

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION, LIMITATION AND SUGGESTION FOR FUTURE STUDY

5.1 Introduction

The chapter provides a discussion about the findings of data analysis. Following this, the chapter describes the implications of this study from a practical and theoretical perspective. Finally, the chapter provides a discussion about the limitations of this study and suggestion for future study.

5.2 Background of context

The basic goals of training are to improve the performance of the employees in their present positions; and to prepare and help the employees to fill more responsible positions in the future. Training is also conducted to fulfil the needs of an organisation (i.e. competent employees), which can enhance the organisational performance. These objectives can only be achieved if employees apply what they have learned in training at the workplace.

The Libyan government has spent billions of dollars in training to improve the public sector employees' performance, and the service quality of the public sector. Unfortunately, there is still limited improvement in terms of employee performance. One of the reasons could be that the employees do not apply the newly learnt knowledge and skills from training at their workplace following the training. On the other hand, if employees apply the newly learnt knowledge and skills from training at their workplace, there is a high possibility that the employees' productivity and

performance can be enhanced. Therefore, a comprehensive evaluation of transfer of training at the workplace is required to encourage employees to apply the newly learnt knowledge and skills from training at their workplace.

Having adequate understanding about the factors that influence the transfer of training outcomes at the workplace is very important. This is the main reason that encourages researchers in this field to focus on identifying the specific factors that influence the transfer of training. As explained previously in Chapter 2, the factors that influence the transfer of training include supervisor support, opportunity to perform, organisational learning culture, motivation to transfer, and peer support. However, Kirwan and Birchall (2006) have found that the motivation to transfer is the most critical and regarded as a pre-condition for the trainees to apply the training content into their work. This perception has been verified by previous studies who found motivation to transfer as an important factor that predict the success of transfer of training at the workplace (e.g., Axtell et al., 1997; Burke and Hutchins, 2007; Chiaburu and Lindsay, 2008; Liebermann and Hoffmann, 2008). In other words, these studies conclude that the employees would not use the recently acquired knowledge, skills, and attitudes from training in their jobs, unless they are motivated to transfer the training outcomes following the training.

This study is focused in identifying the factors that influence motivation to transfer training outcomes in the Libyan public sector organisations. Specifically, these factors were categorized into four groups: first, the employee's characteristic factors (motivation to learn, self-efficacy, and job satisfaction); second, the training design factor, which is content relevant; third, is the work environment factors which include

opportunity to perform and the organisational learning culture; and fourth, is the national culture factor known as power distance.

Another area of research related to motivation to transfer is to examine the impact of motivation to transfer on employees. However, this area of research has not been extensively explored by previous studies. As a result, there is still a lack of understanding about the impact of motivation to transfer on employees. This study is conducted to address this gap. Specifically, this study examines how motivation to transfer can improve employees' work engagement, which is defined as a positive, fulfilling, job-related state of mind; characterized by dedication, absorption, and vigour (Schaufeli et al., 2002).

5.3 Findings and Discussion

As stated in the beginning of this thesis (Chapter 1), the first four objectives of this study are to examine the factors that influence motivation to transfer in the context of the public sector organizations in Libya. The factors include the employee's characteristic factors (e.g., motivation to learn, self-efficacy, and job satisfaction), the work environment factors (e.g., opportunity to perform and the organisational learning culture), the training design factors (e.g., content relevance), and the specific national culture factors known as power distance. This is the difference of this study compared to previous studies, which include various factors together in one conceptual framework and empirically tested to a specific context; the employees of the public sector in Libya. Previous studies have empirically justified the effects of these factors on motivation to transfer, but the relationships between the factors have been examined separately in different studies and contexts. As a result, the conclusion

about what are the factors that influence motivation to transfer for the specific group of people or context cannot be generated by previous studies.

This study proposed that all of the factors included in the conceptual framework are going to be positively related to motivation to transfer of training outcomes. The following paragraphs provide detail discussion about the results of data analysis.

5.3.1 Trainees' characteristics

5.3.1.1 Motivation to learn is positively related to motivation to transfer the training outcomes

The results from the regression analysis indicate that motivation to learn was positively and significantly related to motivation to transfer. This result is consistent with previous studies that suggested trainees who have the motivation to learn new knowledge and skills in the training program they have attended, are motivated to transfer the acquired knowledge and skills to their work place following the training (Chiaburu and Marinova, 2005; Fecteau et al., 1995; Foxon, 1993; Tziner et al., 2007). One possible explanation is due to when an employee has the motivation to learn in the beginning of the training, they have prepared themselves physically and mentally to learn new knowledge and skills from the training program. According to Noe (1986), employees who are enthusiastic about the training course and have a desire to learn its contents are likely to learn more knowledge, skills, and attitudes; and to demonstrate greater behaviour change and performance improvement than employees who are not motivated to learn. As a result, when employees have learned new knowledge and skills from the training they have attended, they are eager to find any

opportunity to apply those training outcomes in the workplace following the training. A study by Quinones (1995) has confirmed that an individual's motivation to learn and attend the training positively influences their level of knowledge and skills acquisition, retention, and willingness to apply the training on the job.

5.3.1.2 Self-efficacy is positively related to motivation to transfer the training outcomes

This study proposed that self-efficacy is positively related to motivation to transfer. The relationship has been supported in the analysis results and indicated that self-efficacy is positively and significantly related to motivation to transfer. The finding is consistent with past researches that suggested when trainees have confidence in their capabilities, they are increasingly more motivated to apply the recently trained knowledge and skills back in the workplace (Mathieu, Martineau, and Tannenbaum, 1993; Noe, 1986). This is because a trainee with a higher level of self-efficacy will set more challenging goals for himself than a trainee with lower level of self-efficacy. A number of previous studies have revealed the significance of self-efficacy in shaping the behaviour of learners within the organisational setting. Specifically, previous studies have found that higher self-efficacy contributes to better performance by reinforcing the individual's judgement that better performance is possible through a greater commitment to self-set performance goals (Decker, 1999; Mathieu and Martineau, 1997; Shoemaker, 1998). Therefore, when trainees have confidence in their capabilities, they are increasingly more motivated to apply recently trained knowledge and skills back in the workplace.

5.3.1.3 Job satisfaction is positively related to motivation to transfer the training outcomes

The current study further hypothesised that job satisfaction will be positively related to motivation to transfer. The outputs of the current study indicated that job satisfaction is positively and significantly related to motivation to transfer. The finding is consistent with past studies that have found that satisfied employees were extremely motivated and tied by a fulfilment for a positive transfer of training to the work place (Chiaburu and Lindsay, 2008; Machin and Fogarty, 1997). An employee who is satisfied with his/her job will normally demonstrate a very high commitment to his/her organisation as well. In other words, they have shown a high intention to engage in specific behaviours that would facilitate transfer of learning. As Machin and Fogarty (2003) have mentioned, satisfied employees have a high intent to engage in particular behaviours that would ease the transfer of learning.

5.3.2 Training design

5.3.2.1 Content relevance is positively related to motivation to transfer the training outcomes

The current study hypothesised that content relevance will be positively related to motivation to transfer. The outputs of the current study indicated that content relevance was positively and significantly related to motivation to transfer. This finding is consistent with past studies that have found that the relevance of the training program has been seen as a particularly important area of training design and was included as a critical factor here. If the training program is not relevant, then trainees are unlikely to apply the acquired knowledge and skills when they get back to the

work place, regardless of the presence of trainees and work place characteristics (Yamhill, 2001). Example of content relevance include the training environment should be similar to the environment in which individuals usually work (Gagne, 1962; Goldstein, 1986) and the practicing exercises are similar to those which trainees face on a daily basis at the work place. On the other hand, the variation between the training context and the actual job context will significantly restrict the effectiveness of application of the learnt knowledge and skills.

5.3.3 Work environment

5.3.3.1 Opportunity to perform is positively related to motivation to transfer the training outcomes

The study suggested that the opportunity to perform will positively relate to motivation to transfer. The results from the regression analysis indicate that the opportunity to perform is positively and significantly related to motivation to transfer of training outcomes at the workplace. The findings of this study is consistent with previous studies that found employees who get the opportunity to perform new learnt knowledge and skills at the training program are motivated to transfer these acquired knowledge and skills to their work place. If a trainee does not have the opportunity to use recently trained knowledge and skills, he or she will not be motivated to use the trained knowledge and skills in their jobs (Nikandrou et al., 2009). Similarly, a study by Quinones, Ford, Sego, and Smith (1993) tried to determine a relationship between the motivation to transfer gained knowledge and skills and the extent to which trainees receive opportunity to perform the gained tasks on the job. Results of the research have found a strong relationship between the opportunity to perform trained tasks and

the successful transfer of recently learnt knowledge and skills. Trainees need plenty of opportunities to use their new knowledge and skills in the work setting for positive transfer to happen. The present study consistently reported that the lack of such opportunities to perform can industriously prevent the use of learnt competencies on the job. This study explained that the provision of opportunity to perform can also be conceptualized as a form of support. Employees rated opportunities to perform newly learnt knowledge and skills as the highest form of support, and conversely, the lack of opportunities to perform them as the biggest hurdle for motivation to transfer training outcomes. Moreover, the opportunity to apply the trained knowledge and skills is a fundamental demand for learners to encourage their learning and application of trained skills after the training session. As Garavaglia (1993) argued, having the opportunities to use the acquired knowledge and skills on the job can cause the training outcomes to be transferred to the work setting.

5.3.3.2 Organisational learning culture is positively related to motivation to transfer the training outcomes

Moreover, the study further suggested that organisational learning culture is positively related to motivation to transfer. This hypothesis was supported by the analysis results, which indicated that organisational learning culture was positively and significantly related to motivation to transfer. The finding is consistent with past researches who found that organizations with powerful learning culture enable employees to use the recently learnt knowledge and skills on their jobs (Egan, Yang and Bartlett, 2004; Huber, 1991). One possible reason is due to organisational learning culture where it emphasizes the shared beliefs, values, and assumptions of

organisational members. Specifically, this type of culture educates the organisation members about the value of learning and application of recent learning for creative purposes in the pursuit of organisational objectives and goals. In addition, organisational learning culture supports the acquisition of information, the sharing, and distribution of learning; and provides rewards and recognition for learning and its application (Marquardt, 1996; Watkins and Marsick, 1993). Such organisational culture can increase employees' innovation, initiative and risk-seeking behaviour, which subsequently motivate them to apply the newly learnt knowledge and skills in the workplace (Baumgartel et al., 1984).

5.3.4 The national culture

5.3.4.1 Power distance is positively related to motivation to transfer the training outcomes

This study hypothesised that one aspect of national culture, which is power distance is positively related to motivation to transfer the training outcomes at the workplace. The outcomes of the current study showed that power distance was positively and significantly related to motivation to transfer. This is a new finding, which has not been determined by previous research in the field of training, particularly in the context of public organisations in Libya, where large power distance is the predominant characteristic for this area. This type of national culture deals with an employee's values with regard to status, authority, and power in organisations. Employees will obey managers' instructions without question; believe that managers deserve respect, and trusting that managers provide more credible decisions. Managers in such cultures may also have the power to decide when and how learning is diffused

(Bhagat et al., 2002). As a result, there is a possibility for employees to have the intention to transfer the training outcomes at the workplace following training as a symbol of respect to the instructions given by their managers.

5.4 Motivation to transfer as a mediator

The current study has proposed that motivation to transfer mediates the relationships between all the independent variables of this study (motivation to learn, self-efficacy, job satisfaction, content relevance, opportunity to perform, organisational learning culture, power distance) and work engagement. This study argued that all the independent variables will positively influence the employees' motivation to transfer the training outcomes at the workplace, which consequently enhance the employee's work engagement.

The hierarchical regression analysis has been conducted to examine the mediating effects of motivation to transfer in the relationship between the independent variables (motivation to learn, self-efficacy, job satisfaction, opportunity to perform, organisational learning culture, power distance) and work engagement. The results have shown that there is a mediating effect of motivation to transfer on the relationships between the independent variables and work engagement. However, it is only partial mediation.

These results (the mediation effects of motivation to transfer) are important findings that have not been empirically determined previously in training literature. These findings suggested that when employees perceive motivation to learn, self-efficacy, job satisfaction, opportunity to perform the training outcomes in the workplace, the

practice of learning culture, and power distance in the workplace; they feel motivated to transfer the training outcomes at the workplace following the training, and subsequently enhance their work engagement. In addition, these findings provide further experimental proof to the literature due to the sample of this study that was drawn from the public sector organisations in Libya.

5.5 Implications of the study

The current study has a number of practical and theoretical implications that could provide some insight to researchers and practitioners.

5.5.1 Theoretical implications of the study

This study extended the discussion and understanding about the factors that influence motivation to transfer at the public sector organisations in non-western countries, especially Libya, a developing country in North Africa. Most of the previous studies have been conducted in private sector organisations in Western countries. There are still very limited studies that have been conducted using the public sector population in Libya to examine the influence of trainee's characteristics, training design, work environment characteristics, and national culture on motivation to transfer the recently acquired knowledge and skills to the work place. The outcomes of this study provide essential information to assist the management of public sector organisations in Libya to enhance the employees' motivation to transfer the training outcomes following the training.

Previous research that examine the factors that influence motivation to transfer have focused on testing the impact of specific trainee characteristic factors, training design

factors, work environment factors, and national culture factors on motivation to transfer (Tracey and Tews, 2005). However, till date, relatively very few studies have simultaneously tested the impact of trainee characteristic factors, training design factors, work environment factors, and national culture factors on motivation to transfer in one conceptual framework. The findings of this study extend the literature by testing a research framework that includes a number of trainee characteristics, training design factor, work environment factors, and national culture factors. By having such a framework that include various factors, a more appropriate conclusion can be generated on the factors that influence motivation to transfer in a particular context, such as the public sector organisations in Libya focused on in this study.

The findings of this study have suggested that the proposed factors (motivation to learn, self-efficacy, job satisfaction, opportunity to perform, organisational learning culture, power distance) in the conceptual framework of this study can improve motivation to transfer, which in turn increases employees' work engagement. The significant relationship between the variables (the proposed factors in the conceptual framework of this study – motivation to transfer – work engagement) is an important finding that has not been empirically determined previously, particularly in literature of the motivation to transfer. The findings indicate that the motivation to transfer shows a fundamental role as a mediator in the relationship between all the proposed factors in the study framework and work engagement. These findings provide new information to the literature by providing empirical evidence that the link between the factors (motivation to learn, self-efficacy, job satisfaction, opportunity to perform, organizational learning culture, power distance) and work engagement can happen

through the mechanism of employees' motivation to transfer the learnt knowledge and skills to their work place. Although the findings presented here are limited to the specific context of the public sector in Libya, a developing country in North Africa, the results of this study overall clearly point toward the factors (motivation to learn, self-efficacy, job satisfaction, opportunity to perform, organisational learning culture, power distance) being significant factors that can foster the motivation to transfer and, ultimately, work engagement.

5.5.2 Practical implications of the study

The main administrative implications of the current study includes the truth that companies and organisations should not only focus on planning, managing, and providing budgets for employees' training, but also ensuring that trainees have the motivation to learn and acquire new skills and knowledge from the training program they attended. It is due to the trainees' motivation to learn that plays a major role in facilitating trainees' motivation to transfer the training outcomes at the workplace. In other words, employees who are enthusiastic about the training course and have the desire to learn its content are likely to learn more knowledge, skills, and attitudes; and demonstrate greater behaviour change and performance improvement than employees who are not motivated to learn. This study has found that employees who have the motivation to learn show intention to apply the training outcomes on the job following the training.

In addition, organisations should also emphasise on the development of the employees' capacity and their confidence to achieve the training goals. This is because employees who show high levels of self-efficacy concentrate on the demands

of a situation; show more confidence with their capacity to successfully learn targeted knowledge and skills; and perform acquired learning from the training program (Robbins and Judge, 2009). Moreover, this study has found that trainees with higher self-efficacy are more motivated to transfer the training outcomes at the workplace. One initiative that can be done by organisations to enhance the employees' self-efficacy is through enhancing positive expectations and outcomes. It was believed that this would instil values in the training before the trainees arrive at the training session.

Moreover, organisations must be aware that each action taken by the organisation could impact the attitudes and behaviours of the employees inside the organisation, including the employees' satisfaction towards their job. Therefore, in order to achieve high effectiveness of the training program, organisations are encouraged to promote any efforts that can lead to employees' satisfaction such as taking care of their well-being, consider their opinions, etc. The findings of this study reveal that satisfied employees were highly motivated to transfer the training outcomes at the workplace. Similarly, a study by Baharim (2008) also found that job satisfaction has a positive influence on employees' intention to apply what he/she has acquired from the training course at his/her work place.

Besides that, organisations should focus on planning, managing, and providing training that is totally related to the actual job setting to guarantee that training will be applied on the job. This study has found that the relevance of the training program, particularly the training content, has been seen as a particularly important area of training design, which can affect the trainee's intention to apply the training outcomes

in the workplace. If the training program is not relevant, then trainees are unlikely to apply the acquired knowledge and skills when they go back to the workplace.

Managers and supervisors should provide the opportunities for the trainees to apply what they have learned from the training program in the job setting to achieve the training goals. This study has revealed that having the opportunities to use the acquired knowledge and skills on the job can create the trainees' intention to transfer the training outcomes to the work setting. On the other hand, if a trainee does not get the opportunity to use recently acquired knowledge and skills, there is a low possibility for the transfer of training to happen in the job setting due to the trainee not being motivated to transfer the acquired knowledge and skills in the work setting following the training.

The organisational culture is another important element that can influence training effectiveness. One particular culture that has been recognized by this study is known as organisational learning culture. This study found that the implementation of organisational learning culture has influence employees to transfer the training outcomes at the workplace. Therefore, an organisation should be able to promote this culture to enhance the return on training investments. This can be done by providing supports to the acquisition of information, allowing sharing and distribution of learning, and provide rewards and recognition for learning and its application.

According to Hofstede (1985), Arabs rated higher than the United States (US) in the area of power distance. It means that the Arabs respect positions of power and people in authority more than in the US. This study has found that such national culture

(power distance) has influence the increasing of the employee's motivation to apply the learnt knowledge and skills on the job. Based on this result, organisations, especially the public organisations in Libya need to encourage the manager or supervisor to provide their expectations to the employees, prior to attending any training program. As the culture of Libya is power distance, the employees will respect the instructions given by their manager or supervisor, which can consequently produce positive behaviours among the employees (i.e. have the intention to transfer the training outcomes at the workplace following training).

Finally, this study has provided empirical evidence about the importance of motivation to transfer on employees. Specifically, this study has revealed that when an employee has the intention to transfer the training outcomes at the workplace, such behaviours can enhance their engagement to the organisation. Therefore, the organisation should emphasise on developing employees' motivation to transfer when organising any training program. The factors that have been found in this study can be regarded as a guideline to organisations on how to create motivation to transfer among employees who attended training.

5.6 Limitations and suggestions for future studies

First, this study only applies a quantitative research design; the researcher used a questionnaire survey technique to collect data. Future studies have to consider gathering the data from the respondents using a qualitative research design. Applying triangulation methods (qualitative and quantitative research design) can provide a big chance for more in-depth and a richer caption of how the factors identified in this

study can influence employees' motivation to apply the training outcomes in the workplace.

Second, this study applies a cross sectional research design; the data has been gathered at one point of time. It is suggested for future studies to re-examine the findings of this study with longitudinal research design. According to Chiaburu and colleagues (2010), the longitudinal method is more convenient than the cross-sectional method in terms of generating causal derivations, according to pre-existing theory and experimental data. For example, the data of organisational learning culture, job satisfaction, etc. were collected prior to the employee attending the training program. While data related to motivation to transfer is collected at the end of the training program.

Third, the data of this study have been collected from employees of the public sector organisations in Libya. Therefore, the generalization of the results of the current study beyond the current organisations are limited. A future study is recommended to replicate the conceptual framework of this study in other types of organisations such as the private sector organisations. A previous study has shown empirical evidence that the factors linked with motivation to transfer training outcomes vary significantly among the public and private sectors (Chen et al., 2006). By testing the conceptual framework of this study in different work settings such as the private sector, a more consistent view of their functions on the motivation to transfer training outcomes could be acquired (Cheng and Ho, 2001).

Fourth, this study only includes a number of factors (motivation to learn, self-efficacy, job satisfaction, content relevance, opportunity to perform, organisational learning culture, power distance) that have influence on the motivation to transfer. There is a possibility that other factors, which have not mentioned in this study could have influence on the motivation to transfer. For example, the role of supervisor and co-worker support, intrinsic and extrinsic rewards, and organizational commitment.

Fifth, the current study only focused on the influences of motivation to transfer on employees' work engagement. Future study is encouraged to further examine the impact of motivation to transfer on employees and organisations. Such efforts can provide essential empirical evidence about the importance of having motivation to transfer training outcomes at the workplace at the end of the training program.

5.7 Conclusion

The current study provides a fundamental knowledge and understanding about the factors and consequences of the motivation to transfer issue in North Africa countries, specifically the public sector organisations in Libya. This study has provide empirical evidence about the significance of employee's factors (motivation to learn, self-efficacy, and job satisfaction) in maximizing the employee's motivation to transfer the training outcomes to the job setting. Specifically, this study has found that trainees who have motivation to learn when participating in a training program show high motivation to transfer the acquired knowledge and skills to their job setting following the training. This study has also found that the employees who believe in their capacity to learn and use the recently acquired skills and knowledge are more motivated to use the recently acquired knowledge and skills at the work place.

Furthermore, the current study also suggested that satisfied employees are highly motivated to transfer the training outcomes at the work place. In addition to the factor related to employees, this study has found one aspect of training design, which is content relevance. It can influence employees' motivation to transfer the training outcomes following the training. Specifically, when the training content is similar to the work setting, trainees show a high intention to use the learnt knowledge, skills, and attitudes in their jobs. The study also provides empirical evidence for the significance of the work environment factors (e.g., opportunity to perform and organizational learning culture) in enhancing employees' intention to apply training outcomes in the job. Specifically, the current study has found that those trainees who get the opportunities to perform recently acquired knowledge, skills, and behaviours at the training are highly motivated to transfer these facets to their jobs immediately after the training course. This study has also found that learning culture has an influence on employees' motivation and intention to transfer the training outcomes to the workplace. Finally, this study has provided a conclusive evidence for the significance of national culture known as power distance to increase the trainee's motivation to transfer recently acquired knowledge and skills to the work place, and the significance of motivation to transfer in enhancing employees' work attitude and behaviour known as work engagement.