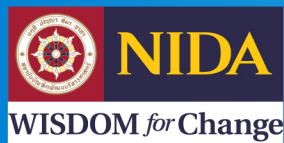


The logo for ICADA, featuring a stylized 'i' with a hexagonal shape above it, followed by the letters 'CADA' in a bold, sans-serif font.

The Proceedings of 9th ICADA 2020

The 9th ICADA 2020-SSIS

(The Ninth International Conference on Advancement of Development Administration 2020—Social Sciences and Interdisciplinary Studies)

Abstract Presentation, October 8, 2020

Full paper/Abstract Presentation, December 16, 2020

ISBN 978-616-482-054-8

www.icada2020.nida.ac.th | Facebook Page: Research Center at NIDA



"Development toward Asianization in the Digital Era"
National Institute of Development Administration (NIDA)

**THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS AND
SELF-DEVELOPMENT IN THE WORKPLACE: THE MODERATING ROLE OF
ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT**

by

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the relationship between personal characteristics and self-development in the workplace and the moderating role of organizational support. Two study questions are discussed: (a) How do personal characteristics affect self-development? (b) How does organizational support affect the relationship between personal characteristics and self-development? Data were collected via questionnaire from 160 Bangkok-based cabin crew working for Norwegian Air Shuttle. Multiple linear regression was used to analyze and test the hypotheses. The result reveals that although the relationship between personal characteristics and self-development were strongly linked, organizational support as a moderator had no significant effect on the relationship. This result is noteworthy for organizations when setting guidelines, policies and plans for staff's self-development in the workplace. Implications for the effective implementation of organizational support are discussed as well as recommendations for future research.

KEY WORDS: Human resource development, Personal characteristics, Self-development, Organizational support

INTRODUCTION

Employees are an organization's most valuable resource. Human resource development (HRD) is at the heart of developing a person's potential. (Panyaroj, 2012) It is also the foundation for the advancement of an organization and leads to a strengthening of society and the nation. HRD is the process of enhancing an individual's ability to compete (Ankarathitipong, 2013), especially in the 21st century when the world's societies are rapidly changing. Thus, HRD focuses on a continual self-development. The self-development of personnel in an organization results in quality, the ability to compete with other organizations, and acceptance by other people and organizations around the world. Organizations should focus on an individual's personal characteristics which can affect self-development ability.

HRD develops process to enhance human expertise. It is aimed at improving the performance of individuals by having organizations, groups of individuals and individuals as a basic element of HRD (Swanson, 2008). HRD uses an Inside-Out Approach strategy which focuses on self-development from the inside, such as by attending to attitude, motivation and habits which lead to external self-development such as in knowledge, skills and behavior. It believes if employees can develop themselves from the inside, the development of knowledge, skills and behavior certainly becomes easier (Boon-arth, 2012). Furthermore, an organization should be aware of the importance of employee's self-development in the workplace by encouraging and supporting them to develop their own potential for various aspects of work. It is also important to encourage employees in the organization to realize the importance of self-development.

This study examined the relationship between personal characteristic factors and self-development in workplace and a moderator role of organizational support. The study begins by reviewing existing researches. This is followed by developing a conceptual framework which generated two study questions: (a) How do personal characteristics affect self-development? (b) How does organizational support affect the relationship between personal characteristics and self-development? Hypotheses are embedded in each study question.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This section will review related literature in three areas: (a) Personal characteristic factors: Attitude, Motivation and Habits, (b) Self-development in the workplace and (c) Perceived organizational support.

Personal Characteristic Factors: Attitude, Motivation and Habits (PCF)

According to Triandis (1971) there are three elements of attitude: (a) cognitive component - a person's belief or thoughts on one thing, (b) affective component - a positive or negative feeling, and (c) behavioral component - an integral part of the personality. These elements are associated with each other which means that a change in one element causes changes in another element. Attitude is expressed in two behaviors. One is manner of satisfaction. For example, *I would like to do it, I would like to get closer to that thing* which is called positive attitude. Another behavior is negative attitude, meaning people will exhibit an unpleasant

feeling. Another type of attitude is called neutral attitude, meaning no feeling or *I don't like, I don't hate* (Newcomb, 1954).

The Two-Factor theory of Herzberg (1959) mentions that motivation can be divided into two factors: (a) motivation factors, which are internal incentives that will help people work better; and (b) hygiene factors, which are not direct motivation factors but if missing will result in no motivation to work. Motivation is an internal condition which empowers human beings so that their actions are directed toward achieving their goals (Bernard & Steiner, 1964 cited in Sanhapakdee, 2007). The person who has been stimulated, exhibits behavior in activities that clearly reflects the intention of effort or internal power as well as increasing the ability of devotion to work to achieve the goals, to inspire maximum motivation (Sererat, 1998) and to receive rewards (Beach, 1965).

Important to this study is the seven plus one Characteristics concept of Covey (2004) which describes eight habits which are the result of a combination of knowledge, skills and willingness of a person. Knowledge of theoretical concepts provides a guideline for what to do, how to do it and why. Skill is the ability to get things done, and willingness is motivation to act (Covey, 1990 cited in Phipatanapanit, 2007). Together these become habits and are vital for everyday life as well as work life. Behavior shows how powerful or useless a person is. Habits can express emotional fundamentals and life balance (Suksawas, 2015). Previous research identified the relationship between individual personality and employee's quantity of self-development e.g., Orvis and Leffler (2011) revealed the link between personality and self-development among 136 employees in workplace. The result confirms the study of Brandfstadter and Lener (1999) which proposed that individual developed their intention of self-development. They form their mental representation of what they can be or become. Additionally, self-attitude, motivation and behaviors represents intrinsic components within individuals that drive self-development in workplace.

Self-Development in Workplace (SDW)

This study focuses on the self-development concept of Megginson and Pedler, 1992 (cited in Pholsai, 2007). Self-Development is the creation of one's own attitudes, cognition, ethics, understanding and expertise in order to bring happiness, progress and completeness. Prosperity gained can be used to benefit oneself, society and the nation in accordance with appropriate interests and potential (Charuchinda, 1996). Self-development is self-learning and can be improved by self-correction in both intellectual activities and quality of work by having a direction in work and life (Swansbug, 1995 cited in Pholsai, 2007). Self-development can also be improved by encouraging and supporting employees to develop their own opportunities to improve their abilities. Self-development must be done by each person individually with some help and support from other people (Wacharinrat, 1997).

Since the world has changed rapidly, people in organizations need to develop themselves along with organizational changes so that organizations can move forward. One way to contribute to the values of an organization is for employees to develop themselves. Self-development can increase strength by increasing the knowledge of the operators which enables the organization to progress (Megginson & Pedler, 1992 cited in Pholsai, 2007). Based on the existing literature review, hypothesis 1 is developed as follow.

Hypothesis 1: PCF is positively related to self-development in workplace.

Perceived Organizational Support (POS)

This study has given emphasis to the Perceived Organizational Support Theory (POS) of Eisenberger et al. (1986) which is a study of the perception of people involved in the organization's values that affects the performance of people in the organizations. Perceived Organizational Support is critical in developing a successful organization based on the organization's goals. Since Perceived Organizational Support affects attitudes of employees. Whenever a person perceives organizational support, it will affect attitude, motivation, thoughts and behavior of the person (Saritwanit, 2009). Organizations must be aware that perception of organizational support encourages employees to realize the value of their work. Moreover, organizations should provide support in various ways as well as opportunities for employees to develop through setting policies and plans that contribute to employees' well-being.

When an employee perceives positive support from an organization, the employee is willing to exhibit and maintain good behaviors. In contrast, if an employee perceives low or negative organizational support, the employee will not work to achieve the organization's goals and may leave or resign to seek a new organization. Therefore, hypothesis 2 is set.

Hypothesis 2: POS is a moderator of the relationship between personal characteristic factors and self-development in workplace.

METHODS

This section will review related literature in three areas: (a) Personal characteristic factors: Attitude, Motivation and Habits, (b) Self-development in the workplace and (c) Perceived organizational support.

Participants

Data were collected via a 50-item self-administered questionnaire completed by 160 Bangkok-based cabin crew working for Norwegian Air Shuttle. Each item was rated according to a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). Details of participants are presented in Table 1.

TABLE 1. Details of participants.

	Data collection	
	N = 160	percent
Gender		
Male	46	28.7
Female	114	71.3
Age (years)		
30 – 35	77	48.1
36 – 40	49	30.6
41 – 45	26	16.3
> 45	8	5.0
Education		
Bachelor's degree	114	71.3
Higher than Bachelor's degree	46	28.7
Work experience (years)		
5 – 10	79	49.4
11 – 15	57	35.6
16 – 20	21	13.1
> 20	3	1.9
Work position		
Cabin Crew	80	50.0
Senior Cabin Crew	58	36.6
Supervisor	16	10.0
Ground Instructor	6	3.8

Measurement

Validity as determined by Index of Item – Objective Congruence was approved by three Thai professors. The reliability of results is 0.96 which meets the requirement of Cronbach's alpha as recommended by Kitpreedaborisut (2010).

Personal Characteristic Factors (PCF) were measured with a 30-item questionnaire including 10 items relating to attitude developed from Sriwichan (2011), Jantaramanee (2014) and Butthongdee (2014); 10 items relating to motivation developed from Sriwichan (2011), Jantaramanee (2014), Yamketh (2015) and Elias, Smith and Barney (2012); and 10 items relating to habits developed from Pholsai (2007), Yamketh (2015), Suksawas (2015) and West and Berman (2011). Sample statements are *I perform my assigned duties to the best of my ability to achieve the success of the organization*, *Support and compliments from supervisor gave me encouragement to perform work* and *I organized work in consideration of its priority*.

Self-development in the workplace (SDW) was measured with a 10-item questionnaire developed from Yamketh (2015) and Gheith and Aliaberi (2018). Sample statements are *I studied the work practices of people who have been successful and applied them myself*, *When I find a defect, I will update and fix it immediately*.

Perceived organizational support (POS) was measured with a 10-item questionnaire developed from Jantaramanee (2014), Eisenberger, Cummings, Armeli and Lynch (1997). Sample statements are *My organization cares about my opinions*, *My organization would forgive an honest mistake on my part*.

The reliability of results according to Cronbach’s alpha for each of the three questionnaires is 0.96.

Translation of some items in this questionnaire from the original English language used a forward-only translation and then applied a back-translation method. Finally, the translation was checked and approved by an expert in both Thai and English (Sawasdipanich & Tiansawad, 2011).

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Correlation Analysis

Correlation was conducted to confirm the relationship and direction among variables. This approach indicates the accuracy of the components that used for research. The result showed a significant relationship among PCF, SDW and POS. Table 2 displays the Mean, Standard Deviation, Average Variance Extracted (AVE), Composite Reliability (CR) and Cronbach’s Alpha value of constructs from data collection (N = 160). According to Hair (2016) this result showed all values passes the threshold (AVE > .5, CR > .7) Cronbach’s Alpha higher than 0.80 are considered excellent (Kitpreedaborisut, 2010).

TABLE 2. Mean, Standard Deviation, Average Variance Extracted (AVE), Composite Reliability (CR) Cronbach’s Alpha value of constructs and Inter-correlation among PCF, SDW and POS as a moderator.

Variables	Mean	SD	AVE	CR	Cronbach’s alpha	1	2	3
1. PCF	4.31	.75	.57	.80	.96	-		
2. SDW	4.27	.73	.50	.83	.96	.71**	-	
3. POS	3.32	1.11	.51	.86	.96	.44**	.28**	-

Note: N = 160; **p < .01

Verification of Research Hypotheses

Table 3 displays the result from multiple linear regression analysis predicting SDW from PCF and POS as a moderator. The result shows that PCF was significantly related to SDW ($\beta = .71$; $p < .01$) and POS as a moderator was not significantly related to PCF and SDW ($\beta = -.04$; $p > .05$). This can explain 50% and 50% of the relationship between PCF and SDW, and POS as a moderator respectively ($R^2 = .50$; $p < .01$). Even though PCF was strongly related to SDW, POS as a moderator produced no influence on the relationship between PCF and SDW.

TABLE 3. Multiple Linear Regression analysis predicting SDW from PCF and POS as a moderator.

Variables	Model 1			Model 2		
	B	SE	β	B	SE	β
Constant	6.70*	2.90		6.67*	2.90	
PCF	.28**	.02	.71**	.29**	.03	.72**
POS				-.03	.04	-.04
R ²		.50			.50	
Adj. R ²		.49			.49	
F		156.18**			77.97**	

DISCUSSION

The results will be discussed based on theory and previous researches according to the research questions.

Research Question 1: How do personal characteristics affect self-development?

It can be stated that personal characteristics affect self-development positively at a high level. This result is consistent with existing works on attitude, motivation and habits related to self-development such as those of Elias, Smith and Barney (2012), Manzoor (2012) and West and Berman (2011). People who have a good attitude toward themselves and things around them can develop their own potential efficiently. It is important to strengthen the individual's positive motivation since it helps to demonstrate quality of life and work. Furthermore, habits also reveal people's efficiency and performance. In summary, personal characteristics; including attitude, motivation and habits; affect self-development in the workplace. Whenever employees have a good attitude toward work, as well as motivation and productive habits, they also develop themselves effectively.

Research Question 2: How does organizational support affect the relationship between personal characteristics and self-development?

The influence of organizational support as a moderator on the relationship between personal characteristics and self-development was measured. The result reveals that organizational support has no effect on the relationship between personal characteristics and self-development. This result is consistent with existing works; Hamwi, Rutherford, and Boles (2011) ($t = .99, p > .05$) and O'Driscoll, Poelmans, Spector, Kalliath, Allen, Cooper and Sanchez (2003) ($\beta = -.33, p > .05$). Organizations should create a culture for employees to access information and recognize that the organization supports employees as such support plays a significant role in self-development of employees in the workplace. Although supportive policies and plans may be insufficient to generate significant self-development, development of an organizational culture that is perceived to be supportive may be a necessary condition for the self-development of the employees in workplace.

PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

This research provides evidence to employees and organizations that personal characteristics and organizational support have a strong relationship with self-development of employees in the workplace. The finding that organizational support has no effect on the relationship between personal characteristics and self-development is important. As discussed earlier, organizations should be concerned about how employees perceive information as this can influence self-development. Regardless of how good the plans or policies of organizations are, if employees do not perceive positive actions of organizations, they may consider that organizations do not support them which may affect their work efficiency. Thus, it is the duty of organizations to plan and issue policies that support and encourage employees in developing themselves and also to communicate the intention of these policies and plans to all employees.

LIMITATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This research, like all researches, has some limitations. The first limitation is that this study only examines results obtained from the Bangkok-based cabin crew working for Norwegian Air Shuttle. This limits the perception of organizational support to only a small fraction the total number of employees in the many bases of the airlines. In addition, other industries should be studied to evaluate a wider range of results and to be able to compare similarities and differences. Finally, more information from employees could help clarify how organizational support affects the relationship between personal characteristics and self-development in the workplace.

CONCLUSION

This study involved a survey of Bangkok-based cabin crew working for Norwegian Air Shuttle. The conceptual framework was developed based on existing theories relating to personal characteristic factors, self-development and organizational support. The results confirm that personal characteristics have a significant impact on self-development in the workplace. However, organizational support as a moderator has no influence on the relationship between personal characteristics and self-development. This study has shown that employees with positive personal characteristics drive positive self-development in the workplace and organizational support encourages positive self-development of the employees. The results obtained from this study encourage not only employees but also organizations to realize the importance of personal characteristics and organizational support. The results can be used as a guideline when setting policies and plans for the better improvement of employees' self-development in the workplace.

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The Proceedings of 9th ICADA 2020

(The Ninth International Conference on Advancement of Development Administration 2020—Social Sciences and Interdisciplinary Studies)

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ISBN 978-616-482-054-8

