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The Impact of Training on Employee Performance in a Selected Apparel Sector Organization in Sri Lanka

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Abstract- The success of any organization depends considerably on the standard of its human capital. Training is a more powerful weapon among Human Resource Management practices, which helps to develop knowledge and skills of employees in an organization. The objective of the study was to investigate the impact of training on operational level employees' performance in a selected apparel organization in Sri Lanka. Through the analysis of 60 responses of randomly selected sample of machine operators; it shows that there is a strong, positive and significant relationship between training and performance with the correlation value of 0.817. The result of regression analysis indicates that there is a significant positive impact of training content and operational factors on employee performance. Upgrading the training content and identifying the training requirements specifically with a proper training duration are some of the recommendations that the researchers are suggesting improving employee performance.

Keywords: training content, operational factors, employee performance.

I. INTRODUCTION

a) Background of the Study

Employees are considered as the most valuable asset of every organization because the success or failure of any organization is mainly supported by its employees' performance. Employees are required in organizations because their competencies can fulfill a particular role in a company. Either skilled employees are recruited, or they are developed in organizations with training programs. Every single industry is coping with activities that are used in attaining their standard. It had been revealed in various studies that there are sound associations between training practices and distinct measures of worker performance (Niazi, 2011). According to Sultana, et al. (2012) performance is the achievement of set targets in terms of expected standards of accuracy, completeness, cost and speed. Training requirements of a particular employee cannot exactly be the same for another employee, because for those who have low qualifications need extensive trainings and high motivation to be able to work with those who have high qualifications (Newton, 2006).

Therefore, it is very essential for organizations to offer systematic training and career development programs for their employees because they are the ones who make up the organization.

b) Problem Statement

The training process has always been useful for the apparel industry, since there has been a constant impact of training over the organizations showing their culture as being socially responsible. The selected organization is an apparel manufacture that was established in the early 1900s and belongs to a group of companies which is a global business with 60,000+ associates and a diversified footprint that spans multiple industry sectors. Even though, the selected company is spending large amount of money to train machine operators as they are the key resource of the organization, who contribute a lot to achieve success of the organization, the observations had in the organization show that trainings are given for individuals, without identifying gaps between their actual performance and desired level of performance, which means employees take trainings that are not related with their work. Furthermore, management is facing difficulty in delivering the orders on time to the customers when their employees could not meet production targets and due to the quality defects identified in garments. Therefore, it has become a problem to the organization whether their trainings have an impact over employee performance. Although, many studies were carried out on the impact of training on employee performance in the organization, not enough research had been conducted in apparel sector in Sri Lanka to provide empirical support for investigating impact of training on employee performance among machine operators. This shows that there is a gap in empirical knowledge in that area. Therefore, the main problem in this study is to what extent training impact over employee performance in the selected apparel organization.

c) Significance of the study

The apparel industry in Sri Lanka plays an important role in the economic system of the country as it is one of the largest contributors to the growth of Sri Lankan economy. Since the selected organization is also an apparel manufacturer, this research study will be important to the management and executives to understand the importance of training programs and also enable them to structure their training programs to make them more effective in terms of helping to improve the efficiency of the workforce and lead to better

performance. Furthermore, this will help HR managers to develop appropriate training strategies for their operational level employees. Moreover, the research findings can be used as a tool for performance evaluation and reward management of operational level employees in the organization.

d) Objectives of the Study

General objective

- To investigate the impact of training on performance of operational level employees in the selected apparel organization.

Specific objectives

- To identify the impact of training content on performance of operational level employees in the selected apparel organization.
- To identify the impact of operational factors on performance of operational level employees in the selected apparel organization.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

a) Training

Training and development function is one of those HRM functions that involves in improving employee abilities. Some employments and designations are redundant and surplus in organizations due the newest technologies that have taken place. Due to that there is a need of highly skilled people in organizations and employees need to be skilled and trained in order to secure their employment in the future. Training has been defined by various scholars in different ways. In the era of 1960 to 1969, many authors have defined training as a process to improve job related skills, knowledge in order to adequately perform present job by an employee. For an example Becker (1962) defined training as an investment which raises the productivity of employees (Somasundaram & Egan, 2004). In that case, they did not consider training as a learning tool which makes relatively permanent change in employee's behavior. After 1970, many authors defined training as a systematic process to provide learnings to employees as well as a tool to modify employee behavior. Campbell, Dunnette, Lawler & Weich (1970) defined training as a planned learning process that designed to make a permanent change in employee skills, knowledge and attitudes (Somasundaram & Egan, 2004). In 1985, Training was defined by Holder (1985) as "a process of learning to improve job performance that is directly related to a particular job" (Somasundaram & Egan, 2004). However, when it comes to more recent definition on training, according to Hassan, et al. (2013) training is a planned process which is designed to improve individuals' job performance. According to Kulkarni (2013) training is a kind of nerve that helps to fluent and smooth functioning of work that in return improves the

quality of work life of employees and organizational development. To survive in the competitive market successfully, training plays a significant role as a tool which helps organizations to gain competitive advantage. Trainings improve the ability of workforce to perform the jobs with excellence (Kulkarni, 2013).

b) Dimensions of Training

Even through, there are many training dimensions; researcher has identified two basic training dimensions from past literature. These two dimensions are training content and operational factors.

c) Training Content

According to Opatha(2009) training content can be defined as all the things that are considered to be covered through a training program. According to Cheng & Waldenberger (2013) training content is the work-related knowledge and skills that are going to be gained through participate in training program. Researcher uses the definition of training content of Cheng & Waldenberger (2013) and specific skills, general skills and relevance as the indicators of training content for this research study.

Specific skills: Specific skills are defined as the job specific skills that are important for the performance and company specific norms and regulations that facilitate to smooth functioning within the organization (Chen 2005 cited in Cheng & Weldenberger 2013).

General skill: General skills are the skills that need to improve the employability of the employees (Baruch 2001 cited in Cheng & Weldenberger 2013).

Relevance: Relevance can be defined as relatedness of something to a particular situation or to a person or its importance in that situation or to that person (Collinsdictionary, n.d.). In this research study, relevancy is defined as the extent to which training content meet trainees' expectation in their career.

d) Operational Factors

Operational factors include design, organization and implementation of training like training provider, time duration, length, support and so on (Cheng & Waldenberger, 2013). According to Colquitt et al, 2000 cited in Cheng & Waldenberger 2013, operation of training has impact on trainees' reaction and behavior. Further, it is identified that trainees are expecting qualified trainers and highly reputed training providers (Gan & Colleagues 2009 cited in Cheng & Waldenberger 2013). In this research study, trainer's support and duration of training are used as indicators of operational factors.

Trainer's support: According to Opatha (2009) trainers are the people who are going to provide trainings to trainees. They should be experts in relevant field and that expertise knowledge should be acquired through training, education and experience (Opatha, 2009).

According to Cheng & Waldenberger (2013), trainees are expecting highly qualified and reputed training providers. Trainer should have both strong educational background and extensive practical experience (Cheng & Waldenberger, 2013).

Duration of training: According to Opatha (2009) time duration of training refers to particular dates or hours of training sessions. Past literature reveals that a reasonable period of training is expected by trainees (Mumford et al. 1988 cited in Cheng & Waldenberger 2013).

e) *Employee Performance*

Organizations have understood that they have to develop distinctive dynamic characteristics that empower their competitive advantages in order to survive in this everchanging business environment. The way employees perform their role directly or indirectly can have an impact on success or failure of any organization as it ultimately reflects the organizational performance. Sultana, et al. (2012), has outlined performance as; "the accomplishment of specific targets measured against preset standards or expected level of accuracy and completeness". When employees have performed their tasks up to the required standard they can be considered as good performers (Sultana, et al., 2012). As Brown 2008 cited in Sila 2014 performance is how well someone completes a particular task and additionally the perception with which he/she completes that task. According to Sila (2014), job performance can be defined in terms of quantifiable outcomes of work behaviors such as amount of sales, numbers sold and also in terms of behavioral dimensions. As Baldwin 2008 cited in Sila 2014 performance is about generating actions or behaviors effectively to meet the set targets. According to all above definitions, employee performance means the accomplishment of a given task measured against present known standards of accuracy, competency, cost and speed.

f) *Dimensions of Employee Performance*

The researcher used efficiency, effectiveness, and speed as the dimensions of employee performance.

g) *Efficiency*

Efficiency can be defined as the comparison of what is actually produced or performed with what can be achieved with the same consumption of resources (money, time, labor, etc.). It is an important factor in determination of productivity (Businessdictionary, n.d.). The quantity of work would be the indicator of efficiency in this research.

Quantity of work: Quantity is the amount that you can measure or count (Collinsdictionary, n.d.). Therefore, the quantity of work is the amount of work produced or the volume of work completed by an employee in an

organization. It recognises the hard-working employees in an organization.

h) *Effectiveness*

Effectiveness can be defined as the degree to which objectives are achieved and the extent to which targeted problems are solved. In contrast to efficiency, effectiveness is determined without reference to costs and, whereas efficiency means "doing the thing right," effectiveness means "doing the right thing" (Businessdictionary, n.d.). The quality of work is used as the indicator of effectiveness.

Quality of work: The quality of work refers to the produced work in terms of standards, errors, waste and rework and it recognises employees who produce quality work, work which meets standards and work with few errors or mistakes.

i) *Speed*

Speed is a measure of how fast something is moving. The average speed of an object in a certain time is the distance the object travelled divided by the time. Speed is also the distance covered by an object per unit time. The researcher used timelines of work as the indicator of speed.

Timelines of work: Timelines of work refers to the timely delivery of work in terms of schedules, meeting deadlines, etc. and it recognises employees who produce work on-time and meet deadlines.

j) *Relationship between Training and Employee Performance*

The information from previous studies has revealed that there is a positive relationship between training and employee performance. Therefore, training plays an importance role in improving quality of employees directly and effects on organizational performance through HR outcomes. The aim of training is to maximize employees learning of new skill, knowledge, attitudes and behaviors to cope with the demand of dynamic business environments. These principles of employee training contribute to the overall organizational development which is a significant reason for organizations to encourage and promote this important human resource management function. In every organization there are some expected performances from its employees. Moreover, when they perform up to that expected standards and meet organizational standards, they are believed good performers (Sultana, et al., 2012). The study Ahmad, et al. (2014) also reveals that a sound association exists between training and employee performance. It is also believed that to achieve the organizational goals, employee performance is important and it depends on a variety of factors but training receives high importance as it improves the skills, capabilities, confidence and competencies (Ahmad, et al., 2014). According to

Benedicta & Appiah 2010 cited in Sultana, et al. 2012, there is a positive relationship between training and employee performance because training generates benefits for both employee and the organization with the positive influence through the enhancement of knowledge, skills and behaviors. Even though employee

performance depends on various factors, training is the most important fact that impacts performance because it increases individual's skills and competencies (Khan, et al., 2011). The conclusion results of Khan, et al. (2011) shows that training and development have a positive impact on organizational performance.

III. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The conceptual framework of this study is shown below.

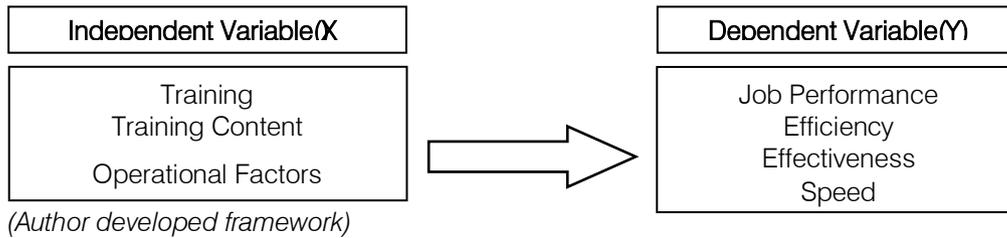


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Below are the developed hypotheses for the study.

- H1_a: There is a significant relationship between 'Training Content' and 'Employee Performance'.
- H1_o: There is no significant relationship between 'Training Content' and 'Employee Performance'.
- H2_a: There is a significant relationship between 'Operational Factors' and 'Employee Performance'.
- H2_o: There is no significant relationship between 'Operational Factors' and 'Employee Performance'.
- H3_a: There is a significant relationship between 'Training' and 'Employee Performance'.
- H3_o: There is no significant relationship between 'Training' and 'Employee Performance'.
- H4_a: 'Training' has a significant impact on 'Employee Performance'.
- H4_o: 'Training' has no significant impact on 'Employee Performance'.

IV. METHODOLOGY

The research was conducted with a deductive approach by studying the relevant theories applicable for the area of interest. The data gathering was conducted mainly by referring to primary data. A quantitative approach was mainly applied in this study and the research strategy adopted was 'survey'. This study was cross-sectional in nature since it was conducted during the year 2019 and 2020, and the respective findings were discussed based on the data collected at that point of time. SPSS version 22 was used for the data analysis in arriving at the results and the interpretations.

The target population of the study was 150 of machine operators attached to the "Sample Development Department" in this selected apparel organization in Sri Lanka. From that population of 150, the researcher selected only 100 employees in order to carry out the study ($n/N \times 100\% > 150 \times 30\%$) in which only 60 responses were returned. Depending on the

nature of the research and the facilities available, the questionnaire method was used to collect primary data. Apart from the five main questions relating demographic factors, this research instrument includes fifteen questions under Training and seven questions under employee performance. Each question was measured with a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5.

V. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

a) Reliability of research instrument

The reliability of the questionnaire was measured by calculating Cronbach's Alpha Value through SPSS. Cronbach's Alpha is a reliability coefficient which indicates how well items in an instrument are positively correlated to one another (Sekaran, 2003). According to Sekaran (2003) an alpha of 0.7 or above is considered to be reliable in the research study. As shown below Table 1, the Cronbach's Alpha Value of this research questionnaire is higher than 0.7 which means the questionnaire used to gather data is valid.

Table 1: Reliability Test

Reliability Statistics		
Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.906	.907	22

b) Descriptive Analysis

Below Table 2 displays the profile of the participants within the sample. In terms of gender, the majority of the study participants were females (60%) and the age of the most participants ranged from 31 to 40 years representing 46.7% of the total sample. Majority of respondents possessed ordinary level examination as their highest educational qualification and only 8 from the total sample have done extra

courses other than their O/L and A/Ls and it represents 13.3%. When considering the marital status of respondents, most of them are married and it represents

61.7% of the total sample. According to the findings, majority of the sample have above 3 years' experience, which is 45% of the total respondents.

Table 2: Descriptive Summary of Machine Operators

	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Female	36	60%
Male	24	40%
Age		
20 and Below	1	1.7%
21- 30	25	41.7%
31- 40	28	46.7%
41 and Above	6	10%
Education Level		
Below Grade 11	5	8.3%
O/L	27	45%
A/L	20	33.3%
Courses	8	13.3%
Marital status		
Unmarried	23	38.3%
Married	37	61.7%
Experience		
Below 6 months	3	5%
6 months - 1 year	3	5%
1 - 2 years	12	20%
2 - 3 years	15	25%
Above 3 years	27	45%

c) Correlation Analysis

The Pearson correlation has been adopted in this study to identify whether there is a significant

relationship between the variables as explained in the Conceptual Framework.

Table 3: Correlation between 'Training Content' and 'Employee Performance'.

		Training Content	Performance
Training Content	Pearson Correlation	1	.748**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	60	60
Performance	Pearson Correlation	.748**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	60	60

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

According to the correlation analysis carried out in SPSS and shown in Table 3, the level of significance between the variables is 0.000 which is less than the significance level of 0.01, thus alternative hypothesis

could accept (H1_a) and reject the null hypothesis (H1₀). Furthermore, it shows that there is a strong positive relationship between two variables of training content and performance with the correlation value of 0.748.

Table 4: Correlation between 'Operational Factors' and 'Employee Performance'.

		Operational Factors	Performance
Operational Factors	Pearson Correlation	1	.719**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	60	60
Performance	Pearson Correlation	.719**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	60	60

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

According to the correlation analysis carried out in SPSS and shown in Table 4, the level of significance is 0.000 which is less than the significance level of 0.01, thus alternative hypothesis could accept (H2_a) and reject

the null hypothesis (H2₀). This further shows that, there is a strong positive relationship between two variables of operational factors and performance with the correlation value of 0.719.

Table 5: Correlation between 'Training' and 'Employee Performance'.

		Training	Performance
Training	Pearson Correlation	1	.819**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	60	60
Performance	Pearson Correlation	.819**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	60	60

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

According to the correlation analysis carried out in SPSS and shown in Table 5, the level of significance is 0.000 which is less than the significance level of 0.01, thus alternative hypothesis could accept (H3_a) and reject the null hypothesis (H3₀). Moreover, it shows that the correlation value between two variables of training and performance is 0.819. This depicts that there is a strong

positive relationship between two variables of training and performance with the correlation value of 0.819.

d) Regression Analysis

The simple regression analysis was made to determine the functional relationship between the dependent variable, employee performance and independent variable, training.

Table 6: Model Summary

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.819 ^a	.671	.666	.33586

a. Predictors: (Constant), Training

As depicted in Table 6, the R square value of 0.671 indicates the proportion of dependent variable (employee performance) that is explained by the independent variable (training). Therefore, 67.1% of

operational level employees' performance in the selected apparel organization can be explained by the variable of training, while the remaining 32.9% are described by other factors.

Table 7: Regression analysis- ANOVA

ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	13.355	1	13.355	118.396	.000 ^b
	Residual	6.543	58	.113		
	Total	19.898	59			

a. Dependent Variable: Performance
b. Predictors: (Constant), Training

The above Table 7 determines whether the predictor variables of the study account for significant variance in the outcome variable (dependent variable). Accordingly, the significant value is less than 0.01 and it

demonstrate that there is a significant variance between predictor (Training) and the dependent variable (Employee Performance).

Table 8: Regression analysis- Coefficients

Coefficients ^a						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.434	.311		1.396	.168
	Training	.905	.083	.819	10.881	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Performance

The above Table 8 demonstrates the coefficient of predictor variable (Training) consisting the 'Training Content' and 'Operational Factors' as dimensions. The fourth hypothesis was to test whether 'Training' has a significant impact on 'Employee Performance' under the significance level of 0.01. Accordingly, significant value for Training is 0.000 which is less than 0.01 (Sig = 0.000 < 0.01) thus, accepting (H_{4a}). This indicates that Training impacted on Employee Performance. According to the above table, unstandardized coefficient has been considered as the data taken from a common scale and resulted in B=0.905. This represents when the training increases by one unit, the employee performance expected to increase by 0.905 units.

Therefore, the regression equation of employee performance is,

$$\text{Employee Performance} = 0.434 + 0.905 (\text{Training}) + \varepsilon$$

e) *Discussion and Managerial Implications*

According to the results it was found that there is a strong positive relationship between training and employee performance among the selected sample. The correlation between the two variables, training (IV) and performance (DV) was 0.819 which was significant at 0.000 level. This correlation was found to be strong as it is more than the lower bound of strong correlation (0.7). The regression analysis showed that there is a strong impact of training on employee performance in the sample. The R Square value indicates how much of the total variation in the dependent variable, employee performance, can be explained by the independent variable, training which is 67.1%.

The findings of correlation and regression analysis empirically confirm the arguments given by previous authors like Sultana, et al. (2012) and Khan, et al. (2011). The results of study carried out in the telecommunication sector in Pakistan by Sultana, et al. (2012) showed that there is a positive relationship between the two variables of training and performance with 0.508 of correlation value and also training had accounted 50.1% of variation in the performance of their study sample. Khan, et al. (2011) had also identified a positive impact of training and development on organizational performance in their study. They have considered training and development, on the job training, training design and delivery system as independent variable while organizational performance as dependent variable. According to Ahmad and Sahajud-din (2009) cited in Khan, et al. (2011) training and development increase performance of employees. They have proved it though research on training and development is the best way to improve performance in health sector organization. According to above empirical findings, training helps organizations to improve the performance of employees not only in apparel sector but in other industries as well.

As some employees are not satisfied with the present content of the training (specific skills, general skills and relevance) and identification of training needs are important, the management should first identify the training needs of employees before planning the training program, and then they should maintain a skill inventory and ensure that it is up to date at least on a quarterly basis. It is also identified that some employees are not satisfied with the current operational factors like trainer's support and duration of their trainings. The line managers should understand the importance of training and let their subordinates participate in trainings. Therefore, the management must pay attention on these factors in order to provide effective trainings. The majority of employees took training once or twice. Training should be conducted on continuous bases for employees of the organization so as to make them competent in this challenging environment. It is important for the selected apparel organization to understand that training is not having an impact only on employee performance but on a firm's overall performance. Hence, management should be a willingness to spend in employee trainings with the understanding of that it is an investment that will bring you good returns.

VI. CONCLUSION

Offering systematic trainings and career development programs for the employees is a key responsibility of all organizations since employees are the ones who drive the organizations. The training process has always been beneficial for apparel industries as they mainly depend on the labor-intensive processes. The research was aimed to investigate whether there is an impact of training over operational level employees' performance in the selected apparel organization. Based on the theoretical information, a conceptual framework was developed to test the impact of training on employee performance. The results of empirical study discovered that training has a positive impact on performance of operational level employees at the selected apparel organization. The findings of this research study shall be important for the practical scenarios in the organization as well as for further studies. This study focused only on the training content and operational factors as the dimensions of training. Therefore, there is a scope for other researchers to study the other aspects of trainings and their influence on performance on the same or different sectors. Further research can also be carried out to identify other factors that may affect the employee performance which are not studied yet.

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