

## Effects of Organizational Learning Culture and Developmental Feedback on Engineers' Career Satisfaction in the Manufacturing Organizations in Malaysia.

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### *Abstract*

*The purpose of this paper is to test the hypotheses that relations between organizational learning culture, developmental feedback and career satisfaction in the manufacturing organizations. A sample of 155 engineers was drawn from two major manufacturing organizations located in the Northern Malaysia. Participation in the research was voluntary and data were gathered by means of a survey questionnaire. Multiple regression results provided support for the direct impact of organizational learning culture and developmental feedback on the engineer's career satisfaction. Key implications of the survey findings both of the theory and practice are discussed, potential limitations are specified, and directions for future research are suggested.*

**Key Words:** *Engineers, Career Satisfaction, Manufacturing, Malaysia.*

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### **Introduction**

According to Malaysian Employers Federation (MEF), in the manufacturing sector, the electrical and electronics section having the second highest turnover rate of 23.04 percent per annum (Wong 2012). The interview with a few of the human resource managers of this manufacturing organizations in Bayan Lepas Free Trade Zone, Northern Region of Malaysia revealed that career satisfaction is one of the major factors that influence engineers' turnover (Wong, 2012). Therefore, it is crucial for us to determine the predictors of career satisfaction among engineers in the Bayan Lepas, Free Trade Zone area, which is the largest industrial manufacturing zone in the Northern Region of Malaysia.

Career satisfaction is assessed as a subjective career success which defined by individual's satisfaction with their career accomplishments. It is important, therefore, for us to understand the factors that influence an employee's career satisfaction. Amongst the famous predictors of career satisfaction are pay and promotion (Judge, Cable, Boudreau & Bretz, 1994). Pay and promotion are always regarded as a part of the organizational factor. We are interested on the different factor, which are called contextual factors such as organizational learning culture and developmental feedback.

Organizational learning culture is defined as “an organization skilled at creating, acquiring, and transferring knowledge, and at modifying its behavior to reflect new knowledge and insights” (Garvin, 1993, p. 80). Developmental feedback is defined as the extent to which supervisors provide employees with useful information that enables the employees to learn, develop, and improve on the job (Zhou, 2003). Supervisors will be able to improve the employee performance by engaging in this way.

According to Farr et al. (1993), organizational learning culture and developmental feedback would significantly influence career satisfaction. As there are a limited number of research in related to manufacturing and engineers, the purpose of this paper is to test the hypotheses that relations between organizational learning culture, developmental feedback and career satisfaction in the manufacturing organizations.

## Literature Review

### Organizational Learning Culture

According to Yang et al. (2004) and Watkins and Marsick (1993, 1996), organizational learning culture is composed of both the people level (i.e. continuous learning, dialogue and inquiry, team learning, and collaboration) and the structural level (i.e. embedded system, system connection, empowerment and structural leadership).

Organizational learning culture is an influential contextual characteristic to enhance positive outcomes in the HRD aspect (Egan et al. 2004; Marsick & Watkins 2003). According to Egan et al. (2004), organizational learning culture will enhance the employees' level of career satisfaction. Employee participative decision making (Daniels and Bailey 1999), employee empowerment (Johnson and McIntyre 1998), and leadership behaviors inspiring teamwork (Gaertner 2000) had a significant influence on career satisfaction.

### Developmental Feedback

Developmental feedback is defined as supervisor provides valuable messages to employees and empower the employees to develop, learn, and make improvements on the job (Zhou, 2003). Organization engaging in this practice, which supervisors actively provide employees with behavioral feedback that influence employees to improve their performance in the absence of pressure for a particular outcome. The behavioral feedback practices with the objective to boost intrinsic motivation (Deci and Ryan, 1980, 1985) and strengthen the interest desire in the task itself with an orientation toward learning and advancement.

Some studies suggested that positive or developmental feedback has generate positive energy on career satisfaction. According to Nemeroff and Cosentino (1979) that employee satisfaction with performance reviews come with superiority of performance feedback combined with goal setting over performance feedback session. Besides, Jaworski and Kohl (1991) discovered positive feedback from supervisors enables employees to learn positive ways of doing things, behaviors reinforcement, competency improvement, and enhances performance satisfaction in their job function. Thus, with efficient developmental feedback expected to increase career satisfaction of employees.

### Career Satisfaction

John et al. (2008) found that career satisfaction is the overall corporate attachment & its feelings of an individual, throughout his/her career. It is a measure of satisfaction or dissatisfaction of an individual about his/her career. It is a perception that how an individual feels about his current job. According to Steve and Catherine (1997) that when someone is satisfies with his/her job and things that his/her career is secure and a safe through this job than he would be more satisfied.

Baruch (2006) suggested that one-way organizations may meet the challenge to support their employees in developing their own careers and increase their career satisfaction. This approach recommend organizations perform a new supportive, rather than directive role in empowering their employees' career success.

According to Greenhaus et al. (1990), career satisfaction is the intrinsic and extrinsic aspects of the personal satisfaction obtain from their careers, including salary, advancement, and developmental opportunities. It has been perceived as an integral factor in the career success and as an important criterion for an individual's career value as a whole (Gattiker & Larwood 1998). Erdogan et al. (2004); Heslin (2003); Seibert and Kraimer (2001) found that career satisfaction assess the extent of individuals believe their career progress is consistent with their own goals, values and preferences.

Career satisfaction and career success were interchangeably used in many career researches. Judge et al. (1995) defined career success as a positive psychological or work-related outcomes that a person gained as a result of work experiences. Previous research has viewed career being passive for individual and influenced by situational factors (Bell & Staw, 1989). Whatsoever, some recent studies thought that personality through certain behaviors would influence the environment. Seibert et al. (1999) noticed that career success seem to be cumulative outcome of behaviors over a long-time period which personality is likely playing a role.

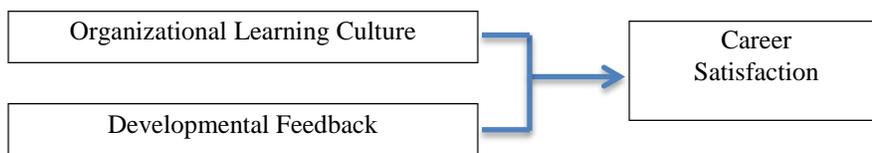
**Relationship between Organizational Learning Culture and Developmental Feedback toward Career Satisfaction**

According to Joo and Park (2010), it is significantly correlation in between contextual characteristics composed by organizational learning culture and developmental feedback on employees' career satisfaction.

**Theoretical Framework**

According to the literatures, organizational learning culture and developmental feedback are associated with career satisfaction. Thus, Figure 1 depicts the theoretical framework.

Figure 1: Theoretical Framework



**Hypotheses Development**

The constructs; organizational learning culture, developmental feedback and career satisfaction are discussed in the following section.

**Organizational Learning Culture and Career Satisfaction**

Egan et al. (2004) found that organizational learning culture raise the level of career satisfaction. It is significant influenced by empowerment (Johnson and McIntye 1998), participative decision making (Daniels and Bailey 1999), and leadership behaviors inspiring teamwork (Gaertner 2000).

Ng et al. (2005) expected organizational support for career development (OSCD) introduces the necessary programs, processes, and assistance to support and strengthen their employees' career success. This

includes formal strategies (career planning, training and assessment centers) and informal support such as coaching and mentoring opportunities (Hall 2002; Sturges et al. 2002). Joo and Park (2010) disclosed in their study of Korean employees that organizational learning culture has significant correlation with career satisfaction. Thus, it is more likely that organizational learning culture will affect career satisfaction:

H<sub>1</sub>: Perceived organizational learning culture will be positively related to employee's career satisfaction.

### **Developmental Feedback and Career Satisfaction**

The previous studies hint at developmental or positive feedback has a positive correlation on career satisfaction. Nemeroff and Cosentino (1979) found that there is advantage of doing employees' performance feedback and goal setting concurrently instead of performance feedback alone with respect to their satisfaction with performance reviews. Additionally, supervisors' positive feedback would cultivate employees to learn effective way of doing things, reinforces positive behaviors, enhances their competence, and improves performance satisfaction in the workplace. Therefore, with the expectation of regular developmental feedback will cultivate better career satisfaction:

H<sub>2</sub>: Perceived developmental feedback will be positively related to employee's career satisfaction

## **Methodology**

### **Population and Respondents**

The population and respondents of this study were engineers whom are working in the two major manufacturing organizations in Penang. There were 255 questionnaires had been distributed to the engineers.

### **Measures**

The organizational learning culture questionnaire was developed by Marsick and Watkins (2003) and further validated by Yang et al. (2003). This study adopted the seven items from Yang et al. (2004) shortened version of the organizational learning culture questionnaire. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient was 0.81. All these measures were assessed using a five-point Likert-type scale ranging (1) "strongly disagree" to (5) "strongly agree".

Developmental feedback was measured with three-item scales developed and validated by Zhou (2003). The reliability coefficient of the five items was 0.82 in this study. All these measures were assessed using a five-point Likert-type scale ranging (1) "strongly disagree" to (5) "strongly agree".

A five items developed and validated by Greenhaus et al. (1990) was used for this study to measure career satisfaction. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient was 0.81. The survey questionnaire measured with a five-point Likert scale ranging (1) "strongly disagree" to (5) "strongly agree".

## **Results**

### **Respondent Demographic Profiles**

A total of 159 questionnaires were returned with the response rate of 62.1%. However, there was 4 questionnaires unusable due to incorrectly or incompletely responses. As a result, only 155 questionnaires were usable and given the final response rate of 60.5%.

Table One clearly exhibited the respondent profile. It has shown that majority of the respondents are male (74.2%), their age is between thirty to thirty four years old (38.1%), and holding a bachelor degree (18.1%). Also, majority of them are working as a senior engineer (18.7%), have been working in their organizations between two to six years (55.5%) and earned MYR 5,500. The details are shown in Table One.

Table 1: Respondents' Demographic

Item	Categories	N	%
Gender	Male	115	74.2
	Female	40	25.8
Age (years old)	Below 30	32	20.6
	30-34	59	38.1
	35-39	37	23.9
	40-44	15	9.7
	45-49	7	4.5
	Above 49	5	3.2
Highest Qualification	SPM	2	1.3
	Certificate	8	5.2
	Diploma	28	18.1
	Bachelor	97	62.6
	Master	18	11.6
	Others	2	1.3
Designation	Associate Engineer	24	15.5
	Senior Engineer	23	14.8
	Specialist	78	50.3
	Others	29	18.7
	Others	1	0.6
Position's Tenure (year)	Below 2	39	25.2
	2-6	86	55.5
	7-11	19	12.3
	12-16	5	3.2
	Above 16	6	3.9
Working Tenure (year)	Below 2	37	23.9
	2-6	79	51.0
	7-11	13	8.4
	12-16	12	7.7
	Above 16	14	9.0
Salary (MYR)	Below 2,501	4	2.6
	2,501-3,500	15	9.7
	3,501-4,500	33	21.3
	4,501-5,500	39	25.2
	Above 5,500	64	41.3

### Correlation Analysis

Correlations analysis has been conducted for independent variables (the organizational learning culture and developmental feedback ) with career satisfaction. The relationship between organizational learning culture and developmental feedback with career satisfaction were investigated using correlation coefficient. Preliminary analyses were performed to measure no violation of the assumptions of normality, linearity and homoscedasticity. Based on the correlation analysis results below, career satisfaction has a significant positive relationship with organizational learning culture ( $r = 0.41, p < .01$ ) and developmental feedback ( $r = 0.37, p < 0.01$ ). Overall, there were strong correlation ( $p < 0.01$  and  $p < 0.05$ ) between variables; is depicted in Table 3.

Table 2: Correlations Results

	Item	1	2
1	Organizational Learning Culture	1	
2	Developmental Feedback	0.44*	1
3	Career Satisfaction	0.41*	0.37*

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

### Multiple Regression Analysis

Multiple regression analysis was employed to predict the impact of the organizational learning culture and developmental feedback on career satisfaction. Table 3.0 illustrates the results of multiple regression analysis.  $R^2$  is 0.22 has indicated that organizational learning culture and developmental feedback affected 22% of career satisfaction among the engineers.

Base on the multiple regression analysis, organizational learning culture ( $\beta = 0.30, p < 0.01$ ) has a significant effect on career satisfaction. This result concludes that organizational learning culture is positively related to career satisfaction. Thus, hypothesis one is supported.

Developmental feedback ( $\beta = 0.24, p < 0.01$ ) was significantly related to career satisfaction. Developmental feedback achieved high standardized coefficient beta which is 0.24 with significant level of 0.004 which the  $p < 0.01$ . The result clearly indicates that the developmental feedback is perceived as a significant predictor for the career satisfaction. Hypothesis two is therefore supported.

Table 3: Multiple Regression Results

	Career Satisfaction ( $\beta$ )
Organizational Learning Culture	0.30*
Developmental Feedback	0.24*
$R$	0.47
$R^2$	0.22
Adjusted $R^2$	0.20
$F$ -Change	10.58
Durbin-Watson	2.01

\* $p < 0.01$

In summary, organizational learning culture and developmental feedback have a positive relationship with engineer's career satisfaction in Northern Region of Malaysia.

### Discussion and Conclusion

This study has revealed that two contextual factors; organizational learning culture and developmental feedback, were predictors for career satisfaction of engineers. It also stamps the importance of cultivating learning cultures as to providing feedback to them. It can be interpreted as a means for managing the relationships between organizational learning culture and developmental feedback through the connections between organizational purposes to cultivate individual improvement.

#### The Relationship between Organizational Learning Culture and Career Satisfaction

In this study, organizational learning culture was significantly related to career satisfaction, replicating previous researches (Egan et al. 2004; Joo and Park 2010). This result is related to characteristics of organization learning culture that provides continuous learning, dialogue and inquiry, team learning, embedded system, empowerment, collaboration and strategic leadership (Marsick & Watsin 2003). Heo

(2008) advocated that organizational learning culture depends on the acquisition of information, the interpretation of information and the formation of organizational knowledge. Example of learning cultures are creating continuous learning opportunities; promote inquiry and dialogue; encourage collaboration and team learning; establish systems to capture and share learning; empower people to have a collective vision; connect the organization to the environment; and use leaders who model and support learning at the individual, team, and organization levels (Watkins and Marsick, 1997).

Findings from this study also indicated that the 59% of engineers who were working in this manufacturing organizations belong to Gen Y. Gen Y defines organizational learning culture as an environment where they can constantly learn and be challenged (Ballenstedt and Rosenberg, 2008). Thus, organizations must provide that learning platform for their engineers. Furthermore, Gen Y also has the desire to make crucial decisions of an organization soon after entering the organization; they do not desire to wait for important duties (BSG Concours 2007). Scholars note that Generation Y expects to be valued by their employers as the key assets of the organization and that their input will be taken into full account and acted on by their employers (Ballenstedt and Rosenberg 2008; Blain 2008; BSG Concours 2007). Organizations must find ways to win the heart of this new generation, Generation Y.

### **The Relationship between Developmental Feedback and Career Satisfaction**

The finding has revealed that developmental feedback was significantly related to career satisfaction, replicating previous researches (Jaworski and Kohl 1991; Nemeroff and Cosentino 1979). This is a surprising finding because Joo and Park (2010) did not support this hypothesis in Korea. This is probably due to the organizational learning culture that both manufacturer, are actively practicing, which are the one-to-one feedback session on a weekly basis and during the engineer's performance appraisal.

This study also recognized the critical role of managers in organizational learning culture and developmental feedback. It highlights the importance of organizational learning culture to the engineers. Managers should encourage subordinates to increase their career satisfaction through establishing productive learning culture and providing positive feedback (Joo and Park 2010). According to Nemeroff and Cosentino (1979), it is important that performance feedback session coupled with goal setting compare to performance feedback alone with respect to employee satisfaction with performance reviews.

This study has found that Gen Y is continuously looking for feedback and advice from their superior, it was most likely a result of their strong ties to and constant feedback from their parents (Cruz 2007; BSG Concours 2007). On the job, Gen Y expects frequent direction from superiors regarding their performance. They recognize the role knowledge plays in career advancement and look for opportunities to learn from their superiors and older generations (BSG Concours 2007). Additionally, Generation Y views failure as a motivator and not a deterrent. Thus, they view failure as an opportunity to improve job performance (Blain 2008). Jaworski and Kohl (1991) also found that positive feedback from supervisors enables employees to learn better ways of doing things, reinforces appropriate behaviors, improves their overall competence, and achieve career satisfaction in their working field.

Overall, this research has found that contextual characteristics such as organizational learning culture and developmental feedback have had significant impacts on employees' career satisfaction. Practically, managers and human resource practitioners should provide support on employee career satisfaction by developing, improving, and delivering the relevant practices, ensuring that the climate and human resource practices are such that career satisfaction can be realized. One of the practical ways is to help managers adopting new roles as coaches and learning facilitators. For example; Human Resource Department could design and provide relevant training programs to their managers to embark themselves as coaches and facilitators to their subordinates. Moreover, as an organization reflected themselves as a team, the role of a manager has changed from a traditional hierarchical directive to being a supportive and non-controlling figure. Thus, coaching and mentoring have become as a significant employee development strategy.

Explicitly, managerial coaching or manager-as-coach has become nowadays crucial management strategy to increase employees' career satisfaction in many organizations (McLean, 2006).

The limitation of this study is that samples in this study were based on two large manufacturing companies in the Northern Region of Malaysia. The findings of this study, therefore could not be generalized to all Malaysians. Future studies should broaden the samples.

In conclusion, in the Malaysian context, this study provides useful information to researchers who conduct similar studies in different cultural backgrounds. It also contributes to recognizing the critical role of managers in organizational learning culture and developmental feedback. Managers could encourage subordinates to increase career satisfaction through establishing productive learning culture and providing positive feedback. For example, organizations policy makers should encourage continuous learning opportunity, establish system to capture and share learning, and managers should provide employees with behaviorally relevant information that leads employees to improve their performance in the future in the absence of pressure for a particular outcome.

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