Training, Job Satisfaction, POS and Service Quality: The Case of Malaysia

Abdul Rahim Zumrah*

This study is conducted to examine the role of job satisfaction and perceived organizational support as a mediator in the relationship between training and service quality. The data of this study has been collected from 222 public sector employees in Malaysia and their supervisor through survey. The results from data analysis shows that both predictions were not supported by the analysis. However, this study found a significant relationship between training and job satisfaction, and between training and perceived organizational support. Although the main objectives of this study was not supported, however, this study provides empirical evidence of the direct effect of training on perceived organizational support and job satisfaction, particularly in the Malaysian public sector context. The results support the importance of training in producing positive work attitude and behavior found in previous studies, and demonstrates the applicability of this management concept to non-Western settings (Malaysia), and to the public sector more generally.

Field of Research: Training, job satisfaction, perceived organizational support, service quality, Malaysian public sector.

1. Introduction

Service quality is generally viewed as a customer’s overall evaluation of the service provided to them (Kandampully et al. 2011). Service quality is regarded as a critical success factor of service organizations (Avcikurt et al. 2011). This is due to the belief that service quality can deliver positive effects to organization such as increase customers’ positive perceptions toward the organization (Kim & Damhorst 2010), influences the customers’ behavior to continuously receive service from the organization (Kim & Damhorst 2010; Kim et al. 2012) and remain loyal to it (Gracia et al. 2011).

Many factors have been identified as influencing service quality, which can be categorized into two subcategories: employee factors and organizational factors. In regard to the first factor, a number of studies have found that employees’ job behavior such as organizational citizenship behavior (Morrison 1996), job satisfaction (Glisson & Hemmelgarn 1998) and organizational commitment (Hung 2006) have a positive influence on service quality. However, the majority of previous studies tend to regard organizational factors as more important determinant of service quality. The organizational factors that have an influence on service quality are including the support from management and supervisors, positive work group relationships (Batt 1999) and constructive team culture (Glisson & James 2002). Furthermore, researchers believe service quality can be improved through human resource management practices such as an appropriate manpower planning, recruitment and selection, training and development, job design, pay

*Senior Lecturer, Faculty of Leadership and Management, Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia, 71800 Nilai, Negeri Sembilan, Malaysia. Email: rahim@usim.edu.my
and rewards, performance appraisal, career development system, managerial coaching and empowerment (Chand 2010).

Although many organizational factors have been identified with service quality, one important and essential factor is training. As Mosahab, Mahamad and Ramayah (2011) indicate, ‘in order to enhance service quality, training is an important task that cannot be neglected’ (p. 93). Prior studies in various service industries including the banking, hotel and health industries indicate that training is positively and significantly related to service quality (Schneider & Bowen 1993). Similarly, a recent study by Beigi and Shirmohammadi (2011) concerning employees at five branches of a large public sector bank in Iran also found that the employees who participated in an emotional intelligence training program showed improvement in all service quality dimensions (reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy). Support for this can be found in a study with 439 hotel employees in India, which indicated that training showed the highest correlation with service quality than other human resource practices such as recruitment, selection, manpower planning and pay system (Chand & Katou 2007). One possible explanation for these results is that training provides an opportunity for employee to continuously learn (Batt, 1999). This opportunity allows employees to directly upgrade their knowledge, skills, abilities and professionalism which they require to meet the needs of customers, and respond better to customers’ requirements (Chand 2010).

While it has been generally accepted that training will lead to higher levels of service quality, the literature does not lend its full support to this relationship. For example, a study by Zerbe and colleagues (1998) consisting of 452 airline employees in the United States highlighted that there is a significant relationship between employees’ perceptions of HRM practices and employees’ display of positive behavior toward customers. However, no relationship was found between satisfaction with training and service behavior in this study. Similarly, Cook and Verma (2002) in their study of 147 employees of a large bank in Hong Kong found that training provided by the organization was not related to any dimension of service quality. Recently, Hung (2006) studied 316 people working in the hotel industry in Taiwan, and indicated that a more positive employee perception of HRM practices would stimulate increased organizational commitment and in turn service performance. However, the study reported a negative relationship between perceptions of training and service performance.

Based on the above mixed findings, a more detailed scrutiny of this relationship is clearly warranted. This study is conducted to further study this relationship by exploring the possibility that job satisfaction and perceived organizational support (POS) are mediator in the relationship between training and service quality. Such mediating effect could be exist due to previous studies found that training is positively and significantly associated with job satisfaction (Schmidt 2007; Valentine & Fleischman 2008). There are also studies indicated that job satisfaction is positively and significantly associated with service quality (Evanschitzky et al. 2011; Gazzoli et al. 2010; Kim et al. 2009). Similarly, in regard to POS, number of studies found that the opportunity to participate in training programs as the determinant of POS (Armstrong-Stassen & Ursel 2009; Chiang et al. 2011; Edwards 2009). At the same time, there is a study indicate that POS is positively related to service quality (Bell & Menguc 2002).

Based on the above findings, this study argue job satisfaction and POS could mediate training and service quality relationship. This proposition can be explain theoretically using the social exchange approach (Eisenberger et al. 1986). The social exchange approach
dictates that people will follow the norm of reciprocity in which people respond to each other in kind—returning benefits for benefits. In this study, providing training to employees is an example of effort by organization to enhance their employee competencies. This effort can increase employee job satisfaction and their positive perception toward organization. As a return, employee will improve their quality of service to organization’s customers in order to meet the organization objectives (e.g., profit, good image). However, till date, there is still lack of empirical evidence whether job satisfaction and POS mediate the relationship between training and service quality, particularly in the Southeast Asia context such as Malaysia.

This study will adds to the HRM literature by examining the mediating role of job satisfaction and POS in the relationship between training and service quality. According to Tremblay, Cloutier, Simard, Chennevert and Vandenbarghe (2010), there is a need for research to investigate the mediating factor between human resource management (HRM) practices and employees’ performance to enhance understanding about the mechanism that link HRM practices and employees’ performance. Specifically in this study, although a positive relationship between training (HRM practice) and service quality (employees’ performance) is acknowledged in several empirical studies, this study improves this line of research by examining whether the relationship between training and service quality is mediate by job satisfaction and POS.

In addition, this study extends a discussion about the factors that influence service quality in public sector organizations in Malaysia, a non-Western country located at Southeast Asia. The rationale for testing the proposed model in the context of public sector organizations in Malaysia is based on the fact that previous studies related to service quality in this context have mostly been conducted in private sector organizations such as banks (Kumar et al. 2009), private higher education institution (Abu Hasan et al. 2008) and airlines organizations (O’Connell & Williams 2005). In previous studies evidence has been presented showing that public and private sector organizations differ significantly in terms of organizational goals and systems, work values and work motivation (Buelens & Broeck 2007). These differences could have a significant impact on employees and the way they deliver service.

The following discussion of this manuscript is organized into six sections. Section Two discusses in detail the relationship between training, job satisfaction, POS and service quality. Six hypotheses are then proposed at the end of each discussion. Section Three provides detailed information on the methodology issues (e.g., population and sample, data collection procedure, measures) in conducting this research in order to test the proposed hypotheses of this study. Section Four presents the results of the quantitative analyses (e.g., factorial validity of constructs, the results of the hypotheses testing). Section Five presents an integrated discussion drawing on the findings from Section Four and the hypotheses that were developed in Section Two. Section Six provides a detailed explanation of the theoretical and practical implications of this study. Finally, Section Seven discusses the limitations of this study together with suggestions for future study.

2. Literature Review

2.1 The Relationship between Training and Job Satisfaction

Training refers to a planned and systematic effort to provide and enhance employees’ knowledge, skills and attitudes related to their job, through learning experiences with a
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view to working more efficiently (Blanchard & Thacker 2010). Organizations view training as an investment that is expected to provide benefits to them such as enhancing the employee job satisfaction. Recent empirical studies conducted among employees from various organizations showed that training was positively related to job satisfaction (Abdulla et al. 2011; Back et al. 2011; Gould-Williams & Mohamed 2010).

There are a number of reasons why training has a positive impact on job satisfaction. First, training can make employees more qualified and job proficient (Lee & Bruvold 2003; Li et al. 2008). Second, training can enhance an employee’s ability to adjust successfully to organizational change (Traut et al. 2000). Third, training can deliver a strong message to employees that the organization is concerned about their needs and development, which ultimately creates a positive effect on job satisfaction (Kim et al., 2009). Based on the discussion, the following hypothesis is proposed:

**Hypothesis 1:** Training is positively related to job satisfaction

2.2 The Relationship between Job Satisfaction and Service Quality

Job satisfaction is defined as ‘how people feel about their jobs and different aspects of their jobs. It is the extent to which people like or dislike their jobs’ (Spector 1997, p. 2). Satisfied employees are likely to exhibit various desired behaviors including the ability to deliver a high quality of service. Previous studies of employees in various sectors such as hotels (Kim et al. 2009), service shops (Yee et al. 2008), banking (Malhotra & Mukherjee 2004), restaurant (Gazzoli et al. 2010), market (Wangenheim, Evanschitzky & Wunderlich 2007) and franchise services (Evanschitzky et al. 2011) all show job satisfaction is positively related to service quality. A recent meta-analysis also revealed that job satisfaction accounted for between six and ten percent of total variance in service quality (Brown & Lam 2008).

There are two possible explanations for this association. Firstly, highly satisfied employees may be more willing to engage in positive and helpful behaviors that lead to better service quality (Lee et al. 2006) and customer trust (Bradford et al. 2009). Second, job satisfaction leads to employees’ intentions to keep performing their required job tasks well, which in turn affects their actual behavior such as commitment to customer service, cooperation with fellow employees and commitment to the organization (Arnett et al. 2002). Thus, based on the discussion, the following hypothesis is proposed:

**Hypothesis 2:** Job satisfaction is positively related to service quality

Based on the discussion in subsections 2.1 and 2.2, the present study conclude that training has a positive relationship with job satisfaction. Job satisfaction is then has a positive relationship with service quality. These perspectives are necessary and sufficient to establish the mediation effect (Kenny et al. 1998). Accordingly, this study proposes that job satisfaction can mediate the training and service quality relationship. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

**Hypothesis 3:** Job satisfaction is a mediator between the training and service quality
2.3 The Relationship between Training and Perceived Organizational Support (POS)

POS is defined as the employees’ general belief that their work organization values their contribution and cares about their well-being (Eisenberger et al. 1986; Rhoades & Eisenberger 2002). The employees’ level of POS is based on the treatment they received from their organization (Rhoades & Eisenberger 2002). Examples of organizational treatments viewed by employees as affecting the level of POS are: perceived fairness of organization decision-making (Lavelle et al. 2009), a caring and ethical climate in the organization (Filipova 2011), perceived organizational ethics and management safety concerns (Credo et al. 2010), perceived supervisor support and quality of leader-member exchange (Chen & Eldridge 2011; Credo et al. 2010), trustworthiness of the manager (Byrne et al. 2011), perceived fairness of rewards and recognition (Edwards 2009), receiving career mentoring (Chew & Wong 2008), an open communication environment and open team meetings (Edwards 2009), and perceived employer inducement and psychological contract fulfillment (Coyle-Shapiro & Conway 2005). All these findings show that employees tend to perceive favorable organizational experiences as the main determinant of POS.

Another organizational treatment that can enhance the employees’ level of POS is the human resource management practices in organization (Chiang et al. 2011), specifically, the opportunity to participate in training and development programs. This assumption has been justified empirically by previous studies (e.g., Allen et al. 2003; Armstrong-Stassen & Ursel 2009; Eisenberger et al. 1997; Rhodes & Eisenberger 2002; Wayne et al. 1997). There are number of reasons why the opportunity to participate in training and development programs has a positive impact on POS. First, training and development programs serve as signals to employees about the extent to which the organization values and cares about them as an employee (Allen et al., 2003). It is due to the training and development programs is a platform that can enhance employees' competencies (knowledge, skills and attitudes), which can help them to perform their current job. Second, training and developments programs can facilitate employees to growth and advance their career in organization. Therefore, based on the discussion, the following hypothesis is proposed:

**Hypothesis 4:** Training is positively related to perceived organizational support

2.4 The Relationship between Perceived Organizational Support and Service Quality

Service quality is generally viewed as a customer's overall evaluation of the service provided to them (Kandampully et al. 2011). The customer's overall evaluation is based on their assessment of a number of service-related attributes such as tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy (Parasuraman et al. 1988).

Many factors have been identified as influencing service quality including the employees' job behavior such as organizational citizenship behavior (Morrison 1996), job satisfaction (Glisson & Hemmelgarn 1998), loyalty (Glaveli & Karassavidou 2011) and organizational commitment (Hung 2006), and organizational factors such as the support from management and supervisors (Batt 1999; Zeithaml et al. 1990), positive employee involvement climate (Mathe & Slevitch 2011), and positive work group relationships, for example with peers (Batt 1999).
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Another organizational factor that has influence on service quality is perceived organizational support (POS). A study by Bell and Menguc (2002) have found a significant relationship of POS with service quality. They believe when employee fell that their work organization values their contribution and cares about their well-being, the employee may put their effort to reciprocate the organization support such as through the performance of behaviors that expected by the organization (i.e., delivering quality service to organization customer). Therefore, based the discussion, the following hypothesis is proposed:

**Hypothesis 5:** Perceived organizational support is positively related to service quality

Based on the discussion in subsections 2.3 and 2.4, the present study conclude that training has a positive relationship with perceived organizational support. Perceived organizational support is then has a positive relationship with service quality. These perspectives are necessary and sufficient to establish the mediation effect (Kenny et al. 1998). Accordingly, this study proposes that perceived organizational support can mediate the training and service quality relationship. Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed:

**Hypothesis 6:** Perceived organizational support is a mediator between the training and service quality

3. Methodology

3.1 Population and Sample

The population of this study consists of employees of public sector organizations in Malaysia who participated in training activities organized by the main campus of the National Institute of Public Administration (INTAN) in 2010. INTAN is a training centre that provides Malaysian government employees with various types of training relating to language and communication, leadership, finance, information technology, professional development, quality and human resource development. Purposive sampling technique has been used to select the sample for this study. This technique was chosen since this study focuses on a specific target group (a group of public sector employees who participate in a specific training program) (Sekaran & Bougie 2010).

The final sample of this study comprised 222 employees and 624 internal customers (employees’ colleagues). For employees, 68 per cent (N = 151) of them were female and 32 per cent (N = 71) were male. In terms of age, 41.9 per cent (N = 93) were between 20 and 29 years of age, 36.5 per cent (N = 81) were between 30 and 39, 7.6 per cent (N = 17) were between 40 and 49 and the remaining 14 per cent (N = 31) were between 50 and 60. Information about education qualifications revealed that 60 per cent (N = 133) of the employees were university graduates, while the remaining 40 per cent (N = 89) had secondary school certificate level qualifications. The majority of the employees were married (66.7 per cent, N = 148), while the remaining 33.3 per cent (N = 74) were single. In terms of employment history, 68.5 per cent (N = 152) of the employee sample have worked in public sector organizations ranging from 1 to 9 years, 15.3 per cent (N = 34) worked in the public sector between 10 and 19 years, and the remaining 16.2 per cent (N = 36) worked in public sector organizations for more than 20 years.

For internal customers, 69.7 per cent (N = 435) of them were female and 30.3 per cent (N = 189) were male. In terms of age, 45.7 per cent (N = 285) were between 20 and 29 years of age, 31.4 per cent (N = 196) were between 30 and 39, 11.5 per cent (N = 72) were
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between 40 and 49 and the remaining 11.4 per cent (N = 71) were between 50 and 60. The information about education qualifications revealed that 59.5 per cent (N = 371) of the employees’ colleagues were university graduates, while the remaining 40.5 per cent (N = 253) have secondary school certificates. The majority of the employees’ colleagues sample were married (66.5 per cent, N = 415), while the remaining 33.5 per cent (N = 209) were single. In terms of employment history, 63.6 per cent (N = 397) of the employee colleagues sample have worked in public sector organizations between 1 and 9 years, 19.4 per cent (N = 121) of them have worked between 10 and 19 years, and the remaining 17 per cent (N = 106) have worked in public sector organizations for more than 20 years.

3.2 Data Collection Procedure

The data of this study were collected through survey from two sources; the group of public sector employees who attended training program in 2010 (employees), and employees’ colleagues who work in the same sector with the employees (internal customers). The survey were based on reliable and valid measures previously used and reported in the literature.

The employees received a questionnaire that contained questions to measure training, perceived organizational support and job satisfaction. It is argued that the employees themselves are credible persons who can provide data on training because they are the individuals who had go through the training and know exactly the level of improvement they achieved as a result of the training (Phillips 1997). The employees also are the best source of information to measure perceived organizational support (Bal et al. 2010) and job satisfaction (Spector 1997). The employees’ colleagues are regarded for the purposes of this study as internal customers have received a questionnaire containing questions related to service quality. Measuring service quality based on internal employees’ perception has been applied in a number of previous studies by Cook and Verma (2002), Glisson and James (2002) and Slatten et al. (2011), as it can provide a more accurate assessment of the quality of service provided by employees to their customers. Internal customers experience service provision from the employees on a daily basis and therefore should be able to observe the employees’ service quality more than external customers (Lai 2006).

An arbitrary code number was assigned to each survey in order to associate the feedback received from the employees and the employees’ colleagues.

Surveys were anonymous and delivered personally to the employees and their supervisors. Assistance from the employees’ supervisor was then sought to distribute the internal customer survey to the relevant employees (i.e. the employees’ colleagues) in the organization. It was decided to deliver the survey personally because the respondents (the employees and their supervisors) were located in a local area and the researcher had obtained approval to meet them (Cavana et al. 2001; Sekaran & Bougie 2010). This approach also allowed the researcher to control the conditions under which questionnaires were completed to ensure they were completed by the actual respondents and to reduce opportunities of shared responses (Thomas & Smith 2003). In addition, the researcher could collect the completed responses within a short period of time (Cavana et al. 2001). Furthermore, evidence from previous studies indicates that this method produces higher response rates in this type of context (Tay 2008).
3.3 Measures

3.3.1 Training

Training is measured by four items developed by Curry (1997). An example of the item is ‘As a result of the training, I substantially increased my knowledge on the topic’. The four items are applicable to measure training in the context of public sector organizations (Curry 1997). These four items have also been empirically used in previous study with a reliability of 0.83 in the study by Curry, Donnenwirth and Lawler (2010).

3.3.2 Perceived Organizational Support (POS)

POS is measured using Eisenberger, Cummings, Armeli and Lynch’s (1997) short version of the Survey of Perceived Organizational Support (SPOS). This version of the POS contains 8 items. An example of the item is ‘My organization cares about my opinions’. This short version of POS was selected because it contains 8 items that load highly on the main POS factor as reported in the scale’s source article by Eisenberger et al. (1986). This version can also be applied to a wide variety of organizations (Eisenberger et al. 1997) in the context of Asian countries (Liao 2011). Additionally, this version has been applied in recent study, which show high internal reliability: 0.99 in the study by Suazo and Stone-Romero (2011).

3.3.3 Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction is measured by a three-item scale adapted from the Michigan Organizational Assessment Questionnaire Satisfaction Subscale developed by Cammann, Fichman, Jenkins and Klesh (1979). An example of the item is ‘In general, I like working here’. This measure is selected due to it being simple and short but significant in measuring an employee’s overall job satisfaction (Spector 1997) and has been widely used in various research settings (Golden & Veiga 2005). In addition, this measure has been tested in the context of public sector organizations (e.g., DeHart-Davis & Pandey 2005) and applied by recent study (e.g., Bagger & Li 2014; Dehart-Davis & Pandey 2005).

3.3.4 Service Quality

Service quality is measured using the customer perceptions component of the SERVQUAL instrument developed by Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1988). There are five dimensions of service quality proposed by the original scale: tangible, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy. These dimensions consist of twenty-two items. Due to the nature of this study, to measure service quality from the employee perspective (internal customer), only four dimensions (reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy) consist of eighteen-items have been used. The dimension ‘tangibles’ have been excluded from this study because they do not affect employees’ perceptions of service quality (Lai 2006). The other four dimensions have been regarded as the primary measures of service quality from the employee perspective (Gazzoli et al. 2010; Lai, 2006). An example of the item is ‘When he/she promises to do something by a certain time, he/she does so’. Coefficient alpha reliability for these four dimensions were reported to be 0.81 (reliability), 0.81 (responsiveness), 0.90 (assurance) and 0.86 (empathy) in the study by Chand (2010).
4. Analysis and Findings

4.1 Factorial Validity of Constructs

The items measuring each construct (training, perceived organizational support, job satisfaction, service quality) was factor-analyzed using principal component factor analysis. Table 1 shows that all items load substantially on only one component.

Table 1: Factor structure resulting from EFA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Training</th>
<th>Perceived Organizational Support</th>
<th>Job Satisfaction</th>
<th>Service Quality</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cronbach α</td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>0.70</td>
<td>0.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item abbreviation</td>
<td>Item abbreviation</td>
<td>Item abbreviation</td>
<td>Item abbreviation</td>
<td>Item abbreviation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PL1</td>
<td>0.644</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PL2</td>
<td>0.760</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PL3</td>
<td>0.645</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PL4</td>
<td>0.743</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POS1</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.734</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POS2</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.786</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POS3</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.849</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POS4</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.851</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POS5</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.680</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>POS7</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.573</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>POS8</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.745</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JS1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.834</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JS2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.722</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JS3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.840</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REL</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.868</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RES</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>0.776</td>
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<tr>
<td>ASS</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>0.895</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMP</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.876</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: N = 222.

4.2 Mean Scores and Correlations

Table 2 presents descriptive statistics for constructs of this study. It can be observed that all constructs obtained relatively high mean scores. Table 2 further shows the correlation between the constructs. There is a positive and significant relationship between training, job satisfaction and perceived organizational support. However, none of these three constructs have a significant relationship with service quality. Moreover, the result of Table 2 shows negative correlation between training and service quality.
**Table 2: Means, standard deviation and correlation matrix**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>POS</th>
<th>JS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>T</td>
<td>6.04</td>
<td>0.59</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POS</td>
<td>5.35</td>
<td>0.72</td>
<td>0.335**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JS</td>
<td>5.80</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td>0.332**</td>
<td>0.467**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SQ</td>
<td>5.44</td>
<td>0.64</td>
<td>-0.037</td>
<td>0.114</td>
<td>0.087</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: T = training; POS = perceived organizational support; JS = job satisfaction and SQ = service quality. ** = p<0.01.

### 4.3 Hypotheses Testing

To test hypotheses 1, 2, 4 and 5, a series of regression analyses were carried out. The analysis result shows that training is positively related to job satisfaction ($\beta = 0.332, p < 0.001$). Training also is positively related to perceived organizational support ($\beta = 0.335, p < 0.001$). However, the analysis result shows that the relationship between job satisfaction and service quality is not significant ($\beta = 0.087, p > 0.05$). Similarly, the relationship between perceived organizational support and service quality also is not significant ($\beta = 0.114, p > 0.05$). These results provide partial support for the hypotheses proposed in this study (hypotheses 1 and 4 is supported, while hypotheses 2 and 5 is not supported). Consequently, the other two hypotheses (hypotheses 3 and 6) that would like to test the mediation effect is not supported (Baron & Kenny 1986).

### 5. Discussion

This study predicted a positive relationship between training and job satisfaction, and between training and perceived organizational support. Both predictions were supported by the analysis. These findings are consistent with previous research that indicated participation in training program can enhance an employee level of satisfaction toward their job (Abdulla et al. 2011; Back et al. 2011; Gould-Williams & Mohamed 2010), and their positive perception toward the organization (Allen et al. 2003; Armstrong-Stassen & Ursel 2009; Rhodes & Eisenberger 2002). The findings presented here provide additional evidence to the literature. The use of a sample drawn from the Malaysian public sector provides cross-validation of past empirical findings that previously has looked at respondents in a Western private sector setting and Asian developed country.

This study further predicted that job satisfaction would have a positive relationship with service quality. This study argues that employees who fell satisfaction with their job, will be able to demonstrate quality service to their customers. However, this prediction was not supported by the analysis. In other word, the level of employee job satisfaction does not contribute significantly to the quality of service they provided to their customers. The non-significant relationship between job satisfaction and service quality is quite contrary to previous research findings (e.g., Kim et al. 2009; Lee et al. 2006; Yee et al. 2008; Malhotra & Mukherjee 2004; Gazzoli et al. 2010; Bradford et al. 2009; Wangenheim et al. 2007) who have found significant and positive links between job satisfaction and service quality. One possible explanation for the non-significant relationship between job satisfaction and service quality reported here is the potential presence of other important variables which may also impact on the Malaysian public sector employee service quality. It could be that particular organizational practices might contribute a greater influence on the quality of service provided by public sector employees in Malaysia rather than the
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characteristics of the employees. For example, the support from management and supervisors (Batt 1999; Zeithaml et al. 1990), positive employee involvement climate (Mathe & Slevitch 2013), and positive work group relationships, for example with peers (Batt 1999).

This study also predicted a positive relationship between perceived organizational support and service quality. This study argues employees who felt that their work organization values their contribution and cares about their well-being, will be able to demonstrate quality service to their customers. However, this prediction was not supported by the analysis, which contrary to previous research findings (e.g., Bell & Menguc 2002) who have found significant and positive links between perceived organizational support and service quality. It could be that perceived organizational support might contribute to the development of positive work attitude and behavior of employees rather than the employees’ performance. Evidence from previous studies have clearly justify the essential of perceived organizational support in developing a positive work attitude and behavior among the employees such as job commitment (Tremblay et al. 2010), loyalty (Coyle-Shapiro & Conway 2005), job satisfaction (Filipova 2011), self-efficacy, motivation (Chiaburu et al. 2010) and trust (Chiang et al. 2011).

Alternatively, the non-significant relationship between perceived organizational support and service quality might simply mean the relationship is mediated by other variables (Judge et al. 2001). In other words, there is another intervening factor between perceived organizational support and service quality. For example, the role of organizational citizenship behavior may have some influence in this relationship that is not accounted for in this study. In a study by Chiang and Hsieh (2012) it was found that perceived organizational support had a significant effect on employees’ job performance through the employee organizational citizenship behavior. The example shows that the impact of perceived organizational support on service quality may be mediated by other employee characteristics factor. Therefore, future study might consider the mediating factor when investigating the effect of perceived organizational support on employees’ performance outcomes.

Finally, the non-significant relationship between job satisfaction, perceived organizational support and service quality might be influence by the source of the data for variable service quality. As mention earlier in the methodology section, this study utilized the views of internal customers in assessing the level of service quality provided by the employees, rather than those of external customers as seen in a number of other studies (e.g., Kim et al. 2009; Wangenheim et al. 2007; Yee et al. 2008). It has been noted previously that the views provided by external customers and internal customers could be different in assessing the quality of service provided by employees (Bowen & Schneider 1988; Lai 2006). The duration of time and opportunity to evaluate service quality performance are two indicators that contribute to the different views between internal and external customers. In the context of this study, the assessment of internal customers (i.e. employees’ colleagues) on service quality may be lower than the assessment provided by external customers because they received service from those employees (who participated in training) regularly and have adequate opportunity to observe the employees’ overall service attributes. Conversely, the assessment of service quality provided by external customers could be higher due to they may rely heavily on tangible aspects (e.g., physical setting of the organization and the appearance of the employees), as the time and opportunity to look at overall employees service attributes are limited. The potential different assessment score given by internal and external customers could affect
the strength of the relationship between job satisfaction, perceived organizational support and service quality. However, further research is necessary to determine the stability of this assumption. Therefore, perhaps the different perspective on service quality utilized in this study accounts for the contrary results presented here.

6. Conclusion

This study is conducted to examine the relationship between training, job satisfaction, perceived organizational support and service quality in the context of public sector organizations in Malaysia. Although the main objectives of this study were not supported, however, this study provides an essential knowledge about the importance of training on employee, particularly the employees of the public sector in Malaysia. The findings from this study can be a motivator to organizations to actively and continuously focus on, encourage and promote training in their organization. The contribution of this study to the body of knowledge, its practical implications, its limitations and suggestions for future study have been discussed in details in the following sections.

6.1 Implications of the Study

From the theoretical perspective, this study provides empirical evidence of the direct effect of training on perceived organizational support and job satisfaction, particularly in the Malaysian public sector context. The results support the importance of training in producing positive work attitude and behavior found in other studies (Abdulla et al. 2011; Allen et al. 2003; Armstrong-Stassen & Ursel 2009; Back et al. 2011; Eisenberger et al. 1997; Gould-Williams & Mohamed 2010; Rhodes & Eisenberger 2002; Wayne et al. 1997) and demonstrates the applicability of this management concept to non-Western settings (Malaysia), and to the public sector more generally.

In term of practical implication, this findings of this study provides an essential evidence to organization to actively and continuously focus on, encourage and promote training in their organization. Although training is regarded as costly and liability to organization, however, training is a well design event that can enhance an employee positive perception toward organization and their attitude toward work. The findings of this study show that the opportunity of an employee to participate in training program is significantly related to both the employee’s level of satisfaction and their belief towards the organization. To achieve such positive outcomes, an ongoing evaluation of employees who have attended training programs including receiving feedback from their supervisors over time is strongly recommended. In addition, organization need to ensure that the training program is relevant and related to employee current job description and/or future job development, and it is facilitated by trainers who are both knowledgeable and experienced in a particular training content.

6.2 Limitations and Suggestions for Future Study

One limitation of this study is that the data were collected at one point of time, applying a cross-sectional design methodology. Although researchers such as Chiaburu and Lindsay (2008) indicate that this design is commonly used in training research, some view the collection of data at one point of time make it difficult to draw inferences of causality (Dysvik & Kuvass 2008) and limiting the explanatory power of the results (Gegenfurtner et al. 2009). Therefore, undertaking a longitudinal study in this area would assist in validating the current findings. While beyond the scope of this study, a longitudinal designed study
may provide more robust findings on which to base causal inferences (Chiaburu et al. 2010).

In addition, this study applies a quantitative research design where the data were collected through a questionnaire survey. Future studies should consider collecting deeper qualitative data from their respondents. The use of both qualitative and quantitative methods would provide an opportunity for more in-depth and richer explanations of how the training affects job satisfaction and perceived organizational support.

There are also limitations that need to be placed on the generalizability of this study beyond the current organization where it was conducted. The data of this study was collected from public sector organizations in Malaysia and more specifically, the population that undertook the training program at INTAN. Clearly, replication is necessary to test the relationships reported here. Thus, future studies could replicate the proposed relationships used here in other types of organizations such as private sector organizations.

References


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