

## THE ROLES OF LEARNING ACTIVITIES ON EMPLOYEES' PERFORMANCE IN MANUFACTURING FIRMS AT PENANG, MALAYSIA

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### ARTICLE INFO

### ABSTRACT

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This study evaluated the relationship between workplaces learning activities, outdoor learning activities, and continuous learning activities on employees' performance in manufacturing firms in Penang, Malaysia. A sample size of 222 respondents was taken from 28 electrical manufacturing firms with a 6322 population and 361 samples to examine the relationship. A questionnaire was designed for data collection to measure learning activities on employees' performance in manufacturing firms. A stratified sampling method was used, and the data was analyzed using SmartPls 3.7.8. The study showed that workplaces learning activities and continuous learning activities have a significant relationship with employees' performance in manufacturing firms. The result also showed that outdoor learning activities are not-significant on employees' performance in manufacturing firms. However, the limitation of this study only covers electrical manufacturing firms. Suggested for future study focus on electronic, plastic, and fabricated manufacturing firms to be more effective in improving manufacturing firms' learning and development practices.

**KEYWORDS:-** Learning Activities, Workplace Learning Activities, Outdoor Learning Activities, Continuous Learning, Activities, Employees' Performance

## **1. Introduction**

Learning activities have a strategic position and they directly contribute to the business goals and objectives of firms. In the development of firms, learning activities are an indispensable function. Learning activities are one of the top things on the priority list of most firms. To meet the current and future challenges of the business, learning activities are considered learning activities, ranging from training employees to their tasks (Dejene & Chen, 2019; Zafeiroudi & Kouthouris, 2018). In addition, knowledge sharing increases efficiency in conducting business and customer service. When implemented, learning activities are often the persistence of the human resources department to ensure each employee has the necessary skills. Learning activities enable employees to acquire new skills, hone existing skills, do better, increase productivity and become better leaders. However, for most businesses, the cost of learning activities is quite expensive (Liljedahl, 2018); Shrestha, Li, Le-Kernec & Fioranelli, 2019). Another reason why many firms reduce the opportunities for learning activities for their employees is that attending learning sessions can disrupt production operations because employees need to take time to attend learning activities programs held. Despite the lack of potential, learning activities can give employees and firms overall benefits that make time and money spent on investments with lucrative work results (Vallejo-Correa, Monsalve-Pulido & Tabares-Betancur, 2019; Halvarsson-Lundkvist & Gustavsson, 2018).

## **2. Research Objectives and Research Questions**

### **2.1 Research Objectives**

1. To evaluate the relationship between workplace learning activities on employees’ performance in manufacturing firms.
2. To examine the relationship between outdoor learning activities on employees’ performance in manufacturing firms.
3. To identify the relationship between continuous learning activities on employees’ performance in manufacturing firms.

### **2.2 Research Questions of the Study**

1. Is there any relationship between workplace learning activities on employees’ performance in manufacturing firms?
2. Is there any relationship between outdoor learning activities on employees’ performance in manufacturing firms?
3. Is there any relationship between continuous learning activities on employees’ performance in manufacturing firms?

## **3. Literature Review**

### **3.1 Workplace Learning Activities**

Workplace learning activities refer to an employee's learning done at their place of work. Workplace learning activities aim to expose the employees involved to the real situation where they work. Previous studies found that there is a positive relationship between workplace learning activities on employees’ productivity at the workplace (Mekruksavanich & Jitpattanakul, 2018; Rajabalee, Santally & Rennie, 2019). Workplace Learning activities are a function of human resource management that should be an ongoing philosophy for a firm in improving the work performance of an employee. Every employee who goes through certain periods of working in a firm will usually have a desire to improve their workability, skills, and knowledge of the learning activities provided (Zhang, Admiraal & Saab, 2018; Bakhr & Mehta, 2019). The changes that occur in firms in the context of technology and competition cause the function of workplace learning activities many advantages and benefits. and areas that are constantly occurring within firms. In addition, workplace learning activities can

expose employees to their real workplace. A previous study also found that workplace learning activities can increase work productivity because the work results obtained through the learning process that has been made successfully improved their skills in producing work productivity required by firms (Chukwuemeka, Dominic, Kareem & Mailafia, 2018; Jeder, 2019).

### **3.2 Outdoor Learning Activities**

Outdoor learning activities refer to the learning process of an employee made outside the workplace. Outdoor learning activities can produce workers who are skilled in handling their daily tasks. A previous study stated that there is a significant relationship between outside learning activities on employees’ performance in the firms (Ozkan, Turan & Topsakal, 2019; Hadi, Mutiarani & Herlina, 2019). Outdoor learning activities allow an employee to undergo training together with other employees from different firms and exchange ideas related to the tasks performed. Problem recognition and decision-making techniques are important to share with other employees from different firms because each view has good potential to be practiced in the real workplace. Outdoor learning activities are a job analysis related to a systematic learning activity about a job or workgroup to determine what employees need to obtain to achieve optimal work performance (Lismaya, 2018; Lismaya, 2019). The results of these outside learning activities include standard performance, how work needs to be done to meet the standards, knowledge, skills, attitudes, and skills characteristics that employees need to have to meet the set standards. Based on the results of previous studies, outdoor learning activities can produce work output that attracts employees to delve into their work in detail and how to interact with other employees to make themselves employees who have various skills and expertise needed by firms to maximize profit and wealth through shortening outdoor learning activities implemented. The results of outside learning activities enable each firm to have a quality workforce, skilled and capable of producing high work productivity to contribute to the firm where they work (Oktaviani, Slamet & Hartono, 2018; Djajadi & Rauf, 2018).

### **3.3 Continuous Learning Activities**

Continuous learning activities are a practice in firms to ensure that each employee remains in possession of existing skills. Continuous learning activities are very important learning to ensure that each employee can specialist in all the available expertise can be maintained for a long period. The previous study stated that there is a significant relationship between continuous learning activities on employees’ performance in the workplace. Recognizing the fact of the importance of continuous learning activities to prosper firms, HRM has taken several proactive actions including formulating several policies and placing the component of continuous learning activities as the main thrust in firm planning (Marques & Pitarma, 2019; Schaefer, Rahn, Kopp, Fabian & Brown, 2019). Continuous learning activities cover such a broad meaning, this concept encompasses the process of educational coordination that provides the widest possible educational opportunities to every employee regardless of their position in the firm. The educational opportunities provided are to improve the knowledge, skills, and competencies of an employee. Continuous learning activities can be done either formally such as in the learning room or external learning center based on the syllabus of experience and learning in their respective workplaces. The approach of continuous learning activities can be varied so that it is easily accessible by employees such as through learning or online courses (Patalas-Maliszewska & Halikowski, 2019). Continuous learning activities implemented by firms using a face-to-face educational approach and arranged according to a schedule is recognition in improving work experience and personal skills. Previous studies showed that continuous learning activities can maintain existing

skills, be able to increase knowledge and be able to produce high work productivity in their firm (Arinaitwe& Sannerud,2019;Armstrong,2018).

### **3.4 Employees’ Performance**

Employees' performance refers to the quality and productivity of performance in handling their daily tasks given by the organization. To perform a task, employees need a good level of thinking, job knowledge, skills, capability, and desire to improve their work performance to be more professional in performing their daily responsibilities (Martono& Putri,2018;Sendawula, Nakyejwe Kimuli,Bananuka& Najjemba Muganga,2018;). Recognition of employees creates a positive, productive, and innovative organizational climate in addition to looking at the factors of caring for employee welfare, which is also recognized to affect the employee atmosphere in an organization which is based on various forms of welfare packages created by the organization in producing excellent levels of work performance. The recognition is given, actually encourages more action, and stimulates an employee's thinking to believe that they have the potential and ability to continue to contribute to the progress and success of their organization. Employees' performance through recognition of employees is a form of credit for the quality of work shown by the employees because quality employees are the main assets of an organization (Beltran-Martin & Bou-Llusar, 2018).The quality of work is how a job is executed, and the output from it is the success of meeting the required expectations. If we look at the definition of quality itself is defined as a degree of excellence that is usually high or quality. The quality of work is essential in the management of an organization because, without it, the organization's function, independence, and sustainability can be disrupted (Wang& Guan,2018). Thus, having quality employees at all levels of employment in each department is hope because quality employees translate to the organization's success in producing first-class human resources, which becomes a valuable asset for organizational excellence in the long run. Every employee feels that their organization pays attention to the importance of giving recognition to their ability to handle their daily tasks because it will directly create a new value for employees in the organization is the value to 'give more' and 'not count' while serving the organization (Lakshmi, Narahari& Koneru,2018). When employees can produce output as expected, employees' performance is in a state of availability in handling whatever task is directed. Excellent employee performance positively impacts the organization's performance to continue to grow in maximizing profits and wealth (Bernanthos,2018; Soelton,2018).

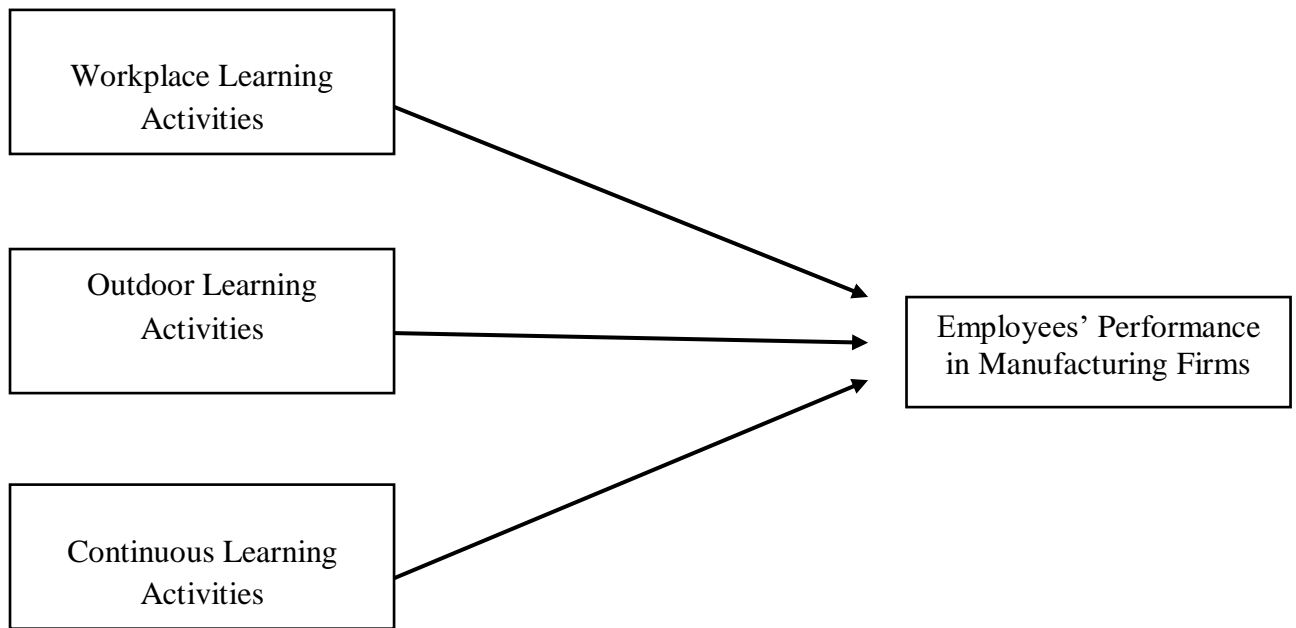
## **4. Conceptual Framework**

### **4.1 Independent Variables**

- Workplace Learning Activities
- Outdoor Learning Activities
- Continuous Learning Activities

### **4.2 Dependent Variable**

- Employees’ performance in Manufacturing Firms



### 4.3 Hypothesis Development

H1. There is significant relationship between workplace learning activities on employees’ performance in manufacturing firms.

H2. There is significant relationship between outdoor training activities on employees’ performance in manufacturing firms.

H3. There is significant relationship between continuous learning activities on employees’ performance in manufacturing firms.

## 5. Methodology

### 5.1 Participants

The data was collected from 28 electrical manufacturing firms, with 6822 employees, 361 questionnaires were distributed, and 222 questionnaires were analyzed among the employees (Krejcie and Morgan schedule, 1970). The respondents were selected using the stratified sampling technique.

### 5.2 Measurement Scale

Questionnaires are designed in Linkert Scale (Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, and Strongly Agree).

### 5.3 Data Analysis

The data obtained were studied using SmartPLS version 3.7.8 to discuss the findings obtained. Statistical scholars highly recommend SmartPLS in producing an accurate analysis of each variable's cause and effect relationship. SmartPLS is also a sizeable multivariate analysis technique in social and psychological research. In addition, SmartPLS can analyze measurement model evaluation and structural model evaluation.

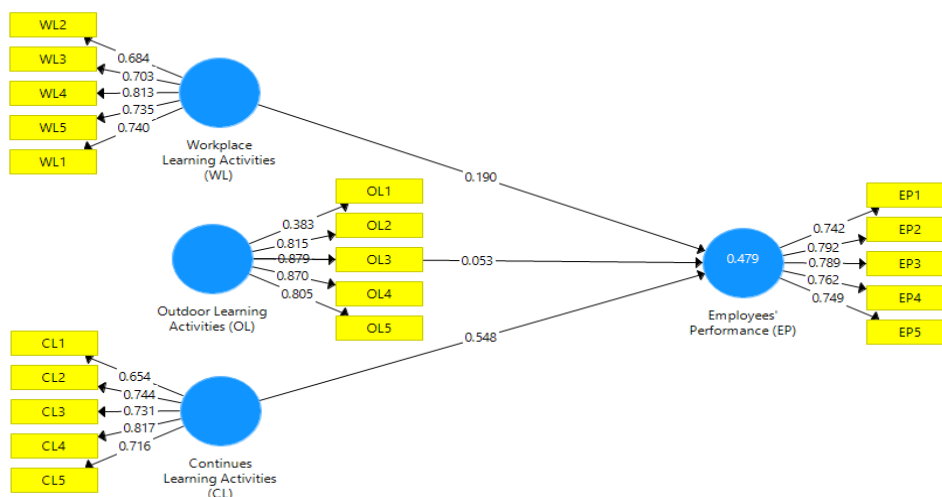
Table 1 shows the Loading, Composite Reliability (CR), Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values for each construct studied; and the lowest value is **0.5392**, and the highest value is **0.5976**. These values are more significant than 0.5 (> 0.5), confirming that the study

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construct can explain the mean change of variance within the items (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Gefen & Straub, 2005; Henseler, Ringle & Sinkovics, 2009).

**Table 1 Loading, CR & AVE Results**

	<i>Loading</i>	<i>CR</i>	<i>AVE</i>
Workplace Learning Activities		0.8550	0.5420
WL1	0.7402		
WL2	0.6843		
WL3	0.7027		
WL4	0.8127		
WL5	0.7346		
Outdoor Learning Activities		0.8749	0.5976
OL1	0.6827		
OL2	0.8153		
OL3	0.8790		
OL4	0.8698		
OL5	0.8048		
Continuous Learning Activities		0.8534	0.5392
CL1	0.6543		
CL2	0.7443		
CL3	0.7309		
CL4	0.8170		
CL5	0.7159		
Employees’ Performance		0.8771	0.5883
EP1	0.7423		
EP2	0.7920		
EP3	0.7886		
EP4	0.7617		
EP5	0.7491		



**Figure 1: Structural Model Direct Effects**

The discriminate validity test was measured through two methods, namely the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) criterion test and cross-loading (Henseler et al., 2009). Table 2 below

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shows the output from the HTMT analysis. The results can be calculated easily using the formula as in (Henseler, Ringle & Sarstedt, 2015).

**Table 2. Discriminant Validity**

Constructs	CL	EP	OL	WL
<b>CL</b>	<b>0.7343</b>			
<b>EP</b>	0.6678	<b>0.7670</b>		
<b>OL</b>	0.6833	0.5042	<b>0.7730</b>	
<b>WL</b>	0.4401	0.4535	0.4075	<b>0.7362</b>

Note: Values in Bold face are the square root values of average variance extracted

#### 5.4 Assessment of Structural Model

The findings for testing this direct effect model using SmartPLS software package version 3.7.8 through the structural equation model. This measurement aims to test the direct effect model and the effective model of the mediated variable. Therefore, empirical evidence has been used to construct a direct effect model, as shown in Figure 3.

**Table 3. Summary of Hypotheses**

Relationship	Summary of Hypotheses				
	beta	Std Error	T-Value	P-Value	Decision
WL->EP	0.1926	0.0640	2.9620	0.0000	Significant
OL->EP	0.0590	0.0780	0.6703	0.5027	Not-Significant
CL->EP	0.5485	0.0776	7.0667	0.0000	Significant

## 6. Results

### 6.1 Workplace Learning Activities

The results obtained showed that the workplace learning activities variable significantly affects employees’ performance in manufacturing firms ( $\beta = 0.0640$ ;  $t = 2.9620$ ;  $p = 0.0000$ ). H1 Accepted. The results also showed that workplace learning activities contributed 18.9% ( $R^2 = 0.189$ ) to employees’ performance in manufacturing firms.

### 6.2 Outdoor Training Activities

The results obtained showed that outdoor learning activities variable not-significantly affects employees’ performance in manufacturing firms ( $\beta = 0.0780$ ;  $t = 0.6703$ ;  $p = 0.5027$ ). H2 Rejected. The results also showed that outdoor learning activities contributed 5.3% ( $R^2 = 0.053$ ) to employees’ performance in manufacturing firms.

### 6.3 Continuous Learning Activities

The results obtained showed that continuous learning activities variable significantly affects employees’ performance in manufacturing firms ( $\beta = 0.0776$ ;  $t = 7.0667$ ;  $p = 0.0000$ ). H3 Accepted. The results also showed that outdoor learning activities contributed 54.8% ( $R^2 = 0.548$ ) to employees’ performance in manufacturing firms.

## 7. Conclusion

Workplace learning activities can improve employees’ performance by giving them the means to grow with the manufacturing firms and contribute to a culture built around performance. Employees are more likely to succeed when allowed to do so. Continuous learning activities in the workplace make employees knowledgeable about their role and how to better enrich their time at work. To sum it up, workplace learning presents an opportunity

to expand the knowledge and skills of all employees. It can help the company’s mission and vision and is recommended as a tool to engage employees and invest in the growth of the manufacturing firms. For this reason, seek professionals who can commit to implementing favorable training plans to take your team to the next level. Solutions are a reliable and dedicated provider of workplace learning that is innovative and structured to fit every business need found within the workplace.

The result showed that outdoor learning activities have a not-significant relationship with employees’ performance. Outdoor learning activities not-support the employees’ performance in manufacturing firms. Manufacturing firms must focus on outdoor training activities because employees work in the outdoor learning activities, employees can expect to meet people with a passion for the outdoor environment, a desire to meet and get to know others, a love of developing knowledge, skills, and experience, and a willingness to contribute to a strong team atmosphere. There are full-time, part-time, voluntary, and self-employment opportunities for people of all ages. Employees can work delivering, leading, or managing outdoor learning as well as in operations, hospitality, logistics, accounts, maintenance, and grounds. Developing skills and knowledge and providing exciting and often transformational experiences to employees can be rewarding and deeply fulfilling. Employees can turn a personal interest in outdoor learning activities or appreciation of nature and the natural environment into something more than a hobby. If engaging others in employees’ passion and helping them learn, develop and grow as individuals is what gets employees out of bed in the morning come rain or shine, employees can do it again and again in outdoor learning. It’s a lifestyle thing new in manufacturing firms.

Continuous learning activities in the workplace have the potential to expand employee skill sets, increase skill and knowledge retention, generate new ideas and perspectives, boost morale and raise overall employee performance. On the level of the individual employee, this can help achieve career development goals. Continuous learning activities are the process of learning new skills and knowledge on an ongoing basis. This can come in many forms, from formal courses taking too casual social learning. It involves self-initiative and taking on challenges. Continuous learning activities can also be within manufacturing firms, or it can be personal, such as in lifelong learning.

Staying competitive in today’s global marketplace means that manufacturing firms need to be innovative, adaptive, and ever-changing. Achieving this depends on the skill and knowledge of the workforce. To innovate, to try a new process, or to do something new all require learning. Employees need to learn new knowledge or skills to see things in a new light and take that next leap. When manufacturing firms do not support a continual process of learning, innovation does not happen, processes remain unchanged, and nothing new is ever accomplished. Employees need to be able to challenge themselves to obtain new knowledge, ideas, and skills. Continuous learning activities need to be on a flexible, on-demand, and continual basis to contribute this kind of cutting-edge performance.

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