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Training characteristics that stimulate essential training motivation and individual effectiveness: Analysing the Sample of Malaysian Public Sector using SEM-AMOS

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ABSTRACT – *Training characteristics are very important to ensure training effectiveness; however, research explaining the right training characteristics affecting individual effectiveness is limited. Hence, this research was done to close the research gap by determining the effect of training characteristic on individual effectiveness by analysing essential training motivation as mediator. Data were analysed using SEM-AMOS among 203 Malaysian Public Service Officers attended training organized by The Malaysian National Institute of Public Administration in 2016. Findings indicated that majority respondents perceived the level of individual effectiveness as high. In addition, training content familiarity followed by training relevant, training design, and training reputation were important characteristics of a training program affecting individual effectiveness. Additionally, essential training motivation partially mediated the relationship between training characteristics and individual effectiveness. Significantly, research findings are important to determine the most important characteristic of training in human resource development to ensure employees' individual effectiveness.*

Key words-- *Training characteristic, training motivation, training effectiveness, human resource development, public sector, Malaysia, individual effectiveness, employee training, human resource management, SEM-AMOS, mediator.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Training and development is an important function of human resource management to upgrade the quality of employee (Noe, 2017; Aziz, 2018a). Hence, most organization invests a lot of money in training program and training program is compulsory in some organizations (Aziz & Osman, 2019; Brunello et al., 2020). Consistently in Malaysia, it is compulsory for government servants to attend formal training as minimum of seven days per year (Service Circulars, 2005). Therefore, training evaluation becomes crucial in ensuring training effectiveness either in private or government sector (Yaqoot et al., 2020; Sharma & Mishra, 2020). Ironically, using a qualitative study, Ho et al. (2019) found that training program among government servant in Malaysia was ineffective; they also suggest investigating training characteristics associated with training effectiveness. Hence, there is a need to determine training characteristics affecting training effectiveness among government servant in Malaysia.

Further, the classical model of Four Levels of Training evaluation by Kirkpatrick (1959/1996) was widely used to evaluate training effectiveness. However, some researchers have criticised the model and suggest for a new

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creative and impactful evaluation (Alliger et al., 1997; Reio et al., 2017). Meanwhile, Aguinis and Kraiger (2009) have suggested evaluating training effectiveness from the perspective of training impact on important levels of organizational performance. These include the impact of training on individual effectiveness, followed by teamwork effectiveness, organizational effectiveness, and society effectiveness. To respond to the challenge, Aziz et al. (2018) have developed an instrument to measure individual effectiveness based on three important measurements including individual's knowledge, skill and attitude. Therefore, training effectiveness should be measured based on individual effectiveness since it is the most important level of training evaluation that will affect higher level of organizational performance including teamwork effectiveness and organizational effectiveness. In fact, training characteristics affecting individual effectiveness should be studied to plan an effective training program.

Nevertheless, research related to training characteristics affecting individual effectiveness is limited since individual effectiveness is highlighted as new measurement of training output (Aziz, 2018a). Research in training and development field of study have demonstrated several training characteristics affecting training effectiveness including training content familiarity (Aziz & Selamat, 2016; Hajjar & Alkhanaizi, 2018), training design (Aziz et al., 2011; Lee et al., 2019), training reputation (Aziz, 2016; Sahoo & Mishra, 2019), and training relevant (Aziz & Ahmad, 2011; Beqiri & Mazreku, 2020). Hence, these training characteristics should be used to determine training characteristics associated with individual effectiveness.

On the other hand, numerous researches have indicated the important effect of training motivation on training effectiveness (Colquitt et al., 2000; Aziz, 2018a). However, some researchers including Alvarez et al. (2004) have demonstrated the confusion effect of training motivation since there were different types of training motivation, such as motivation to learn, motivation to transfer, pre-training motivation, post-training motivation, etc. Hence, Aziz (2018b) has redefined training motivation as essential training motivation (ETM) that combined the measurement of motivation to learn and motivation to transfer since the two types of training motivation are proven to affect training effectiveness. Therefore, ETM can be used to determine the mediation effect of training motivation.

Taken together, the objective of this paper is to close the research gap by determining important training characteristics affecting individual effectiveness among government servant in Malaysia. Various positions of Public Service Officers attended training organized by The National Institute of Public Administration (INTAN) of Malaysia in 2016 are taken as research sample. In addition, essential training motivation is analysed as a mediator on the relationship training characteristics and individual effectiveness. Significantly, these research findings are important to plan effective training programs in the future.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Training Effectiveness Evaluation

Training effectiveness evaluation was evaluated using various models and methods. The most influential model referred to evaluate training effectiveness is the classical model of Four Levels of Training evaluation by Kirkpatrick (1959/1996). Kirkpatrick's (1959/1996) model suggests that training is considered as effective through four sequence levels; in which, training is considered as effective if there is positive reaction among trainees,

followed by trainees' learning acquisition, trainees' behavioural changes, and improvement in organization's results. However, previous researchers have criticised the model because the model not only simple but the claimed 'levels' are found to be uncorrelated in most previous research findings, and there is a need to focus on important output of training (Alliger et al., 1997; Reio et al., 2017). Hence, Aguinis and Kraiger (2009) have suggested evaluating training effectiveness from the perspective of training impact on important levels of organizational performance.

According to Aguinis and Kraiger (2009) training impact should be measured by evaluating individual effectiveness, followed by teamwork effectiveness, organizational effectiveness, and society effectiveness. This has creates a new output measurement of training effectiveness that can truly measure training effectiveness at significant and related levels' evaluation. In fact, it is important because the main objective of providing training is to enhance employee's individual effectiveness (Aziz, 2018a; Brunello et al., 2020). Therefore, Aziz et al. (2018) have taken the challenge by developing an instrument to measure individual effectiveness based on three important measurements including individual's knowledge, skill and attitude. The instrument is named as Individual Training Impact Scale (ITIS).

According to Aziz et al. (2018), ITIS was developed using previous literature and based on training evaluation model by Kraiger et al. (1993) from the psychology field of study. Kraiger's et al. (1993) training evaluation model suggests that individual effectiveness should be measured by determining trainees' cognitive, skill-based and affective outcomes. Hence, Aziz et al. (2018) redefined the measurement into knowledge (cognitive), skill (skill-based) and attitude (affective) measurement. Then, Aziz et al. (2018) adapted the measurement of learning performance by Aziz (2013) to evaluate trainees' knowledge, job performance by Hilliard (2000) to measure trainees' skill, and work motivation by Wright (2001) to measure trainees' attitude. The ITIS was verified by its reliability, face validity, content validity and exploratory factor analysis (EFA) in several studies and can be used to determine individual effectiveness. Aziz et al. (2018) also suggest future research to test ITIS using construct validity. Therefore, the current research has two-fold objectives; which are to determine individual effectiveness among Public Service Officers attending training organised by INTAN, as well to determine ITIS's construct validity using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) in SEM-AMOS analysis.

Training Characteristics

Training characteristics are widely researched by previous researchers to determine the right criterion of training for future training development. Numerous researchers have been continually investigating about the right characteristics of training including Aziz and Ahmad (2011), Charoensap-Kelly et al. (2016), and Beqiri and Mazreku (2020). Although findings of previous research have focussed on different characteristics of training, it can be concluded that there are four main important characteristics of training including training content familiarity, training reputation, training relevant, and training design (Aziz, 2018a). In fact, Aziz and Selamat (2016) have developed instrument to measures these training characteristics by analysing the CFA to verify its construct validity.

Training content familiarity refers to the perception of experiencing similar training content (Tsai & Tai, 2003; Aziz, 2018a). It has been proved to affect training effectiveness among banking officers in Taiwan (Tsai & Tai, 2003), Malaysian army (Ismail et al., 2016), and among public officers in Bahrain Kingdom (Hajjar &

Alkhanaizi, 2018). Although previous researchers did not refer it using the same term (training content familiarity), however, they tend to propose that training content should be familiar with trainees in terms of understanding and similarity with job environment.

Meanwhile, training reputation is referred to as good "…expectation about the quality of the course" (Facteau et al. 1995, p. 3). It has been proved to affect training effectiveness among American public servants in Southeastern State Government (Facteau et al. 1995), academic staff in Malaysian public university (Aziz & Selamat, 2016), and employees of an Indian governmental power transmission organization (Sahoo & Mishra, 2019). Although previous researchers did not refer it using the same term (training reputation), however, they tend to propose that when most of the employees perceived a good reputation of training, such as having positive attitude towards training, it will results in better training effectiveness.

Additionally, "…training relevant is the degree to which training is related and can be useful for job, career, and personal needs" (Aziz et al., p. 96). It has been proved to affect training effectiveness among American holding non-managerial and technical positions in multinational company (Axtell et al., 1997), Malaysian participants attended compulsory safety training organized by the Malaysian National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (Aziz, 2016), and employees in private businesses and public institutions in all regions of Kosovo (Beqiri & Mazreku, 2020). Although previous researchers did not refer it using the same term (training relevant), however, they tend to propose that when most of the employees perceived training is relevant to the job needs, such as for achieving better skills, it will results in better training effectiveness.

Finally, training design is referred to as "the characteristics of the learning environment" (Noe, 2017, p. 147). It has been proved to affect training effectiveness among academic staff in Malaysian public universities (Mokhtar et al., 2019), American employees in large hospital in the Southeastern United States (Charoensap-Kelly et al., 2016), and students and officers related with Korea Maritime and Ocean University at South Korea (Lee et al., 2019). Although previous researchers have studied different dimensions of training design, they tend to have the same conclusion that the right training design will improve training effectiveness.

Essential Training Motivation

Essential training motivation (ETM) is defined as the willingness of the trainees to put the effort into his/her training and use it to improve the job performance (Aziz, 2018b). Aziz (2018b) redefined training motivation into ETM because there were various types of training motivation studied by previous researchers including pre-training motivation (e.g., Tracey et al., 2001), post-training motivation (e.g., Cannon-Bowers et al., 1995), motivation to transfer (e.g., Chiaburu et al., 2010; Arasanmi, 2019), motivation to learn (Blume et al., 2010), and training motivation (e.g., Colquitt et al., 2000). Hence, some researchers including Alvarez et al. (2004) have demonstrated the confusion effect of training motivation. In fact, Aziz (2018b) also develops and verify instrument to measure ETM using CFA into six items; three items to measure each motivation to transfer and motivation to learn. This can be used to measure mediation effect of training motivation.

Research Hypotheses

Based on the literature review, alternative hypotheses are:

H1: Training characteristics significantly affect individual effectiveness

H2: Essential training motivation significantly affects individual effectiveness

H3: Essential training motivation significantly mediates the relationship between training characteristics and training effectiveness

III. RESEARCH METHOD

This research used quantitative research and survey to determine mediation effect of essential training motivation (ETM) on the relationship between training characteristics and individual effectiveness. Seven training programs organized by the Malaysian National Institute of Public Administration in Middle Zone branch (INTENGAH) and headquarters (INTAN Bukit Kiara) on August to December 2016 were selected for this research. Using census, all participants of training were involved in this research. However, usable data only available from 203 instead of 210 total participants. Table 1 shows the proportion of participants involved in this research.

Table 1: Proportion of Respondents

Num.	Name	Total Participants	Available Respondents
1.	Financial Management Based on Performance Course (Kursus Pengurusan Kewangan Berasaskan Prestasi)	34	33
2.	Information Security System Management Course, ISO/IEC 27001: 2013 (Kursus Pengurusan Sistem Keselamatan Maklumat, ISO/IEC 27001:2013)	36	34
3.	Enhancing Service Delivery Series: Effective Customer Service (Siri Meningkatkan Penyampaian Perkhidmatan Pelanggan: Perkhidmatan Pelanggan Efektif)	22	22
4.	Outcome Based Budget Course (Kursus Bajet Berasaskan Outcome)	26	26
5.	Business Management Course (Kursus Pengurusan Perniagaan)	30	28
6.	Kursus Perakaunan Akruan : Peringkat Asas (Accrual Accounting Course: Basic Level)	33	31
7.	Kursus Kepimpinan Transformatif dan Pengurusan Organisasi (Transformative Leadership and Organizational Management)	29	29
	TOTAL	210	203

Further, questionnaire used for this research was based on 5 point likely Likert scale and represented to respondents in dual language (English and Malay). Respondents need to answer the questions based on what they perceived after attending the training program. Dependent variable for this research was training effectiveness that measured by individual effectiveness using ITIS developed by Aziz et al. (2018). There are three components of individual effectiveness in ITIS including individual knowledge, skills and attitude. Sample item for individual knowledge is “I learned new knowledge in this training”. Sample question for individual skill is “I have performed essential duties.” Sample question for individual attitude is “I give the best effort to achieve expected goals.” Individual knowledge was measured right after the completion of each training program. Meanwhile, individual skills and attitude were measured three months after training completion by using follow up telephone calls and emails.

Furthermore, ETM was mediator and training characteristics were independent variables. Instrument developed by Aziz (2018b) to measure ETM was used and data were collected right after the completion of training to determine trainees' training motivation. The ETM comprise of items measuring motivation to learn and transfer. Sample item to measure motivation to learn is "I try to learn as much as I can from this training"; sample item to measure motivation to transfer is "I have determined that I am not going to waste what I have learned in this training".

Meanwhile, instrument to measure training characteristics was adopted from Aziz and Selamat (2016). Sample item to measure training reputation is "Most employee training programmes provided by my organisation offers quality training content". Sample item to measure training relevant is "The training programme can help me improve my current job performance". Sample item to measure training content familiarity is "My job provides the opportunity to learn the knowledge associated with this training programme". Sample item to measure training design is "In overall, the instructors of this training have delivered the training material very well".

Data were analysed using SEM-AMOS (structural equation modelling – analysis of moment structures) to test for research hypothesis. Data were also analysed descriptively using SPSS (statistical package for social sciences).

IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings indicated that all research's alternative hypotheses were fully accepted. In addition, ITIS's construct validity was successfully verified using the research sample. Findings also indicated that majority respondents have high level of individual knowledge, skills and attitude after attending training program organised by INTAN.

Figure 1 shows a bar chart on the levels of individual knowledge, skills and attitude perceived by respondents. It can be seen that majority respondents have high levels of individual effectiveness after attending training programs organised by INTAN. Findings were consistent with previous research including Aziz et al. (2018), Ismail et al. (2016), and Mokhtar et al. (2019) that found training programs were effective for government servants including those working in army, public universities, and public service department. However, Ho et al. (2019) found that training program was ineffective for Malaysian government servant. This might be due to different measurement of training evaluation. Hence, it is suggested for future researchers to use establish instrument, such as ITIS to evaluate training effectiveness.

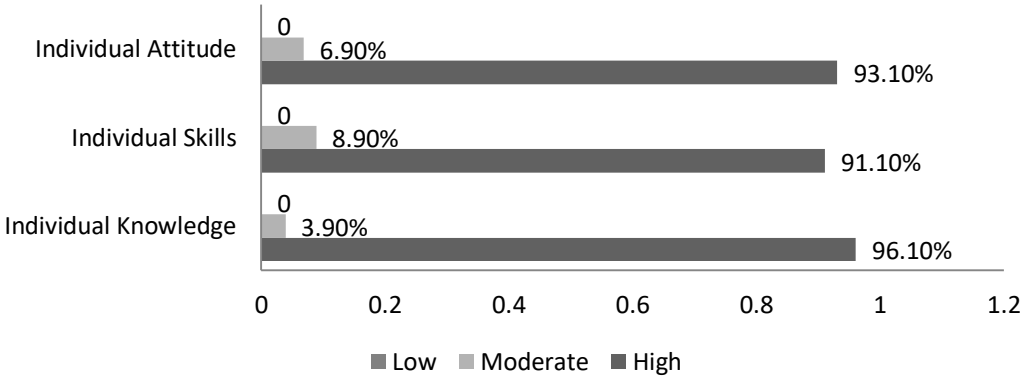

Figure 1: Percentage of the levels of individual effectiveness perceived by respondents

On the other hand, Figure 2 shows CFA for individual effectiveness. There were 32 initial items in ITIS developed by Aziz et al. (2018). However, the current research found that only 16 items are suitable to measure individual effectiveness. The CFA model has acceptable goodness of fit (GOF) including the value of GFI, CFI, TLI and RMSEA.

Further, Figure 3 shows measurement model to test the research hypotheses. It can be seen that the research framework has acceptable GOF for GFI, CFI, and RMSEA. The measurement model also verified the research frameworks' construct validity including composite reliability, discriminant validity and average variance extracted when rounded up into one decimal point.

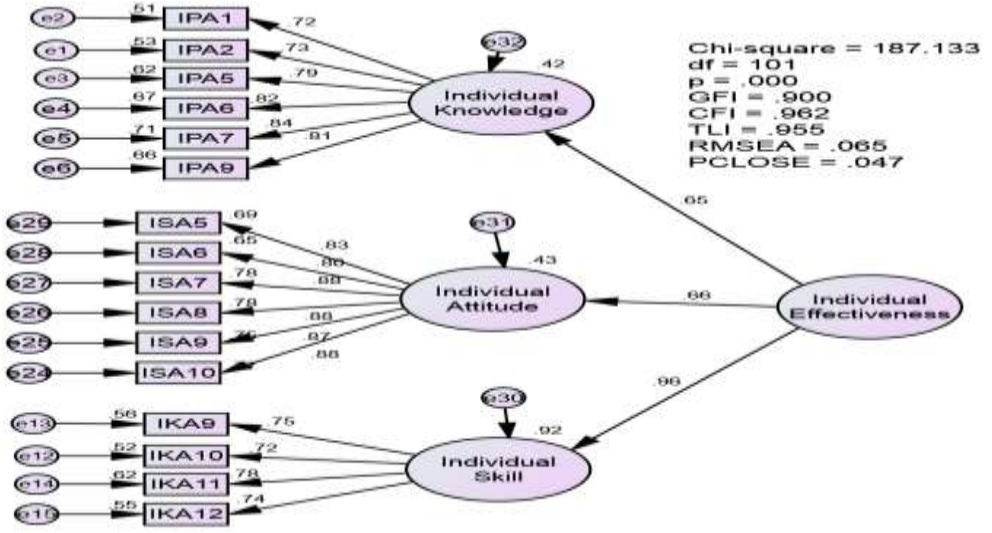

Figure 2: CFA for individual effectiveness

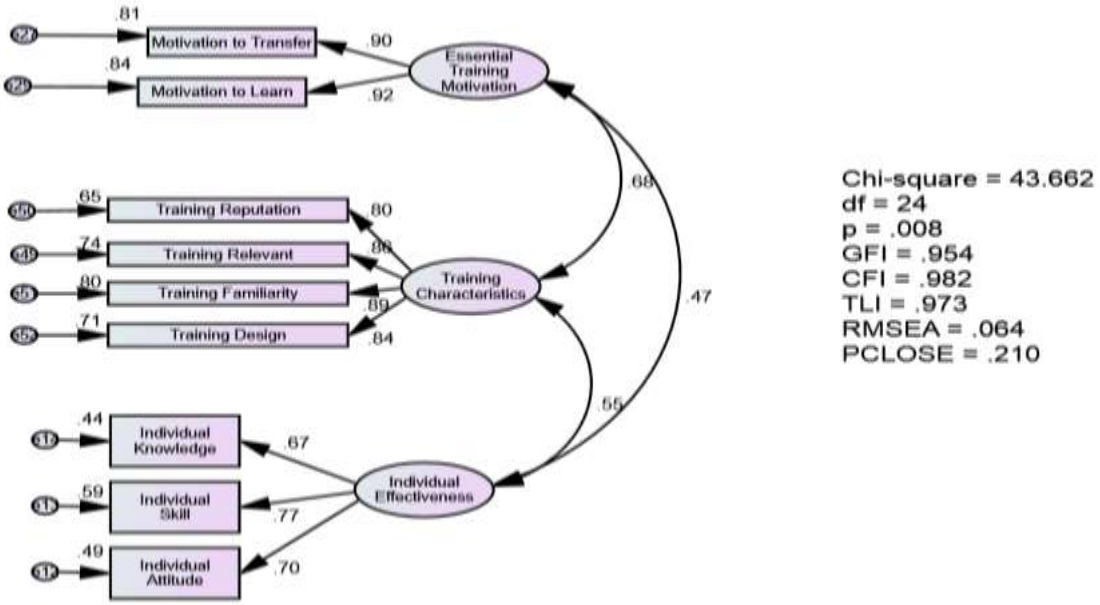

Figure 3: Measurement Model

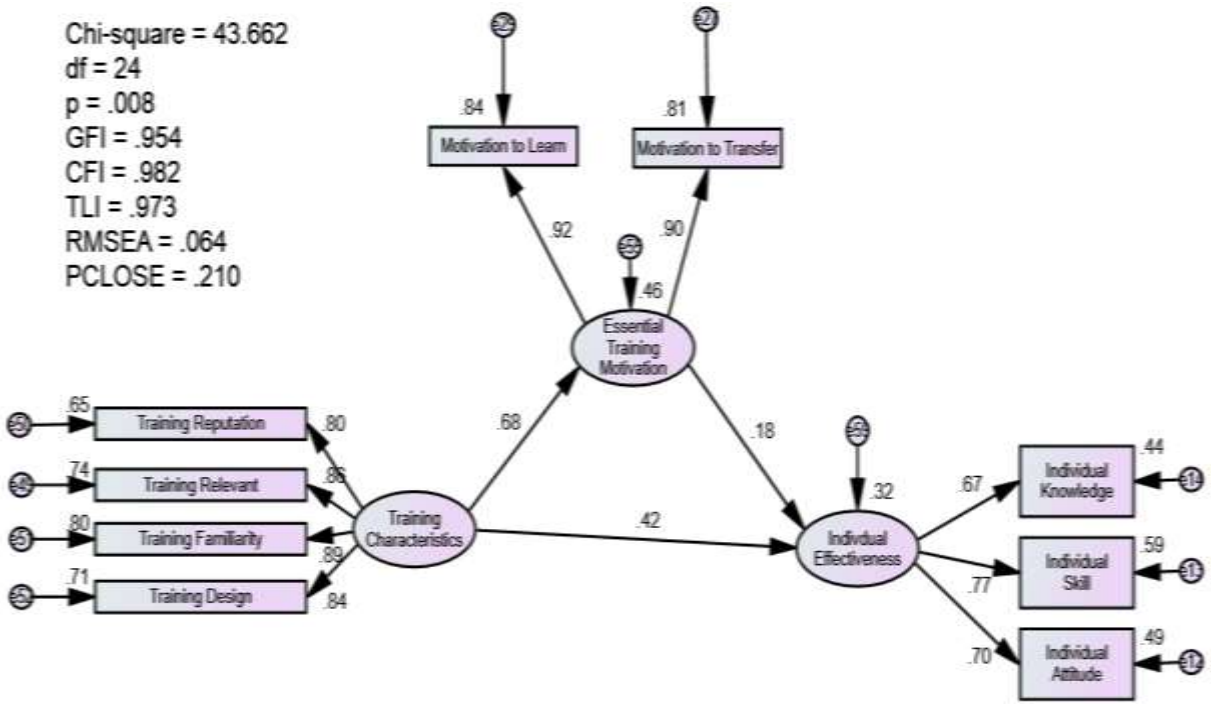

Figure 4: Structural Model

Table 2: Results of SEM-AMOS

Model	Hypothesized path	Standardized regression weights estimates	SE	CR	P value
Structural Model	ETM <--- TCS	.678	.087	9.280	***
	IE <--- ETM	.182	.062	1.656	.009
	IE <--- TCS	.425	.078	3.660	***
Direct Model	ETM <--- TCS	.679	.087	9.292	***
	IE <--- ETM	.461	.052	4.976	***
	IE <--- TCS	.547	.063	5.846	***

***Significant at 0.0001. ETM: Essential Training Motivation, TCS: Training Characteristics, IE: Individual Effectiveness, SE: Standard error, CR: Critical ratio, P: significant level

Table 3: Testing the mediation effect

Dependent variable	Regression	Independent variable	Mediator	Total effect	Mediation effect (>0.08)
IE	←	TCS	ETM	0.42 + (0.68x0.18) =0.5424	Yes

*** ETM: Essential Training Motivation, TCS: Training Characteristics, IE: Individual Effectiveness

Furthermore, Figure 4 shows the research framework's structural model and Table 2 shows the results of SEM. Meanwhile, Table 3 shows the result of mediation effect test. Hence, it can be seen that:

H1: Training characteristics significantly affect individual effectiveness

Hypothesis H1 is fully accepted because there is significant direct effect of training characteristics on individual effectiveness (β=0.57, p=0.0001).

H2: Essential training motivation significantly affects individual effectiveness

Hypothesis H2 is fully accepted because there is significant direct effect of essential training motivation on individual effectiveness (β=0.461, p=0.0001).

H3: Essential training motivation significantly mediates the relationship between training characteristics and training effectiveness

Hypothesis H3 is fully accepted because a total effect of training characteristics on individual effectiveness is more than 0.08.

Taken together, it is verified that ETM partially mediated the relationship between training characteristics and individual effectiveness. In addition, training characteristics and ETM explained 32% variance in individual effectiveness, and training characteristics explained 46% variance in ETM. This is consistent with previous research, in which, Colquitt et al. (2000), Chiaburu et al. (2010) and Arasanmi (2019) found that various types of training motivation mediated the relationship between various factors and various measurement of training effectiveness.

In addition, several training characteristics were significant factors affecting individual effectiveness. This is also consistent with previous research in which it is indicated that training content familiarity (Tsai & Tai, 2003; Ismail et al., 2016; Hajjar & Alkhanaizi, 2018), training design (Mokhtar et al., 2019; Charoensap-Kelly et al., 2016; Lee et al., 2019), training reputation (Facteau et al. 1995; Aziz, 2016; Sahoo & Mishra, 2019), and training relevant (Axtell et al., 1997; Aziz, 2016; Beqiri & Mazreku, 2020) were significant training characteristics affecting training effectiveness.

Findings also indicated that the most influential training characteristic affecting individual effectiveness was training content familiarity followed by training relevant, training design, and training reputation. These characteristics are consistent with those influential training characteristics found by previous researchers. For example, Karnain et al. (2018) and Fariduddin et al. (2020) found that an effective training should have training module content that related (familiar) and relevant to achieve training objective and job requirement. Meanwhile, Ghazvini and Shukur (2018) found that training design should adapt latest technology that could attract learning, such as using online game training. Additionally, Hamdan et al. (2019) found that online learning should be part of training design for more effective training.

V. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the aim of this paper is close the research gap by determining the effect of training characteristic on individual effectiveness by analysing essential training motivation as mediator. Hence, a number of 203 Malaysian Public Service Officers attended seven training programs organized by The Malaysian National Institute of Public Administration in 2016 were taken for sample. Using SPSS and SEM-AMOS data analysis, findings

indicated that those organised training were effective since respondents have high level of individual effectiveness after attending the training program. In addition, essential training motivation partially mediated the relationship between training characteristics and individual effectiveness. Additionally, training content familiarity followed by training relevant, training design, and training reputation were important characteristics of a training program affecting individual effectiveness. Significantly, research findings are important to determine the most important characteristic of training in human resource development to ensure employees' individual effectiveness.

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