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Drivers and Outcome of Motivation to Improve Work Through Learning: Evident from South East Asia

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Drivers and Outcome of Motivation to Improve Work Through Learning: Evident from South East Asia

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Abstract

Research Aims: This study aims to examine the influence of social support on training transfer and investigate the mediating effect motivation to improve work through learning has on this relationship.

Design/Methodology/Approach: This study used a quantitative design, utilising a cross-sectional survey via self-administered questionnaires, with experienced firefighters as respondents. Out of the 500 questionnaires received, 395 were valid responses and were further analysed using statistical analyses, such as confirmatory factor analysis and structural equation modelling.

Research Findings: While peer support is a strong driver of training transfer, supervisor support has no significant influence on training transfer. Also, motivation to improve work through learning mediates the effect of social support on training transfer. Ample support from supervisors and peers to employees at work enhances employees' motivation to improve work through learning and leads to applying the acquired knowledge, skills and abilities.

Theoretical Contribution/Originality: This study provides evidence that human resource administrators should enhance the social support provided to employees to ensure that the new knowledge, skills and abilities acquired via training programmes are utilised on the job.

Managerial Implications in the South East Asian Context: Social support is critical in public or private organisations. Adequate support to employees is needed to enable employees to benefit from the newly acquired knowledge, skills and attitudes gained through training. However, social support alone is insufficient without considering employees' motivation to improve performance. Employees' motivation to improve work through learning must be emphasised when promoting positive training transfer in organisations.

Research Limitation & Implications: The cross-sectional approach and single informant limit the generalisability of the findings. Since the present study sample was drawn from one country and a single organisation, future studies could replicate the research in other countries and various organisation types to enrich the findings.

Keywords: social support, supervisor support, motivation to improve work through learning, training transfer

INTRODUCTION

Training is essential in an organisation to support employees' continuous improvement and professional development so as to meet the organisation's objectives (Fuchs, 2021). In the context of critical organisations and hazardous work environments, training is vital to improve the knowledge, skills and abilities (KSA) of employees. This helps not only in saving lives and properties but is also of utmost importance in protecting employees from life-threatening injuries or death during rescue work.

The training literature demonstrates that the amount of KSA applied in the workplace was inadequate despite the enormous investment in training made by organisations (Hughes et al., 2020; Kim et al., 2019; Wirdani & Wulansari, 2019). Scholars have referred to this situation as the 'training transfer' problem in the workplace (Baldwin & Ford, 1988; Tekleab et al., 2005). Training transfer refers to the degree to which employees effectively apply, generalise and maintain the newly acquired KSA gained through training programmes to the job context (Baldwin et al., 2017; Blume et al., 2019). Due to training transfer problems, the effect of training and development on employees' performance is unsatisfactory (Creon & Schermuly, 2021).

Various studies have been done to realise the issue of training transfer in organisations. Ever since Baldwin and Ford (1988) first grouped the antecedents of training transfer into three broad categories (trainee characteristics, training design and work environment), social support has gradually become the centre of research within the area of training transfer in the work environment. Scholars have found that social support is imperative to employees, as it moulds employees' behaviours and perceptions before and after attending training programmes (Muduli & Raval, 2018; Yaghi & Bates, 2020). Social support refers to the extent to which employees perceive support for their work tasks in the workplace (Hutchins & Burke, 2007). The significant feeling of being valued in the organisation and beliefs about how much others care about an individual at work plays an important role in determining employees' contributions to the

organisation (Blume et al., 2010). A number of studies have investigated the role of supervisor and peer support in the transfer of training benefits (Ng & Ahmad, 2018; Park et al., 2018; Reinhold et al., 2018). However, due to the various constructs and dimensions investigated by researchers, inconsistent findings were discovered.

Early studies in the training literature found that social support influenced employees' outcomes. Strong social support in the workplace resulted in two types of employee outcomes: enhanced employee motivation and training transfer within the organisation (Ismail et al., 2018; Jackson et al., 2018; Kodwani, 2017; Na-nan et al., 2017; Singh, 2017). Employees are the most important assets of an organisation. Therefore, employees' motivation, such as achievement motivation, contribute significantly to organisational performance (Tanjung & Musa, 2021).

Apart from the direct link concerning social support and training transfer, existing studies have also identified a possible connecting mechanism that links these two constructs. Various motivation constructs have been explored, such as motivation to learn (Suhepi & Syah, 2018) and motivation to transfer (Homklin et al., 2013). However, we still have scant knowledge about the employee motivation construct such as motivation to improve work through learning (MTIWL; Ng & Ahmad, 2018). Scholars believe that all existing employee motivation constructs are not comprehensive enough to represent employees' desire to learn and improve their job performance (Ng & Ahmad, 2018).

To encourage employees to further improve their performance willingly, MTIWL, when coupled with social support from organisational stakeholders, is the most appropriate construct to be investigated in the training transfer model (Alvelos et al., 2015; Ng & Ahmad, 2018). Specifically, the existing research has neglected the role of MTIWL as a mediating variable, despite the fact that this construct is more logical, relevant and comprehensive in assessing employees' desire to improve their work performance in the workplace (Ng & Ahmad, 2018).

The context of this study is the Fire and Rescue Department in Malaysia. As one of the organisational challenges, a training transfer problem would affect the mission of the Fire and Rescue Department to achieve two major national agendas: 1) improve the rate of attending to emergency calls and 2) reduce the national average response time, which currently stands at 11.59 minutes (Fire and Rescue Department of Malaysia, 2020).

The present study aimed to investigate the relationship between social support, namely, supervisor support and peer support and training transfer. In addition, the present study also aimed to examine the mediating role of employees' MTIWL. Therefore, the present study raises the following

research questions. First, does social support influence training transfer? Second, does MTIWL influence training transfer? Finally, does MTIWL mediate the relationship between social support and training transfer?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Supervisor Support

Supervisor support refers to support extended from supervisors to their subordinates, such as facilitation and moral support (Tracey & Tews, 2005). The supervisor's role in an organisation is crucial to motivate employees to apply their new knowledge, skills and abilities to the job so as to improve their performance (Holton et al., 2000; Nijman et al., 2006; Tracey & Tews, 2005). As an immediate superior, the supervisor is responsible for empowering employees and providing them with the necessary aids, including positive support for the use of learning on the job (Yaghi & Bates, 2020). Supervisors provide two types of support: facilitation and moral support (Govaerts et al., 2018; Lancaster et al., 2012; Wei Tian et al., 2016). In terms of facilitation, supervisors demonstrate, guide and provide feedback and advice to subordinates to help them perform their tasks effectively and efficiently to meet the organisation's goals. When supervisors guide and provide proper direction and facilitation, employees feel confident in carrying out their responsibilities, and this situation motivates employees to learn continuously to excel in their job functions (Bjerregaard et al., 2016; Dirani, 2017). Previous studies have provided evidence that supervisor support essentially serves as the determinant of employee outcomes, namely MTIWL (Ismail et al., 2018; Ng & Ahmad, 2018) and training transfer in organisations (Reinhold et al., 2018).

Peer Support

Peer support relates to assistance extended to employees by their co-workers in reinforcing and supporting the application of newly acquired KSA to the job (Ha & Vanaphuti, 2021; Salamon et al., 2022). Peers provide prominent social support to co-workers to meet challenging job demands at work. Many scholars have agreed that peers provide fellow employees with two important types of assistance: facilitation and moral support (Baldwin & Ford, 1988; Blanchard & Thacker, 2004; Noe, 1986). In terms of facilitation, employees and their peers would frequently review and share their newly obtained KSA with each other. When employees have a mutual understanding of the best practices for performing their jobs, they are keen to learn new ways and practice them at the workplace to maintain the group's standards and norms (Reinhold et al., 2018).

Regarding moral support, peers inspire, advise, praise and share personal life experiences with their colleagues to overcome job stress (Malek et al., 2010) and unhealthy working relationships in the workplace (Ibrahim et al., 2017). When employees receive ample support from their peers, they are willing to learn new KSA and are motivated to apply them to the job to help each other improve job performance. Existing research has discovered that peer support is another essential predictor of employee outcomes in organisations (Ismail et al., 2018; Khan et al., 2014; Muthoni & Miir, 2016; Reinhold et al., 2018).

Motivation to Improve Work Through Learning

MTIWL refers to employees' motivation to improve work performance by engaging in training or learning activities with a strong purpose to utilise the newly obtained KSA in the existing job setting by performing job functions differently (Naquin & Holton, 2003; Ng & Ahmad, 2018). Scholars have agreed that MTIWL is the enrichment of a typical employee motivation construct that comprises two major important employee motivation elements: motivation to learn and motivation to transfer (Naquin & Holton, 2003; Ng & Ahmad, 2018). Motivation to learn implies an employee's aspiration to learn the subjects of training and development (Noe, 1986), whereas motivation to transfer refers to the intended effort towards utilising the newly acquired KSA obtained in a training environment to a real work situation (Naquin & Holton, 2003). MTIWL is crucially differentiated from other employee motivation constructs due to various employees' learning behaviours and intentions during training programmes. MTIWL emphasises employees' desire to improve their work outcomes rather than focusing on effective learning only (Ng & Ahmad, 2018).

Previous studies have found that MTIWL influences social support, leading to desirable training transfers in organisations (Ismail et al., 2008; Ismail et al., 2015; Lochter et al., 2013; Wen & Lin, 2014; Zainol et al., 2016). In addition, previous studies have also found that MTIWL is a determinant of training transfer (Bauer et al., 2016; Gegenfurtner, 2013; Gegenfurtner et al., 2009; Gegenfurtner et al., 2010). Furthermore, studies have found that MTIWL is an essential mediator of the association between social support and training transfer (Ng & Ahmad, 2018; Seiberling & Kauffeld, 2017).

Training Transfer

Training transfer refers to the capability of employees to initiate, generalise and maintain the learning acquired through training programmes in the job context (Baldwin & Ford, 1988; Blume et al., 2010). Training transfer contains three important elements: transfer initiation, transfer generalisation and transfer maintenance (Baldwin & Ford, 1988; Ford, 1990; Foxon,

1993; Laker, 1990; Powell, 2009). Transfer initiation relates to the extent to which employees initiate or attempt to apply newly acquired KSA to the job (Laker, 1990). Transfer generalisation is the extent to which the newly acquired KSA fit different settings, people and/or situations from those that were trained (Blume et al., 2010). Transfer maintenance involves the continuing use of newly acquired skills or capabilities over time (Colquitt et al., 2000). The findings of recent studies reveal that training transfer is a crucial outcome of social support and MTIWL in organisations (Islam & Ahmed, 2018; Park et al., 2018).

Conceptual Framework and Research Hypotheses

Based on the literature review, we develop a conceptual framework for the present study (Figure 1).

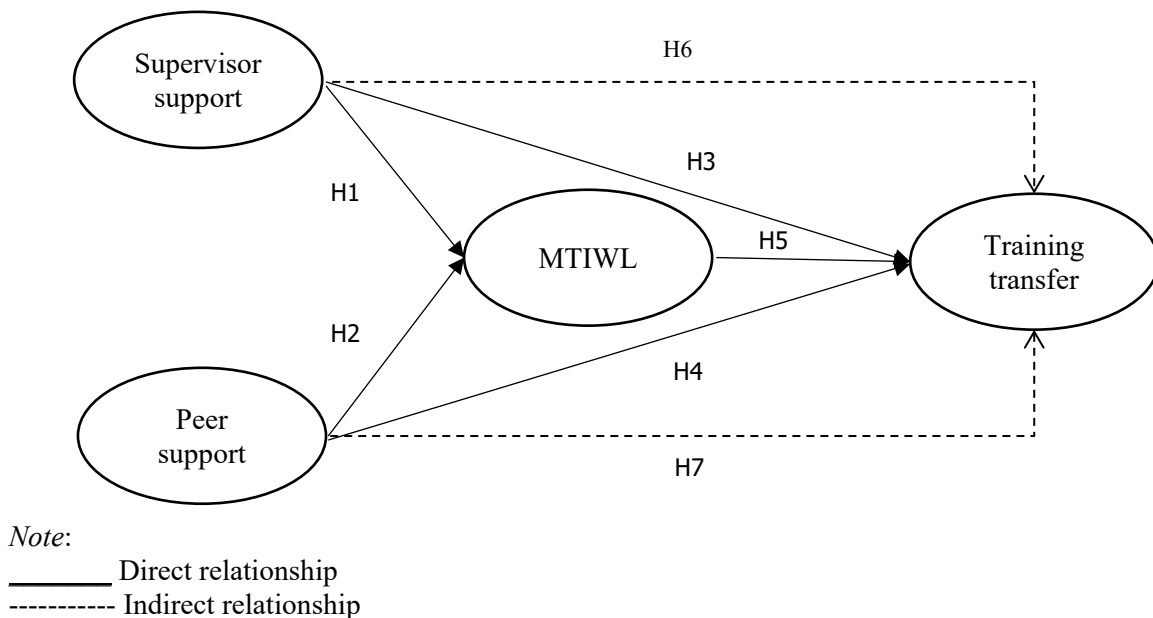


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

Social Support as a Determinant of MTIWL

The social exchange theory underpins the role of social support as a determinant of MTIWL (Blau, 2017), which posits that whenever employees receive adequate social support in the workplace, they reciprocate the kindness with good behaviours. This mutuality instilled motivation among employees aims to please supporters by showing improvement at work and therefore gain more KSA through training. From the perspective of training transfer, social support at the workplace is obtained from supervisors and peers. The willingness of supervisors and peers to support employees at the workplace enhances employees' MTIWL (Freitas et al., 2019; Hughes et al., 2020). Employees feel appreciated and are more enthusiastic to perform tasks and participate/provide full cooperation when working in teams. Assistance from

supervisors and peers enhances employee motivation. Thus, this study proposes the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: There is a positive relationship between supervisor support and MTIWL.

Hypothesis 2: There is a positive relationship between peer support and MTIWL.

Social Support as a Determinant of Training Transfer

Social support has a role in determining training transfer and this was based on the notion of Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1969). This theory posits that individuals learn through observing, modelling and imitating the behaviours, abilities and emotional reactions of others. Behaviour is acquired from the environment via observational learning procedure. Supervisors and peers encourage employees' participation in training activities as well as assist trainees to apply the skills that they have learned in the job to improve job performance.

Supervisors set reasonable goals and deliver constructive feedback to subordinates to maintain employees' performance at work. In addition, supervisors assist employees with other job needs (Ismail et al., 2018). However, peers demonstrate the right way to perform tasks and appreciate and praise each other in the workplace. Peers frequently become role models for their co-workers. Employees feel appreciated and more enthusiastic about performing tasks based on newly acquired KSA, and, as a result, their performance enhances.

A few empirical studies have provided evidence supporting the interaction between social support and training transfer. Reinhold et al. (2018) discovered that supervisors' feedback and coaching were the significant predictors of training transfer. Among other variables, Reinhold et al. (2018) argued that supervisors' support was the most influential social support factor that affected the smooth application of knowledge into an organisation. Existing studies also found that peers' readiness to assist employees with moral support and instrumental support (e.g. help and guidance) motivated employees to improve their job performance by utilising the newly acquired KSA. This situation has led to enhanced training transfer in organisations (Arefin & Islam, 2019; Freitas et al., 2019; Na-nan et al., 2017). Based on the above discussion, the following hypotheses are proposed:

Hypothesis 3: There is a positive relationship between supervisor support and training transfer.

Hypothesis 4: There is a positive relationship between peer support and training transfer.

MTIWL as a Factor in Training Transfer

MTIWL as a factor of training transfer is consistent with Ryan and Deci's (2000) self-determination theory. This theory considers employees' internal motivation, self-regulation and well-being and how they encourage employees to make choices without external influence and interference. The application of this theory in training literature has demonstrated that when employees have internal motivation to do something, they choose behaviours that favour their surroundings. In a training transfer study, employees who possessed high motivation chose to apply and share the newly acquired KSA and demonstrate to others new ways of performing tasks without being asked (Ng & Ahmad, 2018). Consequently, as the new KSA was utilised, it helped employees improve their performance at work by practising the most effective and efficient ways of performing their current tasks (Ng & Ahmad, 2018).

Previous studies have documented how MTIWL influences training transfer in an organisation. Suhepi (2018) studied a sample of 200 employees in Indonesia who possessed strong MTIWL and volunteered to participate in training for the sake of refining their work outcomes. The employees were eager to seek relevant KSA, took their own initiative to attend training and participated actively during training programmes (Suhepi, 2018). They valued the newly acquired KSA, were enthusiastic about applying them to their jobs and looked forward to sharing the knowledge with their team members at work (Suhepi, 2018). As a result, employees who practised the newly acquired KSA demonstrated better work performance (Suhepi, 2018). Therefore, the present study hypothesises the following:

Hypothesis 5: There is a positive relationship between MTIWL and training transfer.

MTIWL as a Mediator of The Relationship Between Social Support and Training Transfer

Social support in the workplace does not necessarily mean that training transfer will occur in organisations. Supervisor and peer support for employees are limited to only training sessions and working hours. Employees are free to choose whether to use the newly obtained KSA for their jobs. Therefore, scholars are convinced that there is another mechanism that associates social support and training transfer in the workplace. Based on social learning theory (Bandura 1969), people learn from others through observation, imitation and modelling. The social interaction through exchanges of information and resources between employees at the workplace enhances motivation (e.g. guidance and facilitation from supervisors and peers could lead to enhanced motivation to improve work performance) and improves outcomes (e.g. employees apply their knowledge, skills and attitudes to imitate excellence performance in the workplace).

Hence, supervisors' and peers' support, such as guidance and facilitation, enhances employees' MTIWL. As a result, the ability of employees to practise the new KSA at work improves their performance. The important role that MTIWL plays as a mediator between social support and training transfer has received strong support from empirical evidence in the existing training literature (Ng & Ahmad, 2018). Wirdani and Wulansari (2019) argued that support extended by supervisors, such as providing positive and constructive feedback to employees during and after training programmes, motivated employees to acquire more KSA to achieve their supervisors' targets and desired performance. Employees implement the newly acquired KSA to please their superiors, and this leads to improved performance in the workplace. This study illustrates that the capability of supervisors to support their subordinates in the workplace enhances employees' MTIWL, which in turn leads to applying this knowledge to the job.

Ng and Ahmad (2018) contended that active discussions between supervisors and employees on ways to apply KSA on the job assisted employees in refreshing the knowledge learned through training and enhanced MTIWL (Ng & Ahmad, 2018). As a result, employees practised the new skills at work. Therefore, the present study hypothesises the following:

Hypothesis 6: MTIWL mediates the relationship between supervisor support and training transfer.

Hypothesis 7: MTIWL mediates the relationship between peer support and training transfer.

RESEARCH METHOD

Partial Least Square-structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM)

The present study employed PLS-SEM to analyse the data as it is involved with testing a theoretical framework from a prediction perspective. In line with the research objectives, PLS-SEM was chosen because it is suitable for analysing complex structural models that include many constructs, indicators and relationships between variables (Hair et al., 2019).

Questionnaire Design

To collect data, the present study employed a survey method. The self-administered questionnaire consisted of five sections: supervisor support, peer support, MTIWL, training transfer and demographic profile of the respondents. We used a seven-point Likert scale, with 1 signifying 'strongly disagree' and 7 signifying 'strongly agree'. The questionnaire was designed systematically to reflect the variables chosen in the present study. There were 21 total indicators, with six indicators for supervisor support, three indicators for peer support, seven indicators for MTIWL and five indicators for training transfer.

The scales for supervisor support were adapted from Xiao (1996) and consisted of statements such as ‘My supervisor helps me set goals for applying new knowledge, skills and attitudes. The scales for peer support were adapted from the learning transfer system inventory (LTSI) by Holton et al. (2000) and consisted of statements such as ‘My colleagues will appreciate me using the new KSA I learned in this training’. MTIWL was based on Yi and Davis (2003) and the learning transfer system inventory (LTSI; Holton, Bates, & Ruona, 2000). The scale measured two components of motivation: motivation to learn and motivation to transfer.

Data on demographic profiles, including the respondents’ educational and employment histories, were also collected. This section consisted of 12 questions. The officers in charge of the Fire-Rescue Department verified the instrument, and it was pretested with a few respondents from around Klang Valley to ensure that all parts of the items were pertinent to the context of firefighters. The relevance of the items was assessed, and unclear statements were clarified and amended before the actual instrument was distributed to all respondents. Furthermore, the questionnaire was also reviewed by selected experts. We also ran a pilot test among 200 respondents, and the results were used to improve the final instrument.

Sample Profile

The present study employed a cross-sectional survey as its data collection method. The respondents were experienced firefighters who had served the Fire-Rescue Department for more than five years. The data were gathered via the method known as non-probability convenience sampling at the firefighters’ convenience. The sample was drawn from five main zones in Malaysia: the Borneo zone, the South Zone, the Central Zone, the East Zone and the North Zone. In addition, we utilised a self-administered questionnaire, which had a total of 31 items. Furthermore, the questionnaire was distributed to the respective zones after receiving approval from the Director of Research, Fire Rescue Department of Malaysia. We enclose a cover letter which contains details about the study and a statement about the research confidentiality.

A total of 500 completed questionnaires were received from the respondents. The data analysis process started with examining the typical issues involved with data collection, such as missing data, suspicious response patterns, outliers and data distribution (Hair et al., 2017). Suspicious response patterns included straight-lining (same response for most questions), diagonal lining and alternating extreme pole responses. These issues were identified using descriptive statistics (i.e. mean and variance) in SPSS version 24.0. Next, the researcher assessed univariate outliers by using the *z*-score approach by Tabachnick and Fidell (2001), whereas for multivariate

outliers, a Mahalanobis distance test by Tabachnick and Fidell (2013) was applied. As a result, 105 questionnaires were identified to contain suspicious response patterns and outliers. These responses were removed from the dataset. Therefore, only 395 responses were considered valid for the next stage of data analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The present study utilised reflective measures for all constructs. Hence, there were two important assessment models that were carried out: a measurement model and a structural model. Table 1 exhibits the results of the reflective measurement model. The outer loadings of all indicators were between 0.832 and 0.925, well above the cut-off value of 0.70. The internal consistency reliability was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability. Table 1 shows the values of Cronbach's alpha which ranged between 0.928 and 0.951. Meanwhile, the values of composite reliability ranged between 0.954 and 0.961. Thus, following Leguina (2015) the reliability was supported since both criteria surpassed the cut-off point of 0.7. Another criterion, the average variance extracted (AVE), was calculated to measure validity. The results exhibited that all values of the AVE were above the cut-off value of 0.50. Based on the evidence, the constructs chosen in the present study were valid and reliable for each of the indicator items for the constructs. It is important to ensure that all constructs are represented with valid indicators to achieve robust research findings.

Table 1. Reflective Measurement Model Results

| Construct | Items | Outer loading (> 0.7) | Cronbach's alpha (> 0.7) | Composite Reliability (> 0.7) | AVE (> 0.5) |
|-----------|-------|------------------------------|------------------------------------|---|--------------------|
| SVSS | B1 | 0.832 | 0.950 | 0.960 | 0.801 |
| | B2 | 0.859 | | | |
| | B3 | 0.854 | | | |
| | B4 | 0.884 | | | |
| | B5 | 0.891 | | | |
| | B6 | 0.913 | | | |
| PERS | C1 | 0.847 | 0.928 | 0.954 | 0.875 |
| | C2 | 0.933 | | | |
| | C3 | 0.924 | | | |
| MTIWL | E1 | 0.855 | 0.893 | 0.949 | 0.903 |
| | E2 | 0.881 | | | |
| | E4 | 0.857 | | | |
| | E5 | 0.911 | | | |
| | E6 | 0.853 | | | |
| | E7 | 0.888 | | | |
| | TTRF | F1 | | | |
| F2 | | 0.914 | | | |
| F3 | | 0.878 | | | |
| F4 | | 0.833 | | | |
| F5 | | 0.839 | | | |

The last criterion for the reflective model was the assessment of the heterotrait–monotrait correlation (HTMT). Table 2 displays the HTMT results for the model. The present study chooses a conventional cut-off value of 0.85. To establish the discriminant validity all HTMT values were estimated to be below 0.90. The values of HTMT ranged between 0.488 and 0.843, which was less than the cut-off value (Henseler et al., 2015). Based on the accepted HTMT values, the discriminant validity of the present study was established.

Table 2. Discriminant Validity Results Using HTMT

| | MTIWL | Peer support | Supervisor support | Training transfer |
|--------------------|-------|--------------|--------------------|-------------------|
| MTIWL | | | | |
| Peer support | 0.605 | | | |
| Supervisor support | 0.531 | 0.684 | | |
| Training transfer | 0.843 | 0.567 | 0.488 | |

Note. MTIWL – Motivation to improve work through learning.

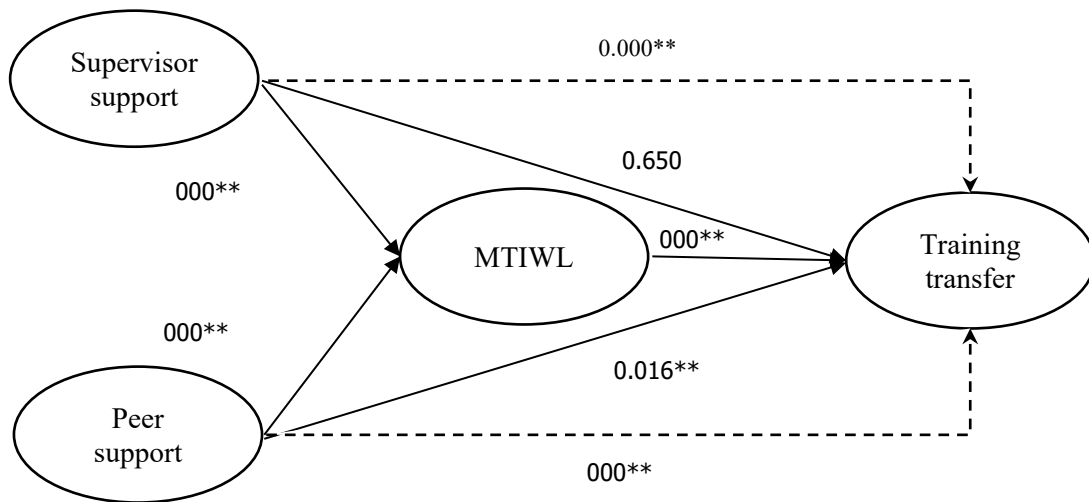
Based on the four assessment criteria, the measurement model is reliable and valid. Next is evaluating the structural model, which includes several assessments such as variance in inflation factor (VIF), coefficient of determination (R^2), effect size (f^2), path coefficients and their significance and predictive relevance (Leguina, 2015).

Table 3. VIF, Coefficient of Determination and Effect Size Result

| Latent variables | Training transfer ($R^2 = 0.812$) | | Motivation to improve work through learning (MTIWL) ($R^2 = 0.427$) | |
|--------------------|--|-----------------------|---|-----------------------|
| | VIF | Effect size (f^2) | VIF | Effect size (f^2) |
| Supervisor support | 2.004 | 0.006 | 1.879 | 0.067 |
| Peer support | 2.217 | 0.018 | 1.879 | 0.180 |
| MTIWL | 1.744 | 2.326 | | |

Table 3 shows the VIF, coefficient of determination and effect size results for the present study. All VIF values were less than 5; thus, collinearity is not an issue. In the proposed model, there were two endogenous latent variables: motivation to transfer and training transfer. The coefficient of determination for MTIWL was 0.427, which means that 42.7 percent of the variance in motivation to transfer was explained by supervisor support and peer support, with a stronger effect from peer support ($f^2 = 0.180$). The ultimate endogenous latent variable was training transfer. All three exogenous latent variables explained training transfer, and the coefficient of determination was 0.812. Thus, 81.2 percent of the variance in training transfer was explained by supervisor support, peer support and MTIWL. The strongest effect on training transfer was MTIWL, which was 2.326. This means that MTIWL had a substantive effect on training transfer. Meanwhile, supervisor support had the smallest effect on training utilisation ($f^2 = 0.006$).

A bootstrapping procedure with 5,000 resamples was performed to generate the results. As illustrated in Figure 2, all relationships were significant at P-value < 0.05 except the path from supervisor support to training transfer that showed an insignificant P-value of 0.650.



Note. ** Significant at $P < 0.05$.

Figure 2. The Structural Equation Model Showing the Mediating Effect of MTIWL on the Relationship Between Social Support and Training Transfer.

Table 4 exhibits the scale and significance of the hypothesised relationships. The results (Table 4) showed Hypothesis 1 ($\beta = 0.279$, $p < 0.001$) and Hypothesis 2 ($\beta = 0.408$, $p < 0.01$) were supported. Hence, supervisor support and peer support were important determinants of employees' MTIWL in the Fire-Rescue Department. Supervisor support, such as setting reasonable goals; providing encouragement, guidance and assistance; and delivering constructive feedback to subordinates enhanced employees' MTIWL in the Fire-Rescue Department. However, peer support, such as encouragement, cooperation, assistance and appreciation from co-workers, were able to enhance employees' MTIWL in the Fire-Rescue Department.

Similarly, Hypothesis 4 ($\beta = 0.100$, $p < 0.001$) was supported. The results showed that peer support significantly affected training transfer in the Fire-Rescue Department. Support rendered by co-workers was able to inspire employees to use newly acquired KSA at work.

Hypothesis 5 was also supported ($\beta = 0.804$, $p < 0.01$). The results indicated that MTIWL had a positive, significant influence on training transfer in the Fire-Rescue Department.

However, Hypothesis 3, which hypothesised supervisor support positively predicts training transfer, was not supported ($\beta = -0.018$, $p = 0.650$). This finding showed that supervisor support was not significantly linked to training transfer in the Fire-Rescue Department. Even though many

previous research studies have shown significant findings on the relationship between these constructs, the present study's context proved otherwise. The present study's findings supported previous studies, such as Chiaburu and Marinova (2005) and Velada and Caetano (2007), that proposed a trivial connection between supervisory support and training transfer. These scholars justified that the insignificant relationship was due to the timing of support rendered by supervisors (i.e. before and after training only). Supervisors were not supervising subordinates all the time. Hence, the employees were free to choose whether to practise the newly acquired KSA on the job in the absence of their supervisors.

Table 4. Magnitude and Significance of Hypothesised Relationships

| Hypothesised relationship | Beta | P-value | (2.5%, 95%) CI | Result |
|-------------------------------------|--------|---------|-----------------|---------------|
| H1: Supervisor support – MTIWL | 0.279 | 0.000** | (0.172, 0.388) | Supported |
| H2: Peer support – MTIWL | 0.408 | 0.000** | (0.283, 0.525) | Supported |
| H3: Supervisor support – TTRF | -0.018 | 0.650 | (-0.099, 0.062) | Not supported |
| H4: Peer support – TTRF | 0.100 | 0.016** | (0.016, 0.183) | Supported |
| H5: MTIWL – TTRF | 0.804 | 0.000** | (0.749, 0.854) | Supported |
| H6: Supervisor support – MTIWL-TTRF | 0.224 | 0.000** | (0.138, 0.314) | Supported |
| H7: Peer support – MTIWL - TTRF | 0.328 | 0.000** | (0.233, 0.418) | Supported |

Note. MTIWL – Motivation to improve work through learning; TTRF – Training transfer; **significant at $P < 0.05$.

The present study also hypothesised that MTIWL mediates the effect of peer support and supervisor support on training transfer. Based on the results of the bootstrapping, both Hypotheses 6 and 7 were supported. Hence, MTIWL mediates the effect of peer support and supervisor support on training transfer. MTIWL was an essential mediator between peer support and training transfer as a result of showing complementary (full) mediation between the constructs. However, MTIWL was a competitive (partial) mediator between supervisor support and training transfer. The findings exhibited the crucial role MTIWL plays in the relationship between social support and training transfer in the study's context. The findings clearly show that social support by organisations' stakeholders did not guarantee that employees would practise what they had learned. Therefore, MTIWL is a crucial connecting mechanism between social support and training transfer that requires due emphasis. With the right attitude and strong employee MTIWL, the employees themselves will feel obliged to practise the newly acquired KSA at the job for the sake of improving their own performance. Next, after hypothesis testing was conducted, we examined the model's predictive relevance using both the blindfolding and PLS predict methods in SmartPLS 3.3.3. Both methods indicated that the model had good predictive relevance. The Stone–Geisser's Q^2 value for MTIWL was 0.371 while the value for training transfer was 0.663. Both values were

more than zero, indicating that there was evidence of predictive relevance. Likewise, the PLS predicted Q^2 values for both latent variables were 0.432 and 0.403, respectively. Therefore, the results support the model's predictive relevance.

Table 5. Comparison Between PLS and Naive Benchmark for Key Endogenous Construct: Training Transfer

| Items | RMSE | | MAE | |
|----------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| | PLS | LM | PLS | LM |
| MTIWL E1 | 0.679 | 0.685 | 0.527 | 0.532 |
| MTIWL E2 | 0.663 | 0.668 | 0.512 | 0.515 |
| MTIWL E3 | 0.661 | 0.668 | 0.511 | 0.516 |
| MTIWL E4 | 0.678 | 0.680 | 0.525 | 0.523 |
| MTIWL E5 | 0.654 | 0.645 | 0.506 | 0.492 |
| MTIWL E6 | 0.675 | 0.668 | 0.524 | 0.516 |
| MTIWL E7 | 0.663 | 0.659 | 0.518 | 0.510 |
| TTRF F1 | 0.638 | 0.643 | 0.500 | 0.506 |
| TTRF F2 | 0.655 | 0.651 | 0.514 | 0.512 |
| TTRF F3 | 0.646 | 0.648 | 0.508 | 0.510 |
| TTRF F4 | 0.691 | 0.698 | 0.540 | 0.543 |
| TTRF F5 | 0.676 | 0.682 | 0.518 | 0.522 |

Note. TTRF = Training transfer. Bold values indicate that higher prediction errors were observed in the naïve benchmark (LM) than in PLS.

The predictive performance of the present study's model was further evaluated by assessing the standard deviation of the prediction errors for the linear model (LM) and the PLS model (PLS). Table 5 shows that the value improved when LM and PLS were compared. Hence, this indicated that the present study's model showed good predictive accuracy when all items of the key endogenous construct showed an improvement in the standard deviation of the prediction errors from LM to PLS (Hair et al., 2019).

MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS IN THE SOUTH EAST ASIAN CONTEXT

This study has several implications for managerial practices, particularly within the Fire-Rescue Department. First, in the past, many companies overlooked employee motivation when determining training investment, often assuming that such an investment would not provide equitable growth and development for employees. The present study revealed that supervisor support and peer support were positively correlated to employee outcomes, namely, MTIWL and training transfer. In other words, social support merits attention because it could improve employees' motivation and lead to improved performance. The Fire-Rescue Department's Human Resource Department can utilise the outcomes of the present study to improve training programmes and work-related activities involving supervisors and peers in the organisation. To meet this objective, management must consider several aspects.

First, the effectiveness of supervisors must be given due consideration when planning and conducting training. Supervisors must be educated and trained to become more involved with firefighters in training-related activities. For example, involve both supervisors and firefighters in simulation exercises to familiarise firefighters with the actual support expected during incidents. Second, recruitment policies must emphasise selecting employees who have good attitudes so that they can become good peers to their fellow employees. Third, training facilities and technologies must be emphasised to enable firefighters to apply their skills. If these propositions are given fair consideration, they may inspire employees to learn continuously by participating in training programmes and encourage them to use what they learn, which ultimately leads to favourable training transfer within the organisation.

To enrich the findings of the present study, future research could replicate this study in other public organisations, such as police departments, that share similar natures and organisational structures to the Fire-Rescue Department. Unlike other private organisations, training in these types of organisations is fully funded by the government, and the return on investment is assessed through particular benchmarks, such as the national average response rate and the department's efficiency in its respective country.

THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS

Based on a theoretical perspective, the present study makes a few significant contributions. First, this study revealed the important concept of social support in human resource development by compiling and synthesising the related literature on training transfer. A concept of social support that consisted of supervisor support and peer support was clearly elaborated and discussed. Next, based on the findings, the present study proved that social support was capable of impacting employees' MTIWL in the Fire-Rescue Department. After a thorough examination, the present study also confirmed the role MTIWL plays as a means that relates social support and training transfer in a single model. A few theories, such as social exchange theories, social learning theories and self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2015), were examined to understand the concept of MTIWL and the association between social support and training transfer in organisations.

The present study incorporated a theoretical understanding of the association between social support and MTIWL into a single model. While previous empirical findings only emphasised the direct effect of social support on training transfer (Futris et al., 2015; Kodwani & Prashar, 2019; Lau et al., 2013), the present study investigated the effect of employee MTIWL as a mechanism for linking social support and training transfer. Hence, the present study produces a current impact on the literature by delivering support for the magnitude of employee MTIWL as a mechanism for explaining the association between social support and training transfer in organisations.

In the context of South East Asia, the present study adds to knowledge about the crucial role MTIWL plays in workplaces among employees. The present study showed that social support extended by organisations' various stakeholders (supervisors and peers) is imperative. However, support alone is inadequate to encourage employees to effectively practise newly acquired KSA on the job. Hence, appropriate support from stakeholders plays a crucial role in enhancing employees' MTIWL in workplaces, ensuring that employees willingly apply newly acquired KSA for the sake of improving their work outcomes. This situation leads to positive training transfers in organisations. Operating in a borderless and demanding era of business, particularly in the emerging countries of South East Asia, human resource personnel should expect challenges in providing employees with the necessary support to enhance their MTIWL and reap the benefits from the training provided by organisations.

CONCLUSIONS

The Fire-Rescue Department invested considerable resources and efforts into training to enhance firefighters' KSA in the workplace. However, the extent to which the KSA was applied to the job varies on how strong the available social supports are in the workplace. Our study provides suggestions for organisations that are keen to witness favourable outcomes from investments in employee training. In particular, the results propose that peer support is more critical than supervisor support in the Fire-Rescue Department. However, both supervisor support and peer support could result in enhanced firefighter MTIWL, which in turn could lead to enhanced firefighter performance. Social support may be the ideal training investment to focus on in the Fire-Rescue Department to address the occurrence of injuries and accidents involving firefighters during rescue missions. Finally, we hope that these research results will benefit similar organisations, enterprises, managers and other researchers addressing the issue of training transfer in the workplace.

To the best of our knowledge, the present study is the first to investigate the training transfer problem in one of the national emergency rescue organisations in Malaysia. However, the conclusions of the present study are subject to some limitations. First, because of its cross-sectional research design, the present study may not capture causal connections between the variables of interest. Next, the sample was taken from one organisation only (i.e. the Fire-Rescue Department); hence, this situation may limit the ability to generalise the results of the present study to other types of organisations. The variables chosen in the present study were related only to social support and employee motivation; thus, future studies could also explore other transfer climate variables, such as organisational support and employees' self-efficacy. The limitations of the present study should be kept in mind when designing future studies.

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