

## THE CHALLENGES IN TRANSFER OF TRAINING AFTER COVID 19: CASE OF HOTELS IN NAY PYI TAW, MYANMAR

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### ABSTRACT

*The objectives of the study are to analyze the effect of challenges on transfer of training after COVID 19 Pandemic and the effect of transfer of training on employee performance. The study focuses on hotels located in Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar. Employees desire to transfer their trained skills is limited after COVID 19. Employees have changed their expectations related to their job. Although hotels in Nay Pyi Taw implements training programs, transfer of training among employees is a significant challenge for hotels with strong competition. In the present condition, hotels hire the new staff. It is important for the hotels to review the factors that create challenges for transfer of training. As the challenges, job security, supportive work environment, empowerment, compensation and benefits and social wellbeing are focused in this study. To prove the objectives of the study, primary data is collected from 178 non-managerial employees from five hotels with more than 30 employees in Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar. The respondents are selected by using two-stage sampling method. Structure questionnaire is used to collect primary data. Data collection period was in July and August, 2022. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with Linear Structural Relationships (LISREL) 8.72 is used as the main analytical tool. The results of the study revealed that job security, supportive work environment, compensation and benefits and social wellbeing have significant direct effect on transfer of training. Transfer of training has significant direct effect on employee performance. Empowerment has no significant effect on transfer of training. According to the results, the hotels in Nay Pyi Taw should put more emphasis on the significant factors that employees demand for transfer of training. Without transfer of training, the performance improvement of employees cannot be achieved by the hotels.*

Keywords: Challenges, Transfer of Training, Employee Performance, Hotels in Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar

### INTRODUCTION

Human resource is the key success factor for any organization. Organizations emphasize the means to improve knowledge, skills and abilities of their human resources. Dessler (2020) defined human resource management as the process of acquiring, training, appraising and compensating employees, etc. and of attending to their labor relations, health and safety and fairness concerns. Managing human resources expects the excellent individual performance of employees that is the key to gain better performance of the whole organization. Performance is accepted as the critical issue in training and development and an organization makes a shift toward the performance mind-set by linking training to performance goals (Ascher, 2013). The excellent performance of employees is the key to overcome the competitors. Training is essential for employees to upgrade their performance. For successful training, transfer of training or the actual application of training outcomes by employees after training is the expectation of organizations because of costly training programs. After COVID 19 pandemic, employee perception on transfer of training and the behavior to apply the training outcomes have significantly changed. Several challenges are faced by organizations to have successful transfer of training. Previous studies pointed out challenges of transfer of training. Among them, the study focused on job security, supportive work environment, empowerment, compensation and benefits and social wellbeing as the challenges of transfer of training. These challenges are job-related factors.

The objectives of the study are to analyze (1) the effect of challenges (job security, supportive work environment, empowerment, compensation and benefits and social wellbeing) on transfer of training after COVID 19 Pandemic and (2) the effect of transfer of training on employee performance.

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Organizations provide various types of trainings to employees, but in some training, it is found that the employees who attend the training are less re-applicable the trained skills than the organizations expect. In the present condition, employees have different expectation after training to transfer their skills.

### JOB SECURITY

The International Labour Organization (ILO) estimates that the economic crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic could lead to the loss of 25 million jobs worldwide (ILO, 2020). Job insecurity is a serious problem faced by people. Job security is defined as the perception and expectation of jobholders regarding continuity of current job (Davy et al., 1997). Employment security or job security relates to an individual's actual or perceived likelihood of keeping their job (Nnadi et al., 2022). According to Kalleberg (2018), job insecurity includes not only job loss, but also other characteristics at work such as remuneration or career development opportunities. Some studies proved that employees perceive their jobs secure and then they are more likely to perform well for the overall well-being of the organization (Debus et al., 2019; Emmanuel & Joseph, 2021).

**H1: Job security has direct effect on transfer of training.**

## SUPPORTIVE WORK ENVIRONMENT

An effective work environment is one of the key elements for training effectiveness. According to the definition of Boswell et al. (2017), a supportive work environment is the climatic component that includes supervisory/peer support, obstacle, and prospect to apply learned behavior in the workplace. Creating the work environment with excellent application of skills is strongly demanded by employees. The supportive work environment enhances the employees' interest in their jobs, thereby increasing their performance (Ma Prieto & Pilar Pérez-Santana, 2014). Kundu and Lata (2017) identified the supportive work environment as the support from supervisors, organization, and peers. The supportive work environment includes peer interaction, perceived climate, perceived organizational support and supervisory relationship (Yusliza et al., 2021).

**H2: Supportive work environment has direct effect on transfer of training.**

## EMPOWERMENT

Empowerment refers to motivational behaviors among employees that competently fulfill their work role (Spreitzer, 1996). Empowerment is an essential factor for employees in hospitality and service organizations where the high service quality standards need empowered employees (Jauhari et al., 2017). According to Al-douri (2018), psychological empowerment should be used as an analytical instrument in the hotel business, enabling employees to take immediate and relevant decisions without permanent reference to higher authorities. It is also stated that psychological empowerment is an indicator of effective hotel performance (Ibrahim, 2020). The importance of empowerment for employees in transfer of training is focused in this study.

**H3: Empowerment has direct effect on transfer of training.**

## COMPENSATION AND BENEFITS

"Employee compensation includes all forms of pay going to employees and arising from their employment. It has two main components, direct financial payments (wages, salaries, incentives, commissions, and bonuses) and indirect financial payments (financial benefits like employer-paid insurance and vacations)" (Dessler, 2020, p. 350). Benefits are an important element of employees' aggregate compensation: the welfare and financial well-being (Kristal 2017). Thunnissen and Buttiens (2017) suggested that attracting and retaining talented employees is based on offering the best compensation packages by organizations. The compensation package is essential for organizations to gain more benefits.

**H4: Compensation and benefits have direct effect on transfer of training.**

## SOCIAL WELLBEING

The wellbeing indicates the ability to realize one's potential, cope with normal stress, work productively and contribute to the community. According to Sakka, and Ahammad (2020), employee well-being, refers to psychological, physical, and social well-being. Psychological well-being is mainly related to satisfaction with ones' job and life, physical well-being with health, and social well-being is related to aspects such as interpersonal relationships, participation in community, and acceptance (Grant et al., 2007). In the study of Linton et al. (2016), wellbeing includes mental wellbeing, social wellbeing, and spiritual wellbeing. As social wellbeing, they stated that social relationships and communities are mainly focused. Thus, social well-being is based on interaction among employees to care and support each other in job and in social environment.

**H5: Social wellbeing has direct effect on transfer of training.**

## TRANSFER OF TRAINING

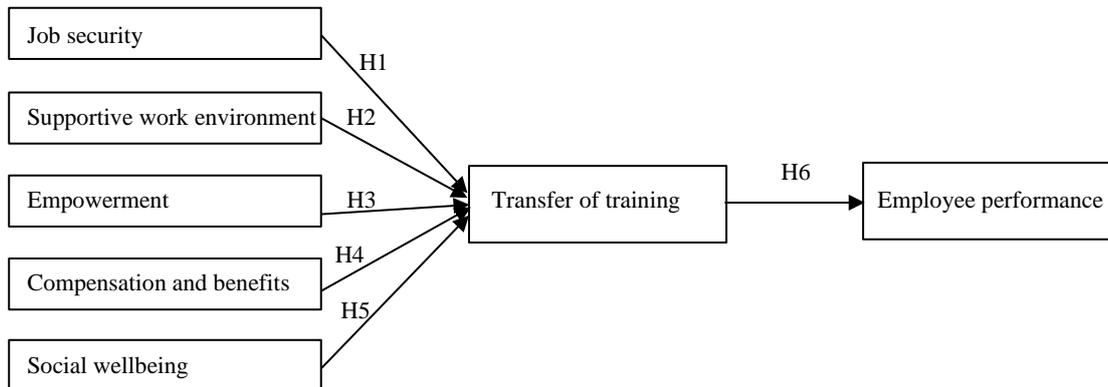
According to Baldwin and Ford (1988), the three main factors are essential for training transfer which are trainee characteristics (ability, personality and motivation); training design (principles of learning, sequencing and training content) and work environment (support and opportunity to use). According to Noe (2017), transfer of training is the trainees effectively and continually applying what they have learned in training to their real jobs. Transfer of training can serve as a powerful measure of training effectiveness. Among the training effectiveness criteria, the most important impact is the transfer of training, which leads to improvements in employee and organizational performance (Bhatti & Kaur, 2010, p.658). Moreover, transfer of training is the extent to which trainees successfully apply the knowledge, skills and abilities (KSAs) learned in training to their jobs (Suleiman et al., 2018). Several studies proved these three factors to have the relationship with transfer of training. Training transfer can improve the effectiveness, productivity and improving knowledge and skills of employees to face the challenges of the workplace (Sayadi et al., 2017). After COVID 19 Pandemic, the performance of employees is a questionable condition. If the skills and knowledge acquired through training are not applied in the workplace, the investment on training will fail to increase individual performance (Ansari et al., 2021). The challenges of transfer of training are the area to be emphasized because of different demands of employees in the present working condition.

## EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE

Because of the poor transfer of training, the newly trained skills are not transferred to the work environment by employees to result in positive changes in job performance (Manju & Suresh, 2013). The success or failure of the organization and the entire performance of organization depend on the performance of individual employees. Employee performance cannot be separated from transfer of training which is the application of training outcomes by employees. The work-related performance is the result of the work of a person or employee in carrying out the tasks assigned to him in accordance with his responsibilities and roles (Iskamto, 2021). Additionally, Nellyanti et al. (2021) stated that employee performance needs an assessment with the intention of providing a good opportunity for employees for their career plans seen from their strengths and weaknesses.

**H6: Transfer of training has direct effect on employee performance.**

**Figure 1: Conceptual framework**



**METHODOLOGY**

**RESEARCH INSTRUMENT AND KEY RESPONDENTS**

The structured questionnaire with five-point Likert scale was used to collect data from the respondents. The questionnaire has two sections. The demographic characteristics of respondents (age, gender, educational level, work experiences, etc.) were asked in the first section. The second section explored the employee perception on job security, supportive work environment, empowerment, compensation and benefits, social wellbeing, transfer of training and employee performance based five-point Likert scale items (1= strongly disagreed from 5= strongly agree). By using two-stage sampling method, the first step is choosing hotels. In this study, the five hotels with more than 30 non-managerial level employees in Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar were selected. The second stage is selecting respondents. The questionnaire was distributed to 204 non-managerial level employees from the selected hotels. 178 complete set of questionnaires were included in the final analysis of the study and the response rate is 87.25%.

**ANALYTICAL TOOLS AND PROCEDURE**

Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with LISREL was used as the main analytical tool to test the proposed model. Descriptive statistics was used to describe the demographic characteristics of the respondents and their perception on variables based on the mean values. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was carried out for factor analysis. CFA is an inseparable part of the SEM technique because it provides a way to test a measurement model or the relationship of observed variables to understanding constructs (Yamkovenko & Holton, 2010, p.396). Cronbach’s alpha values were used to prove the reliability of variables with the minimum acceptable level of at least 0.70 (Cronbach, 1951). The structural equation modeling (SEM) with LISREL 8.72 was used to prove the objectives and hypotheses of the study.

**RESULTS**

The demographic characteristics of the respondents showed that male respondents were more than female respondents. According to the age level, 18-27 years and 28-37 years are the two largest number of respondents. Most of the respondents have bachelor degree and some gained master degree. 33.7%, 28.1% and 33.1% represent working experience of respondents with 1-3 years, 4-6 years and 7 years and more respectively. The respondents with training experiences of 1 to 2 times and 3-4 times are the two largest groups of respondents. Empowerment and employee performance were measured with five items each. Job security, supportive work environment and compensation and benefits were measured with six items each. Social wellbeing was measured with seven items and transfer of training was measured with nine items. The results of the respondent perception on variables (mean values), reliability and correlation of variables are shown in Table 1.

**Table 1: Means, reliability and correlations of variables**

Variables	Mean	JSEC	SWE	EMP	CB	SOC	TOT	EP	Alpha
JSEC	4.03	-							0.851
SWE	3.84	.715**	-						0.938
EMP	3.86	.475**	.596**	-					0.888
CB	4.07	.512**	.571**	.486**	-				0.921
SOC	4.04	.611**	.657**	.552**	.614**	-			0.924
TOT	3.90	.698**	.765**	.586**	.669**	.685**	-		0.948
EP	4.05	.510**	.451**	.428**	.680**	.478**	.652**	-	0.909

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

JSEC = Job security, SWE = Supportive work environment, EMP = Empowerment, CB = Compensation and benefits, SOC = Social wellbeing, TOT = Transfer of training, EP = Employee performance

To check the fitness of the model,  $\chi^2/df$ ; comparative fit index (CFI); incremental fit index (IFI); normed fit index (NFI); Non-normed fit index (NNFI); root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) and standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) (Bentler, 1990; Williams et al., 2009, Hair et al., 2010) were used in this study. The model fit statistics are presented in Table 2 and the direct, indirect and total effects of the variables are shown in Table 3.

**Table 2: Models and fit statistics**

Models fit	$\chi^2$	df	CFI	IFI	NFI	NNFI	SRMR	RMSEA
Final model	100.08	92	0.99	1.00	0.99	0.99	0.02	0.02
Suggested values	$\chi^2/df < 2$		$\geq 0.95$	$\geq 0.95$	$\geq 0.95$	$\geq 0.95$	$\leq 0.08$	$\leq 0.05$

All  $\chi^2$  values are significant at  $p < 0.05$ . df = degree of freedom, CFI = comparative fit index; IFI = incremental fit index; NFI = normed fit index; NNFI = non-normed fit index; SRMR = standardized root-mean-square residual; RMSEA = root-mean-square error of approximation.

**Table 3: Summary of effects**

Variables	Transfer of training			Employee performance		
	DE	IE	TE	DE	IE	TE
Job security	0.59**	-	0.59**	-	-	-
Supportive work environment	0.72**	-	0.72**	-	-	-
Empowerment	0.08	-	0.08	-	-	-
Compensation and benefits	0.67**	-	0.67**	-	-	-
Social wellbeing	0.61**	-	0.61**	-	-	-
Transfer of training	-	-	-	0.86**	-	0.86**

\*\*  $p < .01$ ; DE = Direct effect; IE = Indirect effect; TE = Total effect

Table 3 describes the direct, indirect and total effects of the variables. The results reveal that job security, supportive work environment, compensation and benefits and social wellbeing have significant direct effect on transfer of training ( $\gamma = 0.59$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), ( $\gamma = 0.72$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), ( $\gamma = 0.67$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), and ( $\gamma = 0.61$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) respectively. Thus, hypothesis 1, hypothesis 2, hypothesis 4 and hypothesis 5 were accepted. On the other hand, the result did not support the significant direct effect of empowerment on transfer of training ( $\gamma = 0.08$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Hypothesis 3 was rejected. Although the hotels practice empowerment, the empowerment did not play a significant role for employees to transfer the trained skills. The study also tested the effect of transfer of training on employee performance. The result proved that transfer of training has significant direct effect on employee performance ( $\beta = 0.86$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Thus, hypothesis 6 was accepted. It can be concluded that the four challenges of transfer of training are needed to be controlled by the hotels. The effective and supportive condition of these four challenges will be able to transfer the trained skills of employees after costly training. Furthermore, because of successful transfer of the trained skills, the performance improve of individual employees can be achieved by the hotels.

## CONCLUSION

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The study is about the challenges of transfer of training of hotels in Nay Pyi Taw. Employee performance is the expected outcome after successful transfer of training. As challenges of transfer of training, job security, supportive work environment, empowerment, compensation and benefits and social wellbeing were focused in this study. Although trainee characteristics, training design and work environment are essential in transfer of training, after COVID 19 pandemic, the needs and expectation are significantly changing. To achieve successful transfer of training, organizations need to transform their perception on other job-related factors. Previous studies pointed out some factors for transfer of training and employee performance. The different factors or challenges of transfer of training are the area to be reviewed.

The respondent perception on challenges in transfer of training is evaluated based on the mean values shown in Table (1). It is concluded that the employees agreed that the challenges are presented in the workplace and those are essential to transfer their trained skills. If these challenges cannot be controlled by the hotels, the successful transfer of training is not achieved as results after training. Among them, compensation and benefits showed the maximum mean value and it is agreed that the employees expect the satisfactory compensation and benefits. According to the correlation results, the five challenges have positive correlation with transfer of training. The more the challenges are created as a favorable condition for employees, the more the transfer of training will be achieved. According to Chowdhury et al. (2015), empowerment has moderate positive correlation with transfer of training and other four challenges have strong positive correlation with transfer of training. Moreover, transfer of training showed moderate positive correlation with employee performance. The more the transfer of training in the workplace, the better the performance of employees can be expected by the hotels.

The LISREL results revealed that there is significant direct effect of four challenges (job security, supportive work environment, compensation and benefits and social wellbeing) on transfer of training. Among the significant variables, supportive work environment has the strongest effect on transfer of training followed by compensation and benefits, social wellbeing and job security. As the challenges, if the hotels cannot create the favorable condition that support the needs and expectation of employees, employees will not have desire to apply their skills after training. Because of favorable condition of these four challenges, transfer of training is the outcome for the hotels and the hotels gain several benefits through transfer of training. Moreover, the significant direct effect of transfer of training on employee performance was also explored in this study. Transfer of training can actually create better performance of employees. It can be concluded that without transfer of training or the actual application of training outcomes by employees, the excellent performance of employees will be a question for the hotel. This, the hotels face several challenges after COVID 19 pandemic and these conditions cannot be ignored by the hotels. Especially for new employees, they must have strong desire to use the trained skills with the support of the better condition of challenges in the workplace. On the other hand, empowerment has no effect on transfer of training.

## **SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

In the present situation, the hotels in Nay Pyi Taw recruit employees and implement training for them. The hotels expect the effective application of training outcomes or transfer of training. As new challenges of transfer of training, the study focused on job security, supportive work environment, empowerment, compensation and benefits and social wellbeing. The employee perception on these challenges and their desire to apply the trained skills were analyzed. According to the results of the study, the hotels should review the present needs and expectations of employees after training. If the expectation of employees cannot be fulfilled, the hotels will not achieve the expected transfer of training.

The LISREL results showed that job security, supportive work environment, compensation and benefits and social wellbeing have significant direct effect on transfer of training. The hotels should focus more on these four factors to upgrade the transfer of training of employees. The support work environment has the strongest direct effect on transfer of training. The hotels should review the present work environment to be more supportive work environment. The managerial and supervisory skills should base on the sense of creating supportive work environment. The requirements of employees should be fulfilled by timely feedback and support. The attractive compensation and benefits play an essential role in transfer of training. The compensation system and the benefits provided to employees should base on the performance of employees. Social wellbeing and job security are strongly demanded by employees in the present days. The hotels should not be ignored on these two factors also. The study also explored the direct effect of transfer of training on employee performance. The hotels should put more emphasis on transfer of training and should create better job-related factors for employees to yield the better performance of employees.

On the other hand, empowerment has no effect on transfer of training. The employees want to apply their knowledge and skills without any control. The freedom in performing the tasks is the expectation of employees. In the real condition, empowerment is a weak practice in the hotels. Empowerment is not essential to determine the transfer of training of employees. The responsible persons of the hotels should review and allow employees to perform their tasks independently and only provide direction and support to improve their performance. Thus, the challenges and transfer of training should be emphasized by the hotels because favorable and supportive challenges create transfer of training and because of transfer of training, employee have improved their performance. The results of the study fulfilled the research gap by exploring the challenges of transfer of training and employee performance based on the employees of the hotels located in Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar.

The results of this study have important implications for human resource managers of the hotels, policy makers, and practitioners of the hotels and for researchers. First, it is interesting to note that the findings point to the positive effect of challenges on transfer of training. It is suggested that organizations should emphasize the challenges after COVID 19 pandemic to enhance the behavior of employees to apply the training outcomes. If the employees fail to apply their training in their job, the hotels should identify the challenges that block employees' ability to apply their training and motivational strategies to upgrade their ability to apply the trained skills. Second, the significant and positive effect of transfer of training on employee performance. By creating a successful transfer of training, the managers or the responsible persons of the hotels emphasize employee performance improvement through the effective transfer of training. Thus, the hotels should focus more on the challenges for employees to apply their skills and transfer of training to yield the better performance of employees.

Some limitations should be focused by further research to fulfill the gap of the study. As one limitation, the scope of the study is hotels located in Nay Pyi Taw. Other areas and other service organizations should be focused and employee performance should be analyzed. The five challenges are tested in this study. Other challenges that influence transfer of training and employee performance are the area to be examined by further studies to get different results. Finally, the respondents are non-managerial level employees. The perception of managerial level employees or managers will differ from non-managers. Further research should study the perception of managers on those challenges and their transfer of training and performance.

## **CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE STUDY**

There are two main contributions in this study. As the first contribution, the study explored the effect of challenges on transfer of training and employee performance. By exploring the direct effect of job security, supportive work environment, compensation and benefits and social wellbeing on transfer of training and the direct effect of transfer of training on employee performance, the hotels gain the knowledge of the importance of challenges which can actually create transfer of training. Moreover, because of transfer of training, employee performance becomes the expected outcome for the hotels. Thus, the hotels have the ideas to focus

on these four important challenges and transfer of training to upgrade the performance of employees and to accept that the expected performance of employees cannot be obtained without the successful transfer of training.

The second contribution is the exploration of the challenges of transfer of training based on hotels in Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar. There were no previous studies that focused on these challenges and the effect of transfer of training on employee performance with the analysis of LISREL. The research gap is fulfilled by examining the effect of challenges on transfer of training and the effect of transfer of training on employee performance.

## CONCLUSION

The study explored the present challenges of transfer of training faced by the hotels in Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar. Job security, supportive work environment, empowerment, compensation and benefits and social wellbeing are explored as challenges. The weak support of the hotels related to job security, supportive work environment, compensation and benefits and social wellbeing creates the poor application of trained skills by employees. According to their perception, employees accepted the presence of those challenges. Additionally, their expectation after COVID 19 pandemic had changed. Although, trainee characteristics, training design and work environment are essential for transfer of training, the challenges especially job-related challenges are needed to be considered in organizations after training. According to the results, job security, supportive work environment, compensation and benefits and social wellbeing are supported by the hotels and then, transfer of training is achieved. It means that if these challenges are attractive, supportive and are created to reach the acceptable level of employees, they will have more desire to apply their skills after training. The study also proved the significant effect of transfer of training on employee performance. Without transfer, the expected performance level of employees is a problem for the hotels. Because of transfer of training, the better performance of employees is yielded by the hotels. The study proved that the transfer of training and employee performance improvement are significant benefits for the hotels by creating job security, supportive work environment, compensation and benefits and social wellbeing as attractive for employees after training.

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