborated with other factors. Examples of the training related factors are work environment related factors such as peer encouragement, managerial support, opportunities to apply learned skills, adequate resources and consequences for using training on the job (Sanjeevkumar and Yanan, 2011). Other antecedents are training material, trainer, participants, and organizations. Although, many antecedents were found to influence the favorable outcomes of learning, the main focus of this study is only on the trainer and the social support factors forming the independent variables as suggested by other previous

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Article History:

Received 28 February 2016 | Accepted 6 March 2017 | Available Online 10 March 2017

Cite Reference:

Yaqoot, E.S.I., Mohd. Noor, W.S.W. and Mohd Isa, M.F., 2017. Antecedents of Training Effectiveness in Bahrain. *Expert Journal of Business and Management*, 5(1), pp.13-21.

literatures, that might promote to enhance training effectiveness (Almakhadmah, 2012; Lin, 2012; Homklin et al., 2013; Massenberg et al., 2015).

There is another importance for this study mainly to the practitioners working in the training field, because it presents pertinent knowledge supporting the fulfilment of effective training programmes. By becoming aware and familiar with the factors that are affecting directly the training effectiveness, practitioner would be able to eliminate or treat part of the training successfulness resistance. They will also give more attention to other restrains working against achieving higher better training level and objective perfection.

## **2. Literature Review**

It is discovered that the majority of the organizations are unsuccessful to perceive the importance of controlling and exploiting the antecedents that might affect the training effectiveness. Essentially, most organizations failed to give the training evaluation the deserved importance (Kirkpatrick and Kirkpatrick, 2009). In the best state, the training evaluation has been conducted briefly and rapidly which will not give enough analysis for the evaluation to be useful (Pineda, 2010). Furthermore, training is a costly effort, evaluating its effectiveness is substantial to the accommodation of the training programme (Tuzun, 2005). Viewing training programmes effectiveness necessitates a serious consideration to the factors impacting the process through employment of the proper training evaluation model to evaluate those factors. This confirms the efficient correct money investment worth helping the organizations achieving the planned results and objectives. Also, evaluation of the training effectiveness lacks the attention it requires and people are unaware of its importance. A dispute about that is supported by the limited articles number in the literature about that subject (Hogan, 2007). In the existing difficult and unstable economic environment, training personnel are forced to deal with hard economic commitment by finding the feasibility and worth of the offered training programmes. A real proof and evidence is needed to show programmes' quality to make influential determination to the organization's management and decision maker (Chiaburu et al., 2010). Accordingly, the evaluation's meaning and purposes must further be comprehensibly introduced (Giangreco et al., 2010).

### **2.1. Training Effectiveness**

Training after school in the Kingdom of Bahrain is still insubstantial and unknown in the sense that there is no proof of its practice documented compared to other gulf citizen countries (GCC). They frequently and periodically reassess their training and labor force performance outputs paralleled with their real requirements of handwork and economy in the other GCC countries (Karoly, 2010). According to the Labor Market Regulatory Authority (LMRA), it was indicated that a big part of the priority and high type of responsibilities and salary scaled jobs is assigned to non-Bahraini employees. For example, for every five Bahrainis working in the government with a salary that is more than BD 1500 there is one non Bahraini entitled to the same salary range. This presents a gap which is filled by expatriates who share not only the typical salaries range, but the highest range as well in an up normal and unusual ratio compared to the local's ratio. An explanation to this is the training is one of the critical fields. It is greatly connected to the challenges encountered in any sort of organization like the shortage in the employees' skills and shortage in the educational system structure (Al-Mahdi, 2014). The performance appraisal was confused for a long period from point of view of the design, implementation and the management. The reason behind that was because of applying improper operational strategic (Davis, 2012). Training functions to treat the mistakes and to improve outcomes. This benefits the organization and the individual. In other words, more studies and researches should explore this field to settle a base for more attention and care about the importance of the effective training. Increased demand of a highly skilled workforce is associated with an increased complexity in the work fields.

Training can also be identified as continuing education and it is being adopted by government agencies as an instrument for enhancing the performance of their employees. Effective training provides the organizations with many benefits including solving current and future problem that the organization may face. It will also help with adaptation in today's turbulent environments (Bimpitsos and Petridou, 2012). Studying the effectiveness of the continuing education is important because of the significant role it plays and the difference it can make. It is not only important in the provision of urban services to the community, but it is also essential as a catalyst in the economic development and country's well-being.

Effectiveness means achievement of the goal that was set. It also means the possibility of providing the suitable active environment to attain the planned purpose. Attending training is not only passing by or simply joining a training session. It should transfer the participants and put them in a different knowledge level. As Baraki and Kemenade (2013) said, training improves countries by enhancing the empowerment, knowledge, learning, harmony and caution of the participants.

The process of the training evaluations is the verification of its worth and its utility, or furthering precisely its effectiveness (Kirkpatrick, 1970). This is important to compare the total cost of the programme to the associated prospective benefits. Thus, it shows if the programme could attain its purposed objectives (AlYahya and Norsiah, 2013). Training is like anything else. It requires an attainable systematic structured approach and processes to fulfil its major objectives to be effective in developing the employees' capabilities in the job field (Khalid, 2012). The aim of the training is to assist the organization's objectives in improving the employees' performance using a series of actions taken in order to achieve that. The training process consists of activities that link the learner with the materials, tools, devices, other people, etc. (Kock and Ellström, 2011). The public sector performs training to encourage the employees to obtain an up to date and a state-of-the-art abilities to do something well. Training programmes that were planned to be effective will accommodate the organisation in achieving the overall aims of it and its employees (Karim, Huda, and Khan, 2012). Effectiveness will recognize the state of the training if it is either successful or if it did not produce the desired effect (Saghafian, 2011). According to Griffin (2011), the advantage of transfer from training is actually only 10-15 percent into the work field. The full potency of the training under no circumstances is fully perceived. Transferring and implementation to the work place is the intention of any element of the training. This is one of the main factors behind the objective of the training to improve the performance of both parties.

The vocational and foundational training programmes had been chosen to be used for this study. The vocational training programmes is a highly needed skills designed to enhance capabilities for all staff at the public sector. This sort of programmes is created specifically for all employees from the different levels in the organizations comprising clerks and supervisors, and is categorized as a fundamental programme to them. These classifications of employees are supposed to attend such training programmes whenever possible especially during their qualifying period, because those programme provide them with the needed organizational skills. Otherwise their performance will be limited to their limited previous knowledge. The objective of the vocational training programmes is to deliver participants with the principles to support their career performance. It is the programmes that focus only into the job requirements and ignoring other unneeded subjects those are not directly related to the type of work the employee is doing. The base of training programme is a workshop that includes both exercises and classroom discussions. Through these programmes, the trainees will also gain other skills as results of sharing other participant's and instructor's experiences. Their knowledge will also be complemented with other indirect expertise that will also affect their productivity in general. Thus, their willing to transfer what was learned to the work is critical. The period of these programmes is not fixed. It is according to the plan and requirement. It can also be according to the number of trainees and their capability to successfully accomplish the programme.

## **2.2. Trainer**

The trainer's main role is to convert the knowledge available in the training material to understandable knowledge to benefit the targeted trainee in a manner that allows the achievement of the desired results. In addition to facilitating the training process requirements, like providing the suitable training material, a harmonious environment, using the proper presentation skills, the trainer should be well prepared for the session (Lin, 2012). A trainer is one of the main components of any training programme. The trainer's most important characteristic is the knowledge in a specific subject of the training programme. However, knowledge in the field is not enough and should be complemented with the ability to transfer it in an articulate and clear manner to the participants (Ghosh, Satyawadi, Joshi, Ranjan, and Singh, 2012). Iqbal et al. (2011) outlined the very essential role played by the trainer in the learning and the reaction of the trainees.

Motivation of participants to learn, removing their hesitation, eliminating any negative observations or previous experiences against the programmes are also the responsibility of the trainer. In addition, the success of previous training sessions was usually due to the personality of the trainer (Ghosh et al., 2012). Lack of expression impacts negatively the ability to transfer the knowledge to the participants. The proper trainer is the one who is able to make the ideas and information easily reachable, while supplementing them with actual related examples (Griffin, 2014).

## **2.3. Social Support**

Training effectiveness is linked with the transfer of training. Social support requires more research, because it has not been investigated appropriately. More research is needed because usually the researchers in the training transfer the focus of their study into the narrow vision of just either the organisational or the supervisor's support. Training transfer does not happen without the surrounding parties' social support influence which could also be from either the supervisor or the organisation, it involves other parties such as the other trainees in the class, and the family by anticipating the suitable environment for the person to learn.

Social support encourages the trainees to increase their wealth of knowledge, while on the other hand it has a positive effect on the trainee's self-efficacy (Chiaburu et al., 2010). Employee performance and output are influenced directly by the organization's culture and the aid obtained from the organization and colleagues, especially the ones in a direct relation and contact with the employee. A culture that is of a healthy practice and provides creativity to the employee will be full of chances to allow functionality that will yield more than the organization's hope. The secret is the effect of motivation on the workforce as a result of the suitable culture which will change for the better their behavior, production, and favorable representation of the firm (Raza, Anjum, and Zia, 2014).

To get the most out of the training investment in the public sector, a supportive environment must be established to widen the encouragement of the participation and applying the gained knowledge and skill in the work field (McCracken et al., 2012). Because of the increased in a progressive manner difficulty the training managers and professionals face recently, such as the universal complication, increased fast demand for new sorts of skills, and limited available training budget, organizations started to focus and search for all the aid they can possible obtain. With their belief in the possibility of treatment of all the performance – related issues through training, management must play the role associated to them, which is to provide the needed training programmes, make them available and easily accessible to the employees, and stand behind them to look after any object that may interrupt the process. Management should also understand that the better skills and knowledge the employee will obtain, the better quality and service will be reflected to the organization. Management authorization and selection for the training programmes to further and support it is strongly appreciated, or else the reception of the employee will not be receptive (Punia and Saharan, 2012).

### 3. Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 shows the study's framework that displays the theoretical relationship between the traditional framework contents, the independent variables and the dependent variable. Dependent variable in this study is the effectiveness of training. The independent variables; trainer and social support composed of antecedents that influence the effectiveness of training. The quantitative collected data used as a basis for the analysis method for this study. The various levels of the training effectiveness analysis will be based on the trainees' gathered data.

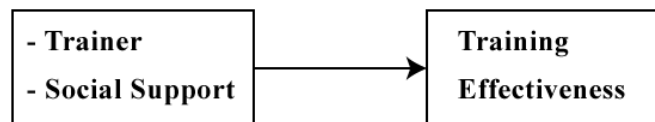


Figure 1. Research Framework of the Study

#### 3.1. Hypotheses

A significant and positive relationship has been found in previous studies between the concepts of trainer, social support and training effectiveness. Whilst part of these studies gave conflicting results which demand to further research in the subject. Therefore, the following hypotheses were proposed to clear moreover the understanding of the factors influencing the training effectiveness.

- H1. There is a positive relationship between trainer and training effectiveness.
- H2. There is a positive relationship between social support and training.

### 4. Method

A questionnaire was deployed for primary data collection. Thirty questionnaires submitted to the most approachable employees in the public sector to conduct a pilot test to confirm the reliability and clearness of the instrument. Cronbach's Alpha presented value of 0.939 for trainer, 0.903 for social support, and 0.884 for training effectiveness. 382 questionnaires distributed to clerks and supervisors in the public sector in Bahrain between March 2016 and June 2016. It consists of 62 questions, 32 questions outline the dependent variables and 30 questions outline the independent variables after the reliability pilot test. SPSS version 20 is the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) used for the data analyses.

Special attempts to get the questionnaires back as soon as possible were conducted. Otherwise, time was allowed and frequent contact maintained to increase the possibility of completed questionnaires return. Out of 382, only 155 were returned. 60% of trainees refused participating in the study, could not enroll in

training programmes in the period of interests, while others ignored to return it even with the repeated requests. There were 27 neglected questionnaires and accordingly omitted. 128 questionnaires only were valid. The low level of participation rate is because of the disheartened research culture in almost all Arabian countries including Bahrain (Gelaidan, 2012).

The questionnaire was first developed in English language, and then translated to Arabic using bilingual expert from English language center in the University of Bahrain to obtain a better and accurate response from a questionnaire administered in an Arabic country.

#### **4.1. Measurement of Items Virtuous**

Questionnaire's items used are adopted from other previously validated studies. They were amended to match the nature of this study. Five point Likert scale measures the participants' respond from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5) for every dimension. 15 items measures the impact degree of trainer on training effectiveness obtained from Leach (1996). Its Cronbach's reliability is 0.870. Social support is measured by sixteen items obtained from Burke and Baldwin (1999). Its Cronbach's reliability value is 0.910.

Training effectiveness consists of sub factors measured by 34 items from other studies. They are reaction, behavior, learning, and result. Eleven items scales were extracted to perceive the respondents' reaction. Four of them are from Pau (2001). Three items are from Al-Eisa, Furayyan, and Alhemoud (2009). One of the items is from Lin (2012). One item is from Barcala (2000). Other one is from Wilson (2000). The last one is constructed by Lin (2012). The Cronbach alpha value is 0.960.

Seven items were extracted to perceive the respondents' learning gained from the training. Two of them are from Al-Eisa et al. (2009), one item is obtained from Tai (2006), another item is from Price (2001), and three were created by Lin (2012).

Ten items were extracted from Lin (2012) to perceive the respondents' behavior change from the training. Two items are from Barcala (2000), 2 items are from Price (2001). 3 items are from Tai (2006), 2 items from (Wilson, 2000), an item from Barcala (2000), one item is from Price, (2001), and the last item is from Pau (2001).

Six items obtained from previous studies to measure the return on investment (result). Five items obtained from Barker (1997), one item obtained from Tai (2006), and one item constructed by Lin (2012). It was also indicated that all the items fulfilled the validity requirements.

### **5. Results**

Cronbach's alpha computation will show the level of respondents' agreement for each factor. Higher reliability is indicated by higher score, with an extent from 0 to 1. The majority of dimensions scored a reliability that is considered of high level. Specifically, values were greater than the cut-off value of 0.70 according to Pallant (2002). The lowest value was for trainer 0.870 (acceptable and higher than 0.7), while the social support has the highest value at 0.910. The revealed value for the dependent variable training effectiveness was satisfactory value of 0.960.

Statistics summary is provided in this section of the measure used to evaluate the relationship between the independent variables (trainer, social support) and dependent variable (training effectiveness). At first, the outcomes of the descriptive statistics along with the correlation analysis for both the independent and dependent variables will be demonstrated. Then, the multiple regression analysis will be demonstrated to statistically measure the extent of training antecedents to contribute to training effectiveness. Survey's items reliability is statistically confirmed using theoretical assessment.

#### **5.1. Descriptive Results**

According to the descriptive statistics data, the greater number of participants were male (58.6%) while 41.4% were female. This is against the ideas that say that female employees are always the bigger ratio of employees in the public sector. Age of the participants was distributed as follows: 20-29 years old (14.8%), 30-39 years old (54.7%), 40-49 years old (19.5), and 50 or older (10.9%). This shows that the majority of the participants seem to be middle aged and they will be productive for long years to come, not approaching retirement for a long period. This finding supports the need to improve the performance of this category considering they form the typical workforce in this sector. In term of participants' experience, the findings indicate that participants experience is divided in these categories: 5 years (12.5%), 6-10 (30.5%), 11-15

(26.6%), 16 -20 (8.6%), 21 or more (21.9%). The majority can still be considered in the beginning of the professional life where they are fresh, have primary experience, and will form a good category to be trained to obtain their peak performance from now on.

### 5.2. Correlation

The dimensions were found to have in accordance to the analysis a positive high value inter-item correlation. The correlation's result is displayed in Table 1 between the three elements, namely the correlations of trainer and social support were found to have a significant relationship with the training effectiveness at a 0.01 level. This confirms that both hypotheses H1 and H2 which assumed a positive relationship.

*Table 1. Correlation results*

|                               | <b>Trainer</b> | <b>Socail Support</b> | <b>Training Effectiveness</b> |
|-------------------------------|----------------|-----------------------|-------------------------------|
| <b>Trainer</b>                | 1              |                       |                               |
| <b>Socail Support</b>         | .423**         | 1                     |                               |
| <b>Training Effectiveness</b> | .546**         | .643**                | 1                             |

Note: \*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2tailed).

### 5.3. Regression Analysis

The findings provided in Table 2 of the multiple regression analysis evaluate the extent to which the antecedent's variables affect training effectiveness. These findings show that trainer and social support jointly contributed to the training effectiveness explaining a variance of .505 (50.5%) in training effectiveness. It shows that 50.5% of the variance in training effectiveness can be accounted by the predictor variables dimensions. Also, social support has the bigger effect on training effectiveness by a beta value of .502 over the effect of trainer which accounted for .334 in beta value.

*Table 2. Regression results dependent variable: Training effectiveness*

| <b>Variables</b>     | <b>Beta</b>   | <b>t-ratio</b> | <b>Sig. t</b> |
|----------------------|---------------|----------------|---------------|
| Trainer              | .334          | 4.533          | .000          |
| Social Support       | .502          | 6.805          | .000          |
| <b>RSquare</b>       | <b>.505</b>   |                |               |
| <b>F</b>             | <b>56.623</b> |                |               |
| <b>Sig.</b>          | <b>.000</b>   |                |               |
| <b>Durbin-Watson</b> | <b>1.844</b>  |                |               |

Note: N=114 \*p<.05 \*\* p<.01

## 6. Discussion

In this study, the research result shows that the trainer is positively and significantly related to an effective reaction. Therefore, the outcomes in this research are in agreement with the presented arguments favoring the positive relationship between the trainer and subsequent reactions (Griffin, 2014). It thus indicates in a practical manner that the trainee in the public sector in Bahrain is responsive and benefits to a greater extent to the trainer who is concerned about their individual and collective reaction.

Arguably, the findings of this study confirm other studies which state that social support from other surrounding parties like the supervisor or the family can increase the trainee's interests and reception of the new knowledge provided in the training. Employee's enhanced performance is generally influenced by the organization's interests and awareness of the proper effective treatment and support given to its employees. The organization and its people have the ability to apply a general supportive atmosphere to maximize the productivity and distinguish itself from others. Many other features can be accomplished using such strategies to benefit all parties involved; the organization, the management, the staff, and the beneficiaries or clients. This statement is parallel with previous studies that viewed social support as having a positive relationship with training effectiveness, such as Chiaburu et al. (2010), Raza et al. (2014), and Punia and Saharan (2012).

The above-mentioned justifications are theoretically in line with the results and other literatures that have been discussed earlier supporting the importance of the social support to establish the willingness of the trainee to favor the main purpose behind the training. Although according to the level of effect of other factors in charge of the training process, and the trainee's level of interests and motivation, the aforementioned

antecedent factor can have more or less influence on the training effectiveness compared to the other factors, which has also been supported in the findings of this research. It was indicated that the social support was the most effective factor in this study. However, unlike the trainer, which was still effective, it was the least effective among the study's individual variables.

Finally, the outcomes also indicate that social support also has a positive statistically significant relationship with the training effectiveness, supporting hypothesis H2. In other words, the overall productivity level in any sector and type of organization is in relationship with the extent and nature of the available social support obtained by the employee. If there is a higher level of social support provided, it will result in a higher level of training effectiveness. Hence, it is observed that in a socially supported work environment, individuals play an effective function in contributing to improve the functionality and quality of the organization by many methods like the improvement of the training effectiveness level. Their role can be further enhanced and they can help the organization to succeed through exchanging support and care between both parties.

## 7. Conclusion

This study explored the influence of training antecedents on the training effectiveness, using clerks and supervisors' employees of the public sector to subjectively examine the dimensions of significance of the training antecedents identified in this study. The concluded results highlighted above have indicated that training antecedents significantly influence training performance, therefore, supports the need for training and HR practitioner to pay attention to these training antecedents. This will assist them towards reaching a competitive advantage. Various concerns are not explored in this study. Therefore, further investigation is necessary. Also, in despite of the fact that there were several limitations in this study and room for further expansion, its outcomes still have their own importance. For example, one of those limits is the small number of participants forming the sample of the study. Although with the comparatively limited samples of 128 participants in the public sector, it acts as an obstacle to generalize the findings. However, further researches are required to enlarge the size of sample, in addition to broaden the scope to include other contexts such as the training environment, trainee motivation, and training material.

These findings can also be of interests to other organizations in the same or different sector. Outcomes can also be utilised to measure other sort of training programmes or the same programme in other countries. In addition, during searching and inspecting relevant literatures on training antecedents and training effectiveness, it is essential to indicate that almost all of the previous studies focused their antecedents exist within the training venue, such as the training material and training environment, and did not give attention to antecedents that exists outside the training venue, such as the social support. Above all, previous studies were mostly conducted in Asian and Western settings.

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