



Performance on the road: examining the critical role of training effectiveness amongst the blue-collar employees in Bahrain

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ABSTRACT

The present study attempted to investigate the role of training effectiveness on the employee performance of blue-collar employees working in Bahrain Transportation sector. Therein, the study examined the effectiveness of five different training programs offered to large vehicle drivers serving in the transportation industry. A total of 135 bus drivers from Alsadiq transport company Bahrain were sampled for the study to outline the effectiveness of three major training programs that they were offered including Customer Handling & Passenger Safety, Health & Hygiene and Guide to traffic laws and driving in Bahrain on their driving performance. Structural equation modeling using smart PLS was used for the present study for data analysis and interpretation. The study found a significant relationship impact of two programs on their driving performance of the respondents. The study forwards theoretical and practical implications and scope for further studies.

Contribution/ Originality

This study is one of the few empirical studies conducted in the transportation sector of Bahrain. The study has attempted to underline the significant role and contribution of training effectiveness on performance of blue-collar employees.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Organizations today are spending millions to help boost employee outcomes and behaviors at work. There has been a phenomenal increase in the focus of companies towards initiatives through which employees could be aided to boost their outcomes (Ahmed *et al.*, 2018). Let it be public or private sector, this trend is picking up momentum as the corporate world has realized its criticality in the current competitive market. Borate *et al.* (2014) have defined training as a methodical learning of skills to improve performance. Training has become a highly important HR components these days whereby, many organizations are actively spending and allocating hefty budget to boost business outcomes (Ford, 2014). Employee training has become essential for many reasons since all employees need it to get appropriate skills for their jobs. It generally encourages the employee to get ideas about the job procedures. Additionally, it helps them to adjust in with any given situation and/or condition hence enabling them to improve their performance. Notably, it is important for organizations to evaluate and/or examine as to what extent a certain training program is important and effective so that more objective training programs can be launched. This assessment of the effectiveness of each training program is also significant in outlining how and to what extent the business is evidently concerned about its training programs and how they continuously influence employee behaviors and outcomes (Kirkpatrick and Kirkpatrick, 2014).

Performance is the ultimate expectation of every business entity, let it be individual or organizational (Ahmed *et al.*, 2018; Umrani *et al.*, 2016; Ahmed *et al.*, 2017). Organizations are spending millions globally to come up with ways and/or strategies through which performance can be enhanced. Notably, employee training has turned to be one major component in this regard (Ahmed *et al.*, 2017; Bartel, 1994).

According to (Bohlander and Snell, 2010) organizations are increasingly spending more and more money every year on training to have the capacity to content in the local and the global market. Governments also consider training and developing people as the first step towards solving the unemployment problem in their nations. Training refers to an act of gaining new skills and knowledge to perform a given task(s) whereas effectiveness of a training program denotes to the responsiveness of a training programs towards enabling individuals to achieve the desired objectives (Werner and DeSimone, 2009). Training is described as “change agent”, which asserts that its primary purpose is to cause a change in employee knowledge, skills performance and/or behaviour. Training professionals are considered to be change leaders in organizations. They are important and potentially strategic to help directing change through programs and through the behaviours they model. The major role of training professionals is to figure out how to change the skills, behaviours and routines of individuals to meet or even exceed business expectations and performance requirements. They have to constantly observe and assess what needs to be developed in order to enhance their performance. In principle organizations invest in people to help them enrich their work behaviors, maximize performance achieve organizational objectives (Rothwell *et al.*, 2003).

Generally, training professionals, as change leaders, motivate the workforce to embrace change, creative direction for the change efforts, help the organization’s workforce adapt to change, and ensures that interventions are continuously monitored and guided in ways consistent with stockholders’ desired results. They should work through a team of change (Rothwell *et al.*, 2003). Borate *et al.* (2014) have defined the training as a methodical learning of skills to improve performance. All employees need it to get appropriate skills for those jobs. It generally encourages the employee to get ideas about the job procedure and help them to adjust in with any condition. The training results in growth of employees which leads to improve the organization wide performance. Training is also explained as a systematic process to provide essential information to employees, necessary to boost their performance. It is very important for any organization to know if the employees implementing what they learn during the training events. Evaluation for training normally helps to explore the value of training. It is processing to evaluate the outcomes and determines the importance of training and how it effect on the employees and organizational goals.

Every training program should be assessed to ensure that they are in line with the organizational expectations. Notable scholars have underlined the significance of training on employee behaviors and outcomes (Ahmed *et al.*, 2015; Ahmed *et al.*, 2016; Ahmed *et al.*, 2017).

2. KIRKPATRICK MODEL OF TRAINING

Kirkpatrick' model has Four stages (reaction, learning, behavior and results) for training evaluation. It is the most model used training evaluation. It's written to find a far-reaching diagram for actualizing the model in a way that really expands the organization outcomes. Utilizing these creative ideas, standards, methods, and contextual investigations, you can better train the employees, enhance the way of organizations, and, at last, enable the organization to meet its most critical objectives. The first stage is about employees discover the importance of training and applicable to their employment. The second stage is about employees obtain the expected information, abilities, demeanor, certainty and responsibility in view of their support in the training. The third stage is about employees apply what they realized amid training when they are back at work. Fourth stage is about focused on results happen because of the training (Kirkpatrick and Kirkpatrick, 2016).

Training Programs generally refer to events designed for training employees in specific skills. This program provides the employees with Knowledge and new skills. Accordingly, training effectiveness refers to objectivity of the training towards enabling attendees to attain required performance and outcomes (Werner and DeSimone, 2009). Many organizations are committed to providing training for their employees, but a few of them are actually concerned about evaluating training effectiveness. In fact, training specialists at big organizations are fully aware that the ultimate goal of training is to improve the employee performance which eventually results in improving the overall organizational performance and productivity. Therefore, when evaluating training effectiveness, training professionals must go beyond the element of just conducting the training programs. Henceforth, following the assertions of Kirkpatrick model, the present study attempted to test the impact of training programs on the learning, reaction and changes in work behavior and performance of the employees in the transportation business to outline their effectiveness respectively.

2.1. Training programs at al-Sadiq transport

Companies usually offer a wide variety of training programs, keeping in view their customer base, nature of business, market and industry requirements. Pertaining to the transportation business generally, health, safety, customer handling and traffic law-based training programs are the most common and popular. Bearing these in mind, Al-Sadiq transport also offer similar programs that match the industry needs and business requirements. These programs are health and hygiene, customer handling and passenger safety and traffic laws and driving in Bahrain. Management at Al-Sadiq transport believes that these training programs are critical for their employees to give excellent driving performance.

Generally, companies offer health and hygiene programs to help the organizations, staffs, and others improve and develop work environment health and hygiene programs, prepare plans of action to prevent accidents or occupational diseases, and to conduct investigations as some of the many ways to meet and achieve good health and safety practices in the working environment. (HAS, 2018).

Accordingly, programs related to customer handling and passenger safety are provided in service-based organizations on a higher note whereby, participants are taken to gain an in-sight into customer handling and how service businesses can ensure safety of passenger. The element of passenger safety goes critical for business like Sadiq transport which deals with providing transportation services to its customers. Similarly, guide to traffic laws and driving in Bahrain is another important training program provided by transportation businesses. Sadiq transport believes the program to be of high importance in ensuring that the drivers are well aware of the traffic laws and hence drive appropriately. Since the present is based on case study approach, it attempted to test

to what extent these three training programs are becoming effective in boosting the driving performance of the drivers in Al-Sadiq Transport.

2.2. Hypothesis testing

Keeping in view the three major training programs offered to the blue-collar employees in the chosen company, the present study tested the following hypotheses to outline which ones are perceived to be more effective by the respondents in connection to their driving performance.

H1: Customer handling and passenger safety training programs will be positively perceived by the blue-collar employees to the extent that it will have a positive influence on their driving performance

H2: Guide to traffic laws and driving in Bahrain training program will be positively perceived by the blue-collar employees to the extent that it will have a positive influence on their driving performance.

H3: Health and Hygiene will be positive perceived by the blue-collar employees to the extent that it will have a positive influence on their driving performance.

2.3. Measurements

Three prominent mandatory training programs provided to all the driving staff were assessed to examine how they were influencing their driving performance. Effectiveness of customer handling & passenger safety was assessed through 3-item scale that enquired respondents to outline the importance of the trainings, its effectiveness and their understandability of the content. Similarly, Health & Hygiene was also examined through 3-items enquiring the importance of the training program, its effectiveness and understandability of the content. Likewise, effectiveness regarding guide to traffic laws and driving in Bahrain was also examined through 3-item scale examining the similar prospects. Lastly, driving performance was examined through 4-item scale.

2.4. Sampling and data collection

All the full time employed drivers of Al-Sadiq transport were sampled for the present study which totaled to 135 during the month of February 2018 through using self-administered questionnaire. The respondents were clearly informed pertaining the confidentiality of the personal details of the respondents so that they could respond to the questionnaire with full objectivity.

Keeping in view the lack of understanding and literacy issue, the drivers were invited in batches of 15 whereby, they were given details explanation on the aim of the study and explanation on the each of the statement in the question so that they could respond effectively. The study resulted with 126 valid questionnaires that were taken further for data analysis.

2.5. Data analysis

Structural equation modeling (Wold, 1985) using Smart PLS 2.0 was employed in the present study (Ringle *et al.*, 2005). The SEM procedure performs the data analysis in two stages and they are:

- Assessment of measurement model
- Assessment of structural model (Hair *et al.*, 2014).

2.6. Measurement model

Measurement model caters to the examination of individual items loadings, AVE scores and alpha coefficients which are known as the psychometric properties of the conceptualized framework. In connection to the assessment of individual item loadings, all the items resulted with loadings higher than the recommended threshold of 0.50 (Chin, 1998; Hair *et al.*, 2014). Therein, items of customer handling and passenger safety ranged between 0.748 to 0.907; health and hygiene ranged between 0.854 to 0.900. Accordingly, individual items of guide to traffic laws and driving in Bahrain scored between 0.854 to 0.869 wherein, individual item loadings for driving performance ranged between

0.871 to 0.895. Accordingly, the present study also examined the average variance extracted to ensure the convergent validity whereas per Chin (1998), the AVE scores should be greater than 0.50. Table 1 shows that all the constructs resulted in higher AVE scores thus confirming convergent validity. Parallel to this, the study also assessed the composite reliability scores to affirm internal consistency reliability of the constructs. As per Bagozzi and Yi (1988), the CR scores should be greater than or equal to 0.70. Table 1 and Figure 1 highlights that all the constructs resulted in values higher than the recommended threshold thus, confirming sufficient internal consistency.

Table 1: AVE, Loadings and composite reliability

Construct	Loadings	AVE	Composite Reliability	R ²
Customer Handling & Passenger Safety		0.740	0.822	
CHPS1	0.907			
CHPS2	0.914			
CHPS3	0.748			
Driving Performance		0.780	0.905	0.236
DP1	0.871			
DP2	0.896			
DP3	0.895			
DP4	0.869			
Guide to Traffic Laws & Driving in Bahrain		0.766	0.846	
GTLDB1	0.8698			
GTLDB2	0.9005			
GTLDB3	0.8547			
Health & Safety		0.637	0.710	
HH1	0.8681			
HH2	0.8434			
HH3	0.669365			

Following to this the study also examined discriminant validity for each of the construct. As per Chin (1998) the discriminant validity should be assessed through taking the square root of AVE scores in a cross table. Therein, the square root values should be greater than the reflective loadings of other constructs. Table 2 highlights scores in this regard whereby, all the square root of each construct's AVE score has ranged higher in comparison with the other reflective loadings thus, confirming adequate discriminant validity.

Table 2: Discriminant validity

Construct				
CHPS	0.8603			
DP	0.4211	0.8831		
GTLDB	0.5720	0.4329	0.8752	
HH	0.5071	0.3903	0.7537	0.7985

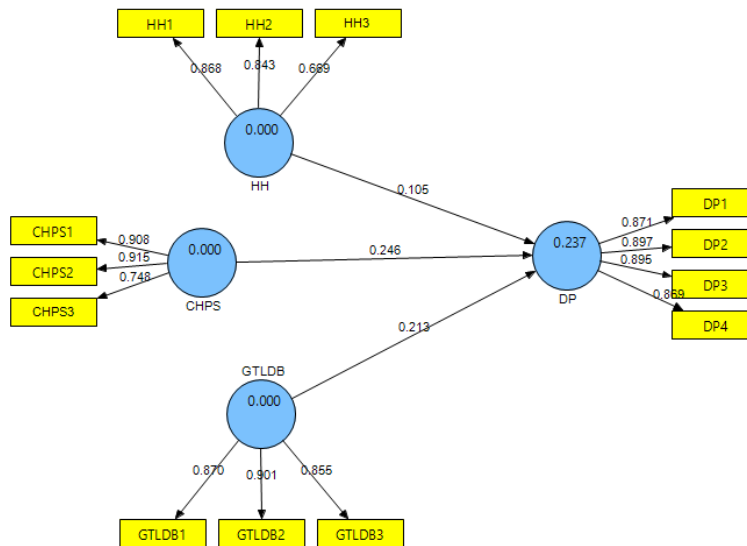


Figure 1: Measurement model

2.7. Structural model

Upon the successful confirmation of measurement model, the present study tested the structural model which caters to the examination of significance of the path coefficients between the hypothesized relationships. Bootstrapping procedures were applied in this regard, whereby, 5000 bootstrap sample was employed to test these relationships. Table 2 highlights that the respondents perceived positive about customer handling and passenger safety practices training program and hence enhancing their driving performance. This result thus has landed support for hypothesis 1. Accordingly, the study has found significantly positive results regarding guide to traffic laws and driving in Bahrain training program and driving performance relationship. In other words, the drivers viewed the training program to be higher effective thus resulting in boosting their driving performance and waving support for hypothesis 2. However, the present study did not find any support for health and hygiene training program and its impact on the driving performance of the drivers. In other words, the respondents did not perceive health and hygiene to be effective enough to facilitate them towards harnessing their driving performance thus rejecting hypothesis 3. Table 3 and figure 2 provides further detail in this regard.

Table 3: Structural model results

Relationship	Sample Mean	Std Error	T-Value	Decision
CHPS -> DP	0.2460	0.0665	3.694	Supported
GTLDB -> DP	0.2132	0.0830	2.567	Supported
HH -> DP	0.1048	0.0833	1.258	Not Supported

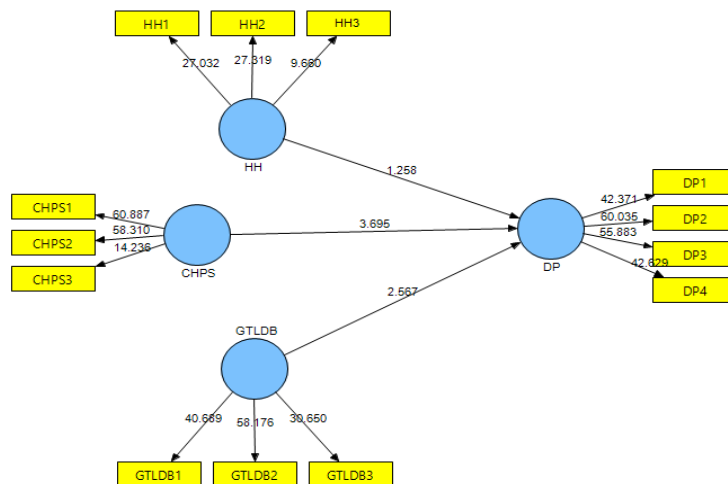


Figure 2: Structural model

3. DISCUSSION

The present study attempted to examine the effectiveness of training programs in the context of enhancing evident performance of the drivers in a transportation business in Bahrain. In specific, the study examined three major training programs offered to the blue-collar employees (drivers) of a large transportation company in the country to see how effective they are perceived in relation to boosting their driving performance. The study found significant results on the hypothesized relationship between customer handling and passenger safety training program and driving performance. The findings suggest that the drivers viewed customer handling the study also and passenger safety training to be an important and effective one for their work outcomes and behaviors in particular thus, boosting their driving performance. This hence highlights that the drivers found this training program to be highly effective in harnessing their on-road performance. Similarly, the respondents also forwarded significant results for training program related to guide to traffic laws and driving in Bahrain in connection to driving performance. The study found that there is a significant relationship between these two elements henceforth confirming the need, importance and vitality of this training program towards boosting the driving performance of the blue-collar employees in the transportation business. on a higher note, the health and hygiene training program resulted to be insignificant in relation with driving performance in the present study. This could possibly be due to the fact that health and hygiene training program relates to the individual physical health and wellbeing and therefore is not concerned with the driving performance directly.

3.1. Implications for theory and practice

Overall, the findings of the present study have outlined that there is a significant relationship between training and performance in general. In particular, the results have also underlined a significant impact of individual training program effectiveness with the performance of employees as the present study found two training programs perceived as effective in boosting their driving performance. This hence goes in consonance with the meta-analysis results of Arthur *et al.* (2003) and Noe (1986). The results hence forwards implications for top management and people in-charge of organizing and conducting training program pertaining to employees` perceptions regarding each training program offered. The findings have underlined that regardless of the need and importance of each training program, it is important to understand that not every individual will potentially view all offered training programs to be equally vital.

Additionally, with regards to performance prospects, it is important for businesses to understand the relevance of each of the training program against the behavior and/or outcome it is assessed since not every training program can possibly influence every employee outcomes(s). In particular, the findings have forwarded implications for managers and top management in Al-Sadiq transport pertaining to the three major training programs offered to the drivers in the company. The findings have underlined that in relation to the driving performance two of the training programs were found to be effective which thus implies less relevance and vitality of the third program. Based on the findings, the company may launch a training program more relevant to their performance.

3.2. Recommendations

The present study attempted to outline the effectiveness of training programs offered to blue-collar employees (drivers) at Alsadiq Transport Company in Bahrain. The findings have outlined that these employees viewed customer handling and passenger safety training program to be very effective for managing improving their performance. This finding hence suggests boosting this program and enriching it further to enhance the drivers` performance on the roads. Customer handling is a major component of service industry and employees working in the transportation business particularly in the school business handling young pupils unquestionably require sufficient training in this regard. Accordingly, the study also found significant results pertaining to the influence of traffic laws and driving performance management training program. The finding suggests that the employees at Alsadiq see the program fruitful and beneficial for them to improve their performance on the road. The company may offer also relevant training programs to help them better understand traffic laws and driving practices in Bahrain. Lastly, in connection to health and hygiene, the study found insignificant results which could be possibly because of the limited direct link of the training program with their driving performance. In order to improve the link between health and hygiene and drivers` performance, the company may possibly enrich the training program through including information as to how good health and hygiene can help them to stay active and productive hence boosting their performance. The company also attempts to review the course to see if there is anything lacking in it.

3.3. Limitations and Scope for further Studies

Besides notable empirical contributions, the present study also has some important limitations. Firstly, the present study was conducted through cross sectional means whereby, the study only focused on the effectiveness of training programs in one particular company. Henceforth, scholars in this domain may attempt to investigate training effectiveness across a wider work sector. Accordingly, with the case study approach, the present study only catered to a small sample size therefore, a bigger sample is advised for future studies to help understand the effectiveness of training programs on employee performance. Likewise, longitudinal study is also recommended keeping in view the cross sectional design of the study to have generalizable results. In parallel, future scholar may also consider investigating the effectiveness of training programs across different organizational set ups and/or industries to unearth how it connects with individual performance. Pertaining to the performance, future studies may also attempt to look into exploring the impact of training on group performance.

4. CONCLUSION

The present study has found a significant relationship between effectiveness of the training program(s) and their connection with the performance prospects of employees in a business set up. In relation to the transportation business, the present study found that the blue-collar employees (drivers) viewed training programs related to customer handling & passenger safety and traffic laws as highly effective thus, enhancing their driving performance.

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