

THE ROLES OF MANAGERIAL COACHING, EMPLOYEES SELF-EFFICACY AND EMPLOYEES DEVELOPMENT IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR

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ABSTRACT

Managers are the most immediate individuals to employees in an organization. Previous studies have shown that leaders' attitude and behaviour in coaching employees can affect the employees' motivation towards their work. Coaching in the context of this study is one of the responsibilities and roles played by the managers in ensuring that the employees get the proper support from the leaders at the workplace. Although the studies concerning the coaching have been widely-known and discussed since the 1980s, the subject of these studies is still a hot subject that being discussed until now. The role of the immediate leaders as a coach is a never-ending and it is continuous in nature as long as there are goals to be achieved. Moreover, the research theories also support that the role of leaders in coaching can influence the employees positive attitude and behaviour through their own internal support. The results of the hypotheses testing using PLS-SEM show three important findings: Firstly, the management coaching and employees' self-efficacy have a significant relationship with the employees' performance. Secondly, the feedback environment and employees' self-efficacy have a significant relationship with the employees' performance. Thirdly, the validation that the employees' self-efficacy serves as an effective intermediary variable between the management coaching and employees' performance in the studied organization. Subsequently, this study provides the discussions, implications and conclusions.

Keywords: *Coaching, Mentoring, Feedback, Self-Efficacy and Employees' Performance.*

INTRODUCTION

In order to face the increasingly complex and challenging workplace, the organizational management needs to ensure that they have leaders who are able to use their authority to influence the behaviour, attitude, knowledge and practices of their followers towards achieving the expected organizational goals and agenda (Jong & Hartog 2007; Kim et al., 2015; Mohd, 2013). Research on literature review concerning the leadership in dynamic organizations has shown that the role of Management Coaching (MC) is seen as a leadership style based on a humanistic approach that is crucial to be practiced in managing dynamic and diverse organizations, emphasizes on new knowledge and responsive to customer needs (Hagen, 2012; Pousa et al., 2015). The MC is a multi-dimensional construct and can be defined according to the language and organizational perspectives. In general, the MC is one of the leadership styles that connects the role of managers and employees in dynamic organizations. Most early studies concerning the MC found that the ability of managers to plan and mentor their employees

in a structured manner can help to improve the employees' self-efficacy in organizations. It is often defined, from the language perspective, as the role and responsibility played by the leaders as coaches and mentors to the employees (Kamus Dewan, 2010). In addition, the MC is also known as an effective managerial and leadership practice that advances employees learning and effectiveness (Cambridge Dictionary, 2013). On the other hand, in the organizational context, the MC is often formally and informally conducted to all working levels regardless at the level of executive or executive management (Ellinger et al., 1999; Hagen et al., 2012). Practically, the MC is practiced in day-to-day work involving routine activities such as on-the-job training that is not foreign among previous researchers (Ellinger et al., 1999; Mclean, 2005; Park, 2008).

According to the perspective of Human Resource Development, the MC is viewed as a very important instrument especially in contributing towards increasing the productivity and employees' development (Egan 2013; Ellinger et al., 2014; Merwe & Sloman 2013; Short et al., 2009). The main purpose of this MC practice is to give emphasize and empower managers to provide clear and organized mentoring in order to ensure employees are in line with the organizational objectives (Grant & Cavanagh, 2004; Baron & Morin, 2009). The importance of MC in organizations is one of the efforts to enhance the organizational achievement by believing that all parties, namely the managers and their subordinates, are able to implement it through a well-planned system to face any working condition (Hashim 2011; 2013). For instance, managers are the individuals empowered to mentor their subordinates by imparting relevant knowledge, skills and work experience while performing core duties in the organization. The present work performance can be improved through this well-planned learning system between the managers and trainees. This situation is in line with the current organization that encourages the involvement or participation of employees in certain tasks, as well as the authority delegated to the employees that can assist them particularly in the decision-making process (Kim et al., 2014).

The development of MC in organizations has been identified since the early of the industrial revolution era in Europe and the United States that was around the second half of the 19th century (Bass, 1999; Jong & Hartog, 2007). The MC approach in the organizational context became an overheated discussion since the 1980s, in which Ellinger et al. (1980; 1999) at that time highlighted the concept of mentoring during working hours that led to the effectiveness of better employees' behaviour. In order to achieve the organizational agenda, most leaders in this early stage tend to practice their leadership styles based on mechanistic approaches (Azman et al., 2010; Mclean et al., 2008; Kim et al., 2014). Based on this approach, the MC is usually implemented in the form of routine activities, based on working experience, informal and ad hoc mentoring to enhance the capabilities of leaders to perform short-term tasks and responsibilities. Hence, the managers in this phenomenon are more likely to be directing, controlling and improving a problem. Therefore, the leadership styles highlighted by classical management scholars only drive leaders to focus on the formation of task structures, determining group assignments, product manufacturing and production oriented and more likely to provide autocratic directions (Bass et al., 1999; Kim et al., 2014). The idea raised by leadership style based on classical approaches is still relevant and important, however, it is only suitable for organizations operating in the domestic, stable and less competitive market (Azman et al., 2010; Kim et al., 2014).

Nevertheless, in the early 70's, the era of globalization emerged in which most small and medium-sized organizations have expanded into organizations that are capable of penetrating the international market and operating globally. This encourages employers to shift the leadership style paradigm from the leadership style that is based on mechanistic approach to the one that is based on humanistic approach in order to achieve the organizational strategies and cultures (Bass 1994; 1999; Hagen et al., 2012; Kim et al., 2014). This phenomenon encourages managers to be more proactive and give emphasize on human capital development such as promoting employees involvement in tasks, distribution of power and responsibility as well as promoting self-learning in the organization. As a result, the transformational-driven leadership style has brought success to organizations, especially from the aspect of improving work performance.

Upon conducting an extensive research towards the latest literature review on management coaching,

it is found that the role of effective coaching has two essential elements: management mentoring and feedback environment (Kim et al., 2014; 2015; Pousa et al., 2015). From a management coaching perspective, management mentoring is defined as the mentoring behaviour, attitude and skills exhibited by the managers to their subordinates such as the managers ability to communicate openly, facilitating towards employees development such as giving the employees the opportunity to try something new and more challenging, working in groups, and evaluating the task outcomes (Kim et al., 2015; McLean 2008). While the feedback environment in this study refers to the five characteristics of the feedback environment process that being emphasized by the organization, namely the reliability of feedback sources, quality of feedback, delivery of feedback, availability of feedback sources, and promoting the sourcing of feedback sources. For instance, managers who emphasize the characteristics of a clear and organized feedback environment are able to help employees to improve their work performance through the confidence towards the feedback given (Fah & Hoon, 2010; Steelman, Levy & Snell, 2004).

It is a remarkable phenomenon when a study conducted recently finds that the managers' ability in implementing management coaching practices in an organization is able to affect the development of employees' performance through an indirect relationship led by employees' self-efficacy. Employees' self-efficacy refers to the individuals' confidence and belief towards their ability and capability to assume the responsibilities assigned to them (Gist & Mithchell, 1992; Pousa et al., 2015). This situation can be clarified through the employees' practices in the organization, in which employees with high self-efficacy, who believe in their own ability to perform tasks, are able to apply what is learned to the actual workplace. Although the nature of this relationship is very important, the role of self-efficacy as an important intermediary variable is still not discussed thoroughly in the study of management coaching.

The study has three main objectives: Firstly, to test the relationship between the management mentoring and employees' self-efficacy. Secondly, to test the relationship between the feedback environment and employees' self-efficacy. Thirdly, to test the role of self-efficacy as an intermediary variable towards the relationship between the management coaching and employees development.

Literature Review

The MC's practice as a predictor variable is in line with the recommendations made by Path-Goal Theory (House 1974), Leader-Member Exchange Theory (Graen & Scandura 1987) and Self-Determination Theory (Deci and Ryan 1985). The main idea of these theories describes the ability of managers in providing mentoring and guidance during working hours, providing adequate support in performing tasks and delivering a systematic feedback on work is able to give an impact on the employees' self-efficacy to act towards the goals set (Anthony 2014; Daci & Ryan, 1987: 2005; Ellinger et al., 2010; Gillet et al., 2010: 2013; Kim et al., 2013; Pousa et al., 2015).

Several previous studies have been conducted based on a direct impact model to study the effect of management coaching on employees' self-efficacy using different samples, such as the involvement of 251 employees of Sarawak and Penang Polytechnics (Ling Ying Leh et al., 2014), 122 financial assistants in Canada (Pousa et al., 2015), 345 employees working in three organizations in Germany (Sparr et al., 2008) and a total of 411 academic staffs selected from five polytechnics in Malaysia (Ling Ying Leh et al., 2015). The findings of these studies prove that the ability of managers to provide mentoring and guidance during working hours and to practice sufficient and persistent feedback environment (quality of feedback, delivery of feedback, availability of feedback sources, and promoting the sourcing of feedback sources) in performing tasks is able to give an impact on the employees' self-efficacy to act towards the employees development (Anthony, 2014; Daci & Ryan, 1987: 2005; Ellinger et al., 2010; Gillet et al., 2010: 2013; Kim et al., 2013; Pousa et al., 2015).

Conceptual Framework and Research Hypothesis

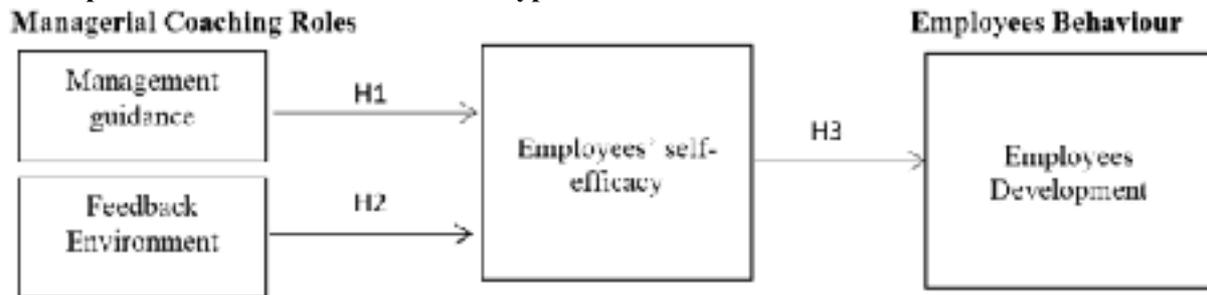


Figure 1. Conceptual framework

Hypothesis

H1: Management guidance has a positive relationship with the employees' self-efficacy.

H2: Feedback environment has a positive relationship with the employees' self-efficacy.

H3: Employees self-efficacy has a positive relationship with employees' development.

METHODOLOGY

The cross-sectional method is used in this study as it allows the researcher to use the literature review of management coaching, pilot studies and questionnaires as the main procedure in obtaining research data (Sekaran 2014; Azman et al., 2014; Aimi 2014). A simple sampling method is used to distribute 200 questionnaires to employees of the Management and Professional Group and Executive Group at the Ministry of Rural and Regional Development (KKLW) as well as the Malaysian Administrative Modernisation and Management Planning Unit (MAMPU). Only 60 percent or 120 of the distributed questionnaires are completely answered by the survey respondents. A simple sampling method is used in this study as the management is not able to provide a list of military leadership due to the private and confidential reason, therefore, it does not permit the researcher to select respondents using a random method. The respondents of this study answer the questionnaire with their own consent and goodwill. The number of samples fulfils the requirement of data analysis using inferential statistics (Cresswell 2008; Sekaran & Bougie 2013).

The first step in the data collection procedure is to provide a draft questionnaire developed based on the study literature review. Furthermore, in order to ensure the data accuracy, the researcher conducts unstructured interviews involving 8 respondents of various backgrounds. They are selected using a purposive sampling that is the selection of interview respondents takes into account individuals having experience of serving more than six months. Their views are taken into account in order to understand the MC's practice and the effect of the practice towards the employees' self-efficacy and behaviour. Furthermore, the information of the interview is used to improve the questionnaire content and format. Prior distributing the questionnaire, the back translation method is used to translate the questionnaire into Malay and English languages in order to ensure the validity and reliability of the findings (Cresswell 2008; Sekaran & Bougie 2013). In this study, only the questionnaire in Malay language is distributed as the respondents feel comfortable to answer in Malay language.

The questionnaire consists of four main sections: Firstly, the management mentoring is measured using 20 question items. Secondly, the feedback environment uses 15 question items and followed by the employees' self-efficacy that uses 9 question items. Finally, the employees' development (transfer of training) uses 9 question items. In addition to the use of categorical scale measurements, all items are measured using a scale of 7 optional answers ranging from "Strongly disagree (1)" to "Strongly agree (7)" and "Strongly dissatisfied (1)" to "Strongly satisfied (7)". The characteristics of respondents' demographics are used as a control variable as this study only focuses on management coaching in general. Furthermore, the SmartPLS method is used to evaluate the validity and reliability of the questionnaire, thus, testing the research hypotheses (Hair et al., 2017; Henseler et al., 2009).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Most respondents are women (65.8%), aged between 25 and 34 years (62.5%), degree holders (40%), Administrative and Support Group (62.5%), working experience of 5 to 14 years (83%) and the

frequency of having work-related discussions with the immediate leaders more than once in a day (34%). Accordingly, Table 1 shows the value of load factor for each item is greater than 0.7, indicating that the items for each construct meet the validity and reliability standard set (Fornell & Larcker, 1982; Gefen & Straub, 2005). Subsequently, each construct has a composite reliability and Cronbach reliability values of more than 0.80, which means the measurement scale has a high internal consistency (Chua, 2006; Henseler et al., 2009).

Table 1. Results of items loading and composite reliability

No.	Variables	Items	Item Loading (≥ 0.70)	Composite Reliability (≥ 0.80)
1.	Management guidance	20	0.701- 0.767	0.919
2.	Feedback environment	15	0.731- 0.776	0.920
3.	Self-efficacy	9	0.700- 0.791	0.882
4.	Employees Development	9	0.715- 0.804	0.895

Table 2 shows that the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for each construct ranges from 0.60 to 0.70, which also exceeds the critical value required that is 0.5 (Chin, 2010; Hair et al., 2012). This indicates that the study constructs meet the criteria of convergent validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Henseler et al., 2009). Meanwhile, the square root value of AVE ($\sqrt{\text{AVE}}$) that is shown diagonally is greater than the correlation among other constructs that is shown non-diagonally. This indicates that the study constructs meet the criteria of discriminant validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Henseler et al., 2009).

Table 2. Results of convergent and discriminant validity analyses

No.	Variables	AVE > 0.50	MG	FE	SE	MTP
1.	Management guidance (MG)	0.6849				
2.	Feedback environment (FE)	0.6660	0.8308			
3.	Self-efficacy (SE)	0.6298	0.6422	0.5272		
4.	Motivation to perform (MTP)	0.6780	0.4422	0.4030	0.6570	

Test Results on Research Hypotheses

Figure 2 shows the inclusion of an independent variable (management coaching) into the SmartPLS path model contributes 39.1 percent to changes in the independent variable (employees' self-efficacy), while 38.2 percent to changes in the second independent variable (employees development), and the values can be considered satisfactory (Cohen, 1988). On the other hand, the results of the hypotheses testing using the SmartPLS path model analysis resulted in two important findings: firstly, the management coaching has a positive and significant relationship with the employees' self-efficacy ($\beta = 0.332$, $t = 2.526$), hence H1 is supported. Secondly, the feedback environment has a positive and significant relationship with the employees' self-efficacy ($\beta = 0.341$; $t = 2.114$), hence H2 is supported. Meanwhile, the employees' self-efficacy has a positive relationship with the employees development ($\beta = 0.618$, $t = 7.142$). Overall, the results confirm that management mentoring and feedback environment serve as important predictors of employees' self-efficacy in the studied organization and the employees' self-efficacy serves as the intermediary variable of the relationship between the management coaching and employees development.

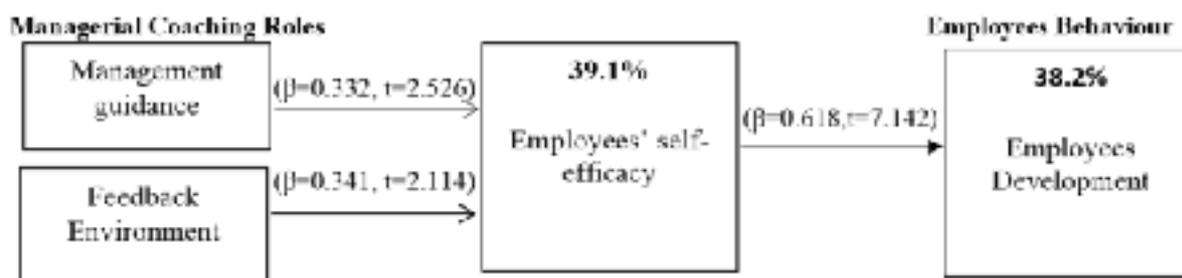


Figure 2. Conceptual result

CONCLUSION

The study findings indicate three important implications to the theories, research methods and human resource practitioners. In terms of the contribution to the theories, this study highlights two important findings: Firstly, the willingness of top management to extend physical and moral support accordingly can enhance the employees' motivation. This finding is supported by studies conducted by Sukanlaya (2010), Eisenberger and Rhoades (2006). Secondly, the feedback environment implemented by the managers is also able to influence the employees' self-efficacy. This finding reinforces the findings of previous studies which explain that the feedback process practiced by the managers is able to influence the employees' behaviour, especially in improving their confidence towards the ability to perform tasks, hence improving their performance over time (McLean et al., 2008; Kim et al., 2014).

From the aspect of strengthening the research methodology, the questionnaires used in this study meet the standards of validity and reliability set. The achievement can yield accurate and credible findings. From the perspective of practitioners, the study findings can be used as guidance by employers to improve the management and implementation of coaching practices. This goal can be achieved if the top management give emphasize on the following aspect: an explanation of the structure of the assigned task. Although the communication culture in the military environment is not directly visible, the management needs to ensure that the information to be conveyed concerning the task is being understood by the employees and the huge gap between the superior and subordinates is hoped not to affect the employees' motivation. In order to ensure the effectiveness of a coaching practice, both employers and employees need to give cooperation and feedback on the implementation of a program, hence achieving the effectiveness of the task. This results in employees feeling close to the employers and getting a strong support from the superiors. Practically, a direct physical and moral support from the management is able to help in enhancing the employees' motivation to continuously improve their performance in future.

The conclusion that is based on the findings of this study is that the researcher needs to take into account the limitations of the conceptual framework and research methodology. Firstly, the cross-sectional method used in this study is unable to detect the dynamic changes and relationship patterns among the more specific variables in the samples of this study. Secondly, this study does not address the relationship between specific indicators of independent and dependent variables. Thirdly, the results of the SmartPLS path model analysis only describe the level of employees' development variant that is influenced by the variables involved in the study. Finally, the samples of this study use only 120 respondents consisting of employees who work in the Federal Ministries only and are not exhaustive. In this regard, this study is only able to make predictions on the relationship patterns between the study variables in general and it cannot be generalized to different organizational backgrounds.

For future studies, it is hoped that the above limitations may be used as a guide to improvise the study. Among the actions that can be taken are, firstly, some personal and organizational characteristics need to be explored more profoundly as it can show a more obvious effect on the implementation of coaching practices on employees. Secondly, more robust research designs such as longitudinal studies should be used to collect data, describe the relationship pattern, direction and degree of relationship profoundness between independent and dependent variables. Thirdly, future studies need to engage

more respondents in order to ensure the accuracy and validity of research findings. Fourthly, independent variables and other dependent variables should also be taken into account in future studies. If the above recommendations are taken into account, it will help in obtaining more effective research findings in the future.

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