

# **A Review of Employees Training and Development in Navigating through Pandemic Covid-19: Malaysian Perspective**

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## **Abstract**

The global outbreak of Covid-19 has had far-reaching effects on countries worldwide, influencing various aspects of life, economies, and markets. As a result of government policies, organizations have been compelled to adopt remote working arrangements. Within this context, the performance of employees becomes a crucial concern for organizations. To effectively navigate the pandemic and develop a capable and adaptable remote workforce, organizations need to prioritize the development of their human capital. Hence, this review paper focuses on exploring employee training during the Covid-19 period in Malaysia. The findings highlight the importance of training and development programs in successfully navigating the pandemic, as they offer numerous benefits and significantly influence employee performance. A great shift to digitalization of training is noticed with 86% of the companies shift their training and development programs to online, 76% of the companies plan to increase their online training programs, and 68% found online training to be equally effective. However, organizations face specific challenges when implementing virtual training, including the inadequacy of traditional programs and methods, limited collaboration and engagement, difficulties in assessing training outcomes, and issues in sustaining trainees' participation. Additionally, the paper recommends that organizations explore and utilize existing training programs and technologies, while investing further in digitalization and virtual training initiatives.

## **Keywords**

Covid-19, Malaysia, Training, Employee Performance, Remote Work

## **1. Introduction**

Developing employees' talents is crucial for achieving sustainable business growth and success due the huge transformation to remote work and technology. Companies typically invest significant time and resources in recruiting and onboarding competent staff, but many leaders neglect the importance of cultivating their employees' potential. In recent years, the onset of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, followed by the COVID-19 pandemic, has disrupted the world of work. The Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) has brought about significant changes in the workplace due to the rapid integration of technological disruption and digital transformation. As a result, many businesses are finding it challenging to keep up with the pace of innovation. Additionally, there is a growing skills gap, which is why investing in employee training and development is crucial for both business growth and the workforce that drives it.

By upskilling or reskilling individuals or groups of employees to fill these skills gaps, companies can thrive and adapt to change rather than just surviving. According to Mikołajczyk (2022), the speed of transformation, uncertainty, unpredictability, and ambiguity of events, along with the rapid advancement of modern technology, actively shape the work environment, influencing the trends and approaches employed in employee development. Enormous challenges are faced by countries globally to meet the unprecedented digitalization (Thi & Nguyen, 2022) and the need for reskilling and upskilling to meet the remote work transition's requirements (Przytuła *et al.*, 2020). It turns out that training is crucial in crisis periods such as Covid-19 (Devyania *et al.*, 2020); to develop the employees' skills (Akkermans *et al.*, 2020), and to ensure smooth transition to digitalized remote work (Hamouche, 2021). Therefore it is essential go with the flow and start developing a new training methods and technologies with keeping the physical distancing measures in mind.

Covid-19 came all of sudden with much uncertainties, and it complicated the business environment worldwide. Malaysia was among the impacted countries because of this epidemic. Several procedures, polices and regulations were imposed by the Malaysian government for protecting people lives. Movement control orders and social distancing were among the procurers that were implemented by the government. Businesses were struggling because of such procurers and polices. Among the most raised critical issue is the employee performance and the practices of Human Resource Management. Expectations change, developmental forms evolve and the need for new tools and training emerges (Williams, 2020). It turns out that employees are responsible to enhance their current skills and add new technological skills to meet new current job demands to ensure their own employability in the current movement towards remote work (Mikołajczyk, 2022). Besides, the epidemic crisis has also redefined the area of learning & development in companies (Kshirsagar *et al.*, 2020; Cai & Yates, 2020; Gartner Report, 2020; Raheja, 2021). According to the estimation of Microsofts' president and vice chair, there would be a significant growth or expansion in the number of digital job opportunities available in the year 2025 (Smith, 2020). The prediction of digital job opportunities is presented in Figure 1 below.

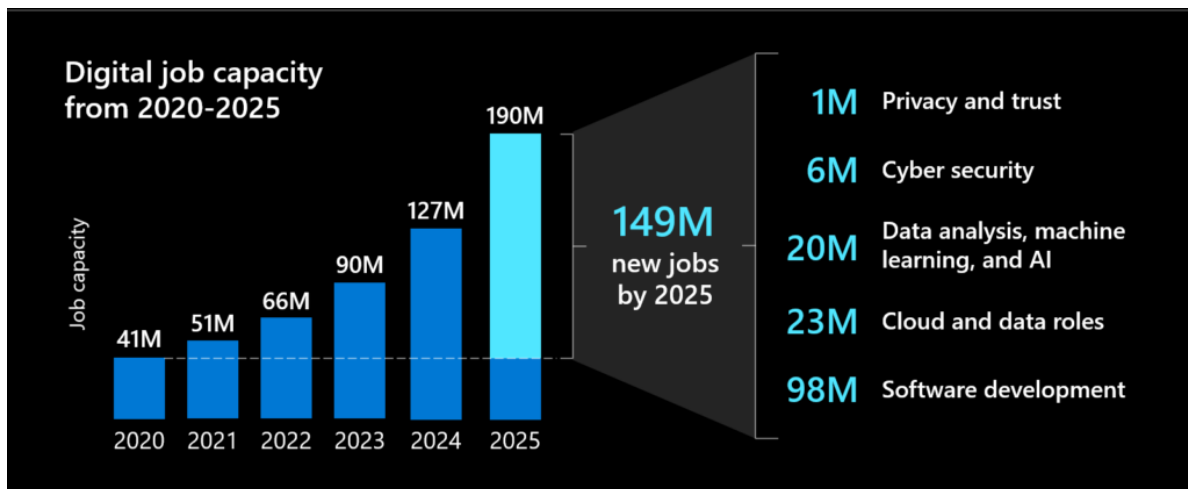


Figure 1: Prediction for Digital Job Growth for 2025. Source: (Smith, 2020)

Training and development are two of the main practices that companies must take care of and implement to ensure that their employees are equipped to perform effectively and achieve the main objectives and goals of the organization (Younas *et al.*, 2018). Employee training and development programs help increasing the knowledge, skills, and abilities of the workers, and creating competitive advantages, efficiency, and value creation among the perspective employees (Ali *et al.*, 2019). In this critical situation of covid-19, the employees are forced to adopt new work environment, tasks and working technologies to remain effective and achieving in terms of performance. Besides, Malaysia is aiming to arrive to the percentage of 45% skilled workforce by 2030 (Bernama, 2017), and as a result, a probable evolution and successive training on the performance of the employee is necessary (Karm and Mahadevan, 2019). Thus, companies have to focus on the training and development to maintain effective performance.

Malaysia has been recently focusing on increasing the percentage of the skilled workers in different fields and industries, and one of the main objectives is to increase the rate of the skilled workers (Lina, 2018). The performance

of employees reflects the prosperity or catastrophe of the company. Therefore, the significance of investment in development and training is recognized by the top management as a way of enhancing the performance of the employee (Elnaga and Amen, 2013; Younas *et al.*, 2018). Consequently, sequential training and overdevelopment upon the performance of the employees is fundamental (Karm and Mahadevan, 2019).

Staff training is a systematic learning and development method aimed at improving the efficiency of individuals, groups or organizations (Alipour *et al.*, 2009). The process involves different ways and learning models that can be grouped under two main categories synchronous and asynchronous (Ray and Samuel, 2020). In the synchronous method, the employees are taught or trained while guided by the instructor in either way of setting in a traditional classroom or through virtual course as it is the case during the epidemic of Covid-19 as all the training programs are conducted through virtual classes (Bouchrika, 2022). However, in the asynchronous approach, the employees are given the freedom to work independently and at their own pace. In addition, the blended or hybrid learning is another method that combined the previous two methods at one time (CompTIA, 2020).

Training is defined by Mozael (2015) as a continuous process that aims at achieving better employee performance by improving employee attitudes and working methods, while Nischithaa and Rao (2014) defined it as the process of upgrading skills required by the employee for conducting a specific task. According to Elnaga and Amen (2013), it is a method used by the organizations to stay ahead of modern technology and industry updates and increase employee morale (Nischithaa and Rao, 2014). It would lead to higher confidence and motivation which will enable the employee to be more productive (Dost *et al.*, 2012), building adoptable workforce for ever-changing situation and reduces employee resistance to change (Khan *et al.*, 2016). Therefore, training programs are the best method to train the employees and make them able to cope and navigate through Covid-19 as an example of pandemic crisis.

Noticing the positive impact that training and development have on the employee job performance, organizations are devoting much effort to conduct effective training and development programs. According to Lori (2019), companies in the United States do an average allocation of 11% of their budget for their employee training and development. Companies in Malaysia have taken the chance to strengthen the engagement and support of the employees during Covid-19 period. On one hand, according to Suazwina (2020), the surveyed companies in Malaysia have showed three trends; 13% are focusing to enhance the programs of work-life balance which will help in gaining more flexible and adaptive work arrangements, 11% of the companies are considering the idea of increasing healthcare benefits, and 6% are planning to support and focus on their training and development initiatives. On the other hand, a survey was conducted on some countries based on their budget allocation for the training and development programs; the results showed that Sweden, Denmark, and UK were among the countries whose companies allocate the highest portion for training and development (44%, 42%, 38% respectively) while France was the lowest spending only 2% of their budget (Bouchrika, 2022). Furthermore, Nkeobuna and Ugoani (2018) has highlighted that non-existence of accurate account or statistics and the absence of legislation in some countries such as Nigeria are among the biggest issues in training and development. Therefore, organizations around the world are recognizing the importance of training for the improvement of their employees to maintain good efficiency and performance by a workforce who is able to cope with the dynamic and changeable environment. However, Malaysia is still far compared to developed countries in terms of spending on employee training.

Recently, the work environment has been characterized by the ambiguity, challenges and totally different environment for the workers and the organizations due to the impact of Covid-19, government regulations and movement control and working from home. This has led the Human resource management struggling to cope with the new challenges and requirements for the new work environment. One of the critical functions of the Human resource management in any organization is developing the knowledge and skills of the employees operating in that organization (Hansson, 2007). According to Becker and Huselid (2010), the strategy of the firm must be understood by the employee working in all the levels, so they can contribute to the organization and enhance their performance. Building on this discussion, it can be inferred that organizations during Covid-19 needed to communicate and train their employees towards the new organizational strategy more than any time before.

This paper reviews the available literature on the importance and the types of employee training in the organizations which could help navigating the impact of Covid-19 and improve the employee performance among the industrial revolution and its advanced technologies. Besides, the paper will review employee training at the age of digitalization as well as the challenges faced with remote employee training among the Malaysian organizations during Covid-19.

In addition, the paper also aims at reviewing the relationship between the Employee training and the employee performance.

## **2. Importance of Employees Training and Development in Navigating through Pandemic Covid-19**

Training is a fundamental step in building effective and professional workforce for building strong organizations. According to Younas *et al.* (2018), one of the aspects that have helped in the development of the economy in the developed countries like America, Japan and Britain is the human resource management. Thus, Malaysia, too, should make adequate steps and provide the long term and systematic training and development programs to make sure that the employees have the required knowledge and skills to reach the developed countries level. In this way, the Malaysian manufacturing companies can build a more competitive and effective workforce that can go through hard times such as Covid-19. Training programs will enable the companies to navigate the epidemic period, survive and maintain the competitive strengths (Kanapathipillai and Azam, 2020). Additionally, Rossilah Binti Jamil, an expert at UTM, has strongly recommended the shift towards the online learning and training and exploiting the available technology found in this regard (Jamil, 2020). One great example of how the crisis has sped up the rapid adoption of digitization to mitigate avoidable physical interactions is the British healthcare system. Compared to 1 percent of online consultations, 93 percent of patients were assessed via video links online by doctors, and only 7 percent met doctors face to face during Covid-19 in UK (Agrawal *et al.*, 2020). Similarly, several online channels were utilized for mental health services (Zhou *et al.*, 2020; Gao *et al.*, 2020)

A survey was conducted by Simplilearn (2022) among the HRM and training and development professionals around the world, with respondents coming majorly from India and United States. The results showed a great shift to digitalization of training. Based on graph 2 below, 86% of the companies shift their training and development programs to online, 76% of the companies plan to increase their online training programs, and 68% found online training to be equally effective. Figure 2 below summaries these information.

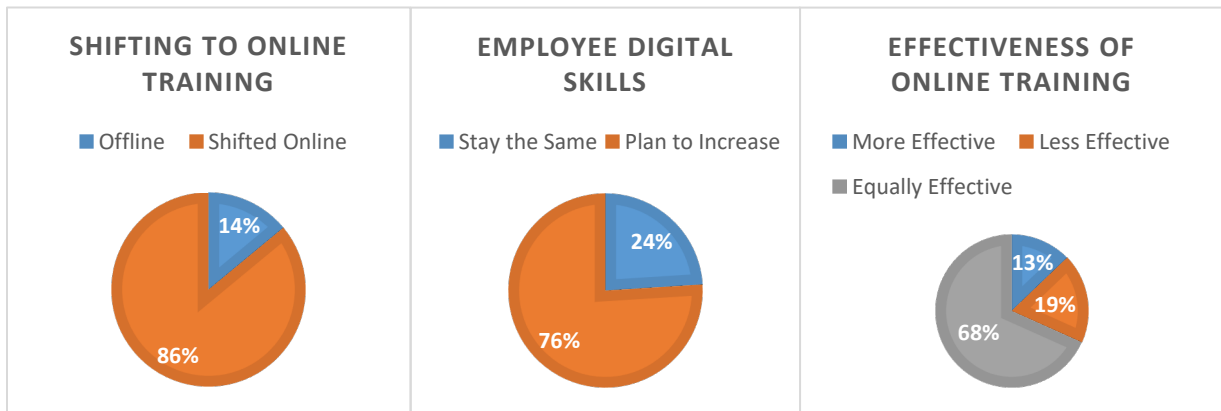


Figure 2: Training and Development Shift to Online. Source:(Simplilearn, 2022)

Considering the training and development practice due to the effect of Covid-19 in Malaysia, organizations have not been able to conduct the training and development programs in the traditional methods. This has made it essential for the companies to look for alternative and go more to the advanced technologies in the communication side with the help of new technologies to reach an effective communication and maintain effective employee performance. According to a worldwide survey conducted by Training Industry website, companies used up to 9 new online technologies to support the training and development of employees as shown in Figure 3 below (Taylor, 2020). However, the report has not listed the name of these technologies.

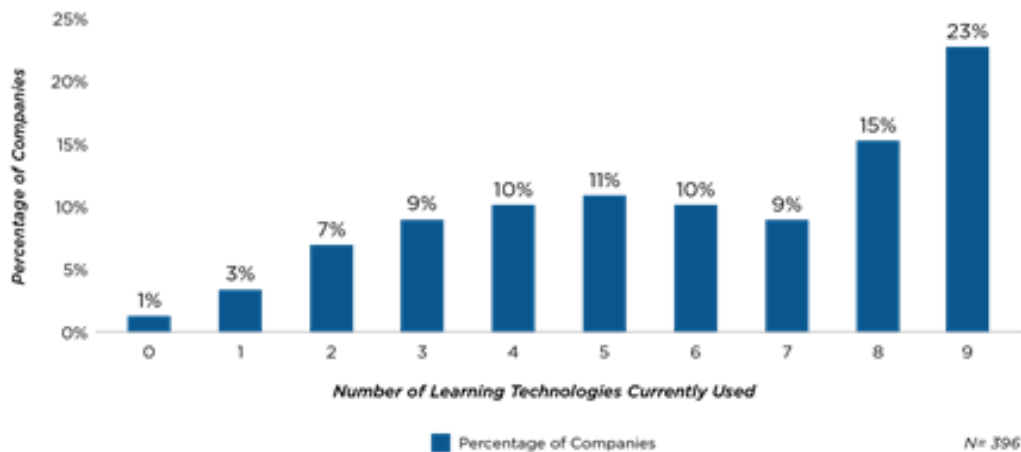


Figure 3: Number of technologies used to support training. Source: (Taylor, 2020)

Numerous changes have been faced, and the globe is changing very fast especially with the impact of Covid-19. Learning should be in our hands in any place and at any time when it is appropriate for us (Karm and Mahadevan, 2019). The training and development programs are among the popular practices in the organizations because they have been successful in helping the companies in both achieving the strategic goals and objectives as well as gaining market leadership (Pinto *et al.*, 2020). More than that, training and development programs are able to increase the employee productivity and the quality of the product enabling the company to meet the standards of the industry productivity, and reducing the scrapping rate of product (AL-Sinawi *et al.*, 2015). Thus, Malaysian organizations, too should focus on this aspect and go in line with the advanced technologies for effective training programs for their employees.

Building on the argument that the work environment has changed due to Covid-19, there is also a need to align the training programs and performance appraisals based on the new environment. Training develops the performance of the employee and then improves the prosperity and expansion of the organization (Hamid *et al.*, 2018). The study of Hee and Jing (2018) has indicated that human resource department should focus on designing both the effective training plan as well as the effective performance appraisal systems that enable the employees know about their performance and compare it to gain better results. The program of training and development can be minimized because of budget constraint or economy downturn. This increases the employees' turnover and the cost of hiring new staff to replace the previous ones, and also the interest of the organization will be affected (Sharma & Taneja, 2013). Suitable and effective training programs and feedback from the employees are two of the main aspects the companies should look into in considering any training program (Karm and Mahadevan, 2019). Nevertheless, the overdrawn training might lead to an undesirable reaction and uninterested attitude of the employees that may search for other jobs instead (Haliva, 2015). Whenever there is a skill gap, the company needs such training and improvement to fill the gap. In our case, Covid-19 is a new critical situation for the companies that have come with many challenges. Thus, training is necessary for the employees to deal with the new situation that they have never gone through before, especially with the usage of the new technologies provided by the advancement in the Industry 4.0.

Great body of literature has clearly supported the importance of training of development in the work life and has shown strong positive relation between the employee performance and the training and development initiatives and programs conducted by the companies (Jagero *et al.*, 2012; Nadarasa 2013; Tabiu *et al.*, 2016; Glaister *et al.*, 2018; Juneja, 2018; Tabiu and Nura, 2013). Development of the employees' creativity is very essential that will help them to execute tasks in effective ways (Vough *et al.*, 2017). The practice of training was effective in increasing the job satisfaction among the employees (Chiang *et al.*, 2005), increasing the levels of the employees' commitment and reducing the turnover intention among the individuals (Newman *et al.*, 2011) and produces competent and skilled-up employees (Mahadevan and Yap, 2019). Thus, when Malaysian organizations are able to improve these aspects, it will be easier to increase productivity and enhance the employee performance. Thus, there is strong link between the

training and the performance of the employees as the employees will feel the presence of the organization strong HRM system (Guan and Frenkel, 2019).

In addition, Covid-19 has raised the need for new tasks, practices, skills and behaviors, thus, training is the best solution that solves such issues. Younas *et al.* (2018) stated that training and development are a profitable investment in the employees equipping them with the required skills to perform well. This is because through the training and development programs the company enables the employees to gain the knowledge, skills and abilities required to complete the duties and tasks at the workplace with more professional way (Raymond *et al.*, 2016). Based on Okechukwu (2017), training plays a significant role in providing and securing the technology which enables the employees to be equipped to perform in a way that meets the required standard because it is a planned activity that enables the employees to obtain the predetermined behaviors and learn new skills. A pivotal and significant role is played by the training programs to improve, enhance and facilitate the employee performance, productivity and quality (AL-Sinawi, Piaw, and Idris, 2015). In addition, it enables the employees to start developing new behaviors and skills as well as motivating them to apply such achievement in the task and contextual performance contexts in the workplace (Tabiu, Pangil, and Othman, 2016). Training and development has twofold aims at the organization; to expand the employee performance and to correct their conduct.

Furthermore, dynamicity nature of the work among the organization that was intensified by the impact of Covid-19 has affected the employee performance in different ways. According to Tahir *et al.* (2014) the programs of training and development effectively conducted by the firm can be considered as the quick predictor that affects the efficiency and performance of the employee. Without training, the employees lack the necessary skills required for communicating and improving their performance, in contrast to those trained individuals who are able to effectively perform their jobs (Younas *et al.*, 2018). The training and development programs developed and implemented by the firm can bridge the gap between the desired performance and the current employee performance and allows more imprudence (Nkeobuna and Ugoani, 2018; Sung & Choi, 2018). Additionally, the knowledge and skills of the employees is improved through the training programs which enable them to deal with the challenges faced during the daily wok and, thus, their job performance is improved (Diamantidis and Chatzoglou, 2019). Thus, with the effective training and development programs, the companies can build efficient team that can adopt to the dynamic environment within and outside the organization. The significance of employee training and development programs is outlined in Table 1.

Table 1: Summary of the Significance of Training and Development Programs

<b>Author</b>	<b>Significance</b>
<b><i>Mikolajczyk (2022)</i></b>	Helps smooth transformation to digitalized remote work
<b><i>Pinto et al. (2020)</i></b>	Achieving the strategic goals and objectives Gaining market leadership
<b>(Kanapathipillai and Azam, 2020; Devyania et al., 2020)</b>	Navigate the epidemic period, survive and maintain the competitive strengths
<b><i>Diamantidis and Chatzoglou (2019)</i></b>	Deal with the challenges faced during the daily wok
<b><i>Younas et al. (2018)</i></b>	Equipping them with the required skills to perform.
<b><i>Younas et al. (2018)</i></b>	Building effective and professional workforce
<b><i>Hamid et al. (2018)</i></b>	Prosperity and expansion of the organization
<b><i>Vough et al. (2017)</i></b>	Development of the employees' creativity to execute tasks in effective ways
<b><i>AL-Sinawi et al. (2015)</i></b>	Increase the employees productivity and the quality of the product Meet the standards of the industry productivity
<b><i>Newman et al. (2011)</i></b>	Increasing the levels of the employees' commitment. Reducing the turnover intention among the individuals.
<b><i>Chiang et al. (2005)</i></b>	Increasing the job satisfaction

### 3. Employee Training in the Era of Industry 4.0

Covid-19 has revolutionized all aspects of business, and employee training is no difference. After few months of Covid-19 spread around the world, Malaysia was one of the countries which imposed governmental regulations and

successive movement controls which forced companies to implement working from home. This caused the total dependence on the virtual or digital training. Thus, organizations are in need for adopting advanced technologies introduced by the Industry 4.0 revolution. According to the findings of Mikołajczyk (2022), while the companies were forced to change the nature and scope of the training programs with employees expressing the a need for fresh topics to improve their skills development based on the new digitalized remote work, a decrease in employee engagement and an increase in employee fatigue because of the implementation of several online development projects or initiatives.

In fact, Covid-19 came just as support for the Malaysian plan and initiatives towards the Industry 4.0 based technologies and advancement in regard to the employee training and development for meeting the future needs. Companies need to upgrade their systems in the era of Industry 4.0 revolution; however, the role that employees play in this advancement cannot be ignored. According to Othman (2020), it is expected that 3.3 million to 6 million jobs will be created in Malaysia in the following ten years, but the loss of some jobs is inevitable due to the new industrialized age which will create the need for new skills and new labor demand. Automation and digitization is having much impact on issues such as the profiles of jobs, the forms of employment, and the platform economy which certainly could cause significant impact on the social policies (Sima *et al.*, 2020). Therefore, Malaysia must take part in this revolution and invest in producing a workforce that is skilled and can meet the new skills and demand. Malaysian companies and employees should have learned from this crisis experience and be prepared for the future need or skilled workforce.

As an example for the great role that the Industry 4.0 in navigating the impact of Covid-19, the rapid changes brought about by the internet have made many processes, practices and functions of the organizations easier in many areas. However, these changes cannot be met with the traditional workforce and traditional job description as a part of achieving the organization goals and objectives though the effective employee performance, but there is a need for the training and development (Nkeobuna and Ugoani, 2018). According to Mahadevan and Yap (2019), high level of competency that contributes to sustainability and growth in the dynamic business environment could be only achieved through the effective training and workforce that is skillful and knowledgeable. Furthermore, complex and customized production tasks can only be performed with employees, however, these employees are required to be trained and supported with the enough effective related training programs for the new technologies introduced with the Industry 4.0. Geodecki & Głowacki (2020) has affirmed the significance of training employees on aspects such as implementing, operating, and maintaining the new Industry 4.0 technologies which could ensure the continuity of operation of such technologies.

#### **4. Types of Employee Training**

As have been highlighted, Covid-19 has affected all aspects of business, and that effect has also involved the training and the choice of effective training programs. In fact, due to the Malaysian regulations and policies that have been implemented for Covid-19 pandemic mitigation, many employees have been forced to work from home. Thus, employees have been pushed to use new tools and skills and especially the digital proficiency (Magni *et al.*, 2020). In addition, Aragón-Sánchez *et al.* (2003) argued that training programs could help in cultivating the learning behaviour to prepare the employees for unexpected uncertainty that might happen suddenly. In the same manner, Akter (2016) claimed that training focus is the future jobs, so it should push trainees to acquire new skills, knowledge, and prospect through providing the necessary workplace where the employees can apply and sharpen those skills. Furthermore, the training programs should reflect the objectives of such training, the trainee characteristics, and the resources needed by the organization and needed for conducting the training program (Nkeobuna and Ugoani, 2018). Thus, this necessitates the need for reviewing the types of training programs that can help in Covid-19 pandemic mitigation in all the organizations since the training has been changed to visual or digital.

There are many training types, however, the most popular types of training are the on-the-job training and Off-the-job training methods. The first type is the On-the-job training methods. This type of methods is usually the most used one. This method is conducted by placing employees on a regular job and teaching them the necessary skills to properly do the job. Most of the organizations use this method to train new employees to observe the senior experienced employees and perform specific job because it is expensive, and it keeps employees on the work, and the employees are trained on standards that are already approved “Some of the commonly used methods are: Coaching, Mentoring, Job Rotation, Job Instruction Technology, Apprenticeship, Understudy etc”, (Gethe and Hulage, 2020, pp. 2). Some of the advantages of this type of training are the ability to transfer knowledge from one another (Baum and Devine,

2007), providing clear picture in conducting the tasks (Alipour *et al.*, 2009), and enhancing the employees ability to relate the training to the day-to-day operations (Tukunimulongo, 2016).

The second type of training is the off-the-job training method. This type of training is conducted by placing employees outside of the organization to gain experience where the study material is supplied and focus is on learning separately from the job place rather than performing on in the work place (Rajasekar and Khan, 2013). Some of the methods under this type of training are “Lectures and Conferences, Vestibule Training, Simulation Exercises, Sensitivity Training, Transactional Training etc.” (Gethe and Hulage, 2020, p.3). This type has also some advantages such as widening the employee theoretical knowledge outside the usual workplace to increase the experience and job knowledge, more attention from the employees (Shafini *et al.*, 2016) because there is no distraction from external factors (Mtulo, 2014), and they are more structured with proper agenda (Ramya, 2016).

To conclude the discussion on the types of employee training, both methods are good but on-job training is more practical because it merges the employees in the real environment of work. However, in some cases, the organizations need to combine the two types of training. In pandemic mitigation such as Covid-19, both types of training could be difficult or impossible in some cases. More than that these organizations have gone to the virtual or digital world which is helped by the advancement in the Industry 4.0 which has provided many programs and systems. Therefore, the organizations should go with the flow and focus on the new technologies that are provided and could enhance from the effectiveness of the training programs. Organisations need to digitalize the process and involve the employees in both types of training virtually.

## **5. Challenges of Virtual Training**

In telework during Covid-19, one of the key issues is how to provide the necessary training for employees. The first main challenge is that the old model of training and development is not suitable anymore with the new procedures and policies imposed by the movements to prevent from the spread of the virus. Different formats of online knowledge transfer have been developed - web / video based trainings; webinars, virtual classrooms, mobile phone learning, group learning or individual activities tailored to the specific needs of the employee. For instance, Chobani has a complete transformation into a number of virtual tools for assisting different aspects of the organization’s work including the start-up and training during the pandemic (Laughman, 2021). In the new model, the company uses the augmented reality as one of the key tools. With the augmented reality, the trainer can wear a headset that allows the remote trainee to communicate with and see what is being seen by the trainer in such case, the company can implement all the training and development programs remotely. This type of course creates less cost, greater employee flexibility and access to many different resources on demand, without waiting for a specific planned date. The disadvantages of these trainings is the technical requirements that are necessary to make the connection in a virtual environment, as well as the lack of communication and real discussion between the participants.

The second challenge in virtual training is the lack of collaborative learning. Trainees are deprived from the discussion and real exchange of experience. Social and scientific communication is very important for the good perception of the material, which means that learners must discuss, write, present and communicate their ideas with others. Collaborative learning can improve communication skills during this epidemic crisis of Covid-19. This is one of the advantages of face-to-face training which cannot be achieved through the virtual trading. Employees cannot interact with the instructor, cannot meet with their colleagues and cannot network with acquaintances. Virtual training might provide employees and employers with flexibility and reduce the costs. However, it deprives trainees from the real interaction that is needed especially in difficult situations such as Covid-19 where the employees are working in totally different and challenging environment. In addition, one of the essential steps in training and development is evaluating the results of the training program. However, with trainees being remotely involved, it is difficult to fulfil this step for further enhancement. Thus, the company cannot measure efficiency of the online trainings and how it improves the work results of the trainees (Litsova, 2020). Furthermore, the essence of training is the engagement of the trainees as the basic fundamental necessity for the success of the session. It is challenging to keep the trainees on the track. The instructor will find difficulty to keep the audience attention while the presentation is displayed on the screen because the trainees’ reactions cannot be seen or communicated. Thus, the participants’ attention is distracted because of the lack of real face-to-face reaction and communication (Litsova, 2020).

Therefore, Covid-19 has hindered the process of employee training and skills development among the Malaysian companies. Companies are facing many challenges and issues to implement the virtual training. These issues include



the unsuitability of the traditional programs & methods, lack of collaborative learning, difficulty to evaluate the training outcomes and the difficulty to maintain the trainees engaged.

## **6. Employee Training and Employee Performance**

Training and development have gained significant importance in gaining higher organizational performance because training and development polish the employees new skills, knowledge advancement, and meeting the technological challenges faced by the employees, especially with the advancement of Industry 4.0 and the new critical environment caused by Covid-19. The impact of training and development on the employee performance goes beyond this to refine the existing skills and attitudes needed for the new environment and distance working of Covid-19. For instance, when hiring new employees, companies need to conduct orientation sessions to familiarize and train the new employees on the new distance work environment of Covid-19 and how to deal with the new Industry 4.0 based technologies. In addition, the training programs could enhance the employees' lives and contribute the development of the mankind in this era of technological advancement. Nkeobuna and Ugoani (2018) asserted that such training and development greatly improve the employee job performance in the long term in ways such as improved performance quantity and quality, efficient performance, lower costs, turnover, grievances and absenteeism. There are many previous studies which have been conducted on the impact of training and development on the employee job performance.

First, a study was conducted by Hee *et al.* (2019) to investigate the relation between the practices of human resource and the job performance of employees in the industry of courier service, Malaysia. The study was quantitative in nature using simple random sampling technique, questionnaires to collect the data, validity test and reliability test, factor analysis (the test of Principal Component), the correlation test and the test of multiple regression. The respondents were 120 employees of a courier service company in Johor. Training and development was the second most affecting factor on the employee performance (positive relationship with job performance  $\beta = 0.336$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). The study results revealed that the human resources department should strive to create a confident atmosphere for the company's employees, make them feel safer, and design appropriate training programs to acquire new knowledge and skills to promote personal growth and improve work performance.

Mahadevan & Yap (2019) conducted another study to investigate the effect of on-the-job training, feedback, training design, and self-paced training on the performance of the employees working in the nutritional industry. The study also followed the quantitative method to collect data from 36 employees who attended the training. The results revealed that Job training scored the highest mean value. The other variables such as training design, feedback and self-paced training were also related. Based on the results, all the independent variables were correlated with the employee performance. Another similar study was carried out by Mahadevan & Yap (2019) in Malaysia to examine the effect of on-the-job and off-the-job training on employee performance. The study followed the positivism philosophy and collected data using questionnaire from 124 participants. The data was analysed with SPSS to find the regression results. The results showed that both on-the-job and off-the-job training positively and significantly impact the employee performance (with standardized coefficients beta value of 0.370 and 0.546 respectively).

In addition, Shafiq (2018) conducted a quantitative study on Malaysian private companies to investigate the effect of on-job training, off-job training, job enrichment and job rotation on the employee performance. The number of participants involved in this study was 105 private-company employees, and the data was then analysed using the SPSS to achieve the objectives. Unlike other studies, this study revealed that there was no significant impact found from the independent variables except for the Job enrichment which had a significant effect on the employee performance. This study has recommended more future studies on the effect of training and development on the employee performance in different Malaysian sectors.

The effect of employee training on the employee job performance has been investigated in other countries as well. Younas *et al.*, (2018) conducted a study in Pakistan to test the effect of training and development on the performance of the employees. The study involved 500 employees in the banking sector. The results showed that employee development will result in better performance of the employees. Both training and development of the employees will increase the performance of the employees. This study, however used basic tests of SPSS16. A similar study was conducted by Akter (2016). The overall theoretical propositions and quantitative analysis using descriptive and inferential statistics, report that there is a high degree of positive relationship and a significant positive impact between employee training, employee development and employee performance. Furthermore, AL-Sinawi, Piaw, and Idris (2015) carried out a research in Oman to study the factors affecting employees' service performance of individuals operating in the ministry of education in Oman. The study focused on two main factors that are employee training and

performance appraisals. The study involved 514 employees from the human resource department of ministry of education in Oman. Training and performance appraisals were found to be valid predictors of examining employees' service performance by the findings of this study.

Therefore, the effect of training on the employee job performance has been studied by several researchers and in different countries and has showed positive impact. This ensures the significance of employee training in enhancing from the organizational human capital in navigating through the technological advancement. It also urges the originations to invest more in creating effective and efficient employees who are able to go through difficult situations such as Covid-19 and meet the future technological advancement.

## **6. Conclusion**

In conclusion, this paper has reviewed the importance of training to navigate the impact of Covid-19, employee training in the age of Industry 4.0, types of training and development, challenges of virtual training, and their effect on the employee job performance. First, through the discussion, it has been clearly affirmed that training programs are of great importance for the organization to create a workforce that is able to adopt to new change. Second, two main types of training methods have been discussed, which are the on-job and of-job training methods, both of which have advantages for the organizations to improve from the employee performance. Besides, unsuitability of the traditional programs & methods, lack of collaborative learning, difficulty to evaluate the training outcomes, and the difficulty to maintain the trainees engaged are among the challenges faced by the Malaysian companies to conduct effecting virtual training programs during Covid-19. In addition, it was found that training programs significantly and positively impact the employee performance and improve it. Furthermore, it is suggested that HR professionals should focus more on the virtual or digital techniques provided to implement the training programs as a way of pandemic mitigation such as Covid-19. Organizations need to focus more on designing and developing more effective materials and programs that are suitable for remote training sessions. This should be in line with the government support in building technological systems and expertise. Finally, future research should investigate how companies can implement a new training and development model that is suitable for the new work environment and can meet the current requirements.

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