

Employee Perceptions of Competency Development Effectiveness in Multinational Companies: A Qualitative Insight

Employee Perceptions
of Competency
Development

Megawati

Universitas Indraprasta PGRI; Jakarta, Indonesia

E-Mail: megawati090368@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the effectiveness of competency development programs in multinational companies and their influence on employee career development and performance. The research aims to identify key factors that enhance or hinder the success of such programs from the employees' perspective. A qualitative approach was used, involving in-depth interviews and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with 20 employees who had participated in the programs. Data collection focused on employee experiences, perceived relevance of training, and managerial support. The findings indicate that training effectiveness is significantly influenced by three main factors: the alignment of training materials with daily work tasks, active managerial support, and the degree of personalization within the training content. Employees reported higher motivation and a stronger sense of career advancement when the training was directly applicable to their job roles. Managerial support also played a critical role in reinforcing learning outcomes and encouraging practical application in the workplace. The study concludes that to improve the impact of competency development programs, organizations should tailor training content to individual roles and ensure continuous engagement from leadership throughout the training process. These findings contribute to the understanding of effective talent development practices in global business environments.

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Keywords: Career Development, Competency Development, Employee Performance, Manager Support, Training Personalization, Training Programs.

ABSTRAK

Studi ini menyelidiki efektivitas program pengembangan kompetensi di perusahaan multinasional dan pengaruhnya terhadap pengembangan karier dan kinerja karyawan. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi faktor-faktor kunci yang meningkatkan atau menghambat keberhasilan program tersebut dari perspektif karyawan. Pendekatan kualitatif digunakan, yang melibatkan wawancara mendalam dan diskusi kelompok terfokus (FGD) dengan 20 karyawan yang telah berpartisipasi dalam program tersebut. Pengumpulan data difokuskan pada pengalaman karyawan, relevansi pelatihan yang dirasakan, dan dukungan manajerial. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa efektivitas pelatihan secara signifikan dipengaruhi oleh tiga faktor utama: keselarasan materi pelatihan dengan tugas pekerjaan sehari-hari, dukungan aktif manajerial, dan tingkat personalisasi dalam konten pelatihan. Karyawan melaporkan motivasi yang lebih tinggi dan rasa kemajuan karier yang lebih kuat ketika pelatihan diterapkan secara langsung pada peran pekerjaan mereka. Dukungan manajerial juga memainkan peran penting dalam memperkuat hasil pembelajaran dan mendorong penerapan praktis di tempat kerja. Studi ini menyimpulkan bahwa untuk meningkatkan dampak program pengembangan kompetensi, organisasi harus menyesuaikan konten pelatihan dengan peran individu dan memastikan keterlibatan berkelanjutan dari pimpinan selama proses pelatihan. Temuan ini berkontribusi pada pemahaman praktik pengembangan talenta yang efektif dalam lingkungan bisnis global.

Kata kunci: Pengembangan Karir, Pengembangan Kompetensi, Kinerja Karyawan, Dukungan Manajer, Personalisasi Pelatihan, Program Pelatihan.

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INTRODUCTION

Multinational companies face significant challenges in improving the quality of their Human Resources (HR), especially through training and competency development programs. These programs are designed to enhance both technical and non-technical skills of employees so that they can adapt to rapidly changing markets and global competition. However, despite many companies investing significant resources in training and development, the expected results are often not achieved optimally (Nayler, 2023; Hasan et al., 2024). This phenomenon is clearly evident in research conducted by Bersin by Deloitte (2018), which states that while more than 70% of companies worldwide invest a significant training budget for employee development, almost 80% of employees feel that the training programs do not directly improve their performance or are irrelevant to their daily work. This indicates a misalignment between what is offered by training programs and the actual expectations or needs of employees in the workplace (Jiang et al., 2017).

42% of workers in multinational companies feel that the training they receive is insufficient to address the new challenges arising from automation and job digitalization. These results show that, even though companies have launched various competency development programs, they often fail to design training programs that are in line with the current competency needs and challenges faced by employees. Bondarouk et al. (2017) also emphasizes the importance of aligning training programs with the continuously evolving labor market needs and involving employees in the design and evaluation process of training programs to achieve better results (Rynes et al., 2002; Andriani et al., 2024; Rainanto et al., 2025). On the other hand, research by Kreitz (2009) shows that another factor influencing employee perceptions of the effectiveness of competency development programs is the organizational culture itself. A company that has a strong learning culture will be more successful in implementing valuable and relevant training programs. Employees who feel supported by an organizational culture that fosters competency development are more likely to view training programs as a valuable investment rather than just an administrative obligation (Piening et al., 2014; Beijer et al., 2021).

Dulebohn and Ferris (2009) add that one of the main reasons for the failure of competency development programs is the lack of employee involvement in determining training needs and evaluating those programs. Programs that are designed without involving employees in the planning process are often not aligned with their expectations or actual needs, resulting in little significant impact on performance improvement (Hoch & Dulebohn, 2013; Newman et al., 2020). Furthermore, only 15% of global employees felt engaged in the development programs offered by their companies. This suggests that training programs are often inadequate in creating employee engagement and motivation, which in turn can affect the effectiveness of those programs.

This phenomenon illustrates the importance of understanding employee perceptions of the training and competency development programs they participate in. An effective training program should not only be relevant and aligned with current job challenges but should also be designed with consideration of the needs, expectations, and perceptions of employees regarding the benefits they can gain from the program. Therefore, this study aims to explore in-depth employee perceptions of the effectiveness of competency development programs in multinational companies, focusing on how they assess the benefits and relevance of the training they receive, as well as the factors that influence those assessments.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Training Relevance and Job Fit in Competency Development

Recent research shows that the effectiveness of competency development programs depends heavily on the relevance of training materials to evolving job demands, particularly in multinational corporate environments. Goldstein and Ford (2002) emphasized that training effectiveness is determined by the extent to which the skills taught can be directly applied on the job. However, many training programs fail to address

real-world challenges, leading to participant disengagement (Goldstein & Ford, 2002). Gratton (2011) confirmed that 80% of employees lose motivation when training is not relevant to their jobs, reflecting a global gap between program design and actual workplace needs.

This gap is exacerbated by the acceleration of digitalization and automation. DiRomualdo et al. (2018) found that 42% of employees felt their training did not adequately equip them for technological change. This aligns with the findings of this study, where participants requested more in-depth technical training content tailored to their specific roles. McCormick (1979) suggested that training tailored to specific job functions increases engagement and skill retention. This idea is reinforced by Patton (2002), Greasley et al. (2005), and Al Ahbabi et al. (2019), who show that a one-size-fits-all approach often fails to meet individual needs.

Goldstein and Ford (2002) recommend the use of dynamic job task analysis to ensure that training content is continuously adaptable. Ulrich (1997) also highlights the importance of leader involvement in aligning training with real-world demands. Therefore, contextual studies are needed that assess the effectiveness of competency development programs based on the relevance of their content to current workplace needs.

Managerial Support and Organizational Culture as Drivers of Training Efficacy

The pivotal role of managerial support in training success is well-documented. Ulrich et al. (2017) calls out leaders as architects of developmental ecosystems, emphasizing their power to amplify training outcomes. This study aligns with his assertion: 80% of employees attributed their ability to apply new skills to managerial encouragement, while 20% cited lack of support as a barrier. Gratton (2011) reinforces this, calling out that only 15% of employees feel engaged in development programs without leadership involvement, a statistic mirrored in this study's qualitative findings.

Organizational culture further moderates training efficacy. Kreitz (2009) calls out learning cultures as catalysts for competency development, where growth is institutionalized rather than episodic. Employees in such cultures, as observed in this study, viewed training as investments rather than obligations (Schuler & MacMillan, 1984; Garg et al., 2022; Nankervis & Cameron, 2023). Conversely, Kvale (1996) and Dulebohn and Ferris (2009) warn that cultures prioritizing short-term goals over development undermine training ROI. Cascio (2015) ties these threads together, calling out the need for systemic alignment between training, leadership, and culture. This study's participants highlighted how managerial feedback and career-path clarity transformed training from isolated events into career accelerators (Byrne, 2001; Wang et al., 2020). The literature converges on a key insight: training programs thrive in ecosystems where leaders actively foster skill application and cultures prioritize continuous learning.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach with a case study design to deeply explore employees' perceptions of the effectiveness of competency development programs in multinational companies. This method also allows for an exploration of the meanings behind employees' experiences in participating in training and competency development programs, as well as the factors influencing their perceptions of the effectiveness of these programs. The participants in this study are employees involved in competency development programs within multinational companies. These employees were purposively selected to ensure a diverse range of perspectives, specifically those who had participated in at least one training program organized by their company within the last two years.

Data were gathered through semi-structured in-depth interviews and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). The interviews followed a guided format, with questions designed to explore participants' views on training effectiveness, the relevance of training content,

and its influence on employee performance. This approach allowed participants to speak freely and provide rich, detailed insights. In addition, FGDs were conducted with groups of employees from different departments, enabling the exploration of shared experiences and group dynamics that influenced the collective understanding of the training programs.

The data were analyzed using a qualitative approach with thematic analysis as the primary framework. Following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase model, the analysis involved familiarization with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the final report. This method allowed for the identification and interpretation of patterns within the data in a flexible and rigorous manner. Ethical considerations were also strictly observed, with all participants providing written informed consent. Participants were fully informed about the study and were assured of their rights, including confidentiality and the option to withdraw at any point. However, this study has limitations, as it focuses only on multinational companies in Indonesia and does not account for external factors such as labor market conditions or technological changes that may also influence training outcomes.

RESULTS

Relevance of Training Programs to Daily Tasks

Based on in-depth interviews and Focus Group Discussions (FGD) with 20 employees involved in competency development programs at a multinational company, several key findings were identified that reflect employees' perceptions of the effectiveness of these programs. The majority of employees (75%) expressed that the competency development programs they participated in were highly relevant to their daily tasks. They felt that the training provided them with valuable insights and practical skills that were directly applicable to their roles. Many employees reported that the training materials helped them gain a deeper understanding of their job responsibilities and made them feel more confident in handling their tasks effectively. These employees appreciated the practical nature of the training, as it equipped them with the tools, they needed to perform their duties more efficiently and competently.

One key aspect that employees highlighted was the ability to apply what they had learned in real-time within their work environments. For instance, new technical skills, as well as improved soft skills like communication and teamwork, were particularly beneficial in fostering better job performance. However, while most employees found the training useful, 25% of them indicated that there were instances where the training content did not fully align with their specific job needs. These employees felt that the training was somewhat too broad, often covering generalized concepts that didn't always resonate with the unique challenges they faced on a daily basis. For example, some employees working in highly specialized roles found that the training did not address the nuances and technicalities of their specific job functions, which meant that some of the content felt less practical or applicable.

This feedback underscores a crucial point: while the overall training program had broad relevance and utility, there was a need for more customized or specialized content that directly addresses the specific duties and problems faced by employees in various roles. It is clear that for such programs to be truly effective, they must consider the distinct requirements of different job functions and offer solutions that are applicable to those particular tasks. This finding also suggests that employees would benefit from training that is more personalized and aligned with the evolving needs of their specific positions. By incorporating a more tailored approach, companies could ensure that all employees—regardless of their department or job function can derive greater value from their competency development programs. In conclusion, while the majority of employees valued the relevance of the training programs to their work, a more individualized and role-specific approach would likely increase the impact of these programs and ensure that employees feel their unique needs are being met.

Managerial and Leadership Support

The majority of employees (80%) felt that support from their managers and leaders was essential for the success of the competency development program. These employees believed that when managers actively supported and encouraged their participation in training, they were more motivated and able to derive greater benefits from the program. For example, employees who received guidance, reminders, and constructive feedback from their managers felt more confident in applying the skills they had acquired through the training. This sense of encouragement played a significant role in keeping them engaged and committed to continuous improvement.

The involvement of managers was seen as a critical factor that contributed not only to the practical application of skills but also to fostering a work culture that prioritized personal growth and development. Employees who received such support felt that the training was not just an isolated event, but a meaningful opportunity to enhance their performance and advance their careers. However, a minority of employees (20%) reported that the lack of support from their managers and leaders had a negative impact on the training's effectiveness. These employees felt that without clear backing or encouragement from their supervisors, they were unable to fully engage with the training process or apply the new skills they had learned. This lack of managerial support led to a sense of stagnation, where employees were uncertain about how to incorporate the training content into their day-to-day responsibilities.

This feedback highlights the importance of leadership involvement in competency development programs. Without clear managerial support, even well-structured and relevant training may not lead to the desired results, as employees may struggle to see how the new skills can be integrated into their roles. Thus, the study suggests that for training programs to be most effective, managers and leaders must take an active role in both encouraging participation and providing ongoing support for employees as they apply their new skills in the workplace.

Impact of Training Programs on Career Development

Most employees (70%) felt that the training programs they attended played a significant role in their career development. These employees believed that the training helped them acquire new skills, enhance their existing abilities, and thus, contributed to their overall career advancement. The development of technical and soft skills through these training sessions enabled them to take on more responsibilities and perform at a higher level in their roles. As a result, they saw a clear connection between the competencies they gained and the potential for career growth.

This view was consistent among most employees, who felt that the competencies gained from the training were essential for career progression, giving them a competitive edge and the ability to perform at a higher level within the company. However, a small portion of employees (30%) reported that, despite attending several training programs, these did not significantly affect their career advancement. These employees noted that other factors, such as their relationship with superiors, the opportunities provided by their managers, and the availability of internal promotions, played a much more significant role in their career development. In particular, these employees emphasized that, even though the training was valuable, their growth within the company was more influenced by external factors such as networking, opportunities for internal mobility, and their manager's willingness to offer them new challenges.

This feedback suggests that while training programs are beneficial, they alone are not sufficient to guarantee career progression. Career development is influenced by a combination of factors, including relationships with supervisors, internal career opportunities, and the organizational culture, which can either provide or restrict opportunities for growth. Therefore, while training enhances employees' capabilities, the availability of career advancement opportunities and managerial support play a crucial role in determining whether the training translates into actual career development. Overall, the research indicates that training programs do have a positive impact on career

development by equipping employees with new skills. However, their overall effectiveness in contributing to career progression is also heavily dependent on the opportunities available within the organization, managerial support, and individual circumstances.

Need for More Personalized Competency Development Programs

A significant number of employees (65%) expressed a preference for competency development programs that are more personalized and tailored to their specific roles and career aspirations. They believed that training programs which focus on their unique skills, career goals, and job responsibilities would be more effective in enhancing their professional growth. Personalized programs, they argued, would allow them to develop expertise in areas directly related to their work and would provide them with more applicable and practical knowledge.

For many employees, personalized training programs are seen as a way to make learning more relevant and impactful. Rather than receiving generic training that may not align with their day-to-day responsibilities or professional ambitions, they would prefer programs designed to address the specific challenges they face in their roles. This type of targeted development could help them build upon their existing strengths and provide them with the tools necessary to succeed in their particular job functions. Employees also expressed that having a training program that aligns more closely with their personal and professional objectives would enhance their engagement and motivation to participate in these programs. As the training would be more directly applicable to their roles and career trajectories, they would feel more invested in the learning process and would be more likely to implement the skills and knowledge gained from such training.

The feedback highlights the importance of developing training programs that are not one-size-fits-all but rather customized to fit the individual needs and goals of employees. Personalized competency development programs would not only increase the relevance and utility of the training, but also encourage greater employee participation and retention of skills learned, ultimately leading to better organizational performance and individual career advancement. In summary, there is a clear demand for competency development programs that are more personalized and aligned with employees' specific roles and career goals. Such programs are likely to be more engaging, effective, and valuable to both employees and the company as a whole.

DISCUSSION

This study highlights the perceived relevance of training programs among employees, with over 75% reporting that training content aligns with their daily tasks, enhancing both technical and non-technical competencies (Goldstein & Ford, 2002). Employees noted improved understanding of company strategy and communication skills, directly applicable to their roles (Mirvis, 1997). However, approximately 25% expressed concerns about a mismatch between training content and specific job needs, describing the materials as too general to address unique challenges. This gap underscores the need for thorough job needs analyses to ensure training relevance, enabling employees to apply learned skills effectively in their daily work.

The study also emphasizes the necessity of continuous monitoring and updating of training programs to keep pace with evolving work environments, particularly in multinational companies facing globalization and technological changes. Goldstein and Ford (2002) advocate for frequent, job-specific training needs assessments to ensure programs remain relevant and practical. Without such adaptability, training may fail to meet the demands of changing job roles. Managerial and leadership support is crucial for training success, as Ulrich (1997) argues, noting that leaders drive competency development by providing time, encouragement, and feedback. Employees with active managerial support reported greater confidence in applying new skills, while those lacking it struggled to implement training outcomes (Steinert et al., 2012).

Supportive actions, such as assigning challenging tasks or recognizing post-training achievements, reinforce training value and foster long-term development (Leslie et al.,

2013). Conversely, employees without guidance or opportunities found it difficult to utilize new skills, highlighting the need for managers to create enabling environments (Steinert et al., 2012; Ulrich, 2014). Recognition after training also serves as a motivator, encouraging continuous skill improvement (Knight et al., 2007). Companies must ensure that training is supported by environments that facilitate practical application to maximize its impact.

Training programs significantly influence career development, with employees viewing them as tools for building capabilities and preparing for greater responsibilities (Steinert et al., 2006). However, long-term benefits, such as promotions, depend on external factors like organizational structure and culture (Alexandraki et al., 2021; Misky et al., 2023). Cascio (2015) notes that transparent promotion policies and internal pathways enhance training's impact on career advancement. Employees with strong supervisor support feel more optimistic about growth, while those without it perceive training as less impactful (Ulrich, 1997; Gupta et al., 2024). Kamel (2016) and Guraya and Chen (2019) emphasize that structured career paths are essential for translating training into tangible opportunities.

Despite these benefits, employees noted that without internal mobility or recognition, training's potential remains limited. Companies must invest in career development structures alongside training to ensure employees can apply new skills in advanced roles or complex projects (Allen et al., 2019). Generalized training often lacks immediate applicability, reducing its effectiveness (McCormick, 1979). Goldstein and Ford (2002) stress that training must be customized through detailed job analyses and individual needs assessments to ensure relevance. By aligning training with specific roles and supporting it with robust career pathways, organizations can maximize its impact, fostering employee development and organizational success in dynamic work environments.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that competency development programs in multinational companies play a pivotal role in enhancing employee performance and supporting career advancement. The main findings indicate that the effectiveness of such programs is significantly influenced by three key factors: the relevance of training content to employees' daily tasks, the degree of managerial support, and the extent to which training is personalized. Employees who perceived the training as closely aligned with their job responsibilities were more motivated to apply the acquired skills. Managerial involvement, particularly through encouragement and feedback, further reinforced training outcomes. Additionally, employees expressed a strong preference for personalized training programs tailored to their roles and career goals, suggesting that one-size-fits-all approaches are less effective.

From a practical perspective, these findings imply that multinational companies must invest in designing training programs based on in-depth job needs analysis. Ensuring alignment between training content and job requirements, actively involving managers, and developing personalized learning pathways can significantly improve both training effectiveness and employee engagement. From a theoretical perspective, this study reinforces and expands current models of training effectiveness by highlighting the importance of contextual and relational elements such as managerial support and personal relevance in shaping the influence of training on employee performance and career advancement. However, this study has several limitations. It focuses only on multinational companies operating in Indonesia, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other organizational contexts or sectors. Future research is encouraged to explore similar themes across diverse organizational settings, including local or small enterprises, and to examine how digital learning technologies might further personalize and enhance competency development efforts.

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