LEADERSHIP TRAINING PROGRAMMES AND PRODUCTIVITY: THE INFLUENCE OF TRAINEE MOTIVATION AS A MEDIATOR

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Abstract

Recent empirical studies have recognised that trainee motivation indirectly influences the relationship between leadership training programmes and productivity. Although this relationship has been widely studied, the role of trainee motivation as a mediating variable has not been discussed in detail in the training management literature. This study focuses on the relationship between leadership training programmes and productivity and examines the role of trainee motivation as a mediating variable. A survey method was used to gather 328 sets of questionnaires from various categories of positions in the central administration sector, in Malaysia. This study employed SmartPLS programme path model analysis to evaluate the measurement and structural models and further examine the significance level of the research hypotheses. The results of path model analysis testing confirm that trainee motivation indirectly influences the relationship between leadership training programmes and productivity. This study's findings can be used as important certificates by management to understand the diversity of perspectives on trainee motivation and design a training programme master plan that can increase employee inspiration to succeed and maintain the organisation's strategies and goals in an era of global competition and an unstable economy.

Keywords: Leadership Training Programme, Productivity, SmartPLS, Structural Model, Trainee Motivation

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1. INTRODUCTION

Leadership development that is oriented towards enhancing the capabilities of high-performing employees is very important. Organisational success in all aspects is often measured by the leadership management style that can provide direction and guide employees through proper methods to enhance and maintain organisational performance (Lukowski et al., 2021; Roupnel et al., 2019). Several contemporary scholars believe that certain individuals have managerial traits to handle organisational

matters because they are born with such qualities (Ismail et al., 2016; Roupnel et al., 2019). However, this view is criticised by most management scholars arguing that individuals born with such traits do not necessarily have the credibility of effective managers without undergoing a regular leadership training process to help employees achieve organisational competencies and goals (Sogunro, 1997; Lukowski et al., 2021). In this situation, leadership training programmes are often seen as a crucial approach to enhancing the excellence of managers through competence and mastery of current skills, knowledge, and proactive attitudes (Aldulaimi, 2018; Fleshman, 2020; Njah et al., 2021). If managers can apply the competence and mastery learned in leadership training programmes, it is believed that they can improve their ability to manage and develop more dynamic organisations in the global competition era.

The history, structure, and design of leadership training programmes can be traced back to the management philosophy introduced by Fayol (1949). This management philosophy often discusses the functional elements and components of managers in handling an organisation (Aman et al., 2012; Ehiohuche & Tu, 2012; Adachi et al., 2019). The stability of this leadership style is influenced by the efficiency and knowledge mastery of managers acquired in the implemented leadership training programmes. Although this management philosophy has certain limitations, it is dynamic because it can be applied along with new leadership training approaches to shape and guide managers in achieving organisational goals and helping employees attain competencies (Curado & Sousa, 2021; Leung et al., 2021).

Towards the year 2025, the World Economic Forum suggests that employees in both the public and private sectors should consider skills in managing and executing tasks effectively, enhancing high-value knowledge and skills (Reeves, 2023). The employer's ability to design well-organised and thoughtful training programmes (such as introducing practical, relevant, lifelong learning content that is related to current tasks) can increase employee knowledge, skills, and learning by up to 94% (Reeves, 2023). In Germany, 50% to 85% of organisations offer high-impact leadership training programmes encouraging the participation of managers to attend and learn new techniques and up-to-date skills that can be applied to their tasks when they return to the organisation (Lukowski et al., 2021). Therefore, managers need to understand in detail the benefits and advantages of well-designed leadership training programmes to build higher productivity in the future.

In the era of 2020, the speed of the internet of things (IoT) became an important aspect of work life, which has various disciplinary visions to benefit managers, organisations, and employees (Lukowski et al., 2021; Boden & Miles, 2001). IoT is a smart device allowing communication processes to occur between electronic devices and sensors while providing innovative solutions to various work challenges and issues related to business industries, industrial cooperation, and public and private partnership networks, improving efficiency and creating more proactive, creative, and innovative human resources (HR) (Kumar et al., 2019; Boden & Miles, 2001). In this paradigm, most of the manager's tasks are focused on data and information through digitisation, which greatly influences work processes in line with the increasing complexity of customer demands (Lukowski et al., 2021; Boden & Miles, 2001).

The challenge becomes more difficult when leaders need to adjust their leadership approach in line with aligning a diverse workforce towards enhancing the capabilities of high-performing employees from classic management approaches to contemporary-based approaches (Daumiller et al., 2021; Jungert et al., 2022; Khan et al., 2020). In this perspective, leadership training programmes designed to focus more on manager effectiveness equip them with broad knowledge, stable emotions, high intellect, and positive attitudes (Khan et al., 2020). Furthermore, these positive practices can enhance the competencies of managers, develop future careers, and effectively produce skilled and proficient workers to manage and perform tasks in the organisation (Aldulaimi, 2018; Daumiller et al., 2021).

A detailed observation of organisational training management research confirms that effective leadership training programmes have two crucial content components, which are practicality and lifelong learning (Da Costa Guterresa et al., 2020). From the perspective of leadership training programmes, the term practical training in the training content is often associated with applied training modules that are capable of solving difficult current task requirements to help achieve the competency level set by the organisation (Ismail et al., 2016; Khan et al., 2020). Meanwhile, lifelong learning is defined as a training module containing effective learning principles and providing useful knowledge, skills, and a good understanding of the task to be achieved. Both criteria are crucial in producing HR with broad job knowledge, high skills, and excellent attitudes in managing and executing tasks (Ismail et al., 2016; Da Costa Guterresa et al., 2020). Therefore, leadership training programmes are a highly relevant agenda; they are often discussed in most organisational training management literature studies and are considered a very dynamic issue in building good relationships between managers and employees.

Studies in training management show that leadership training programmes are a unique and critical issue in organisational learning. For example, studies conducted by Lukowski et al. (2021) and Wisshak and Hochholdinger (2018) reported that well-designed and carefully planned leadership training programmes can positively influence employee behaviour, such as productivity (Otuko et al., 2013) and trainee motivation (Da Costa Guterresa et al., 2020). From a training management perspective, productivity is often interpreted generally as the trainee being prepared to utilise all their skills (such as being able to use information systems, adapt task-related skills), share and apply new knowledge, and practice positive behaviour (such as reducing errors, improving self-image, being disciplined in task performance) that can benefit the organisation (Berge et al., 2002; Chen & Naquin, 2006). For example, managers are prepared to improve positive behaviour through daily work operations, develop useful benefits for the organisation, transfer useful skills and knowledge, and hone new talents in tasks.

This positive behaviour can increase contributions to organisational productivity, task performance efficiency, customer satisfaction, and achieving dynamic organisational strategies (Berge et al., 2002; Chen & Naquin, 2006).

On the other hand, trainee motivation is often associated with high internal and external enthusiasm and inspiration to help employees learn about the benefits and importance of training programmes (such as implementing effective learning principles, providing career guidance, improving task understanding, achieving task competency, and providing critical thinking methods) whether the training is conducted inside or outside the organisation (Nafukho et al., 2023; Ithnin et al., 2022). The ability of employees to master task competency levels can help them solve problems within and outside the organisation, improve good work efforts, build cooperation between employers and employees, and multiply creative thinking in managing and performing tasks. Some current literature studies related to leadership training management reveal that productivity is the impact resulting from the relationship existing between leadership training programmes and trainee motivation (Da Costa Guterresa et al., 2020; Nafukho et al., 2023).

Interestingly, several literature studies on training motivation have shown that effective leadership training programmes are associated with well-designed training content that can influence trainee motivation (Nafukho et al., 2023; Ithnin et al., 2022). Furthermore, this situation can impact the productivity of the respective organisation (Da Costa Guterresa et al., 2020). Although this relationship has been studied intensively, the ability of trainee motivation as a mediating variable in the literature on leadership training management is very limited (Nafukho et al., 2023; Ithnin et al., 2022). Based on the opinions of most researchers from inside and outside Malaysia, this situation is influenced by several main factors. Firstly, most previous studies tend to examine trainee motivation based on an objectivist thinking approach in training management emphasising the role of non-human factors and their influence on organisations. Although this nature of the study has been discussed in depth, the type of trainee motivation approach highlighted tends to focus on one organisational technique for framing and building work policies and procedures. It has limited in-depth discussion about the effectiveness of trainee motivation as one of the most important mediums for managers to develop employee competencies. Secondly, most previous literature often examines the internal dimensions of trainee motivation theoretically and empirically, including definitions, concepts, characteristics, and the importance of these variables in a variable relationship (Beier & Kanfer, 2010; Sahoo & Mishra, 2022). Although this thinking has significant implications, it is insufficient to prove the importance of human psychology variables, such as trainee motivation, in leadership training programmes (Carlson et al., 2000; Chahar et al., 2021).

Thirdly, most previous studies tended to adopt direct effect research models that only test the two-way relationship between two variables, namely the dependent variable and the independent variable (Da Costa Guterresa et al., 2020; Nafukho et al., 2023). For example:

1) employees' perception of trainee motivation;

2) the relationship between leadership training programmes and trainee motivation;

3) the relationship between leadership training programmes and productivity;

4) the relationship between trainee motivation and productivity.

These types of relationships are usually tested based on descriptive analysis (such as percentages, mean, bivariate, standard deviation, and median), limiting the stability of the relationship in a study construct (Da Costa Guterresa et al., 2020; Nafukho et al., 2023). This type of analytical approach is unable to estimate the depth and true nature of trainee motivation as a key mediator variable in the training management model.

In conclusion, previous approaches to leadership training programmes have tended to estimate the effectiveness of trainee motivation by only presenting general statements and easily predictable facts. Therefore, this situation is very limited as a guide and important guideline for most public and private organisations to better understand the effectiveness of trainee motivation as a relevant technique in improving quality and proactive human capital. Thus, this gap provides researchers with high inspiration to assess the objective of the effectiveness of trainee motivation as a mediating variable in the relationship between leadership training programmes and productivity.

The structure of this paper is as follows. Section 2 reviews the relevant literature and Section 3 analyses the conceptual framework used to conduct empirical research on training management literature and describes the methodology. They are followed by Sections 4, 5, and 6 focusing on the findings, discussion, and conclusion, respectively.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. The relationship between leadership training programmes and productivity

The relationship between leadership training programmes and productivity is consistent with the concept of reinforcement theory (Villere & Hartman, 1991; Adams, 2000). This theory suggests that the effective use of HR practices can contribute to positive outcomes. The theory argues that the content of leadership training programmes should be designed and developed in line with organisational goals. In the context of training management, applying this idea explains that the concept of reinforcement in an organisation is often associated with the training content in leadership training programmes. The strength of this theory has been strongly supported by previous studies based on training management. For example, there are several recent training management studies conducted based on direct effect models tested on different sample units. For example, studies involving 150 staff supervisors at Mumias Sugar Company Kenya (Otuko et al., 2013), 32 participants was drawn from in structured interviews conducted by the researcher from Aramco Company (Aldulaimi, 2018), 316 samples of

the administrative staff of Bahir Dar University, Ethiopia, who took training in 2019 (Yimam, 2022), 300 employees of Guaranty Trust Bank in Nigeria (Tan & Olaore, 2022), 308 employees working in the telecommunication sector (Khan et al., 2020), 190 officers in a Malaysian Army infantry battalion (Rahimi, 2007), 89 administrative staff in a university in Pakistan (Hussain, 2011), and 110 senior and junior managers in various Spanish companies (Quesada et al., 2011). These studies have reported that well-designed and carefully developed training content, such as practical and lifelong learning, has encouraged trainee attitudes to consistently improve productivity in terms of knowledge, new skills, abilities, and positive attitudes when they return to their organisations. Therefore, the tested hypothesis is:

H1a: Training content has a positive and significant relationship with productivity.

2.2. The relationship between leadership training programmes and trainee motivation

The influence of leadership training programmes on trainee motivation is in line with the concept of goal-setting theory (Locke & Latham, 1990). This theory suggests that goals can guide individuals to choose the right actions that can achieve the set targets.

In the context of workplace training management, applying this idea translates to the understanding that goal setting is often associated with the content of leadership training programmes. The strength of this theoretical perspective has since been strongly supported by previous literature studies on training management. For example, several training management studies have been tested based on direct effect models on different sample units. For example, the studies involving 436 staff members in the Ministry of Education in Timor-Leste (Da Costa Guterresa et al., 2020), 160 teachers working in high-needs schools in the Southwest United States (Nafukho et al., 2023), 250 employees currently working in the corporate sector in Pakistan (Basnet & Gautam, 2022). The findings of these studies confirmed that the employers' ability to design and develop practical training content (such as providing problem-solving solutions for difficult tasks) and lifelong learning (such as being relevant to future tasks, applying effective learning principles, and enhancing task-related understanding) has encouraged trainees' motivation (such as attending training programmes, being enthusiastic about learning the importance of training, and is fully focused on training programmes). Therefore, the tested hypothesis is:

H1b: Training content has a positive and significant relationship with trainee motivation.

2.3. The relationship between leadership training programmes, trainee motivation, and productivity

The role of trainee motivation in the relationship between leadership training programmes and productivity is consistent with the adult learning theory by Knowles (1984). This theory states that adult individuals are more motivated and disciplined if they can learn the benefits through experience and problem-solving approaches to enhance their knowledge and skills. Applying this theory in training management models is often interpreted as trainee motivation. Its role as a critical mediator variable in the relationship between leadership training programmes and productivity has received widespread attention in previous studies on organisational training management. For example, studies conducted by Basnet and Gautam (2022) involving three types of insurance companies in Nepal that included 203 employees, Da Costa Guterresa et al. (2020) involving 436 employees in the Ministry of Education in Timor-Leste, 160 teachers working in high-needs schools with large numbers of English learners (ELs) Southwest USA (Nafukho et al., 2023). The findings of these studies revealed that the practical training content in leadership training programmes (providing solutions to workplace task problems, providing management and resolution methods, and can be applied to task management) and meeting lifelong learning needs (focusing on challenging tasks, exposing to latest skills, effectively applying learning principles, and providing beneficial experiences) can enhance trainee motivation in the studied organisations. Consequently, this situation can improve employee productivity, especially in acquiring new knowledge, new skills, and positive attitudes. Thus, the tested hypothesis is:

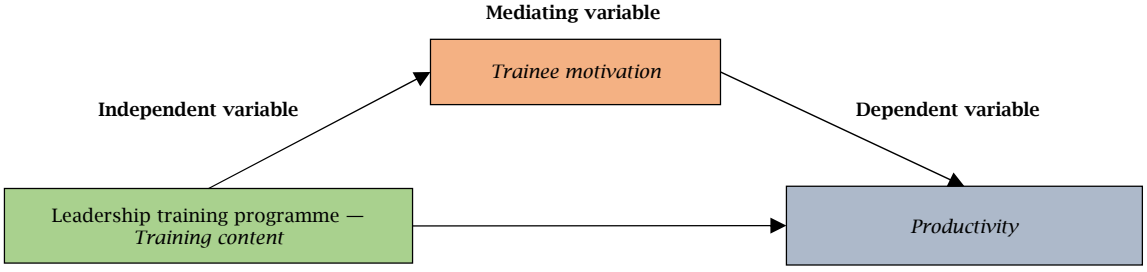
H1c: Trainee motivation acts as a positive and significant mediating variable in the relationship between training content and productivity.

3. RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

3.1. Conceptual framework

The evidence from training literature and theoretical studies has been used to build a research framework for leadership training programmes. Figure 1 shows that leadership training programmes, trainee motivation, and productivity are independent, mediating, and dependent variables, respectively. Figure 1 also explains that the effect of leadership training programmes on productivity is indirectly influenced by trainee motivation.

Figure 1. Theoretical and conceptual framework



3.2. Research methodology

3.2.1. Research design

This research applies a cross-sectional method combining a literature review of training management, pilot studies, and a questionnaire as the main methodology in data collection. This approach helps the researcher to obtain relevant data, increase data accuracy, achieve data quality, and reduce bias (Creswell, 2015; Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). The initial step in the data collection procedure is the preparation of a draft questionnaire based on the literature review. The second step is the re-translation of the questionnaire items to understand their actual meaning from English to Malay (Wright, 1996). This procedure was carried out carefully to produce more accurate and easily understandable item definitions for the respondents. Thirdly, the researcher engaged language experts in the field of HR development and management involving four lecturers from the Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia. This translation technique is carried out to increase and ensure the level of authenticity of meaning and definition accuracy and to achieve reliability of the items developed so that they are not ambiguous in their meaning and confirmed suitable for further analysis. Fourthly, a pilot study was conducted to test the relevance of the items developed in the study sample. Finally, the questionnaire items for the actual study were carefully formatted and arranged to be answered by the study respondents. There are several advantages to carrying out research based on questionnaires:

- First, it can help researchers provide facilities to collect data from a large sample and can be analysed using various techniques and at a minimal cost.
- Second, personal information is private and confidential.
- Third, the answers given by the respondents are more guaranteed and they are given enough time to answer all the questions.
- Fourth, it is a simple method to get respondent information.
- Fifth, it allows for wider and more organised coverage and distribution within the organisation (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016).

3.2.2. Measurement

The questionnaire contains three main sections. The first section measures 12 modified items of training content based on the organisational training management literature (Burke & Baldwin, 1999; Tharenou, 2001). This section is assessed in two sub-dimensions: practical and lifelong learning, with six items, respectively. The second section measures eight modified items of trainee motivation based on past research related to work motivation (Machin & Treloar, 2004; Tharenou, 2001). The third section measures seven modified items of productivity based on the literature on productivity in organisations (Machin & Treloar, 2004). These items were evaluated based on a response scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree/very dissatisfied) to 7 (strongly agree/very satisfied). Furthermore, demographic items were used as a control variable as this research only focuses on investigating training management issues according to employees' perceptions in general.

3.2.3. Research sample

The unit of analysis involves employees serving in management and professional groups and various positions in the Central Administration Agency in Malaysia. At this stage, sampling techniques were applied to allow the researchers to distribute 450 sets of printed questionnaires to be answered by employees in various sections/units/divisions. The researchers sent the valid questionnaires to the study organisation with the assistance of officers entrusted to distribute the questionnaires in their respective units and divisions. The questionnaires' distribution rate considered the organisation's situation, procedures, and regulations as well as the suitability of the study's timeframe and objectives. Of this total, only 328 valid questionnaires were completed and returned to the researchers. The researchers choose this technique because the HR management department could not provide a full list of registered employees to the researchers due to organisational policies and reputation management. Therefore, it did not allow the researchers to adopt a random sampling technique in determining the study's sample selection. Respondents to this questionnaire were guided by the agreement between the two parties (organisation and employees) and their willingness. The response rate met the requirements for data analysis using inferential statistics (Creswell, 2015; Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). This study employed Harman's Single Factor test recommended by Podsakoff et al. (2003) to check biased answers in the questionnaire. The test results show that the value of the variant is 45 percent, which is less than the value of 50 percent (Podsakoff et al., 2003). It means that the element of bias is not critical in the study's questionnaire data.

3.2.4. Data analysis

In the first stage, the study data were analysed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software, aiming to assess the data quality level. Meanwhile, at the second stage, most contemporary statisticians, such as Ringle and Sarstedt (2016) and Henseler et al. (2009), suggest that the path analysis model using the SmartPLS programme is a new generation statistical package in analysing measurement and structural models to produce more accurate and reliable findings. The SmartPLS path model consists of two main evaluations: the structural model and the measurement model. Several criteria proposed by Hair et al. (2011) and Hair et al. (2016) are used to analyse and evaluate the structural model. The evaluation of the structural model includes the collinearity assessment of the study construct, estimation of path coefficients, determination of model strength (R^2), effect size (f^2), and relevant predictions (Q^2) following the guidelines by Hair et al. (2016). This structural model is carried out to identify the validity and reliability level of the questionnaire items represented by the study variables included in the study model (Gefen & Straub, 2005; Chua, 2006) and path analysis is used to test the study hypotheses. At this stage, the structural model goes through three main phases:

1) measuring the validity and reliability level of the study instrument (convergent and discriminant validity);

2) assessing the strength of the direct effect model and the mediator variable effect model based on the t-value > 1.95;

3) assessing the R^2 criteria based on the criteria of 0.26 (strong), 0.13 (moderate), and 0.02 (weak) (Cohen, 1992) and estimating the f^2 rate based on the criteria of 0.35 (strong), 0.15 (moderate), and 0.02 (weak);

4) assessing the blindfolding Q^2 analysis test to determine the level of prediction accuracy based on a rate greater than zero (Hair et al., 2016).

Additionally, one common rule to determine the variance inflation factor (VIF) is that it should be less than 5.0. A VIF value below 5.0 indicates the absence of problems or collinearity issues in the study data (Hair et al., 2016).

On the other hand, the measurement model is analysed and evaluated based on estimated path coefficients or path coefficients in the partial least squares (PLS) measurement model are evaluated based on standard beta (β) values, t-statistics (t) or p-values (Hair et al., 2016; Henseler et al., 2009). Values β and t are obtained from statistical tests using the bootstrapping procedure. The value β is also used as an indicator of the important contribution of the predictor or independent variable in a research study.

4. RESEARCH RESULTS

4.1. Respondent profile

Table 1 shows that most study respondents are aged between 34 and 39 years old (36.0%), married (71.34%), Malay (93.9%), Muslim (94.2%), and female (66.5%).

Table 1. Respondents' characteristics

Profile	*Sub-profile*	*Frequency*	*Percentage*
Age	Less than 27 years old	32	9.8
	28–33 years old	84	25.6
	34–39 years old	118	36.0
	40–45 years old	62	18.9
	> 46 years old	32	9.8
Marital status	Single	75	22.9
	Married	234	71.34
	Widow	19	5.8
Race	Malay	308	93.9
	Chinese	9	2.7
	Indian	5	1.5
	Others	6	1.8
Religion	Islam	309	94.2
	Christian	10	3.0
	Buddha	5	1.5
	Hindu	4	1.2
Sex	Male	110	33.5
	Female	218	66.5

4.2. Validity and reliability analysis

Table 2 presents the findings on the composite reliability, indicator loading, validity, and convergent. The composite reliability values reported are greater than 0.70, indicating that the items had achieved high internal consistency. Additionally, the indicator loading values reported are higher than 0.70, indicating that the items had met the criteria for high indicator reliability (Hair et al., 2016). Meanwhile, the average variance extracted (AVE) values are higher than 0.50, indicating that the items had achieved the suggested level of convergent validity established by Hair et al. (2016).

Table 2. Assessment of reflective measurement model (stage one) (Part 1)

Construct/items	*Composite reliability*	*Indicator loading*	*AVE*	*Cronbach's alpha*
Practical				
RLN1	0.948	0.826	0.753	0.934
RLN2		0.830		
RLN3		0.891		
RLN4		0.908		
RLN5		0.907		
RLN6		0.841		
Life-long learning				
MLT1	0.968	0.918	0.833	0.960
MLT2		0.899		
MLT3		0.931		
MLT4		0.892		
MLT5		0.925		
MLT6		0.912		
Trainee motivation				
MTP1	0.956	0.857	0.729	0.947
MTP2		0.855		
MTP3		0.880		
MTP4		0.844		
MTP5		0.856		
MTP6		0.852		
MTP7		0.842		
MTP8		0.844		

Table 2. Assessment of reflective measurement model (stage one) (Part 2)

Construct/items	*Composite reliability*	*Indicator loading*	*AVE*	*Cronbach's alpha*
Productivity				
PPK1	0.957	0.879	0.763	0.948
PPK2		0.885		
PPK3		0.857		
PPK4		0.880		
PPK5		0.870		
PPK6		0.883		
PPK7		0.858		

Table 3 shows the results of the discriminant validity analysis conducted using the Fornell-Lacker test. The diagonal values represent the square root of the AVE, while the non-diagonal values represent the correlations between the constructs. The diagonal values are higher than the non-diagonal values, indicating that the study constructs meet the discriminant validity criteria proposed by Fornell and Lacker (1981).

Table 3. Discriminant validity based on the Fornell-Lacker criterion (first stage)

Construct	*1*	*2*	*3*	*4*
1. Practical	0.868			
2. Life-long learning	0.660	0.913		
3. Trainee motivation	0.635	0.624	0.854	
4. Productivity	0.565	0.523	0.747	0.873

Table 4 shows the discriminant validity test measured by the heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT) test. These findings indicate that the study constructs have values lower than 0.85, indicating that the study constructs have achieved discriminant validity (Hair et al., 2016).

Table 4. Discriminant validity test based on HTMT criteria (first stage)

Construct	*1*	*2*	*3*
1. Practical	0.868		
2. Life-long learning	0.694		
3. Trainee motivation	0.672	0.651	
4. Productivity	0.596	0.547	0.787

Table 5 shows the results of the cross-loading analysis. The findings indicate that all indicator values for each construct are higher than the indicator values for other constructs, indicating that the study's items have achieved the set level of discriminant validity.

Table 5. Cross loading

Items	*Practical*	*Life-long learning*	*Trainee motivation*	*Productivity*
PTL1	**0.826**	0.521	0.513	0.455
PTL2	**0.830**	0.492	0.484	0.392
PTL3	**0.891**	0.627	0.552	0.500
PTL4	**0.908**	0.575	0.584	0.529
PTL5	**0.907**	0.591	0.621	0.535
PTL6	**0.841**	0.618	0.537	0.510
PSH1	0.623	**0.918**	0.629	0.509
PSH1	0.565	**0.899**	0.497	0.435
PSH1	0.596	**0.931**	0.548	0.501
PSH1	0.602	**0.892**	0.536	0.455
PSH1	0.605	**0.925**	0.594	0.482
PSH1	0.617	**0.912**	0.599	0.476
MSP1	0.559	0.563	**0.857**	0.629
MSP2	0.552	0.521	**0.855**	0.634
MSP3	0.527	0.532	**0.880**	0.599
MSP4	0.531	0.519	**0.844**	0.624
MSP5	0.551	0.519	**0.856**	0.647
MSP6	0.542	0.532	**0.852**	0.670
MSP7	0.529	0.514	**0.842**	0.651
MSP8	0.546	0.559	**0.844**	0.646
PBK1	0.526	0.486	0.680	**0.879**
PBK2	0.488	0.477	0.616	**0.885**
PBK3	0.482	0.447	0.644	**0.857**
PBK4	0.469	0.478	0.638	**0.880**
PBK5	0.489	0.412	0.666	**0.870**
PBK6	0.504	0.441	0.670	**0.883**
PBK7	0.490	0.457	0.649	**0.858**

Table 6 shows the findings of the assessment of the formative measurement model evaluated based on the significant t-value and VIF. The analysis reported significant t-values ranging from 5.097 to 6.656, indicating that the sub-constructs (practical and lifelong learning) met the critical criteria for formative item assessment. Meanwhile, the VIF values were less than 5.0, indicating that the sub-constructs used were free from serious collinearity issues (Hair et al., 2016).

Table 6. Assessment of formative measurement model (second stage)

Construct	*Sub-construct*	*Measurement*	*Outer loading*	*t-value*	*VIF*
Training content	Practical	Formative	0.907	5.097**	1.771
	Life-long learning		0.915	6.656**	1.771

Table 7 presents the basic statistical test findings. The analysis shows that the minimum values range from 5.730 to 6.020, indicating that the constructs of the training content (practical lifelong learning), trainee motivation, and productivity are at high (5) and very high (6) levels.

Table 7. Basic statistical tests

Construct	*Mean*	*Std. deviation*
1. Practical	5.751	0.772
2. Life-long learning	5.730	0.844
3. Trainee motivation	5.990	0.639
4. Productivity	6.020	0.665

Table 8 reports the findings of hypothesis testing *H1a, H1b*, and *H1c* using the SmartPLS software. The hypothesis testing results show three important findings. First, training content has a positive and significant relationship with productivity ($\beta = 0.165$; $t = 2.831$). Second, training content has a positive and significant relationship with trainee motivation ($\beta = 0.689$; $t = 17.867$). Third, the relationship between training content, trainee motivation, and productivity is positive and significant ($\beta = 0.434$; $t = 9.128$). These findings demonstrate that training content is a crucial predictor of productivity and trainee motivation. Furthermore, this analysis confirms that trainee motivation can act as an important partial mediator in the relationship between training content and productivity. Additionally, the R^2 value reports that the training content construct can contribute 0.56% of the influence on productivity. Furthermore, the training content construct can contribute 0.47% of the influence on trainee motivation. These percentages are higher than the value of 0.26%, indicating that the study's structural model has a strong effect (Cohen, 1992).

Table 8. Hypothesis testing *Ha, Hb* and *Hc*

Hypothesis		*β-value*	*t-value*	*p-value*	*Result*
H1a	Training content has a positive and significant relationship with productivity.	0.165	2.831	0.005	Accepted
H1b	Training content has a positive and significant relationship with trainee motivation.	0.689	17.867	0.000	Accepted
H1c	Trainee motivation acts as a positive and significant mediating variable in the relationship between training content and productivity.	0.434	9.128	0.000	Accepted

The blindfolding test (f^2) and predictive accuracy (Q^2) using the PLS algorithm were conducted. The f^2 results confirm that the relationship between training content and productivity has an f^2 value of 0.02, which is lower than the value of 0.15, meaning that the effect of training content on productivity is small (Cohen, 1992). On the other hand, the relationship between training content and trainee motivation has an f^2 value of 0.91, which is higher than the value of 0.35, indicating that the effect of training content on trainee motivation is strong (Cohen, 1992). Furthermore, the relationship between trainee motivation and productivity has an f^2 value of 0.50, which is higher than 0.35, meaning that the effect of trainee motivation on productivity is strong (Cohen, 1992). In addition, the Q^2 value for the relationship between training content and trainee motivation is 0.344, while the Q^2 value for the relationship between training content and productivity is 0.429. These reported values are greater than zero, indicating that the study construct is capable of achieving the expected level of predictive accuracy for the research model (Hair et al., 2016).

Table 9 reports the findings of the importance-performance map analysis (IPMA). The analysis shows that trainee motivation has the highest importance value (0.651) and exhibits the highest performance value (83.123). On the other hand, training content records the lowest importance value (0.435) and the lowest performance value (-16.667). Therefore, the training content construct should be given critical attention to help the organisation improve and enhance effective training management practices.

Table 9. The findings of the IPMA

Constructs	*Productivity*	
	Importance (total of effect)	*Performance (total of index)*
Training content	0.435	-16.667
Trainee motivation	0.651	83.123

5. DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS

This study's findings have been able to achieve the study's main objective: trainee motivation can act as an effective mediating variable in the relationship between leadership training programmes and productivity. In the context of this study, most respondents agreed that the level of management's ability to plan and develop training content, trainee motivation, and productivity is high. It explains that the management's ability to design and develop training content in a planned and thorough manner will be able to increase trainee motivation in the leadership training programmes. It can also increase the productivity of trainees and the organisation in a positive way in the organisation concerned. These findings have been supported and disseminated by previous studies carried out by Basnet and Gautam (2022), and Da Costa Guterresa et al. (2020), in the leadership training programme literature which is employers' ability to design practical training content (such as providing solutions to task problems that can be applied to difficult tasks) and provide lifelong learning benefits (such as meeting trainee needs, being relevant to future tasks and enhancing task-related understanding) can encourage trainee motivation (such as attending training programmes, being enthusiastic about learning training benefits, and fully focusing on training programmes). Furthermore, it can improve employee productivity (such as mastery of knowledge and skills efficiency) in the organisation.

This study presents three important implications: implications for theory, research methods, and practitioners. Concerning implications for theory, this study has confirmed three important findings. First, leadership training programmes (training content) can act as effective predictors of productivity. This finding supports studies conducted by Otuko et al. (2013), Yimam (2022), Tan and Olaore (2022), Hussain (2011) and Quesada

et al. (2011). Second, leadership training programmes (training content) can act as important predictors of trainee motivation. This finding has expanded on training management studies conducted in and outside of Malaysia (Da Costa Guterresa et al., 2020; Nafukho et al., 2023; Basnet & Gautam, 2022). Third, trainee motivation can act as an effective mediator in the relationship between leadership training programmes (training content) and productivity. This finding recognises and supports past studies conducted by Basnet and Gautam (2022), Da Costa Guterresa et al. (2020) and Nafukho et al. (2023).

Concerning implications for research methods, the questionnaire used in this study has undergone psychometric evaluation based on the complex factor validation analysis phase. This assessment confirmed that the constructed items have passed the validity and reliability standards set. Furthermore, it can lead to more accurate and reliable research findings.

Concerning implications for practitioners, this study provides a main guide to help organisations achieve effective training programme development. Based on the IPMA analysis in Table 9, the leadership training programme construct, which is the training content, should be given serious attention to assist policymakers in improving training management in the workplace. Some of the improvements that need to be implemented include, first, providing training evaluation (such as evaluating the quality of training content, teaching concepts, training delivery methods, and lifelong learning) after employees attend the training programme implemented. It can help policymakers to recommend and improve the training programme. Second, update training content based on training needs analysis. This method can improve the quality, accuracy, and effectiveness of existing training content to identify areas that need improvement or revision. To ensure training content meets certain criteria, employers can use content audit checklists that include clarity, focus, consistency, engagement, interactivity, accuracy, up-to-date information, evidence-based materials, alignment with learning outcomes and objectives, and responsiveness to feedback and needs of employees. Third, developing training content that includes elements such as achieving task competency, exposing to current skills, knowledge mastery techniques, developing good learning principles, and providing useful guidance. Fourth, the delivered training content should be suitable for the current job requirements of the employees and practice effective delivery strategies in terms of theory and practicality. Fifth, the training content should recognise the added value in enhancing the employees' career development in the future. Six, re-examine the quality of the training content offered to attract employees' interest in attending the training programme. For example, paying more extensive attention to training delivery methods, training duration, and teaching structure. These suggestions are essential to be considered to establish sustainability in training programme development and to achieve the organisation's increasingly competitive goals in the global economic market.

6. CONCLUSION

This research has tested a leadership training management model developed based on the findings of the literature review of training programmes in organisations. The analysis of the instrument measurement assessment confirms that the items used in this study have achieved high validity and reliability standards. Therefore, the analysis results of the SmartPLS path model show that leadership training programmes, in terms of training content, can act as a significant predictor of trainee motivation and productivity. Furthermore, the SmartPLS analysis findings also confirm that trainee motivation can act as the main mediating variable in the relationship between leadership training programmes and productivity. These results support and reinforce the discussion of past studies, mostly published in Malaysia and beyond.

The conclusion of the study should consider the limitations inherent in the training management model and research methodology. First, the cross-sectional method used in this study cannot identify and track dynamic changes and the nature and pattern of relationships between specific study variables. Second, this study did not assess the relationships between the indicators represented by dependent, mediating, and independent variables. Third, the findings of this study using the SmartPLS programme only explain the level of productivity variance influenced by the variables involved. Fourth, the purposive sampling technique used to collect data is unable to control for response bias given by respondents. Fifth, the study's unit of analysis only involves employees in the Central Administration Agency in Malaysia, selected through simple sampling techniques. Therefore, the study's findings are only able to evaluate expectations about the nature and pattern of relationships between variables involved in general and are not able to be generalised to different objective industries, private sectors, interest groups, and national agencies with various backgrounds and assignments. It is expected to reduce the level and ability of the study's findings to be generalised across sectors.

This study should emphasise several improvements to further strengthen the study findings in the future. Firstly, the respondents' demographic characteristics need to be evaluated in-depth in testing leadership training management models for future training management studies. It can demonstrate the significant similarities and differences in the respondents' responses to the relationships between the variables that will be highlighted. Secondly, it is essential to enhance data collection methods such as longitudinal as an alternative or best method to determine the nature of the study variables used. Thirdly, testing the study model should be tested in the private sector and statutory bodies based on a larger unit and sample. Fourthly, it is essential to explore the nature of mediator variables, namely trainee motivation, dynamically and extensively (such as internal and external motivation). If the recommendations stated can be given more specific attention, it can help strengthen future study findings.

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