

Chapter 5

Work Environment Factors Affecting the Transfer of Training in Female Workers in the Apparel Sector of Sri Lanka

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ABSTRACT

With the increased investment in training and development initiatives, the organizations wishing to enhance their return on investment must understand the factors that influence transfer of training. This research analyzes the impact of the work environment factors on the transfer of training. Data were garnered through a questionnaire from a sample of 100 female workers in an apparel manufacturing company in Sri Lanka. Partial least squares structural equations modeling was used to analyze the proposed model and it could achieve the coefficient of prediction (R^2) of transfer of training as high as 82%, implying the significance of supervisor support, peer support, openness to change, and personal outcomes – positive on transfer of training, while feedback reported no significant impact. Further, positive personal outcomes had the strongest influence on transfer of training. Therefore, practitioners should take into account the contributions associated with each environmental factor and especially to ensure that training transfer outcomes are positive and valued by the employees.

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INTRODUCTION

In the era of knowledge economy, the organizations invest money, time and effort heavily on the training and development of its employees in the aim of empowering the knowledge base, as knowledge becomes the primary factor of production in the modern organizations. But the real question is how much of these investments really pay back. In other words the transfer of training at the workplace remain to be a question for most companies, as return on investment in training is generally considered unsatisfactory. As an organization has a limited budget to be spent across the overall functions of the organizations, most managers deals with the problem of opportunity cost of the training and development initiatives. The human resource development (HRD) professionals in the organizations should ensure that their decisions make a significant impact on improving the employees' performance due to the training and development efforts. To enable an organization to utilize learned knowledge, skills and behavior acquired during a learning event, learning transfer must take place between the classroom and the workplace.

Learning is defined as an enduring change in behavior or in the capacity to behave in a given fashion resulting from practice or other forms of experiences (Schunk, 2008). Transfer of training is the extent to which the trainees apply the learned knowledge, skills, and attitudes in the real workplace setting. As a result of the financial investments organizations make in training, it is important to provide evidence that training efforts are being fully realized (Cascio, 2000; Tahvanainen, Welch, & Worm, 2005). According to the literature, only 10% of learning is transferred as real behavioral changes, and no more than 50% of investment in training results in some real organizational improvement (Saks, 2002). As Arthur Jr, Bennett Jr, Edens, and Bell (2003) suggests, although approximately 40 per cent of content is transferred immediately following training, this falls to 25 per cent after 6 months and 15 per cent after 1 year. Further, the literature indicates that in the short term only 50% of training transfers to the job, and in the longer term, only 10% will ultimately transfer (Kim & Lee, 2001). However, empirical findings of Saks and Belcourt (2006) confirm higher transfer rates. Further as Griffin (2012) claims, most evaluation activities of transfer of training by the organizations focuses on learning rather than on performance outcomes. Therefore, the question of how the transfer of training problem applies both theoretically and practically has been resolved unsatisfactorily (Hutchins, Burke, & Berthelsen, 2010). Neither causes nor the determinants which boost or hinder transfer of training

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