

**EMPLOYEES' PERCEPTION ON LIFELONG  
LEARNING AND JOB PERFORMANCE: A  
CASE OF OIL PALM ESTATES IN BINTULU,  
SARAWAK**

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**ASIA e UNIVERSITY  
2025**

EMPLOYEES' PERCEPTION ON LIFELONG LEARNING AND JOB  
PERFORMANCE: A CASE OF OIL PALM ESTATES IN BINTULU,  
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A Thesis Submitted to Asia e University in  
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## ABSTRACT

A descriptive study has been conducted amongst oil palm plantations employees' feedback on distance learning for furthering study while working as plantation workers. The intention was to investigate career development and training provided by HRD and HRM of the oil palm estates. Based on the research problems, three study objectives were formulated and to be answered based on respondent's feedback. Since the targeted respondents for this academic exercise were employees at oil palm estates in Bintulu Division only, a self-administered questionnaire was designated to collect the primary data from the respective respondents. The questionnaire comprised of Socio-demographic characteristics, funding and perks for distance learning, retention rate, participation and progress tracking, specialized performance appraisal tools, knowledge transfer motivation, professional development for career progression and job performance. The result presented in Chapter 4, about 75 respondents gave feedback and analyzed to answer the study objectives. The study findings show that most of the respondents claim that they faced difficulties to furthering their study via distance learning while engaged as plantations workers. The entire study constructs recorded significant relationship with job performance. During the study period, the researcher found that the limitations of the study could probably due to the very limited time frame to undergo detail research. Short period for this study to explore on many factors influenced relationship between independents and dependent while working at the oil palm estates. Fortunately, replication study could help to reduce the burden of not meeting targeted specific time given. This study could be more efficient if the timeframe is set longer with in-depth analysis. From the study findings, a number of recommendations to suggest to be adopted inline to uplifting career development in HRD and HRM which contributed to better job performance.

**Keywords:** HRM, HRD, distance learning, oil palm, estate

## **APPROVAL**

This is to certify that this thesis conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in quality and scope, for the fulfilment of the requirements for the Doctor of Business Administration

The student has been supervised by: **Assoc. Prof Dr. Mohd Farid Shamsudin**

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This thesis was submitted to Asia e University and is accepted as fulfilment of the requirements for the Doctor of Business Administration



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**Asia e University**

Chairman, Examination Committee

26 February 2025

## **DECLARATION**

I hereby declare that the thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the Doctor of Business Administration is my own work and that all contributions from any other persons or sources are properly and duly cited. I further declare that the material has not been submitted either in whole or in part, for a degree at this or any other university. In making this declaration, I understand and acknowledge any breaches in this declaration constitute academic misconduct, which may result in my expulsion from the programme and/or exclusion from the award of the degree.

**Name: Ambrose Emang**

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'A' followed by a horizontal line and some smaller, less distinct marks.

**Signature of Student:**

**Date: 26 February 2025**



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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATION**

4D	Difficult, Dangerous, Dirty and Demeaning
APEL	Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning
B40	Below 40 percent
CBS	Credit Bank System
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 19
CPS2	Nigeria's Clonal Palm Series 2
DBA	Doctorate in Business Administrative
DELIMa	Digital Educational Learning Initiative Malaysia
DV	Dependent Variable
EC	Electrical Conductivity
EP	Employee Performance
EPF	Employees Provident Fund
EPU	Economic Planning Unit
FELDA	Federal Land Development Authority
FFB	Fresh Fruit Bunch
GIS	Geographical Information System
GNI	Gross National Income
HCD	Human Capital Development
HCM	Human Capital Management
HLIs	Higher Learning Institutions
HPOs	High Performance Organizations
HR	Human Resource
HRD	Human Resource Department

HRDC	Human Resource Development Corporation
HRDF	Human Resource Development Fund
ICT	Information and Communication Technologies
DV	Dependent Variable
IESALC	International Institute for Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean
IoT	Internet of Things
JS	Job satisfaction
KPIs	Key Performance Indicators
LiDAR	Light Detection and Ranging
LLL	lifelong learning
MACRES	Malaysian Remote Sensing Agency
MARA	Majlis Amanah Rakyat
MCO	Movement Control Order
MOE	Ministry of Education
MOHE	Ministry of Higher Education
MOHR	Ministry of Human Resources
MOOCs	Massive Open Online Courses
MPOB	Malaysian Palm Oil Board
MQA	Malaysian Qualifications Agency
MSPO	Malaysian Sustainable Palm Oil
NDP	National Development Policy
NEP	New Economic Policy
NMC	Non-Malaysian Citizens
NST	News Strait Time

NVP	National Vision Policy
OD	Organizational Development
OEM	Original Equipment Manufacturer
OER	Open Educational Resources
OTIF	On Time, In Full
OUM	Open University Malaysia
PA	Performance Appraisal
PMO	Prime Minister Office
PSMB	Pembangunan Sumber Manusia Berhad
PSMB	Pembangunan Sumber Manusia Berhad
QA	Quality Assurance
ROI	Returns on Investments
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
RSPO	Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil
SCORE	Sarawak Corridor of Renewable Energy
SDF	Skills Development Fund
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SOPB	Sarawak Oil Palms Berhad
SOPPOA	Sarawak Oil Palm Plantation Owners Association
T&D	Training and Developing
TUNAS	Tunjuk Ajar dan Nasihat Sawit
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UCTH	University of Calabar Teaching Hospital
UNDP	United Nation Development Programe
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization



UPM	Universiti Putra Malaysia
UTM	University Technology Malaysia
UUM	Universiti Utara Malaysia

# **CHAPTER 1**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **1.0 Background of the Study**

In these current contemporary conditions, education is often named a major contributing factor towards determining the relevance of workers from various sectors or industries such as agriculture. Industries such as agriculture are fast moving towards higher mechanization as newer and more modern methods are being adopted to increase both yield and production rates. However, many players in the agriculture industry especially in Asian countries have been slower to realize the benefits of an educated workforce and are contented to continue using unskilled labor for the majority of tasks especially due to the lower cost of unskilled labor.

Workers in the palm oil industry often times are faced with difficulties to enhance their professional development especially for the purpose of career progression, this can be mainly attributed to the lack of accessible courses available related to their industry. It is only the most tenacious of these oil palm industry workers who undertake the extra effort it takes to actively pursue continuous education to develop their careers. However, these workers that have furthered their studies have voiced discontent that the incentives to furthering their studies such as through career progression are virtually nonexistent.

This can be attributed to a number of reasons, most likely due to the policies of the workplace department responsible to plan staff education and career progression namely the Human Resource Department (HRD). Thus, a major underlying factor related to various issues can be linked to Human Resource (HR) Development. Regardless on the statement of cause being put forth it is still imperative to carry out

research delving into the subject matter in a scientific and objective manner to produce clear results. This includes taking into account important variables including independent variables such as workers age and linking it to dependent variables especially level of further education and job performance when conducting the study to determine any correlation.

Having an effective and competent human resource department is a major determining organizational strength which allows an organization to tackle and prevail over challenges within a competitive environment (Armstrong & Taylor, 2020). The true value of human resource is clearly shown through mandatory regulations in place in Malaysia regarding the management of employees. The Employment Act 1955, decrees staff recruitment, contract for services, payment of wages, statutory deductions from wages, employment and labour relations, employment rights of women and their protection, conditions for their work and regulates employers by the way they manage employee issues by setting strict guidelines for handling complaints, inquiries, harassment investigation, inspection and punitively handle offences and penalties.

HRD is an abbreviation of Human Resource Development, this can best be described as a systematic process to improve efficiency towards achieving organisational goals. The Human Resource Development Act of 2001 allows for the imposing and gathering of a Human Resource Development Levy which main purpose is to promote the development as well as training of all workers within an organization in the country.

The Human Resource Development Corporation (HRDC) (which is known in Bahasa Malaysia as *Pembangunan Sumber Manusia Berhad* (PSMB)) was established as a means for fund administration by the Corporation for affairs related thereupon reflecting directly on governmental interventions pertaining to Human Resources in

the country. PSMB is under the auspices of the Ministry of Human Resources. However, all processes related to employees' development as well as activities initiated with this aim comes under the approvals of the Management of the organization.

According to Fernandez et al. (2020) there is no confirmed rule that employees will develop with trainings that are carried out within the organization over a short or extended time frame. Therefore, based on the employees' level and manner of skills or knowledge development required, the training development programmes must be designed and implemented accordingly. Within the framework of continuing professional development, the existence of life-long learning programs may enhance professional development; these programs are often provided by higher learning institutions in the vicinity of an organization.

Employees join these life-long learning courses for professional development mostly. Any life-long learning programme is designed to provide positive experience which influences positive behaviours at work. Human resource practices in any organization is shown to affect outcomes in employee behaviour and attitudes at work (Tannady et al., 2020).

Recently, a number of studies have been carried out to investigate the human resource development impact on a variety of factors (Kerdpitak & Jermisittiparsert, 2020; Pham, 2020; Satish & Rechanna, 2020). Mainly the current study intends to seek and identify the impact of human resource development on workers who have embarked on distance education programmes for their professional development. The employee in this study particularly focusses on those from palm oil industry. The study is concerted to understand the way HRD manages its employees as they embark and complete their distance education courses. The study attempts to understand if they the

employees of palm oil organizations who embark on a distance learning program are indeed able to impart that experience and knowledge into their work. Life-long learning is supposed to influence work performance positively.

There is hardly any point in approving employees' request for leave and approving budgets allocated for staff to further their studies through distance learning courses while working, if they are not going to be impact fully contributing all that learnt knowledge and skills and attitude to the job due to constraints in the organization. This is the paradox for all HR Department Managers. After allocating budgets and giving approvals, is there a system to track employees' performance and whether these employees would feel demoralized and demotivated once they have completed the programme that they intend to leave the company and join another company for a far more challenging role. Human Resource Development is a critical function to ensure employees are trained, educated and retained on the job to contribute valuable knowledge.

Distance education is required for organizations that are located further away from urban settings like in Sarawak. As per a statement by the Sarawak Oil Palm Plantation Owners Association there are close to 80 member companies. With a probability of having about 100 management staff (all local and non- field) in each company, there is highly likely close to 8000 over management employees in palm oil companies in Sarawak. It becomes a necessity to understand the level of enthusiasm, participation and outcomes from distance learning from these Management level employees.

According to the researcher which have more than 10 years' experience in plantation with Sarawak Oil Palm Group of company in Bintulu. The common situation faced by the employees at Sebauj Plantation such as; logistic matter. It took

them 5-6 hours driving to the nearest town for them to further their study. With these matter in directly, will affect the moral of the employees. Network problem, as we know most of the plantation are based in rural area, the telecommunication network is the worse problem to the employees to do online study. Financial restriction, no motivation, no encouragement from the management and family members are part of the issue to the employees to further their study. This is the prime reasoning for conducting to this research, for the purpose of identifying the problem and solution method for the employees to further their study for their future career. Researcher believe with the employees vast current of experiences, well training method, higher education application and support from the employer and family members, the employees can perform well and contributing to the successfully of the company.

#### **i. Lifelong Learning**

3L or LLL is often widely regarded as the third pillar for our country's human development agenda, this in tandem with the country's formal education system (primary, secondary and tertiary education systems of Malaysia). 3L also concerns the provision of additional opportunities for increasing and improving basic skills and giving learning opportunities at a higher level. Towards this end, 3L also supports citizenry enrichment; it assists in producing well rounded individuals with more holistic talent. Malaysia has to strive towards developing an inclusive knowledge society where every person has the same chances to adapt to the demands of social and economic changes while also being able to participate actively in the shaping of the Malaysia's future. The relevant ministries have launched a number of major initiatives in regards to 3L, this is especially true with the launch of the Blueprint on Enculturation of Lifelong Learning for Malaysia, 2011-2020 (3L Enculturation Blueprint).

## **ii. Institutions Offering 3L**

Malaysia is home to many institutes which offer 3L catering to a variety of focusses. Among these institutions are the Technical and vocational education and training (TVET) programmes designed for the community. Community colleges often tailor 3L programmes in the form of short courses various age groups and categories including a number of which that can be accumulated as course credits. The establishment of community colleges has given rise to wider availability of work-based learning programmes at the diploma level which is well suited to working adults. There is also a wider availability of Polytechnics that also have work- based learning courses. These technical courses can all lead towards further advanced studies at various public and private higher learning institutions (HLIs) which provide 3L learning at the bachelors and postgraduate levels.

## **iii. Demand for 3L**

The current enrolment for 3L participants, has surpassed the 10% annual growth rate target set for the HLIs. In 2013, 3L enrolment was 45% of the regular (full-time) HLIs enrolment. Community colleges recorded the highest number of 3L participants in 2013. In fact, between 2002 and 2013, community colleges registered 1.3 million participants in the 3L courses, with the number of participants increasing from 1,800 in 2002 to 277,080 in 2013. Public universities are second in 3L participation with 131,000 (27%) enrolment in 2013. Public universities offer 3L through distance learning programmes to complement their on-campus fulltime conventional programmes. Registration in 3L programmes offered by ODL institutions was 13% (65,000) of total 3L participation in 2013.

#### **iv. 3L Initiatives and Future Challenges**

The 3L Enculturation Blueprint outlined three strategies targeted at upgrading mechanisms and infrastructure, enhancing public awareness and participation, ensuring continuity and appreciation. There are several ministries, governmental agencies, non- governmental organisations, HLIs, and private companies currently conducting 3L activities. This may lead to overlapping of activities and duplication of efforts and resources and the quality of these programmes may also vary significantly; In order to provide a wider access for 3L participation by several target groups (for example, the marginalised group, the physically challenged, those with learning difficulties, the indigenous, and senior citizens), improved infrastructures, and mechanisms to manage learners with special needs are required.

Many 3L programmes are currently not recognised by formal education institutions, limiting opportunities for lifelong learners to further education. The Ministry is committed to supporting any and all pursuits which encourage and empower Malaysians to acquire - and upgrade - the knowledge, values, skills, and understanding they will require throughout their lives. This provision of lifelong learning is essential for the development of the country as it will lead of life. Lifelong learning is also essential to the development of an inclusive knowledge society. To that end, the Ministry will work with HLIs to increase public awareness of 3L programmes and to create a framework to recognise prior learning. HLIs are also encouraged to develop more innovative programmes that meet the needs of a wider audience (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2015)

#### **v. Strategies to Encourage Lifelong Learning**

The current actual status of lifelong learning in Malaysia is difficult to pinpoint, although any effort to encourage better understanding, awareness and participation



across all levels of society will certainly benefit the lifelong learning agenda in this country. The numbers of school and university enrolments nationwide continue to witness positive developments, signifying a steady general growth in education. However, other forms of learning are more complex to measure, as they take place outside the formal education system. One of the most important forms often mentioned in the sphere of lifelong learning is the continued learning of the labour force. At the end of 2013, the Malaysian labour force was made up of about 13.2 million individuals, representing 44.4% of the Malaysian population (Economic Planning Unit, 2013).

More than two-thirds of these individuals, representing close to 8.8 million Malaysians, are defined as economically active. As such, their effective contribution to the economy holds considerable impact to national development. Encouraging these individuals to take part in lifelong learning initiatives is an important step in ensuring that from an economic standpoint, the nation can continue to benefit from their knowledge and skills. The following section will discuss the relevant strategies that can hopefully contribute to the nation's lifelong learning cause.

#### **a. Establish a National Structure for Lifelong Learning**

Higher education institutions, post-secondary institutions such as polytechnics, community colleges, industrial and skills training institutes as well as professional training outfits are in the business of offering programmes at various study levels, from formal degrees to professional certificates. Many of these programmes serve a purpose in the national agenda of human capital development – formal qualifications are a major element in professional continuing education for working adults; while non-formal and informal courses

present an opportunity for people to pick up new skills and knowledge useful in many areas of life.

While these initiatives and programmes demonstrate the general concern for competence development and education in the country, they need to be properly organised and coordinated if they are to make a more tangible impact on the lifelong learning agenda. A lifelong learning structure, implemented nationwide, monitored and managed by a relevant Government body potentially under the purview of Ministry of Education (MOE), will be able to consolidate and reorganise all relevant courses and programmes. This may also prompt the establishment of designated lifelong learning providers in Malaysia, rather than the offering of programmes through numerous providers that should instead focus on specific niche areas, e.g. research universities and technical and vocational training institutions. Other relevant agencies apart from MOE, for example Ministry of Human Resources, Ministry of Rural and Regional Development and *Majlis Amanah Rakyat* need to take part in the policy making process of this structure as well as in implementing the various initiatives proposed in the Blueprint.

All higher education institutions, whether public or private, as well as polytechnics, community colleges and various training providers must also play a role in the establishment of this national structure. These institutions need to conform to designated niche areas to avoid overlaps and to streamline the courses categorised as lifelong learning in Malaysia.

**b. Establish a Designated Agency to Oversee Lifelong Learning**

As part of a systematic national lifelong learning structure, Malaysia will benefit from a designated governing body that can closely monitor all lifelong learning

targets and initiatives in the country. Most importantly, a single authoritative body can be expected to better track all deliverables and expected results. This agency can be established as a department under the purview of MOE, or even as a separate ministry. Doing so would demonstrate how seriously the Government perceives lifelong learning and would help to secure the confidence of the people with regards to approved providers and programmes related to this cause.

**c. Allocate Funds for Lifelong Learning**

Provision of funds is an important factor to ensure success of the lifelong learning agenda. The relevant institutions require financial assistance to ensure that infra- and infrastructures, manpower, expertise and curricula required for running lifelong learning programmes can be sufficiently developed. The Human Resource Development Fund (HRDF) and Skills Development Fund (SDF) can provide financial assistance to Malaysians who want to take up such programmes. Similarly, the HRDF and SDF can continue to provide incentives to employers that encourage their employees to take up courses and programmes at approved institutions.

**d. Cultivate a Lifelong Learning Culture**

Making lifelong learning a culture amongst Malaysians must start with building awareness. Public and private organisations, including the Government and higher education institutions, can work together to organise promotional activities for lifelong learning, such as through roadshows and campaigns. Many initiatives have been proposed in the Blueprint, although at this juncture it is crucial to follow through with actions and results.

While the onus is on the Government to spearhead these strategies at the national level, education stakeholders need to actively contribute and participate as well. In a professional setting, employers can promote lifelong learning by creating a working environment that supports ongoing education and training, as well as rewards employees for learning and innovation (Freifeld, 2011). There are many relevant strategies that can be employed in any organisation, e.g. create a system for leadership and mentoring, and empowering employees to share ideas and deliver results in their immediate work requirements. However, this must involve a conscious effort by all employers, thus indicating that lifelong learning must be a backbone of organisational culture.

#### **e. Leverage on Appropriate Technologies**

A crucial characteristic in the universal concept of lifelong learning is that learning can take place outside the formal context of classrooms and libraries. The use of technologies is an example of the limitless possibilities involved in learning; evident in open and distance learning (ODL) approaches that utilise technology-based innovations such as e-learning and mobile learning. Similar approaches can be undertaken for lifelong learning, whether in course or programme delivery or for publicity purposes.

The use of mobile devices, such as smartphones and tablets, as well as online social networking platforms (e.g. Facebook), video-sharing websites (e.g. YouTube), and learning management systems have become popular in recent years. Malaysians can also look forward to extensive developments in information and communication technologies (ICT) that have been budgeted for 2015 to 2017, including construction of telecommunications towers and laying

of undersea cables to boost nationwide connectivity and coverage, as well as expansion of high-speed broadband in urban locations (Kuncinas, 2014).

Worldwide, the use of technology for lifelong learning has been demonstrated in recent innovations like open educational resources (OER) and massive open online courses (MOOCs). Both have proven that technology based platforms can improve awareness and uptake of lifelong learning programmes. Education institutions and training providers in Malaysia can leverage on these technological tools and developments to power our own lifelong learning initiatives.

#### **f. Establish System for Accrediting Lifelong Learning Programmes**

Accreditation and approval are part of any quality assurance (QA) process in higher education. They ensure that education providers conform to set rules and regulations and protect the rights of stakeholders and students. Accreditation is also a way to boost confidence and trust, thus potentially encouraging a greater number of people to enrol into courses and programmes – an especially important exercise for private institutions. In the specific context of working adults, accreditation of prior experiential learning (APEL) and recognition of prior learning (RPL) are pertinent concepts as they can encourage people to look at their experiences and careers from a learning perspective.

Accreditation of courses and programmes can be implemented under the MQA. As the national body responsible for accreditation and monitoring of all higher education programmes, the MQA can establish a basis to create a structured continuum between qualifications or even between institutions. Effectively, the MQA can play an active role in assisting individuals with basic certificates to upgrade their qualifications through higher levels of study.

Making this pathway a straightforward and coherent part of the lifelong learning structure can potentially encourage greater numbers of people to actively participate in lifelong learning initiatives.

**g. Establish a Career Path for Lifelong Learners**

This is in direct relation and consequence to the accreditation initiative and links to adult education. Creating an avenue through which working adults can access relevant and constructive learning opportunities can be included as part of a structure that also professionally rewards acquisition of new knowledge and skills by identifying such initiatives with promotions and career advancement. This can be achieved through learning friendly human resource policies as well as educating organisations and employers about the benefits of encouraging employees to evolve as knowledge workers.

**h. Learn from Others**

International success stories have proven that lifelong learning can play a major role in a national education structure, such as those demonstrated by South Korea and several European nations. For instance, South Korea has been implementing the Credit Bank System (CBS) since 1997 (UNESCO, 2001) as a way to recognise diverse learning experiences, whether from formal, non-formal and informal means, as well as to foster lifelong learning in the country. South Korea has proven that a system like the CBS can formally recognise and accredit many forms of learning, enhance the standing of non-formal education and encourage people to continue learning. We can learn to implement a similar system here by consolidating open entry, APEL and RPL – which are already practised in several local higher education institutions such as Open University Malaysia

(OUM)-as a functional and effective component in the Malaysian lifelong learning structure.

#### **vi. Development of e-learning**

The Malaysian government had also strongly urged instructors to integrate e-learning into the learning environments by openly declaring Massive Open Online Courses (MOOC) officially, for all governmental colleges and universities in Malaysia. This decision was made in light of the positive effects of e-learning on students' achievement (Ang et al., 2021). According to Jie and Fernandez (2021), supplying and utilizing e-learning resources seems to have become difficult for several higher education institutions during the Covid-19 pandemic. Furthermore, the COVID-19 epidemic emerged when most educational organizations worldwide were not ready to utilize the benefits of online technologies. Haleman and Yamat (2021) specified that, for some students and teachers, implementing e-learning has not gone smoothly.

The National Fiberisation and Connectivity Plan (NFCP) from the year 2019 to 2023 was introduced by the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC) in the month of September 2019 in an effort to tackle these issues (Malaysian Investment Development Authority, 2021). The government also started introducing a 5G system in several states with fiber-optic facilities for homes, workplaces, and educational establishments and an online network expansion via smart devices for e-learning. Hopefully, this new standard that permits access to digital tools will foster the development and potential of both instructors and learners.

#### **a. The Development of e-learning in the Malaysian Education Curriculum**

E-learning is by no means, a new phenomenon in Malaysia; in fact, Malaysia has seen attempts in incorporating e-learning into its education system even from as early as the 1990s (Azhari & Ming, 2015). E-learning is so integral that in the 10th Malaysian Plan (2010 – 2015), considerable attention was placed on existing communication networks all over the country in a comprehensive attempt to minimize digital rifts and promote a nationwide improvement of the ICT infrastructure, on top of providing training for teachers so that they could be prepared for the imminent technological shift in the field of education (Cheok & Wong, 2016). According to Cheok and Wong (2016), a detailed review of the education system of Malaysia was carried out in October 2011 as part of the prerequisite for developing the new Malaysian Education Blueprint for the next thirteen years from 2013 to 2025. One of the first wave initiatives was the development of the 1BestariNet project and the virtual learning platform, FROG VLE which was set to cater to 10000 public schools across the nation.

E-learning took another leap in progress in the year 2020, when the academic sector became critically affected by the Covid-19 pandemic that had forced educational institutions into closure due to social distancing measures, prompting a sudden digital migration to ensure that classes can still be kept up and running (Sharin, 2021). The pandemic response had forced rapid progress upon e-learning all over the world and prompted educators to adopt previously available, but optional technological measures to continue the delivery of lessons with reasonable quality (Müller et al., 2021). Considering the pandemic, Malaysia too, had adopted and subsequently integrated e-learning into its curriculum.



## **b. Trends in E-Learning in the Malaysian Education System**

One of the most noticeable trends in e-learning in Malaysia, is the prominent use of video-conferencing tools in the learning process. According to Yuchen *et. al.* (2020), one of the favoured applications for e-learning are Zoom and Google Meets. Video-conferencing tools have indeed been used extensively during and after the pandemic, which instructors and learners will utilize to facilitate virtual learning in both synchronous and asynchronous forms. The findings of research by Hiong *et. al.* (2019) show that most instructors in higher institutions are ICT-competent and therefore, well-equipped skill-wise, not just in operating video-conferencing tools with ease but also in combining digital tools several digital tools in order to facilitate online learning.

Apart from video-conferencing tools, Malaysia has also seen an upwards trend in the usage of learning management systems in higher education. According to Razami and Ibrahim (2021), Blackboard is the official platform used by a majority of lecturers in UTM for asynchronous learning. On the other hand, Rodzi *et. al.* (2020) cites Moodle as the favourite to-go LMS for Malaysian institutions due to its user-friendliness, affordability, and flexibility. Learning management systems in Malaysian institutions are largely used for downloading course materials and communication via forums (Kee, 2020). LMSs are also used as assist tools in helping lecturers to manage their courses as well as student assessments (Rahman et al., 2019). Based on several testimonials above, it is quite clear that learning management systems are “trendy” among educators these days, due to its handiness in course management and the variety of available tools.

Moving on to the issues of e-learning in Malaysia, it is quite noticeable that the problem of “Zoom burnout” is prevalent among Malaysians. According to Lim *et. al.* (2022), prolonged hours of screen time from virtual lessons may cause learners to become fatigued and experience burnout. In general, diminished human interaction and the blurring of work and life aspects stemming from e-learning may be a leading cause of stress and burnout among both learners and instructors (Ang & Loi, 2022). These claims are further substantiated by Samara & Monzon (2021), who further explained that a phenomenon aptly named “Zoom burnout” is indeed a very real endemic that can manifest in the form of tiredness from staring at the screen for a long time, back and neck pain, as well as other mental and physical complaints.

Online lectures are somewhat sedentary, which may sometimes require both learners and instructors to sit in front of a screen for hours on end. As a result, all participants may continually expose themselves to health risks that may strain or affect their mechanical functions if e-learning is carried out without proper consideration for their health. Besides burnout, mental health issues stemming from e-learning are also likely. According to Thandavaraj *et. al.* (2021), the pressure of tasks in online lectures that require learners to adapt and improvise with online media quickly with minimal time to fully comprehend everything, can indeed lead to higher stress levels among Malaysian students. Students in their first semester of higher education may find it harder to cope due to the lack of prior experience in using certain platforms, like learning management systems for example, thus necessitating them to learn and adapt fast on top of the struggle to “stabilize” themselves in a new learning environment.

Blended Learning and Flipped Classroom in Malaysia Tan *et. al.* (2022) discussed the current trends of blended learning in Malaysia to shed light on the insights of blended learning which in turn, may benefit the pedagogical practices of Malaysian educators by helping them to meet the new norms of digital education. There is a visible compromise in the pedagogical quality in classrooms due to the pandemic, which is largely due to how educators have converted face-to-face classroom methods to online classes, therefore causing a degree of incompatibility (Tan et al., 2022).

Their study further reiterated that the two most important elements in effective online pedagogy are accessibility and flexibility. Apart from that, the study found that flipped classrooms are more common in pre-university and tertiary education by making use of content analysis of secondary data from existing literature; the journals examined are extracted only from the Web of Science Database. The participants of the research mostly consisted of Malaysian students in higher education; there were also researches focusing on both students and academicians with the rationale that both students and academic personnel are stakeholders in the field of education.

Their findings show that practical training plays a big role in encouraging transformation; it was found that academicians do not oppose the integration of blended learning into the classroom, but it is clear that there are still challenges that cannot be overcome by academicians alone. Blended learning has been found to have practical value across all disciplines with linguistics being a good forerunner to transformation. According to Tan et al. (2022), the shortcomings of blended learning are time consumption and strenuous preparation. It was also found that Malaysia, as a developing country, focuses more on technological

advancement whereas America, a technologically advanced country, focuses instead on standardization. Tan *et. al.* (2022) conclude that as a practice, blended learning is gaining traction in Malaysia due to its flexibility and adaptability.

Overall, the article shows believable points and findings that support the current lieu of blended learning in Malaysia. The findings of compatibility between blended learning and linguistics in Malaysia are supported by research from Amin *et. al.* (2022), whose findings described consistent, positive perceptions of blended learning towards improving the presentation skills of students. This shows that teaching language via blended learning is indeed practical, and the promising results it shows are consistent with Tan *et. al.* (2022) claim of linguistics being a good catalyst for transformation.

One suggestion that can be made about the article from a reader's point of view, is to consider the use of other research methods to analyse the trends of blended learning in Malaysia. For example, research by Prawisanthi and Permana, (2022, as cited in Darmiyani, 2023) made use of a descriptive quantitative research design in which the behavioral responses of learners towards blended learning were recorded; the respondents were also given a close-ended questionnaire to gauge their perceptions towards blended learning. As a reader utilising this existing research by Tan *et. al.* (2022) as a framework and apply different methodologies to gauge future trends in blended learning.

### **c. Challenges in E-Learning in the Malaysian Education System**

The challenges faced by Malaysians in e-learning is the lack of infrastructure, such as readily available devices and stable internet connection. The unsatisfactory internet speed and limited quota hampers the process of e-learning, according to Mut *et. al.* (2020) who further explained that the biggest

problem for rural learners has always been a stable internet connection, and the lack thereof could result in diminished concentration as well as focus. An unfortunate example can be seen in the case of Veveonah Mosibin, an 18-year-old Sabahan public university student who went viral in Malaysia in June 2020 after explaining that she had to sit on a tree in order to obtain stable internet connectivity for her examinations (Ibnu *et. al.* 2021).

The case is reflective of a very grim reality in the Malaysian context of e-learning, in which the lack of basic facilities such as a steady internet connection, is a very real struggle that is still faced by countless other underprivileged learners in the more rural parts of the country. Lastly, Malaysia is also faced with the challenge of inadequate technical training and expertise for the facilitators of e-learning programmes. In other words, a deficiency of technical skills and lack of training as well as technical support for teachers, are some of the hindrances that have been highlighted in the field of e-learning, based on research carried out at Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris (Rajassekharan et al., 2020).

This could mean a lot of missed potential for instructors alike as they grapple with unfamiliar systems which may, in turn, demotivate them due to the amount of effort it takes to understand and operate basic concepts like opening an online lecture, uploading notes, or accessing submitted assignments online.

#### **d. Issues on the Use of Online Learning**

The study conducted by Ilias et al. (2020) aims to help universities to plan how to implement online learning and reduce challenges faced by contributing to the existing knowledge known to mankind regarding online learning. The finding may be helpful to improve the intention and preferences on adapting online learning to be implemented in the future. e-Learning uses an audio-visual

platform to provide a virtual learning environment that allows the learners to engage in various activities that involve a multitude of subjects (Ilias *et al.*, 2020).

The first issue stated by Ilias et al. (2020) is administrator issue. The study showed one of the challenges is insufficient time for the administrators to carry out assessments. Ilias et al. (2020) suggested that lecturers as the administrators during online lessons should take into account the learners' needs, time allotted for each session/class, the delivery method adopted and the internet accessibility before assessing examinations and assignments given. Numerous other studies have stipulated the significance and convenience to use e-learning platform as a medium to receive assignments and provide feedback to learners.

The next issue is social interactions which are linked to the communication between the lecturer and student since e-learning limits communications (Ilias et al., 2020). A major contributor to e-learning issues would be overcoming the lack of social interactions. Effective communication between lecturer and students increases student's emotional intelligence. Besides, good communication is essential to raise students' satisfaction and to avoid miscommunications.

Technical, connection and data issues are the third issue (Ilias et al., 2020). During the pandemic in 2020, when the learning was shifted online, most raised issues regarding insufficient data, unstable Internet connection and lack of devices. Ilias et al. (2020) concurred that if online learning is to be continued, technical issues of insufficient data are deemed important and limited connections tend to lead to issues pertaining insufficient data and outdated devices. The finding from Ilias et al. (2020)'s study is consistent with other

studies done in the field that found connectivity imposes a challenge in implementing e-learning.

The study also found that students have been neglecting time for themselves as they are preoccupied in online learning and difficulty in managing the time to participate in online learning; thus, time and support is needed to adopt online learning (Ilias et al., 2020). One factor that influences the students whether to continue online learning is their level of motivation. Apart from that, learner's preferences also influence the continuing e-learning in the future. So, the lecturers are tasked to enhance student motivation. Classroom sessions and discussions are needed to ensure the learners understood the learning content. It is important to make sure the students gain in-depth knowledge on the subject matter as the lack of understanding poses a challenge as students' have limited interactions and low motivation learning via e-learning (Ilias et al., 2020).

Based on this study, the challenges outlined to implement e-learning are lack of internet connection, insufficient data capacity, administrator's assessment, and communication issues. In addition to that, students' preferences, intention and lack of motivation is also a challenge. Based on these challenges, tertiary education ought to improve assessment held online depending on the time allocated to the lecturers. Simple assessment should be given so that the remote learning expectations are met. To better understand subject matter and increase motivation, online meetings should be conducted. To uphold the high accountability and quality of graduates, it is important for tertiary educational institutes to address the matter regarding inline assessment and examination. Apart from these, the challenges can be overcome by introducing flipped learning and upgrading the learning management system (LMS). Government

also can aid the students by providing electronic devices for those who are unable to buy them.

#### **e. Clinical Medical Students' Online Learning**

This study explains about the clinical housemen preference on the techniques of teaching during their studies and training offered by the medical instructors. The purpose of this study was to investigate the preferred teaching strategies used by the medical teaching body at National Defence University of Malaysia with the houseman. According to Ahmed and Reddy (2021), the students strongly prefer in-person instruction and teacher-led clinical skill presentations. Apart from that, the authors state that students choose to practise on actual patients as opposed to dummies or fake patients and problem-based learning (PBL).

The authors suggested further by pointing out the impact of the healthcare faculty's teaching methods; the standard of its curriculum; the learning environment it provides; the support materials it offers and the students themselves all have on how well the medical students can learn better. Among the best ways to develop clinical and language skills is through bedside instruction, which is an essential component of healthcare education. It is also said that one of the earliest forms of the traditional medical instruction, lectures, are being phased out. It is stated further that, a larger number of medical colleges place a strong emphasis on problem-based lessons as a means of encouraging and instructing students to be independent learners.

The data obtained from the questionnaire that was distributed among 89 clinical housemen showed preference for bedside teaching compared to other methods of teaching. A similar study conducted by Maaruf et al. (2022), also found students desired face-to-face bedside teaching versus other form of



instruction because it aids healthcare students in developing humane abilities and a professional appearance when conducting a check-up, making a final diagnostic test, and establishing a doctor-patient connection.

Another obvious finding is that the majority of students agreed that utilising dummies or stimulants during clinical skill labs (CSL) sessions was beneficial since it boosts their self-assurance and helps students to acquire real-world experience. The other preferred method of study was through integrated learning activities, followed by the utilisation of the lesson materials posted online for e-learning. In general, the article gives clear distinction on the favourable method of teaching that can be used for clinical students in the future.

The only setback, according to the writers, is that, although the medical school placed a lot of emphasis on digital teaching and evaluation during the pandemic, these information and techniques were excluded from the study that was carried out. The investigation's proposal and questionnaire were created ahead of Covid-19 outbreak and a fraction of the research was during the outbreak. The only setback is the inadequacy of information the writers fail to elaborate on, at times of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Therefore, the result from the study may not fully apply now for students and institutions, who have to live with the Covid 19 virus that is mutating at a fast rate. The magnitude of the sample used for the research was small, this might not accurately reflect the preferred teaching techniques at every nation's medical institution. One of the recommendations, as suggested by Maaruf et al. (2022), is that future research will need to be conducted further in Malaysian and international medical schools, especially exploring other options to bedside teaching besides online in times of future outbreak. In general, the authors

attempted to reveal the preferred form of teaching strategies for medical undergraduates in order to enhance clinical students' interest and knowledge.

#### **f. Strategies in Policy Implementation for New Malaysia**

Information and communications technology has developed substantially over the past years, resulting in a revolution in the world of education. Today's education sector is markedly different from the past. The question is, though, have these developments been positive ones? Are these changes contributing to an improvement in the quality of education students receive? It is clear from Asmawi and Mohd Jaladin (2018) in their article *Higher Education System in Malaysia: Exploring Strategic Trends and Challenges in Policy Implementation for New Malaysia* that this is not the case.

The authors contend in their study, based on semi-structured interviews conducted with four prominent education scholars from the Ministry of Education as well as public universities, that despite the apparent transition into a reformed Malaysia and the spearheading of actions geared towards 2020 and beyond, the paradoxical outcome is that all of this bold policy has failed to be implemented successfully (Asmawi & Mohd Jaladin, 2018). The key to the successful implementation of such policies is the establishment of clear objectives and standards (Asmawi & Mohd Jaladin, 2018).

According to the author, tertiary education should be able to continue contributing towards making Malaysia a developed nation while targeting educational objectives that are in line with its current development. Therefore, the Malaysian government needs to match this ideal objective to its existing resources, otherwise the objective must be revised. The way to accomplish this is to assign appropriate personnel to appropriate responsibilities, train

individuals efficiently, assess career advancement, reorganize higher education bodies, revise long-term strategies, and refocus on personnel (Mohd Zain et al., 2017). The higher education system has been the subject of numerous studies, but none focused on its background and challenges (Ghasemy et al., 2018). Hence, this study examines the challenges academics and institutions face in the growing education industry to fill this knowledge gap.

They emphasize the importance of exploring strategic trends in Malaysian higher education. Academics' backgrounds, growth, and challenges are examined in literature reviews of past research. In general, this journal article contains valuable information in its literature review.

This research is conceptualized based on one of the most popular policy implementation models, which is Van Meter and Van Horn's (1975) model (Hussin, 2014, as stated in Ghasemy et al., 2018). They concentrated on the strategic trends and challenges in Malaysian higher education policy implementation. Specifically, it relates to Malaysia's governance as well as its reinterpretations of current policies. The authors emphasize the importance of hiring policy makers experienced in higher education and involved in policy making. It is crucial that policymakers conduct pilot tests and ensure that policy managers fully comprehend the full scope of the policies after they are implemented (Hussin, 2014 as stated in Ghasemy et al., 2018).

#### **g. Online Interaction and Activities**

Teaching is an interactive act. In the classroom, communication between the teacher and pupils goes on constantly as initiatory or responsive acts. This communication is called “interaction”. Hafen et al. (2015) defined classroom interaction as a pattern of verbal and non-verbal communication and the types of

social relationships which occur within classrooms. Wagner (1998) defined interaction as “reciprocal events that require at least two objects and two actions. Interaction occurs when these objects and events naturally influence one another”. Therefore, interactions do not occur only from one side, as there must be a mutual influence through the giving and receiving of messages in order to achieve communication (Rahman, 2014).

The traditional classroom involves a normative teaching style whereby students listen to a teacher in a classroom environment and have face-to-face interactions (Holloway, 1994). The academic world assumes that traditional education is the ideal mode of educational delivery. It serves as the gold standard against which all forms of alternative education are evaluated (Wilson & Peterson, 2006). However, Garrison (2000) reported that the traditional lecture mode of delivery has medium levels of student-teacher interaction, low levels of student-student interaction, and medium to low levels of student-content interaction. Moreover, the traditional classroom approach fails to satisfy the educational demands of students who have job and family commitments.

Interactions in a classroom play a pivotal role. These are a great solution for creating successful interactive systems and interaction design in teaching and learning processes (Garrison, 2000). Teachers and students share and receive messages to achieve a communicative process since it is a reciprocal effect requiring them to exchange thoughts and feelings (Sür & Delice, 2016). This interaction process covers verbal and non-verbal actions to promote learning in the classroom. Applying the right patterns of interaction is a fundamental factor in the success of any activity and the achievement of aims. In the classroom, different interaction patterns may support the aims of different kinds of activities

such as pair work and group work. Changing interaction patterns helps vary the pace while choosing the right pattern helps achieve learning aims and productivity (Mulya Sari, 2018).

Traditionally, educational interactions have been based upon oral communication between teachers and learners. Oral communication tends to be fast-paced, spontaneous, fleeting, and less structured than text-based communication. Notwithstanding what might be considered less-than-ideal characteristics for disciplined and rigorous thinking, experience has shown that oral critical discourse can facilitate critical thinking at least in well-moderated small seminar groups. Moreover, oral communication in a face-to-face context provides multiple non-verbal or paralinguistic cues such as facial expression and tone of voice. Socially and emotionally, face-to-face oral communication is a rich medium (Garrison et al., 2012).

Information that creates and sustains the group dynamic of face-to-face groups is simply not transmitted. When writing or a text-based medium, such as computer conferencing, is used for educational purposes, questions may arise as to whether this leaning down of the communication channel through the screening out of much non-verbal and paralinguistic communication detracts from the quality of learning. On the other hand, the effects are not necessarily all negative. Compared to traditional, oral classroom interaction, computer conferencing would appear to offer not only potential deficiencies but also some advantages (Garrison et al., 2012).

One advantage is that text-based communication provides time for reflection. For this reason, written communication may actually be preferable to oral communication when the objective is higher-order cognitive learning. Some

of the literature does, in fact, suggest that written communication is very closely connected to careful and critical thinking (Olson, 1984). Reflective and explicit nature of the written word encourages discipline and rigour in our thinking and communication. In fact, the use of writing may be crucial when the objective is to facilitate thinking about complex issues and deep, meaningful learning. The use of writing as an adjunct means of communication even in face-to-face learning situations (outlines on whiteboards, overheads, written handouts) lends support to this supposition (Garrison et al., 2012).

Analysing the patterns of interaction has been a research interest leading to a major direction in educational research. Numerous studies in this area had aimed at revealing the complexity of foreign language classroom interaction. A study by Zhang et al. (2018) claimed that the patterns of interaction between participants change by producing a variety of discourse acts, including initiation-response-feedback patterns in student-teacher talk. It further showed that male students were more willing to interact with their teachers than female students. The findings also revealed that the high portion of teachers' domination in classroom talk did not influence students to initiate exchanges with their teachers and provide follow-up to their teachers' responses (Mulya Sari, 2018).

Interaction is one of the central issues in distance education (Abrami et al., 2011; Hisham et al., 2005; Su et al., 2005). According to Banna et al., (2015), interaction is an important component of any learning experience because it encourages reflection and discussion. Since learning is a social activity that requires interaction with the instructor, among students, and with the course content, many researchers and distance education workers agreed that interaction

is the critical factor that facilitates learning in distance education (Selim, 2007).

Interaction makes online learning effective.

#### **h. Types of Interaction**

Interaction in open distance education is important for effective learning and retention. There are three types of interaction that are essential for the e-learning environment, according to Moore (2016):

- i) Learner-learner: Interaction happens between two learners or among a group of learners taking the same course. It can happen with or without an instructor present.
- ii) Learner-instructor: Interaction happens when an instructor provides information, feedback, encouragement or guidance to a learner. It also takes place when a learner asks an instructor questions or communicates with him or her regarding the course.
- iii) Learner-content: Interaction happens when students obtain information directly from learning materials. It takes place whenever they interact with the text or are deeply engrossed with the content.

Applying these three types of interaction is beneficial to learners, and ignoring any of the three will affect the learning process, as suggested by Moore (2016) who asserts that these are the minimum types of interaction that need to be agreed upon by distance educators. According to Moore (2016), interaction between learner and content is the gist of the e-learning process as it brings about the changes in the learner in aspects of understanding, perspective and cognitive structures.

The interaction between a learner and an instructor is regarded as an essential element of e-learning by many educators since the learner will have the opportunity to interact with the expert who prepared the subject material. Experts present information, demonstrate their skills, and model certain attitudes and values, according to Moore (2016). He further reiterates, “instructors provide counsel, support, and encouragement to each learner, though the extent and nature of this support vary according to the educational level of the learners, the teacher's personality and philosophy, and other factors.”

Learner-learner interaction is a new dimension of distance education, whereby the learner interacts with other learners alone or in group settings, with or without the real-time presence of an instructor, and extremely valuable, and sometimes essential, resources for learning (Moore et al., 2016).

#### **i. Asynchronous and Synchronous Learning**

Preparing education through online learning environments has become more available than ever before and is continuing to grow (Crawford-Ferre & Wiest, 2012). The opportunity of online courses is appealing as participation in class allows students the flexibility to continue working while completing their degree. Other appealing aspects of online courses include geographic, financial, and reduced time limitations (Crawford-Ferre & Wiest, 2012). Due to current technology, instructors are able to emulate traditional learning activities that take place in the customary face-to-face classroom within online learning environments (Skylar, 2009). An additional attractive aspect of this type of learning environment is the ability to provide higher education options in rural communities.



Online learning can be presented in synchronous, asynchronous, or hybrid learning environments. Synchronous learning environments are settings where learning occurs in real time and might incorporate activities such as an instructor lecture, collaborative activities, and student questions. All members of the course are logged on at the same time each class meeting. Asynchronous environments are settings where students engage in activities that occur independent of the instructor or other peers. Asynchronous environments might include a review of a pre-created learning module, threaded discussion boards, and/or conversations via email with the instructor or class peers.

A hybrid course can take many forms. Some course meetings are synchronous, while other activities are independent or asynchronous. Regardless of the synchronicity of the course, the key factor for students from rural settings is that education is offered to those who are not near the traditional brick and mortar type of instruction. Students have shown appreciation for distance learning as it provides flexibility, accessibility, and technology and interactive tools. It also enables them to share ideas with other students (Huang et al., 2020).

Some research suggest that online instruction demonstrated more success than traditional courses (Paul & Jefferson, 2019). Students have identified aspects of online learning that are not ideal, such as the cost of print, organisation of materials, and the time needed to prepare materials (Heirdsfield et al., 2011). Another consideration regarding online learning is completion rate (Wladis et al., 2016). Research suggest that students enrolled in online learning environments were more likely to fail or withdraw. Therefore, it is important to consider supports to enhance student success in online programmes.

## **vii. Researchers' Background**

The researcher was an employee at Sarawak Oil Palm Berhad a palm oil organization from year 2007 to 2017. He now teaches Professional Bachelor of Plantation Management in fertilizer management, productivity management, pest & disease management, quality management and environment management at University Technology Malaysia (UTM). He has been teaching since 2016 and has observed the degree of demotivation from his class when it comes to ways in which they are allowed to apply acquired knowledge in their actual workplace. Few have indicated that their organization does not support professional development while others have indicated that personal or professional development is carried out in isolation by themselves without any HR approvals. Therefore, researcher wishes to identify the degree of slack in Human Resource Development Strategies adopted by HR Managers in HRDs from the perspective of learners in lifelong learning programmes/ distance learning courses.

### **1.1 Problem Statement**

In recent years, financial and economic constraints have limited the Malaysian government's finances. An unfortunate result has been that ministries such as the Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE) have received reduced budget allocations. In turn, HLIs are forced to bear the brunt with drastic and significant cuts in funding for both their operations and development (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2015). Part of the problem also lies in the fact that over the years, public HLIs have been over-reliant on government funding, with more than 90% of their expenditure coming from the government (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2015).

This issue is also affecting private HLIs. Although private HLIs are financially independent, 48% of their students take loans from the Higher Education Fund

Corporation (Perbadanan Tabung Pendidikan Tinggi, PTPTN). The fund corporation is also facing challenges to its sustainability as it has only managed to retrieve a small portion of the loans it has dispersed. This may affect future disbursements of loans to students both in the public and private HLIs (The Star Online, 2016).

As efforts are made to raise educational standards, the cost of delivering higher education is rising globally including in Malaysia. According to data from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the per-student cost in its member nations rose by 14% from 2000 to 2007. In Malaysia, however, the per-student cost rose 7% every year from 2004 to 2013 (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2015).

Another challenge for HLIs is the limited range of funding sources that they are able to access. Years of relying on government funding have limited HLIs' ability to drastically change their expenditure and revenue streams. Although several HLIs have provided some innovation in their funding streams such as establishing various forms of endowment funds (Hussin, 2018), they are far from being fully developed to reach their full potential. As a result, the Malaysian HLIs are still a long way from achieving financial self-sustainability.

Higher education is undeniably one of the key factors that have spurred Malaysia's development and capability. Public education especially is viewed as one of the most effective paths to spur social mobility and bring positive benefits to its citizens. Therefore, higher education must remain sustainable and accessible for every qualified citizen. Achieving this goal in the context of existing financial constraints requires a greater focus on value for money and higher efficiency in the usage of funds. HLIs must focus on improving their efficiency and productivity while continuing to deliver great value from the funds invested in them. Efficiency is not enough, however;

they also need to venture into alternative forms of financing. This research seeks to explore the potential sources of funds for HLIs in Malaysia from the capital market and public-private partnerships (PPPs).

There are a great number of workers in the oil palm industry that have furthered their studies at various learning institutions throughout Malaysia. However, thus far there is still a lack of information regarding the issue of distance learning in relation to its impact on educational development to these workers; this is especially true for Bintulu, Sarawak. Based on current literature review, there is no evidence or previous study found which delves into the subject matter of the impacts of educational development through distance education practices for workers in the palm oil industry. Therefore, this study was conducted to examine the impacts of human resource development in regards to distance learning education practices and its effects on job performances amongst staff in the palm oil industry sector in Bintulu District.

According to Clark (2020), distance education is critical for continuous professional development. Although organizations would have had in house and public training interventions for human resource development as means to achieve effective human resources development objectives, the effectiveness of HRD programmes depends on the degree of participation of employees. Business outcomes then should reflect as outcomes of the programme or courses which have been completed by the staff.

Employee's participation in distance learning courses is not tracked nor monitored by HRD in companies (Firat & Bozkurt, 2020). Employees' participation in distance education and the study of its impact on HRD, is not explored thoroughly according Firat and Bozkurt (2020). There is a pressing need for this research because

of the concern on low participation from management level staff for distance learning programmes according to Gregori et al. (2018).

Human resource managers often battle with deploying effective human resource development strategies to improve employee's performance so they can meet organizational goals. Through distance education it is one way to ensure employees are given the opportunity to further enhance their skills and knowledge (Miller et al., 2016). However, the attitude of employees to embrace distance education courses, and transfer that acquired knowledge successfully to their job to obtain the intended results of organizational performance is pivotal. It is important to determine the impact of employees' knowledge transfer to the organization (Hamdoun, et al, 2018).

According to Torraco & Lundgren, (2020), most distance learning courses do not resonate with industry requirements therefore the HR Department Managers are often perplexed at the rate of turnover with employees who have recently become certified for a life-long learning programme. Retention rates suffer when an employee finds that they are highly marketable to the industry with a new qualification. According to Surampalli et al. (2020), the HR Department must clearly set guidelines to ensure employees' development is directly contributed to retention for organization's sustainability. This is the method in which HRD could derive ROI (Returns on Investments) for employee development programmes.

To manage and empower people, training and development programs are very important to any organization because effective training and development program benefits both the organization and the employee. T&D program which comprises of technology-based learning, off-the-job training, coaching and mentoring have significant effect on minimizing employee turnover, upgrading job satisfaction and

morale, upgrading employee's performance and finally propelling a higher productivity and financial gains (Stephen et al., 2017).

Salah (2006) found a significant positive correlation between the training and development with the performance and productivity. Other study also showed that employee training and development possess a significant positive influence on their performance and productivity (Habib et al., 2015). T&D also generate higher confidence level amongst the employees. As such, most employees agree that training and development enhance their performance while the organizations coincide that T&D have a beneficial and substantial effect on employee work performance and productivity.

In Sarawak, the rapid growth of palm oil estates owned by private companies led to the increase in employment opportunities for various levels in the palm oil organizations. Within the context of human resource, there seems to be an unwritten rule to remain competitive among employees to keep their job. Competition is stiff. Employees strive to do their best for the organization by demonstrating commitment to the job and also by reflecting on their job performance. This is what motivates them to further their studies while on the job to develop their skills and knowledge and also to attempt for a promotion, raise and/or bonus. Distance education is a tool utilized for professional development and progressing in their career to the higher level.

According to Sopiah et al. (2020), employees of all levels of the organization focus on self-development followed by professional development while working in the organization therefore talent management initiatives in any organization must first consider this before initiating any employee education programmes. This dives deep into the question of whether the employee pursues distance education for professional development or for personal development is rarely, explored even from a HR

Department perspective because impact analysis study is not easily approachable (Herodotou et al., 2020).

The organization is said to be approving budgets for life-long learning, as well as allowing the employees to pursue their educational programmes in most cases after work hours. Few employees are allocated study leave and exam leaves should they be embarking on such distance learning pursuits. Employees are allowed to go on leave to complete their distance education engagements, which is due partly to Human Resource Development strategy. HRD facilitates performance management of employees (Blaschke & Hase, 2015). For employees who participate in distance education programmes HR provides specific allocations, allowances, perks and benefits to support them in their life-long learning pursuits.

In Sarawak, Human Resource Development becomes an important aspect of Management Development strategy in a palm oil organization due to the mix of skills and knowledge within the organization. With distance learning employees' capabilities should be automatically reflected on their job performance. Therefore, there is an opportunity to understand and learn from others in the same industry. This is called learning implicit knowledge, where knowledge is gained through experiential activities.

There is also a tacit collusion of knowledge when participants work in group assignments and discussions where actual learning occurs. Such enriching learning experience resonates significantly higher performance enhancements among employees who pursue knowledge acquisition through distance education as compared to those who do not. HR faces the challenge of evaluating performance of both these categories of employees equally- those who pursue distance education and those who do not. The challenge is in the prevalence of performance evaluation system and

review toolkits that considers disparity in knowledge of employees as well as skill sets in addition to HR Managers' competencies in evaluating fairly the terms of performance evaluation of employees with differing levels of competency as well as performance.

## **1.2 Research Questions**

While traditional distance learning institutions backed by years of reputation, the search for similarly well-regarded, industry-recognized courses can be tricky especially in Sarawak. Collaboratively employer and employee should determine the best fit between distance learning courses and career goals. By being fully confident in the choice of learning and the human resource process, employees commit to acquiring knowledge through distance learning programmes in hope of future career development. HRD plans with the Management's support the employees' performance development programmes. Distance education is often one of those avenues which provides qualification and accreditation for those skills and knowledge. The choice of modules and outcomes are often used as consideration by employees to determine their interest to participate in those programmes. Employees find the course and would sign up for it themselves. They do not even inform their HR that they are pursuing such goals of learning.

Hence the research questions for this study are to understand issues in human resource development on distance education learners from the palm oil industry. Based on the research problems, the research questions for this study as below:

RQ1: What are the perceptions of the employees on how, Distance learning for career development, training and development provided by HRD and HRM of oil palm estate?



RQ2: What are the employees' competency levels, educational background and technology facilities provided by estate to facilitate distance learning?

RQ3: How effectiveness is distance learning for enhancement of career development contributed to job performance and reduce turn over intention among the studied plantations estates' employees?

### **1.3 Objectives of the Study**

Distance education or learning is supposed to help management cope with improvement job performance and to achieve organizations' goals, which referring to HRM in studied estates. In Bintulu district distance education practices for palm oil company staff is encouraged. This study will examine the relationship between human resource development practices and identify the key aspects of that influence employee development and their performance management by HR in palm oil companies as an impact of distance learning. The objectives of this research is to;

RO1: To identify the perceptions of the employees on how, Distance learning for career development, training and development provided by HRD and HRM of oil palm estate?

RO2: To identify the employees' competency levels, educational background and technology facilities provided by estate to facilitate distance learning

RO3: To examine the effectiveness is distance learning for enhancement of career development contributed to job performance and reduce turn over intention among the studied plantations estates' employees.

### **1.4 Significance of the Study**

The significance of the study is to provide evidence to fill the research gap in terms of knowledge on the relationship between human resource development practices

through distance education program and employee performance of two palm oil companies located within the Bintulu District. Research findings would facilitate to garner insight into the various human resource development practices required to successfully perform in palm oil industry. The findings will contribute to the current knowledge database on the subject matter and contribute positively towards the better understanding of the different aspects of performance in order to experience overall efficiency and effectiveness from employees. The findings will also provide support in increasing the knowledge for the need for application of human resource development practices in higher education institutes.

### **1.5 Scope and Limitation of the Study**

This study will focus on the selected local staffs, amongst those of the executive and administrative level. Assistant managers and managers from palm oil companies in Bintulu which have completed their further education. In the context of the scope the study is limited to the oil palm industry in Sarawak and specifically the district of Bintulu as a representative of the greater industry. For the scope of the discipline, this study only focusses mainly on the aspect of human resource development. However, this study will contribute positively towards the knowledge bank on enhancement of career, knowledge, ability and skills beside reduce turn over intention, which holds influence over job performance in oil palm plantations or industry. Further studies in the future along the same subject lines may increase the scope of the present` study and reduce its limitations.

### **1.6 Chapter Summary**

Human resource development offers various opportunities, activities, and benefits to employees such as performance management and development, employee coaching

and mentoring, succession planning and organizational development to build superior workforce so that the organization and its individual employees can accomplish their work goals.

In order to develop the business, the organization may introduce formal and informal learning opportunities. Informal learning would include coaching and mentoring by the immediate managers in the respective department or by collaborating with trained experts. Formal learning takes place via college courses, or in-house short courses provided by a paid consultant or facilitator. The ultimate focus on any human resource development, is improved effectiveness and productivity to boost the company's bottom line and overall success. By providing learning opportunities management helps to develop employees' strengths as well as their ability to contribute to the organization.

Through distance learning courses that are well planned and phased out, the learning comes in bytes and with loads of practices for real life application. If applied effectively, human resource development will be able to embed ways to attract and retain talent in the organization which is one of the KPIs of HRD.

On-going learning is one of the opportunities that employees seek when they consider an employer. Providing the ability and encouragement for employees to continue to develop skills will help to retain and motivate staff. When employees feel they have received proper training and support, they're more likely to remain loyal to the organization and experience higher job satisfaction. Human resource development also provides the means to identify and prepare employees for advancement, so that your company's leadership is experienced and well trained. Lastly, a highly trained workforce performs better, and when employees excel, the business performs well. As

such, human resource development also ensures the improved effectiveness of an organization, helping it to achieve its goal.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.0 Introduction**

Companies where employees work in remote areas are increasingly adopting distance learning methods to train and develop their talent. Despite the widespread use of these methods, little research has been done regarding the effectiveness of HR in supporting their employees and retaining those (Sonar & Pandey, 2023). This study reviews current literature on the issues pertaining to Human Resource Development and Distance Education Learners in Palm Oil Industry. Suggestions for future research and practices of HRD are also discussed here.

Due to the continued advancement of online technologies since the 1990s, the use of distance learning has made it possible for adult learners to improve their career prospects remotely with more control over temporal and spatial aspects of learning activities (Bok, 2023). Due to the flexibility it offers this type of learning is more sought after in organizations. However, life-long learning attempts are not without problems. The motivation comes from various factors such as professional and personal development as indicated by Merriam & Baumgartner (2020).

The organization that is concerned about encouraging more students to enrol for distance learning courses should find out what would help companies to retain their employees that will be supplemented through the distance learning programme Bart et al. (2020), insisted HR Department which keeps track of professional development of its employees (Guest, 2017) and motivation to share newly acquired knowledge at the work place by Sewart, Keegan & Holmberg (2020), HR incentivizes and appraises performance for distance learners as in Zheng et al. (2020). All these are factors

pertaining to employees and employers' motivation in encouraging and pursuing distance education.

Employees feel the organization does not support their efforts in pursuing distance education while at work (Weiner, 2009). In this literature review chapter whether or not learners' interest is being supported is analyzed. Professional work evaluations of performance, lack of support from HR, new forms of work arrangements such as telecommuting tends to give rise to feelings of isolation due to pursuit where there is fatigue and no connection to workplace experience with this mode of learning, which leads to a disconnect between their learning and their job (Sahai et al., 2020). Organizational barriers include fund allocation for distance education in support for professional development of staff members (Valeeva, et al., 2018).

Employers need to know if distance education is a tool for increasing retention rates (Meister & Willyerd, 2010). HR should also have separate performance evaluation for those pursuing distance learning while, closely monitoring progress of employees involved in distance education (Guest, 2017). This research aims to counter these questions so that distance learning can be implemented in palm oil companies more effectively.

Employees who are learning are life-long learners or students' motivation has a powerful effect on attrition and completion rates, regardless of institutional setting (Nichols, 2010; Wang et al., 2013). Because this study is pertaining to employees from palm oil companies who are pursuing distance education, therefore the emphasis is on organization, specifically what role does the HR have in ensuring students are motivated to complete their course and remain employed in the company.

In past years, there have been serious deliberations about the part of human resource management (HRM) as an essential resource in today's organization (Theriou & Chatzoglou, 2014). HRM has also evolved and developed in its variety to extend where it has turned into an industry, instead of just a primary occupation (Mayrhofer et al., 2019). The impact of HRM noticeably known as human resource practices (HRP) on selecting the best execution and developing worker mindsets have been a primary zone of investigation for the past years (Petrescu & Simmons, 2008).

In any case, shockingly to a significant number of studies have been coordinated on HRP, in the connection of making HRM of the countries to gain a better productive place and job satisfaction (Yvonne et al., 2022). A recent study by Tamirat (2024) in Ethiopia found statistically significant correlation between employee performance and human resource development practices (training and development, teamwork building, academic development, counseling etc.) and concluded that positive HR practices increased the likelihood of employee development in terms of academic career development as well as job satisfaction for the good of the employer.

There is also a need to exercise this study in the HRM of Malaysia in particular (Mahmood, 2004). This study has been set to fill the present Research Gap in terms of knowledge and to search on the influence of HRP and job satisfaction in the setting of Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM). This study would extend the contemporary research and routine of HRM. In general, there are four HRP which are selection, performance appraisal, rewards, and development (Collins & Devanna 1992).

It is exciting to remember that there are still some practices that shape the central part of a variety of methods proposed (Abubakar & Abubakar, 2013). These comprise recruitment and selection, training and development, employee performance and reward scheme (Antwi, Opoku, Seth, & Margaret, 2016). Guest's (2017) HRM-

performance model clarifies how HRM selections, training, appraisal, reward, job outline, and engagement practices result in worker effect, participation, contribution, and optional conduct that result in enhanced employee performance and expanded organizational benefit and degree of profitability results.

Their study will focus on two types of HRP namely; training & developing (T&D), and employee performance (EP) as the independent variables on the influence of job satisfaction (JS) as the dependent variable. Studies have also discussed on the theories that underpin job satisfaction. Tan and Waheed (2011) mentioned that in the area of job satisfaction theories, the Herzberg's inspiration hygiene theory concentrated on this component and distinct job satisfaction emerged by different elements.

In light of Herzberg theory, satisfaction and dissatisfaction are two separate points at the working environment that relies on upon various factors (Herzberg, 1964). Maslow's (1943) Need Hierarchy Theory which discussed on the level of the human need that relates and reflects on satisfaction. These theories will support and strengthen the findings on job satisfaction of staff.

## **2.1 Distance Learning Opportunities**

Many organizations also have realized that the ultimate objective of human resource development activities is to achieve high performance. Many organizations nowadays encourage their staff to further their study by attending the distance education program. According to Bednall et al. (2014), distance education, method involves students (employees from companies) and lecturer (from higher education institution) are physically separated (through online blended learning platforms and in some cases involve face to face interactions in a classroom). It utilizes a combination of technologies including video, correspondence, internet and audio.



Nowadays, the version of this education is online education whereby computers and internet are utilized for learning. This education program is important to human resource development. The historical development and emergence of human resource development in Malaysia lacked empirical evidence, the development of it during this period was not very clear and focused especially the impacts of human resource development through distance education program like in palm oil sectors.

Sarawak Oil Palm Plantation Owners Association (SOPPOA) is a non-profit organisation which consists of member companies which are a majority of oil palm growers in the state. This association was formed in 2008 and the membership includes plantation companies of various sizes including government land development agencies as well as independent smallholders.

In this literature review using secondary analysis scanning the webpage of this association, revealed that the objective of the association pertaining to capability improvements of the industry employees are only limited to workshops, projects, seminars, conference and for member companies and their employees. The topic of interest is to promote technologically advanced, environment friendly and efficient palm oil industry in Sarawak. There is no indication of employee development of capacity building by training employees for management roles.

Another finding is that for this largest economic sector in the country – palm oil industry, there are only 6 institution of higher learning offering courses related to plantation management in Sarawak. These institutions specialize in offering limited number of relevant diploma and master's degree qualifications accessible to working adults.

Therefore the students in the programme taught by the researcher will be a good group of individuals to verify if such limitations were a hindrance to them at the

beginning stage of their search for a distance education programme specifically Professional Development Courses of Plantation Management particularly in Bintulu within the state of Sarawak. This is because the researcher who was once an employee of the company Sarawak Oil Palm Berhad, had experienced similar trouble to search for courses for professional development. He now teaches Plantation Management related courses at the UTM campus in Bintulu, Sarawak.

### **2.1.1 Issues in Distance Learning**

Now there is competition for students or resources is not simply between higher education institutions; but providers and partnerships that operate more like businesses in the education marketplace. Institutions throughout the world offer “learning objects”, courses and whole programs online through the Internet and with various other ICT learner support.

Emergence of new learning paradigms: There are various learning theories, and online courses can be designed according to specific learning theories those themselves have developed with the advancements in ICTs. Several advantages of online learning environments such as rich and diversified multimedia support, enhanced interaction among learners and between learners and tutors and easy updates of course content make possible the application of new learning models.

Employees rely on the recommendations by the HR Manager to determine the type of distance education courses that would suit the employee to enhance their career. If these recommendations are based on goals to develop the performance of employees and to move them up the career ladder the employees are more hyped up and motivated to pursue the stipulated distance learning programmes (Ugoani, 2020). When the courses are suggested by the HR Manager, to improve knowledge and skills

pertaining to the job scope or industry the potential student in this context the employee in the palm oil organization will take interest to join the course to improve their knowledge and increase their competitiveness in the industry.

Often higher learning institutions are looking for employers, particularly HR Managers to promote their courses. HR Department Managers can collaborate with higher education institutions to partner with them for custom designing individualized, high quality distance learning courses for students to increase expertise and understanding. When employees have personalized learning experiences tailored to their needs, it increases knowledge retention rates according to Bernacki et al., (2021) and Gazza & Hunker (2014) and it was also mentioned that it increases employee retention rates in the study by Caporarello et al. (2020).

Ongoing training and career development are consistently listed as one of the top nonfinancial motivators for employees. Employees in palm oil companies may claim training and overall professional development contributes to their overall job satisfaction as the reverse was found that poor training and development, at the beginning of onboarding that does not mention career development opportunities such as distance education is linked to employee turnover in the study researched by Noe and Kodwani (2018).

If employees find distance education critical to their professional development and job satisfaction this research aims are coherent with its objectives to identify if the HRDs in palm oil companies, in Sarawak do actually allocate funds and provide perks for employees' so they may pursue distance education and if the HR does track learning participation, involvement and progress of employees. The study is positioned to determine if distance learning could improve retention rate among employees in

palm oil companies, in addition to having differentiated tools to track performance of employees who are pursuing distance education.

Of course, in all distance education and learning the learner is the primary actor who takes action on learning opportunities for career progression. This research postulates that employees will be motivated to transfer knowledge acquired in distance learning to the workplace or job environment regardless if they consider this distance education course will aid their professional development for career progression and for personal satisfaction.

## **2.2 Human Resource Development and Human Resources Management**

From financial transactions to operational decisions and beyond, the core of every business function relies on an organization's greatest asset: its human resources. As such, human resources boast significant responsibility for the success or failure of an organization (de Waal, 2007). The value of human resources is not always widely apparent. In fact, present day perception frequently limits human resource management (HRM) and human resource development (HRD) to recruitment, compensation, and legalities of managing a workforce (Haslinda, 2009).

This review identifies the emergent value of human resources, the transformation from education and training to HRD, and the relative importance of HRD to organizational leaders. Specifically, it outlines the reliance of high performance organizations (HPOs) on HRM and HRD, concluding with the present day critical issues facing HRM and HRD. The acronyms HRM, HRD and HPO can be, and often are, confused (Haslinda, 2009).

However, to examine their historical and future implications, the differentiation of the acronyms must first be understood. Researchers have adopted a multitude of definitions for the same acronyms. The definitions vary based on country of origin,

global perspective, or individual theorist (Haslinda, 2009). The definitions listed below are selected as the foundational meanings for this paper because each one encompasses the overarching themes across literature.

HRM and HRD are not only broadly contested in purpose across academics, but also commonly confused or misinterpreted amongst managers and organizational leaders (Nickson, 2007). The deliberate development activities of HRD can be easily misaligned with learning and training programs seeking only to provide information or specific skills to employees. However, as this review illustrates, HRD constitutes purposeful actions that intervene with the natural learning process, driving employees to adopt behaviors and develop mental and physical attributes (Stewart & Sambrook, 2012). Through the lens of HPO, employee adaptability and flexibility are key drivers to organizational performance. Therefore, the purpose of HRD is fundamentally connected to training and development of personnel proactively to address change (Stewart & Sambrook, 2012).

### **2.2.1 Human Resources Development (HRD)**

The term Human Resource Development or HRD refers to the development of people working in an organisation. It is a part of HRM; that aims at improving skills, knowledge, competencies, attitude and behaviour of employees of the organisation. The purpose of the HRD is to empower and strengthen the abilities of the employees so that their performance will get better than before.

Human Resource Development involves providing such opportunities to the employees that will prove beneficial in their all-around development. Such opportunities include training & development, career development, performance management, talent management, coaching & mentoring, key employee identification,

succession planning and so on. Nowadays, there are many organisations work for the human resource development of employees from the day they join the enterprise, and the process continues, until the end of their employment term.

As a subset of HRM, it aims at improving the skills, competencies, knowledge, behaviour, and attitude of people working in a specific organization. The main goal of HRD activities relates to empowering and strengthening the capabilities of employees for making their performance metrics better.

- i) HRD deals with the provision of beneficial opportunities to employees for their overall development.
- ii) The main activities of HRD are directed towards career development, essential employee identification, training & development, talent management, succession planning, performance management, coaching and mentoring, etc.
- iii) The HRD department in most organizations, worldwide, work towards the development of employees' right from their date of joining to termination or retirement.

Palm oil industry is growing rapidly in Malaysia as the country is one of the main exporters in the world (Yusof & Mohd Arif, 2015). In order to meet with demand, palm oil plantation company staff work long hours at the plantation as well as at the mills and the office. This is because the delivery agreements to Palm Oil production is measured by OTIF (On Time, In Full). OTIF is a supply chain term that describes the logistic services level where delivery is in accordance with the agreed period of time and delivery is in full, no ordered product is to go missing. In order to meet OTIF the process flow for palm oil production would optimize their performance of manpower. Manpower is crucial in operating processes and generating income. If manpower is

not up to the level to perform, then other resources may not be able to produce outputs (Lim & Biswas, 2015).

Converse to the process-based HRM, HRD is a series of activities that support behavioral change and learning opportunities for employees (Haslinda, 2009). HRD activities aim to develop employee skills and resilience to the current and future demands of the organization. The overall objective of HRD activities is to achieve high performance (Haslinda, 2009). Haslinda (2009) provides for specific examples of development activities to include training and development, feedback and appraisal, career planning and development, and change management.

The origins of HRD are widely contested among researchers and across geographic and cultural boundaries. However, in the United States, the Industrial Revolution is recognized once again as a driving force in the evolution of HRD (Sambrook, 2001). Like Taylor, Henry Ford sought to improve the efficiency of his operations by mitigating the negative impact of human resources. Ford designed a production process that utilized the most efficient movements and maximized employee capabilities. The Ford assembly line is a notable contribution to flow design and lean management in today's operations (Goldratt & Cox, 2012). By the mid-1930s, the formal concept of organizational development (OD) emerged. The theories supporting OD drove ongoing employee training and development opportunities (Stewart & Sambrook, 2012).

Similarly, World War II led to the increased need for employee training to produce warships and military equipment, which employees were not previously apt at doing. In the late 1950s, psychology introduced the human element to OD. Theories on effective employee development activities rose to the forefront of management concern. Psychologists, Argyris, McGregor, Likert, and Herzberg popularized the

notion that employee development activities directly influence employee performance (Haslinda, 2009). As such, HRD added the psychological component to HRM, separating HRD from the processes supporting HRM (Haslinda, 2009).

To move a palm oil organization towards success, employees are the main stakeholders. Performance of these employees will significantly influence the organization's overall growth. Employees need to know that their employer are focused in guiding and appraising them based on their competencies through learning and development activities of which distance education is one of the perks on the job which grabs the attention of new hires even. Human Resource Development is the framework in which an organization manages employees to develop their skills, knowledge, and abilities, which in turn improves an organization's effectiveness (Pacheco et al., 2020).

Organization benefits from the function of Human Resource Department which facilitates activities as part of human resource development. HRD develops the workforce through employee training and career development which improves their performance. There are several facets of Human Resource Development which includes Performance Management and Development, Employees' Coaching and Mentoring, Succession Planning and Education, and most importantly Training and Awareness creating programmes (Armstrong & Taylor, 2020). These activities help to reinforce superior workforce so that the organization and its individual employees can accomplish their work goals. Organizations have many opportunities for human resource development, both within and outside of the workplace.

Human Resource Development (HRD) can be formal or informal, and it can begin as soon as the employee is onboard. Informal learning takes place as soon as the employee signs her/ his employment contract and participates in employee recruitment



and on boarding orientation drives. This includes, coaching by managers, mentoring by more experienced senior level employees and collaborating with outsourced consultants to conduct trainings for new staff members. Formal Human Resource Development include internal trainings and college or university courses. As the employee serves the tenure within the organization, he or she gains more experience, and knowledge on the job. They participate in trainings to acquire more on job related skills and learning to develop their leadership skills too.

Therefore, palm oil organizations require more industry specific learning courses. This is commonly provided in distance learning programmes. Employees need to learn to improve their effectiveness and productivity, boost company's bottom line and overall success. This is the ultimate goal and direction by any Human Resource Department of a palm oil organization. Human Resource Development is all about comprehensively crafting strategies to develop their talent pool so that employees in the company can perform well and increase their bottom line.

In Sarawak, the palm oil plantation companies are scattered across the state. According to the Sarawak Oil Palm Plantation Owners Association there are about 80 if their members in the state. In the palm oil industry in Sarawak, Malaysia the palm oil industry pays competitive wages to employ various professionals involved in many levels of management in the complex industry which involves estates, mills and refineries as well as related aspects of logistics, accounting, human resources and sales. The industry is labour intensive hence human capital intensive.

Palm oil companies contribute substantial revenue to the state of Sarawak through sales tax (regardless of the price for palm oil sold, the state gets 5% tax) and also corporate tax (24%) to the national coffers. In fact, the palm oil industry is one of the leading revenue earners for the state and nation through jobs creation and sales of

the commodity while also providing employment for professionals. According to Varkkey et al. (2018), the palm oil organizations are subjected to socio-political influences pertaining to the palm oil industry in Malaysia.

### **2.2.2 Human Resource Management (HRM)**

Human Resource Management, shortly known as HRM refers to a systematic branch of management that is concerned with managing people at work so that they can give best results to the organisation. It is the application of management principles to the people working in the organisation. It aims at improving the performance and productivity of the organisation by finding out the effectiveness of its human capital. Therefore, HRM is an art of placing the right person at the right job, to ensure the best possible use of organisation's manpower.

The process involves an array of activities that begins with the recruitment, selection, orientation & induction, training & development, performance appraisal, incentives & compensation, motivation, maintaining workplace safety, health & welfare policies, managing relationship with the organisation, managing change. Various management principles applied via HRM to make employees work efficiently and effectively in any organization. It enhances the performance and productivity of a company by assessing the best utilization of human resources. HRM can be termed as the art of putting the right human resource to the right job to enable the maximum possible usage of an organization's human resources.

- i) The HRM process incorporates a wide range of activities that include recruitment, selection, hiring, orientation, induction, training, skill development, feedback, performance appraisal, incentives, rewards and compensation, maintenance of workplace safety, staff motivation, health, and

welfare plans, change management, etc.

- ii) HRM also aims to maintain good relations across the entire organization and the different levels of management.

The purpose of Human Resource Management (HRM) is to ensure the working society in this industry is trained and employees are able to perform well. So as to perform a job in the palm oil organisation, the HR Manager needs to identify the right performers and the laggards. They need to identify right person fit for a particular job, provide job descriptions with duties and responsibilities and specifications based on their academic qualifications and physical qualifications. This selection method also applies to those who are already employed in the organization for a long time.

New and senior employees should be provided with the proper training for performing their duties and responsibilities. Continuous assessment of employees' performance should be carried out to check if those employees are performing to the desired standards set by the management. Accordingly, employees should be rewarded or remunerated for their efforts demonstrating motivation and enthusiasm of employees which has direct impact on productivity of the company (Elnaga & Imran, 2013). In doing this HR Managers are reinforcing proper maintenance of healthy work relationships between employees and management. Employees feel they matter to the organization and will boost their loyalty and overall performance of the organisation.

Haslinda (2009) cites HRM as the “process of managing human talents to achieve organization’s objective” (Haslinda, 2009). Recruitment of talent, benefit management, labor relations, and other legalities such as employee safety and health are all encompassed in the process of HRM (Haslinda, 2009). As discussed further, HRM as a process is a critical distinction from HRD.

By offering trainings to the employees some of these palm oil companies are adhering to the Pembangunan Sumber Manusia Berhad Act, 2001 (PSMB Act, 2001). This PSMB Act, 2001 provides for the imposition and collection of a human resources development levy from companies for the purpose of promoting the training and development of employees. They also train apprentices and trainees in the plantation establishments and the administrative offices. In other word, the company is mandated to claim the levy from the government in order for them to continuously train employees.

According to Section 14(1) of PSMB Act, 2001, indicates that every employer to whom the PSMB Act, 2001 applies, should contribute to the HRD levy. The levy is at the rate of one percent (1%) of the monthly wages of their employees. Section 15(2) of PSMB Act, 2001 stipulates that HRDC will pay to the employer the HRD at the rate of 0.5 percent of the monthly wages of their employees who are attending training provided the company is registered under HRDC.

An employer who is liable to pay the HRD levy shall pay those levies for the first and subsequent months' wages commencing from the date the employer becomes liable as stated under the Regulation 7 of the Pembangunan Sumber Manusia Berhad (Registration of Employers and Payment of Levy) Regulations 2001. The payment of the HRD levy is the responsibility of employers. Employers are not permitted to deduct the wages of employees under any circumstances for the payment of the levy.

Personnel management regularly refers to as human resource management. HRM and work organization symbolizes the significance of overseeing individuals in the organization. HRM offers the chance to influence worker behavior and organizational performance positively. The organization's challenges here is to give a condition that improves the productive effort of its employees and provides close

connections between the individual objectives of people and organizational goals (Collins & Devanna, 1992). HRM is consequently worried about the selection and placement of employees, their improvement and efficient operation to achieving the capability of individual workers and organization objectives and goals (Aina, 1992).

According to Guest (2017), human resource management is a competitive advantage concentrated method in choosing skilled, dedicated and an adaptable workforce. Storey (1987) HRM as a component of production and their treatment resembles that of the factor cost of working together. HRM is an arranged and discerning plan for the administration of individual's working in an organization that alone and together invests the exertion for the achievement of organizational targets. HRM associations' influence on staffs mediated by social exchange processes (Kehoe & Wright, 2013). In a work background, HRM organizations may direct signs that indicate workers' predictions not only for future opportunities but also for expected finishes (Korff, Biemann, & Voelpel, 2017).

Studies have shown that the procedures accounting for the last revolution of human resource management (HRM) systems into organizational performance have increased rising attention regarding both experiential examination (Jiang, Lepak, Hu, & Baer, 2012) and hypothetical clarification (Lepak, Liao, Chung, & Harden, 2006). HRM is an advantage of practices attributed to making sure an efficient and operative staff in the exact place to perform productive requirements of the organizations (Jafri, 2013). Also, the observed HRM practice use at the job group level has been revealed to foresee employees' emotional commitment (Kehoe & Wright, 2013). More recent study have argued that HRM organizations do not, in and of themselves, result in individual level work attitudes. Rather, they offer their basis (Korff, et al., 2017).

Some theorists contend modern business management stems from five periods, which can be characterized by external forces that ultimately altered the way management responded over the long term (Darmody, 2007). The five periods include the industrial growth, scientific management, human relations, systems, and organizational culture (Rodríguez-Ruiz, 2014). However, other theorists such as Sleight (2009), extend HRM earlier, directly connecting it to the trade period and human development. While an official HRM milestone may not be defined, the precluding events are clear. The craftsman and trade apprenticeship era extended into the early 1800s and fostered the introduction of the Industrial Revolution in the late 1800s.

According to Darmody (2007) and Liebhold (1995) theorists such as Fredrick Taylor and Frank and Lillian Gilbreth emerged with a goal to increase productivity through process management of the organization's human resources. Taylor and the Gilbreths introduced concepts of efficient workflow and optimal conditions (Darmody, 2007).

The new obsession with worker performance combined with the rise of large organizations and government intervention forced companies to develop formal personnel management departments. By 1945, during the World War, the official term personnel management (PM) had been coined (Haslinda, 2009). While Haslinda (2009) supports PM aligns with the development of HRM, there are differences between the functions of PM and HRM.

The original function of personnel management (PM) was to recruit and terminate employees and maintain the organization standards in accordance to the trade unions (Ahammad, 2017). Thus, PM was largely a reactive set of processes. To the contrary, Haslinda (2009) argues HRM proactively addresses organizational needs

by obtaining, organizing, and managing human resources. The transformation from PM to HRM stemmed from the evolvement of management practice and philosophies introduced by behavior theorists. For example, Maslow introduced the first concepts of human resource motivation in his A Theory of Human Motivation (Jelavic & Ogilvie, 2009).

By the 1980s, another transformation from a hard HRM approach to a softer HRM approach began to appear (Rodríguez-Ruiz, 2014). The hard approach focused on strategic fit and firm performance. Conversely, the soft approach primarily addressed the impact of human resources on internal and external stakeholders of the organization. The contrasting approaches shifted the perspective of HRM from calculated practices aimed at effective and efficient resource utilization to management decisions which valued both the employer and employee (Rodríguez-Ruiz, 2014).

When palm oil companies are PSMB levy contributors, they are adhering to the employment and labour laws which govern employers in this country. Employees are happy as they now look forward to professional development and personal development courses to build their career with the palm oil organization.

### **2.2.3 HRD vs HRM**

**Human Resource Management (HRM)** is a branch of management; that is concerned with making best possible use of the enterprise's human resources, by providing better working conditions, to the employees. It involves those activities that arrange and coordinates the human resources of an entity. Further, it aims at maintaining good relations at various levels of management.

On the other extreme, **Human Resource Development (HRD)** is a wing of HRM that keeps focusing on the growth and development part of the organisation's

manpower. There are many people, to whom HRM and HRD convey the same meaning, but this is not true. We have compiled an article here, to make you understand the differences between HRM and HRD.

HRM refers to how the principles of management can be applied to effectively manage the employees working in an organization and HRD refers to continuous development functions that enforced for improving upon the act of those working in an organization. HRM is a management function whereas HRD is a sub-function of HRM. The functions of HRM are reactive and usually applied for gaining holistic organizational goals conversely the functions of HRD are proactive and have to be applied consistently to enhance the productivity of employees. The purpose of HRM is related to improving the overall performance of employees, and HRD goals usually connected with skill development, knowledge development and increasing the competency of employees. Most HRM processes are routine and to carry out as and when the need arises whereas HRD processes are ongoing and not occasional.

HRM is an independent existence in itself. It comprises of different sections comprehensive of recruitment and retention, HRD, compensation, performance, appraisal management, etc., on the other hand, HRD is a subsystem of HRM and draws many functions, attributes, and processes from HRM. HRM deals with and has distress for people only. It handles recruitment, rewards, etc. and HRD is concerned with the development of all intents and people within an organization and directs their skill development processes. HRM functions are generally formal and applied via classroom/laboratory training, etc. whereas HRD functions may be casual as in mentor- ships; employees receive coaching from superiors, usually managers.

Some people consider human resource development to be a component of human resource management. That being said, they have two different objectives and



typically involve different responsibilities. Human resource development is primarily concerned with training employees and aligning their personal development goals with the broader goals of the organization or business. Human resource management has a broader focus on labor relations, compensation, benefits and compliance. HR managers also work on issues like diversity and inclusion.

A professional with a background in HRM might end up as a general HR manager or a specialist in an area such as benefits, payroll, or recruiting. Meanwhile, HRD experts may be best suited for positions as training and development specialists and managers, instructional designers, or program developers.

While these two areas are distinct, there are a number of similarities between them. For instance, they both involve problem solving. HR managers may be called upon to resolve conflicts in an organization when they arise, and these often require creative, thoughtful solutions. Likewise, HR developers may be tasked with designing new methods and systems of training, involving a similar exercise in problem solving. Because both roles involve working with people, possessing interpersonal skills may prove helpful in the development and managing of healthy relationships between employees and an organization.

**Table 2.1: Differences between Human Resources Management and Human Resources Development**

<b>Basis of Differentiation</b>	<b>Human Resources Management</b>	<b>Human Resources Development</b>
Definition and full form	The full form of HRM is Human Resource Management. It refers to how the principles of management can be applied to manage the employees working in an organization effectively.	The full form of HRD is Human Resource Development. It refers to continuous development functions that are implemented for improving the performance of those working in an organization.
Nature	HRM is a management function.	HRD is a sub-function of HRM.
Function	The functions of HRM are reactive and are usually applied to gaining holistic organizational goals.	The functions of HRD are proactive and have to be applied consistently to enhance the productivity of employees.
Goal	The objective of HRM is related to improving the overall performance of employees.	HRD goals are usually connected with skill development, knowledge enhancement, and increasing the competency of employees.

Process	Most HRM processes are routine and have to be carried out as and when the need arises.	HRD processes are ongoing and not occasional.
Dependency	HRM is an independent entity in itself. It comprises of different sections inclusive of recruitment and retention, HRD, compensation, performance, appraisal management, etc.	HRD is a subsystem of HRM and draws many functions, attributes, and processes from HRM.
Concerned with	HRM deals with and has concerns for people only. It handles recruitment, rewards, etc.	HRD is concerned with the development of all aspects and people within an organization and manages its skill development processes.
Levels of formality	HRM functions are generally formal and are applied via classroom/ laboratory training, etc.	HRD functions may be informal as in mentorships, employees receive coaching from superiors, usually managers.

HRM is an essential branch of management that deals with making the optimum usage of organizational human resources by nurturing better work conditions for all concerned. On the other hand, HRD is a branch of HRM that focuses on the growth and development of the workforce in any organization. Before we define HRD and HRM in detail, here is a comparative chart depicting the differences between **HRM and HRD** in tabulated format as shown in Table 2.1. The significant differences between HRM and HRD are discussed in the following points:

- i. Human Resource Management refers to the application of principles of management to manage the people working in the organisation.
- ii. Human Resource Development means a continuous development function that intends to improve the performance of people working in the organisation.
- iii. HRM is a function of management. Conversely, HRD falls under the umbrella of HRM.
- iv. HRM is a reactive function as it attempts to fulfil the demands that arise while HRD is a proactive function, which meets the changing demands of the human resource in the organisation and anticipates it.
- v. HRM is a routine process and a function of administration. On the other hand, HRD is an ongoing process.

The basic objective of HRM is to improve the efficiency of employees. In contrast to HRD, which aims at developing the skill, knowledge and competency of workers and the entire organisation. HRD is an organizationally oriented process; that is a subsystem of a big system. As opposed to HRM where there are separate roles to play, which makes it an independent function. Human Resource Management is

concerned with people only. Unlike Human Resource Development, that focus on the development of the entire organisation.

HRM differs with HRD in a sense that HRM is associated with management of human resources while HRD is related to the development of employees. Human Resource Management is a bigger concept than Human Resource Development. The former encompasses a range of organisational activities like planning, staffing, developing, monitoring, maintaining, managing relationship and evaluating whereas the latter covers in itself the development part i.e. training, learning, career development, talent management, performance appraisal, employee engagement and empowerment.

#### **2.2.4 Human Capital Management and Development**

The present and current scenario has seen the use of human capital management (HCM) and human capital development (HCD) by scholars and practitioners alike. What is human capital management and development? Simply stated, human capital means people. Is that not similar as human resources, workers or employees in organizations? The phrase “people or human resources are our greatest asset” are often heard. The term ‘human capital’ originated in 1954 from economic theories when the notion of capital investments was discussed not only in material capital but also on human capital (Schultz, 1971).

Subsequently, Jacob Mincer discussed on investing in human capital and personal income distribution in 1958 and followed by Becker’s book entitled *Human Capital*, published in 1964, which became a standard of reference for many ears. However, the term ‘human capital’ was rarely used in organizations and by professional practitioners due to its negative undertones and its association with

economics. Nevertheless, the term ‘human capital’ emerged again and used popularly to describe human resources in organization since 2003 (Scholz, 2007).

Scholars suggested that the idea of human capital is *people whose assets are of value and can be enhanced through investment*. Indeed, there has been many definitions given to describe the concept of ‘human capital’ but scholars argued that there is nothing new or different beyond the repertoire of knowledge, competency, attitude and behavior embedded in an individual (Youndt et al., 2004). Hence, human capital management can be defined as the process of acquiring, developing, deploying and the retention of the collective knowledge, skills and abilities of an organization’s employees by implementing processes and systems that match employee talent to the organization’s overall business goals. Whilst, human capital development is the process of developing and retaining the existing knowledge, skills, abilities and competencies of employees.

There are, however, two key principles that are central to the human capital idea. First, people are assets whose value can be enhanced through investment. As with any investment, the goal is to maximize value while managing risk. As the value of people increases, so does the performance capacity of the organization, and therefore its value to clients and other stakeholders (Youndt et al., 2004).

Second, an organization’s human capital policies must be aligned to support the organization’s “shared vision”—that is, the mission, vision for the future, core values, goals and objectives, and strategies by which the organization has defined its direction and its expectations for itself and its people. All human capital policies and practices should be designed, implemented, and assessed by the standard of how well they help the organization pursue its shared vision (Wan, 2007).

At most government agencies, the largest share of operating costs is devoted to managing and developing its workforce. For this reason, employees traditionally have been viewed through the budgetary lens, and therefore they have often been seen as costs to be cut rather than as assets to be valued. However, high performance organizations in both the private and public sectors recognize that an organization's people largely determine its capacity to perform. These organizations understand that the value of the organization is dependent on the value of its people. Enhancing the value of employees is a win-win goal for employers and employees alike. Current findings have shown the need of human resource managers to employ positive leadership especially in terms of encouraging development through further education amongst their underlings (Maria et al., 2022).

The more an organization recognizes the intrinsic value of each employee; the more it recognizes that this value can be enhanced with nurturing and investment; the more it recognizes that employees vary in their talents and motivations, and that a variety of incentive strategies and working arrangements can be created to enhance each employee's contributions to organizational performance, the more likely the organization will be to appreciate the variety of employee needs and circumstances and to act in ways that will make sense in-both business and human terms (Kulvisaechna, 2006).

### **2.2.5 The Role of HRM in the Oil Palm Industry**

Any business firm's primary objective is to show superior performance and exceed the competitors in the market. This objective does not provide a base for their survival only but also for their success in the emerging market. And the performance of any firm depends on the firm's workforce (Kianto, Sáenz, & Aramburu, 2017). Human

resources are taken as the most significant firms' sources (Haq, Nawaz, Mahtab, & Cheema, 2012). Even the human resources are more critical to the firm's survival and performance than any other resources as it is the workforce in the firms that uses other assets to operate the firm's functions, create competitive advantages, and realize the firms' goals in the form of superior performance.

Similarly, in the palm oil industry, human resources' crucial role cannot be denied as it is the workforce that performs function from the exploration, acquisition, cleanliness of palm to its distribution in the market. Keeping in mind the core significance of human resources in a firm, the human resource management practices must be efficiently implemented and executed so that the human resources have skills, talent, proper education, knowledge, organizational commitment, and work motivation (Ogunyomi & Bruning, 2016).

These study addresses three significant human resource management practices, such as selecting employees, training, and compensation to employees. The selection of human resources for business firms is a significant process because hiring adequate resources can help the firms gain superior performance. Similarly, the employees' periodical training creates the required skills in them for doing their jobs qualitatively and effectively, which results in the firm's superior performance (Delery & Roumpi, 2017).

Moreover, the compensation on the part of the firm to the employees creates work motivation and organizational commitment in them, bringing improvement in the performance. Malaysia's palm oil industry is growing rapidly, which effective selection and training of employees and right compensation to the employees. Selection is one of the effective practices of human resource management, choosing



and picking the right candidate who seems to be most appropriate for the vacant job position in the business firm.

In the words of Abernethy, Dekker, and Schulz (2015), the selection is the way of interviewing the candidate for the vacant job and judgment of their qualities required for the vacant position and then choosing an appropriate candidate. The study proposes that the candidate's selection by the human resources managers for a specific job ultimately affects its performance. The selection of competent, educated, talented, and experienced persons for a vacant position will surely be an asset to the firm, helping achieve performance-related goals (Bender, Bloom, Card, Van Reenen, & Wolter, 2018).

Training is an essential human resource management practice that affects the employees' skills and attitudes, which further affects the overall firm's performance. Training is the way to provide the employees with the required skills to perform their functions efficiently, accurately, and skillfully. It's not a continuous process, but it's provided periodically within a specific time, and training is provided by a professional or an expert in the concerned field. Long term research and investigation have proved that training is needed almost at every stage of the job and for everyone on the job.

The quality of the employees to be Up-dated contributes a lot to the firm's overall performance and keeps them updated with the rapidly changing environment, concepts, and technologies periodical training proves to be significant (Alasadi & Al Sabbagh, 2015). For improved and consistent performance, organizational retention and organizational commitment are needed, which is possible if the human resource management arranges compensation to the employees.

Compensation is the provision of rewards to employees in return for their labor, and it consists of payments such as profit sharing, bonuses, overtime payment, sales

commission, recognition awards, retirement benefits, pension, and different allowances. Compensation is an essential practice of human resource management that encourages the workforce and improves organizational effectiveness and overall performance (Bennett, Bettis, Gopalan, & Milbourn, 2017).

In Malaysia, some of the reasons for firms' consistent performance are efficient ways of selecting suitable applicants for the vacant positions, the arrangement of training for the employees, and the provision of compensation to the workforce. Organizational support plays a moderating role between human resource practices such as selection, training, compensation, and a firm's financial performance. Organizational support is the employees' perception that the organization values their work and their contribution to the business performance and the sense that the organization cares for their welfare (Hur, Han, Yoo, & Moon, 2015).

The employees who have organizational support are more willing to work for the better performance of the firms. Organizational support also results in inefficient selection, training, and compensation to the employees. On the other hand, organizational learning capability is a mediator between the selection and training of employees and compensation to them and firms' performance. Human resource practices like selection, training, and compensation to the employees add to the organizational learning capability, further improving the firm's overall performance.

Palm oil is one of Malaysia's emerging industries, and Malaysia is considered the World's 2<sup>nd</sup> largest producer of palm oil after Indonesia. IOI and Sime Darby are Malaysian enterprises that enjoy domination in the global palm oil industry. Palm oil is mostly used in consumer goods. The Worldwide use of palm oil has increased in recent years, and it is most likely to increase shortly. In 2019, Malaysian exports of

palm oil was a third of the global palm oil exports and particularly to Malaysia's important palm oil export markets: China, India, and the European Union.

The progress of the Malaysian palm oil industry is mostly dependent on the human resources employed in the firms involved in the palm oil industry as they are the human resources that regulate the organization, use another resource in the interest of firms, and have an active part in the accomplishment of performance goals. The presence of efficient human resources is the cause of survival of the firms and the source of success and superior performance. The efficiency and effectiveness of human resources depend on the effective implementation and execution of human resource management (Shin & Konrad, 2017).

Here in these study, three effective human resource management practices are addressed: the selection of human resources, their periodical training, and compensation activities for the welfare of employees, which ultimately bring improvement in the firm's performance and economic growth country. Organizational support is a moderator between selection and training of employees and compensation to the employees and firm's performance as it put favorable effects on the mutual association of human resource practices and firm's performance.

In contrast, organizational learning capability is a mediator between human resource practices and a firm's performance as the human resource practices affect the organizational learning capability, which further results in the firm's superior performance. The firm's performance-related objectives are possible in a suitable, efficient, talented, skilled, having a good attitude, and less expensive workforce.

The fundamental objective of efficient human resource selection is to match the organizations' requirements with the candidates' qualifications and skills applying for the vacant job position. A good selection of on the part of human resource managers

ensures that the firms will get the right group of employees with the right work behavior, and it is essential in the sense that the hiring of the appropriate resources enables the firm to increase the overall performance (O'Boyle, Patel, & Gonzalez-Mulé, 2016).

In contrast, if there is bad hiring resulting from the flawed selection process, the business activities will negatively be affected, and the inadequate resources are to be replaced, which cause high cost badly affecting the firm's overall performance. The selection process is favorable for the overall firm performance in which the most suitable person is selected for the vacant job position after the elimination of several candidates who don't fulfill the vacant job (Nieves & Quintana, 2018). In Malaysia's palm oil industry, efficient and effective methods are applied to select candidates for the vacant job positions, which considerably contribute to the firms' ultimate performance in the palm oil industry.

### **2.3 Transfer of Technology**

As today's organisations endured a parcel of challenges, individuals' work performance ought to be addressed and should be in every organisation's plan for them to succeed in any work environment or situation. Work performance is behavioural, measurable, multifaceted and incidental and is additionally a sum of recurrent events which workers have done in a normal range in the association (Chu & Lai, 2011).

The ToT is one equipment that needs to be considered necessary to improve cocoa bean production. The function of agricultural extension agents is vital to help in the ToT and HRD (Motolani et al., 2017). Agricultural extension is a continuous process of providing farmers with helpful information and aiding them in obtaining

the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to effectively employ information and technology to boost productivity (Sail, 2010).

Extension services' effectiveness was also heavily reliant on qualified extension agents who understood their tasks and were competent in them. They were responsible for transferring information to farmers during the entire extension process. Extension services were established worldwide according to various ideas, and in certain nations, extension programmes were used to transfer government directives to rural areas. As a result, the responsibility of extension officers in transferring technology and technical competence to farmers to raise their production is critical to the success of extension services (Rahim, 2008). Transfer of technology, also known as ToT, transfers the technology to the recipients.

ToT is used loosely in public discourse, even though it is tightly defined in academic literature. The ToT encompasses a broad scope of activities that lead to the adoption and practice change, including services from extension agents and the diffusion of knowledge to the clients (Ministry of Primary Industries, 2013). According to Altalb et al. (2015), technology encompasses not only the invention of machines and equipment or the introduction of new objects but also skills, talents, knowledge, systems and procedures. All of these are required for them to function and provide outcomes. Technology should also encompass the knowledge and skill required to carry out procedures, goods and services, along with organisation and operational measures.

Meanwhile, human resource development or HRD encourage and ensure the procurement of competencies required by the individuals. Individuals are the employees, supervisors, pioneers, or people in common to perform certain activities or tasks expected to achieve desired outcomes. Thus, human resource development

is a form of systematically planned activity, training and development, career planning and performance appraisals for organisational development (Kahirul & Nor Lisa, 2016).

This aspect plays a significant role in deciding the efficiency and effectiveness of workers' performance in the organisation. Furthermore, human resource development assumes importance in fast-changing organisational environments and demands new techniques by responding to environmental changes.

More efficient extension programmes are also required to tackle farm management issues, including meeting the knowledge needs of poor smallholders in this country. Besides, experts and organisations worldwide in agricultural extension encourage extension agents and educators to adopt ICT (Tata & McNamara, 2016). Social media, a popular ICT tool, has excellent potential for knowledge sharing and social networking among smallholders.

Nevertheless, much scepticism exists about its use in farm extension activities, making it imperative to practise its current use in sharing farming-related information. Further, ICTs encourage agricultural technology implementation by encouraging the education, dissolving problem and competitive accessibility of farmers' markets to their crops (Tata & McNamara, 2016).

Agricultural extension services are currently facing several new and complex challenges. Social media can play a key role in improving connectivity and knowledge flows between various stakeholders involved in agricultural innovation and the thriving growth of agriculture and advisory services agencies (Kipkurgat et al., 2016). Knowledge, guidance, and coaching are essential at the local level for rural producers and other food chain actors (Šūmane et al., 2018).

As a trusted rural communication and education institution, social media is a vital emergency response to such a crisis, offering pandemic information and supporting farming advice to deal with various shocks (Davis, 2020). Although they manage their crops independently, independent smallholders do not entirely lack government support (Tang & Al Qahtani, 2020). The Malaysian Palm Oil Board (MPOB) provides formal and informal training to impart technological competencies and awareness of sustainability through the TUNAS guidance and advisory service programme (*Tunjuk Ajar dan Nasihat Sawit*) to smallholders such as the TUNAS programme engaged in Perak and Sarawak (Ibrahim et al., 2018).

An innovation is a thought, practice, or object taken as new by an individual or other unit of adoption. The diffusion process usually includes both broad communications and relational communication channels. Diffusion is the procedure by which an advancement is conveyed through specific channels over a period among individuals from a social system (Rogers, 1983). A focal idea in the investigation of advancement is that innovations have properties or qualities, and that these attributes affect diffusion and adoption. Innovations have definite characteristics (relative advantage, compatibility, complexity, trialability, observability) which, as seen by adopters, decide the definitive rate and pattern of adoption (Rogers, 1983).

Communication networks range from conventional to new media of communication. Watermelon farmer's in Kenya use radios, fellow farmers and telephone calls to acquire agricultural information on watermelon production while extension officers, television, mobile text messages, farm magazines and newspapers were the channels which were least used. Radios, fellow farmers and telephone calls had numerous strengths, hence were considered more advantageous by farmers than the other channels (Ogola, 2013).

In addition to the attributes of the innovation and communication channels, it is claimed that the value and the social system of the individual is critical to innovation adoption (Daghfous et al., 1999). In the context of palm oil and its relevant innovation, factors affecting the diffusion of this farm produce is very important to be determined (Tanakinjal, Deans & Gray, 2010).

Besides, level of training, degree of guidance on selection of agricultural innovation, imaginativeness, association investment, agrarian information, persuasive exercises and diffusion network had altogether positive associations with role of opinion leadership in dissemination of agricultural advancement (Islam et al., 2016). Yearly income had no critical positive association with role of opinion leadership in disseminating agricultural development. Likewise, age and family size of the respondents had no noteworthy negative relationship with role of opinion leaders in dissemination of agricultural advancement (Ayoade & Akintonde, 2012).

## **2.4 Smart Farming**

Smart farming refers to the application of information and communications technology in agriculture. The integration can help to increase production efficiency and the quality of produce. The practices include the use of drones for monitoring, field analysis and spraying, Internet of Things (IoT), sensors and actuators, geo-positioning systems and big data.

### **2.4.1 Smart Farming Technologies**

According to Balafoutis et al. (2017), smart farming technologies can be divided into three major categories. The first technology is data acquisition technologies. This category contains all surveying, mapping, navigation and sensing technologies. The second category is data analysis and evaluation technologies, consist of a simple



computer-based decision models until complex farm management and systems of information including many different options and data. The third technology is about precision application a technology which contains all application technologies, focusing on variables-rates applicators and guidance technology.

#### **2.4.2 Smart Farming in Malaysia**

Smart farming in Malaysia is still not applied thoroughly. However there are some research and applications that have been reported. One of it was a pilot projects (2001-2007) initiated by Malaysian Remote Sensing Agency (MACRES) together with agriculture-related agencies and Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM) which conducted at Sawah Sempadan. This research focused on the development of Spatial Decision Support System for efficient management of paddy farms. It includes yield mapping, soil variability mapping, water management, variable rate treatment and GIS modelling (Malaysian National Paddy Precision Farming Project).

Another example is by using image processing. Norazlida Jamil & Siti Khairunniza (2014) has reported that thermal image can be used to detect husk and separate it with the seed. In addition, Mehdi Saberioon et al., (2013) have used digital camera image for determining nitrogen status in rice plants, Siti Sharifah et al. (2014) also used image processing to determine physical rice composition. Next is the application of drones and sensors to help in daily operations.

Drones and sensors help to minimalize works and also decrease human labours in daily field operation. One the major company that used the drone technology is Braintree technologies Sdn. Bhd., which provides services about drone services to helps farmers in the field. According to Directors of Braintree Technologies Sdn. Bhd., Mr. Arif, this company aims on using drones, geographic information systems,

artificial intelligence and Internet of Things plans to help Malaysian plantation develop furthers (NST, 2018).

Besides that, the usage of LiDAR sensors also being used in oil palm plantation to obtain geographic information and also the soil elevation map (Helmi et al., 2014). This is another alternatives that can be used to substitutes the usage of satellite that will incurred more cost and needed specific to be carried out in that particular area (Balafoutis et al., 2017).

Other than that, soil EC mapping also used in plantation area to obtain soil characteristics and properties including chemical and physical properties (Amirun et al., 2007). The example of chemical properties such as nutrient level, pH level and also site yield mapping by using soil Electrical Conductivity or else known as the soil EC mapping.

### **2.4.3 Challenges of Smart Farming in Oil Palm**

There are several challenges that limiting the application of smart farming in Malaysia.

#### **i. Weak Imperative for Changes**

In Malaysia, a high majority of farmers and agricultural producers are still reliant on conventional technologies and methods (Ahmad & Zareen, 2019). In well develop country the need for spatial is greater because of the principal of stronger imperatives for change and lack of conventional support (Cook et al., 2003). Contrast with what happen in Malaysia, they feel uncertainty with the result come from the smart farming. The unviability of many services and uncertain towards the benefit leads to this weak imperatives for change (McBride et al., 2003). Moreover, they are still using traditional

method due to structural problems as well. These include small farm size and remote locations with limited access to the latest technology and knowledge.

## **ii. Interoperability of Different Standards**

According to CEO of Tecknowledge software, Hussain Fakhruddin, the innovative technology comes from Original Equipment Manufacturer (OEM) cause several of available tools and technology often not following the same technology standards and platforms. The challenges lies in transforming the smart devices and gateway to become more holistic, hence becoming more farmer friendly platforms (Fakhruddin, 2017).

## **iii. The Learning Curves**

Smart farming involving the implementation of new technology towards day to day field operations, they want more cost-effectives, easy to use and integrated smart farming systems (Fountas et al., 2004). Thus the lack of knowledge on several technology and equipment will eventually become disastrous, most important things is to getting the farmers thoroughly understand about the concept of smart farming and every tools involved in this particular.

## **iv. Connectivity in Rural Areas**

Most of the farming and plantations area involves in rural areas, which the implementation of cloud computing technology needs good network performance and bandwidth speed (Fakhruddin, 2017). Unless this network problem is not solved, then the implementation of several smart farming technology will become problematic. Since most of the sensors and cloud based computing is depends on cloud services, the services and networks needs to be strong enough to be implemented in rural areas (Balafoutis et al., 2017).

## **2.5 Job Performance- Competency Gap**

Humans need meaningful and rewarding job in order to meet the cost of survival and material needs in their life. The Oxford Dictionary (2011), defines job as a paid position of regular employment. We need to be employed in order to be financially independent and have control over our life. Employment helps to overcome financial obligation and also allows one to be involve in good companionship as well as contribute to the society. Even though each individual has a desire to own a job of his/her choice, not all succeed in getting one. Family and personal financial needs usually forces the individuals to accept the jobs available rather than selecting a job related to their skills and knowledge.

However, even employees who are hired according to their skills and relevant knowledge on their current work sometimes are not satisfied with their job. Lack of job satisfaction among employees in an organization, could lead to poor production and work performance. Job satisfaction is defined as the level of contentment a person feels regarding their job while work performance is the work related activities expected from an employee and how well those activities are executed by them.

Job performance is the general attitude that people have about their jobs. Job factors such as the pay, the job itself, promotion opportunities, support from supervisors and relationship with co-workers can affect employee's satisfaction. (Ahmad et al., 2002).

Performance refers to the evaluation of achievement of certain assignment within a specific category, accuracy, accomplishment, expenditure and time lapse. Employee performance is a factor that shape the success of an organization. Liza (2017) stated that employee performance is the results of an accomplished task performed according to the company's target. Performance will be increased when the

employees are highly motivated and have the knowledge in how to increase productivity through training on the use of new technologies. Human resource management approaches are greatly and substantially related to the workforce performance and development (Sultana et al., 2012).

Research was done in Indonesia to evaluate the effect of education and work training on the performance of employees which found that education had a great influence on the performance of employees (Alnawfleh, 2020). Employee performance could be evaluated annually or quarterly basis to appraise the accomplished goals and to identify areas that need improvement (Khan et al., 2017). Employee performance may also be upgraded by training the employee to instill team working capabilities.

Employee capabilities will be upgraded if an organization enhance its workers' knowledge and abilities through training which in turn will produce more productive workforce that will create a more effective bonding between the organization and the employees (Hafeez & Akbar, 2015). The performance of an employee is affected by elements such as organizational policies, working environment, training programs and development opportunities, and workforce relations (Khan et al., 2016).

Training will cultivate the expertise while development program will upgrade the workforce quality to be more knowledgeable, effective, professional and experienced (Khan et al., 2017). The positive effect in work performance will ensure the target is met without jeopardizing the interests of the employees and the organizations (Stephen et al., 2017). Satisfied and convincingly motivated employees are loyal, diligent, and unwilling to quit (Said, 2015). They are involved and encouraged in the formation of outstanding services or quality product.

A previous study revealed that the benefit of investing in training was gained by both the employee and the organization because it improved customers' satisfaction, employee capabilities, behaviors, and the performance (Kiyana & Bett, 2017). Investing on training and development will have the effect on employee performance (Younas et al., 2018). However, some public and private organizations either locally or globally lack the initiative to acknowledge the significance of upgrading the employee productivity through training.

During the economic downturn where the sales are going downhill, the first thing that some organizations do is to slice the training budget (Abdullahi et al., 2018). This will increase the staff turnover, incur higher cost to re-hire new staffs and would therefore finally jeopardize the firm's productivity and profitability.

According to a recent JobStreet.com survey that was conducted in September 2012 on Employee Job Satisfaction in Malaysia, 78% of the respondents claimed that they were unhappy with their current job. Dissatisfaction with their scope of work was the top reason many felt unhappy at work (Daily Express, 2012). Job dissatisfied employee is most likely to show poor performance at work which indirectly affects the productivity of the organization. Organizational commitment and job involvement of the employees will also be a question mark if the employee is not satisfied with his job.

For the empirical gap, some previous research showed that there is no relationship between job satisfaction and job performance (Crossman & Abou-Zaki, 2003). Whereas, other researchers showed that there is a relationship between job satisfaction and job performance (Abdullah et al., 2011). Therefore, these previous studies showed that the relationship between the job satisfaction and job performance are still open for discussion.

On the other hand, there is still limited research, which shows the direct linkage between job satisfaction and job performance. This is because some previous research showed that job satisfaction is linked with turnover intention (Mudoor & Toksoon, 2011), commitment (Sarminah, 2011), and absenteeism (Thamaraikannan & Umasankar, 2011). When employees are dissatisfied with their jobs, they are more likely to quit the organization, become less commitment with peers, and tend to reduce their productivity.

Besides that, there were some researchers found that there is positive relationship between pay and performance (Du & Zhao, 2010) and a negative relationship between pay and performance (Qamar & Baloch, 2011). Therefore, pay should be revised and index in consistency with galloping inflationary trends in order to reduce dissatisfaction of employees in their jobs. Furthermore, Edwards et al. (2008) and Qamar and Baloch (2011) concluded that the policy of promotion is important to improve and increase their performance in their jobs.

Employees are more satisfied when the opportunities for promotion are based on their level of performance. Work itself that is funnier, interesting, has variety, and challenges will successfully motivate employees to increase their productivity and performance (Abdullah et al., 2011). Employees are the most important resources of each organization.

How they feel about the work and the results from it, have a direct impact on the organization's performance and ultimately its stability (Milliman, et al., 2008). For example, if the employees are happy and satisfied with their work, they will be highly motivated to perform the best of their ability to achieve the goals of the organization. Therefore, to compete in the global market and achieve organizational goals, the

organization should do more for an employee than the job requires which could lead to higher job performance.

Job satisfaction trends can affect labor market behavior and influence work productivity. It is also considered a strong predictor of intentions or decisions of employees to leave a job (Gazioglu and Tansel, 2002), as well as a good predictor of overall individual well being (Diaz-Serrano and Cabral Vieira, 2005). An online survey by Adecco Malaysia (2009) shows that 44% of the respondents think that job satisfaction remains to be the key importance factor for being happy at work.

Employee attitude and job performance are essential to the success of any organization, regardless big or small. In the modern workplace, human resources are valued above all others. Motivated, happy and committed employees are the productive employees (Coleman, 2010). Similarly in the plantation companies, employees are the important resource of their organization that play the major roles and contribute to the success of the plantation. In order to maintain high productivity and keep the employees loyal to the organization, the management provides training & development programs, rewards in the form of bonus and promotion to satisfactory performance to motivate the employees.

Although at management level the Human Resource Manager is responsible to ensure they keep costs effectiveness, company performance competitive, and their human resource development strategies coherent to the goals of the organization and their communication of policies credible and their employees are creative to achieve competitive advantage and enhance competence, are adaptable to changes, and are committed to the organization (Podgorodnichenko et al., 2020).

Human resources are an organization's greatest assets because without them, everyday business functions such as managing cash flow, making business



transactions, communicating through all forms of media, and dealing with customers could not be completed. As such, human resources boast significant responsibility for the success or failure of an organization (Stahl et al., 2020). The value of human resources is not always widely apparent. In fact, present day perception frequently limits human resource management and human resource development to recruitment, compensation, and legalities of managing a workforce according to Stahl et al. (2020) human resource management is the function within an organization that focused on recruitment of, management of, and providing direction for the people who work in the organization.

The impact of education has direct influence on our society across many levels, which facilitate growth and development. A good indication of this is where developed nations of the world have high literacy rate and productive human resource (Lee, 2010). Many of these nations have also started imparting their human resource with selective training and education programs in order to meet the rising technical and business demands.

Employees equipped with high education impart powerful knowledge and skills in order to be effective in a competitive environment. Higher education is identification to a better life in improving the standard of living, to meet the demand for higher pay from an organization and to adapt fast technology changing in global. Malaysia is becoming a centre of educational excellence in the region and for the past one decade, has grown tremendously.

A recent launch of “Strategic Plan for Higher Education: Laying the Foundation Beyond 2020” outlines the measures and strategies that will create Malaysia into an international centre of educational excellence. The higher education sector in Malaysia is under the power of the Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE). There are 20 public

universities, 32 private universities and four foreign university branch campuses; 485 private colleges, 27 polytechnics and 59 public community colleges as at June 2007. Certificate, diploma, undergraduate as well as postgraduate levels are covered under Higher Education.

Lambat (2010) suggest that there are a number of forces that boost the rapid development of higher education throughout the world, including in Malaysia. These forces consist of the change in service-based and manufacturing economies to knowledge-based economies, results in increase of demand in higher education that foster in employments in higher educational institutions. The improvement of standard living and the development of the country have urged more quality lecturers and tutors to fulfill the demand of students. Therefore, the change in higher education will change the means where the higher institutions run their businesses and this change may increase the number of lecturers and staffs being employed in higher education industry.

According to the Labour Force Survey Report Malaysia (2011), Malaysia in first half of 2011, there is a decline in number of labor force from 783.7 million in first half year of 2010, to 778.1 million in first half year of 2011 in the education industry. This may occur due to the education system in an institution. Meanwhile, the turnover rate increase may relate to the Human Resource of their company. A number of researchers have determined the relationship between Human Resource practices and employees' performance and the results of the studies shows a positive relationship between them (Mohd. Ishak, Mustapha & Mahmud, 2008).

Researchers have done studies on employees' performances in many industry (Gihebreorgis & Karsten, 2007), Athens Greece (Valchos, 2009), Louisiana (Hagen, Udeh & Wilkie, 2011), Pakistan (Aslam & Rasheed, 2010), United Kingdom (McGill,

Bradshaw & Huges, 2007), Spain (Villar & Alegre, 2007), Sweden (Johansson Sandberg & Vourinen, 2007), USA (Alan & William, 2004) and Nigeria (Adelabu, 2010) but little research has been done to enhance on oil palm employees' performances in Malaysia. In this study, we aim to examine and explore the relationship between the different factors of strategic human resource practices that affect job performance towards career development. Thus, the management of higher education can have better recognition about the factors that affects the performances of their employees as it leads to career development.

Few researches have been conducted to investigate the relationship between the HR practices and the job performance of the employees. The results have shown there are positive relationship among the job performance and the HR Practices (Shahzad, Bashir & Ramay, 2008). Tasks that are assigned and well accomplished by the employees will lead to the good performance. It will also add to the value of employment security of the staff. It been said that the employment security will have positive relationship job performance of the staff. Alan and William, (2004) had also discussed the issue of employment security in the organization. In relation to Dressler's study, it been suggested that for those employees who had planned to stay longer with the organization that they worked for, the employment security is the important factors as it would affect their career development as well.

Non-employment security such as layoffs and termination may affect to decrease the staff's performance (Schuler & Jackson, 1987). The job of the staff could easily been accomplished well when they feel secure of their employment status as this will boost up their performance as the staff. Also, they will perform their job efficiently and become more competence on the task that they are handling (Alan & William, 2004).

High level of job performance shown by the staff may be affected by the training that they attend within the organization. The training may assist to improve their skills and to facilitate administrative skills that could directly influenced to increase their performance from time to time. Therefore, there is a positive correlation between training of the staff and their performance. It can be supported through the study done by (Villar & Alegre, 2007) and (Johansson, Sandberg & Vourinen, 2007) where the training and development of the staff would advance their skills and also their attitude. In addition to that, study by (McGill, Bradshaw & Hughes, 2004), the staff training might be beneficial in the work setting as well as increased their job performance.

The investment made by the organization towards the training of the academic staff will eventually increase the motivation, morale and dedication of the staff and would have direct influence to high job performance shown by the employees (Sukti, 2001). Job performance of the staff is said to be directly affected by the compensation package that they received while they performing the service in the organization. The compensation has strong relationship with the employees' outcomes.

According to the study conducted by (Shahzad, Bashir & Ramay, 2008), good compensation scheme will motivate the employees to work hard and show high competencies in order to achieve the targeted objectives within the organization. Compensation also has been said to be the key element that could affect the promotion of the staff as it involve the monetary and non-monetary reward scheme. This idea also been supported by the study from (Valchos, 2009) where it suggest that compensation is significantly correlated towards the job performance.

The reason being, it would save the cost in terms of providing the training to them. The most qualified and experienced staff will assist to improve and increase the performance of the organization. Valchos (2009) agreed that selective hiring and the

staff's performance are interrelated. When the organization is considered hiring the suitable people together with the good compensation package, it could directly affect individual performance as the staff. Accordingly, they suggested that the appropriate selective hiring process may help the organization to increase in the level of productivity. In addition to that, Gihebreigogis (2007) signified that whenever the organization practice proper selective hiring, it will lead to the staff to perform their job proficiently.

Employees are one of the most important assets of an organization as they contribute to its growth and success (Danish and Usman, 2010). Malik *et. al.* (2010) concluded that in the era characterized by rapid and continuous change, knowledge capital must be retained in order for organizations to be productive and responsive to the needs of their stakeholders.

Previous studies have found that HRM practices have an effect on employee performance and competitive advantage of an organization (Balochi et al., 2010). Pfeffer (1994) identified 16 practices which can enhance a firm's competitive advantage such as employment security, selectivity in recruiting, information sharing, participation and empowerment, training and skill development, incentives, high wages, promotion among others.

Meanwhile, Guest (2017) argued that the impact of HRM practices on organizational performance depends on the response of workers to HRM practices. If employees have a negative perception, organizational performance will be low and vice versa. Furthermore, Ekaterini (2010) reaffirmed the findings of Wright *et. al.* (1994) that the nature of organization's human capital and the way it is managed can have an impact on employees and firm performance. Similarly, Huselid (1995)

established that the effectiveness of employees largely depends on the impact of HRM practices on employees' behavior.

Meanwhile, Delaney and Huselid (1996) identified recruitment and selection, training and development, participation and reward as HR practices. Lee and Lee (2007) identified training and development, team work, performance appraisal, compensation/incentives, human resources planning and employment security help improve performance including increased employee productivity, product quality and firm's flexibility. On the other hand, Qureshi *et. al.* (2010) categorize HRM practices into selection system, training, job definition, performance appraisal system, compensation system, career planning system and employee participation. Therefore, for the purpose of this study, the following HRM practices are considered: recruitment, training, performance appraisal, career planning, job definition, employee participation and compensation.

Coherent to the needs of the palm oil organizations in Sarawak, Malaysia, human resource development is required as a series of organized activities conducted within a specified time and designed to produce behavioural change through training and learning activities with a systematic outcome planned. These activities designed by an organization is to provide employees the opportunities to learn necessary skills to meet current and future job demands. The learning activities will increase employee skills and resilience to the current and future demands of the organization.

Abdullah et al. (2011) conducted a study about relationship between job satisfaction and job performance with a sample of 150 respondents who worked in small and medium sized construction firms in Nigeria. The result showed that there was a relationship between job satisfaction and job performance. In this study, they conducted that job satisfaction was significantly related to employees' job

performance. Haslina (2011) investigated a study of factors affect job satisfaction at workplace with a sample of 150 employees who worked in the various private universities or college in Kuching, Malaysia.

The result showed that there all factors (pay, work itself, promotion, supervision, and co-workers) were significant with the job satisfaction in the workplace. Nimalathan and Brabete (2010) conducted a study of job satisfaction and employees' work performance from the branches of people's bank operating within Jaffna peninsula, Sri Lanka with a sample of 60 respondents. The result showed that there was relationship between job satisfaction and job performance, which was high level of fair promotion, reasonable pay system, and appropriate work itself that leads to high level of employees' performance.

There are numerous previous studies that highlighted the relationship between elements of job satisfaction (pay, work itself, promotion, supervision, and co-worker) and job performance, as well as other related findings. Edwards et al. (2008) investigated a study of relationship between facets of job satisfaction and task and contextual performance with a sample of 444 respondents who held a variety of jobs in a large manufacturing plant in south-eastern Texas in the United States. The result showed that there was positive relationship between work itself and the job performance. In addition, the result showed that there was significant between promotion and job performance. In this study, they conducted that satisfaction with work itself and promotion was significant related to employees' performance.

Du and Zhao (2010) investigated a study of the relationship between pay satisfaction and job performance for employees in enterprises with a sample of 126 respondents and found that there was significant relationship between pay and performance. In the study, the satisfaction of pay reflected the linear changes of job

performance. Shokrkon and Naami (2009) investigated a study of the relationship of job satisfaction with organizational citizenship behaviour and job performance in Ahvaz factory workers with a sample of 400 factory workers and found that there was a significant between satisfaction with supervision and job performance. Moreover, the result showed that there was significant between work itself and job performance. In this study, they conducted satisfaction with supervision and work itself was significant related to employees' performance.

Qamar and Baloch (2011) investigated a comparative study of the job satisfaction and performance between private and public sector hospital of Peshawar with a sample size of 113 doctors, with 59 doctors working in the public hospital and 54 doctors working in the private hospitals. The result showed that there was significance between promotion and performance. Most of the doctors responded that policy of promotion played a positive role on the performance of duty and satisfaction from the job.

Hanan Al-Ahmadi (2009) conducted a study about the factors affecting performance of hospital nurses in Riyadh Region, Saudi Arabia. Fifteen randomly selected Ministry of Health hospitals with a sample of 923 nurses and found that there was a relationship between co-workers and job performance. Besides that, the result showed that there was a positive relationship between work itself and job performance, which indicated that satisfaction with the amount of variety and challenge could influence the nurses' job performance. Hence, job satisfaction is related with job performance because it can realize an individual's competence.

Diab Al-Badayneh and Sonad (2018) conducted a study about an analysis of the job performance and job satisfaction relationship among nurses in Jordanian Hospitals with a sample of 303 registered nurses who volunteered to participate in the study. The



results showed that there were positive relationship between pay and performance. Besides that, they also found that there was positive relationship between co-workers and performance. On the other hand, the study also showed that the relationship between supervision and promotion was positive relationship with job performance.

Oshagbemi (1998) conducted a study of the impact of age on job satisfaction of university teacher in the United Kingdom with a sample of 1102 respondents and found that there was significance between co-workers and performance. When the employees were satisfied with their co-workers in an organization, it increases their job performance. Ensu (2010) investigated a study of job satisfaction and effective commitment of employees at one port authority in the northern region of Sarawak, Malaysia with a sample of 120 respondents and found that there was a relationship between pay and affective commitment among the employees. In addition, the study also showed that the relationship between promotion and work itself was positive relationship with the affective commitment among the employee.

### **2.5.1 Issues in Performance Management**

Before initiating major changes, leaders need to be clear about the nature of the problems and the objectives of their particular change programs. The first step is to determine the reasons that impel the organization toward change. The organizational diagnosis can be conducted by the top management team, by outside consultants, or by a task force composed of representatives of the various key stakeholders in the organization (Zaitouni et al., 2020).

The perception that employees and managers often have is that performance appraisal and performance management is the same. Performance management is the broad collection of activities designed to optimize individual's potential in the

organization based on their role to extend their talent into organizational performance. This includes setting expectations and goals, measuring actions and behaviours to obtain intended results and outcomes. To remedy any deviation with coaching and feedback and evaluating performance over time to use in decision making. The purpose is to align individual efforts to achieve organizational goals.

Performance appraisal, or performance evaluation, is the assessment of past performance within a given time frame. The purpose is to judge how well employees have performed relevant to expectations and goals of the organization. HR Managers commonly measure and track milestones to derives at a variety of talent and organizational decisions. A performance review generally refers to the component of performance appraisal that involves completing rating tools/forms and having a formal conversation between an employee and manager to discuss their evaluation results.

Too often performance management is not done well, resulting in a process that is perceived as time-consuming, burdensome and failing to deliver value. Thus, performance management is not a precise measurement technique because dealing with people development is unique. No single intervention will work exactly the same way in different organizations (Pacheco et al., 2020). Thereafter there exists limitations to performance management practices therefore milestone achievements in performance management becomes easier to manage than to keep tracking behaviour.

In the palm oil industry in Malaysia and in Sarawak as a boundary set for this research evaluating what kind of performance management system is available or set in place by Human Resource Departments is key to this study. Whether the performance is tracked differently and if higher performance in remunerated are pertinent points to ponder in this research.

## 2.6 Employees Turn Over

Employee turnover has had a detrimental effect for many major organizations in the developed countries (Al-suraihi et al., 2021; Naresh *et. al.* 2001). Every organization goal is to satisfy their employees all the way through job satisfaction which is an efficient workforce and turn into an important skill day by day. At the moment, job satisfaction plays an effective role for swing an employee to his profession. On the other hand, when employees are not satisfied in their workplace, it will influence their employment and push them to leave from the organization. Job surroundings and decrease workers effort toward the job have an impact on employee turnover rate through employee dissatisfaction.

Lots of researchers examine the facts which may be mandatory an employee to make decision interested in a leaving. Next this, the intention of looking for the new chances will lead by estimated other work environment (Ayesha Noor & Yuserrie, 2015). Habitually, the organizations have an effect on turnover cost. Kuria and his co-author stated that the job offence, critical working environment, hassles, extensive operational hours with minimum salary, and poor guidance are the causes of turnover (Kuria et al., 2012). Seta et al. (2000) mentioned that, suitable training, work evolution and reward are the job satisfaction factors. These factors could satisfy an employee as well as contribute to the progress of organization. Furthermore, minimum remuneration greatly influences the turnover.

There are two types of turnover which are voluntary and involuntary turnover. The voluntary turnover is related to the execution of the administrative and the emotional contract between the employee and the organization (Koslowsky & Krausz, 2002). It has become a crisis with all jobs, but measured, serious with effect to the service sector. There are some important reasons for turnover, such as poor

remuneration, awful working location, inefficient supervision and lack of additional benefit. In contrast, involuntary turnover certainly leads to unexpected outcome; for instance, job anxiety, work complexity, and status instability (Al Battat & Ahmad Puad, 2013). Every one of the employees who just lost their jobs survives for this passive effect.

The problem arise to recruit the local youth according to Norsida (2008), they claimed that available jobs in agricultural sector are burdening and tiring to be executed. In conjunction, past studies have indicated negative perceptions and attitudes among the local youth as to why they are not interested to work in oil palm plantation (Gidakou, 1999). Lack of knowledge or skill is found to be another factor affecting the interest of youth for participation prospect (Frick et al., 1995). Simultaneously, the alarming social issues among unemployed local youth in settlers' scheme such as hanging culture, misuse of drugs and premarital relationship have lured the attention from government (Husin, 2011).

Based on Ann (1994), the social defection activities caused by unemployment have contributed a negative impact on their attitude. Hence, unemployment gives personal implication encompassing the aspects of psychology, social and financial (Shadare& Tunde, 2012). Thus, this defective community must be diverted and rectified into a mechanism that able to refrain them from wrongdoings through employment in this sector. All benefits and facilities required by the workers as a high basic salary, housing, water and electricity, allowance, Employees Provident Fund (EPF), medical benefits, school aid, insurance and others should be given to local people and revised from time to time for compatibility (Ramachandran & Shanmugam, 1995).

## **2.7 Career Development**

Career development is an approach taken by organizations to ensure that people with the right qualifications and experience are available when needed, as it can benefit both the individual and the organization. Human resource development needs to be done, because it reduces the company's dependence on hiring new employees. Furthermore, Nasution et al. (2018) viewed that career development is an improvement for individuals who work in organizations to achieve the desired career.

Dubrin (2002) also stated that career development is an activity that helps employees plan their future careers, their future in a particular organization so that both the employee and the organization can develop optimally. For employees who have worked for a long time, work is considered not only as a source of income but also something that makes an individual satisfied with other demands such as respect from others, competition with authority and higher positions, and so on (Nasution et al., 2018).

According to Simamora (2007), effective career development will result in an environment of mutual trust, effective empowerment and commitment to the vision, mission and strategic goals (Rivai, 2006). In addition, career development is one of the efforts that must be made so that existing plans can produce satisfactory work performance (Abdullahi et al., 2015).

### **2.7.1 Employee Commitment**

According to Bhatti and Qureshi (2007) explained that employee commitment is a psychological state that shows an employee's relationship with the organization and this relationship has implications for the decision to continue wanting to stay or not in the organization. Furthermore, Pujiwati (2016) explained that employee commitment

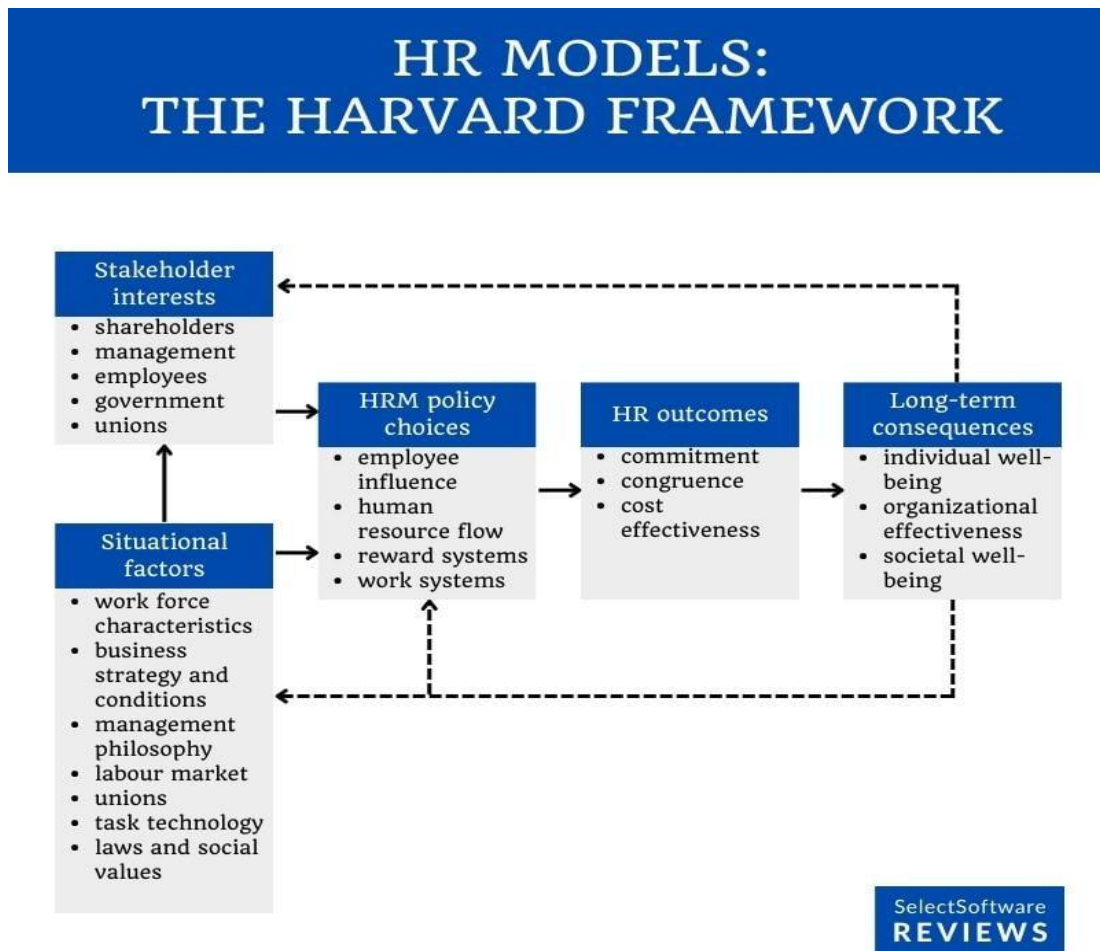
is the loyalty given by employees to the organization where they work. This form of commitment can have an impact on both parties by realizing their goals simultaneously.

Employee commitment is considered as the relative strength of employees in identifying their involvement in the organization (Gordon, 2008). Employee commitment is a form of identification, loyalty and involvement expressed by employees towards the organization or unit (Gibson, 2007). Organizational commitment alludes to the level of trust and acceptance of employees regarding organizational goals and the strength of their desire to remain in the organization (Al-jabari and Ghazzawi, 2019). Moreover, According to Bhatti and Qureshi (2007) stated that employee commitment is related to individual goals in the organization and this has alignment with organizational goals where the better employee commitment to the organization will have an impact on achieving organizational goals.

## **2.8 Research Framework**

Based on the research objectives and research questions of this subject matter, the researcher has arrived at a summarized research framework which relates to this study on Issues in Human Resource Development and Distance Education Learners from the Palm Oil Industry in Bintulu Sarawak. From the gaps found in the literatures reviewed, factors are divided into 2 parts employer and employee. The employer is the palm oil organization's Human Resource Management system and the employees are students of the distance education course. The general framework for Human Resource Management Models or also known as the Harvard Framework is shown in Figure 2.1 which outlines the basic HR models which the present study is based upon. These are two groups to have been found to exhibit gaps in literatures.

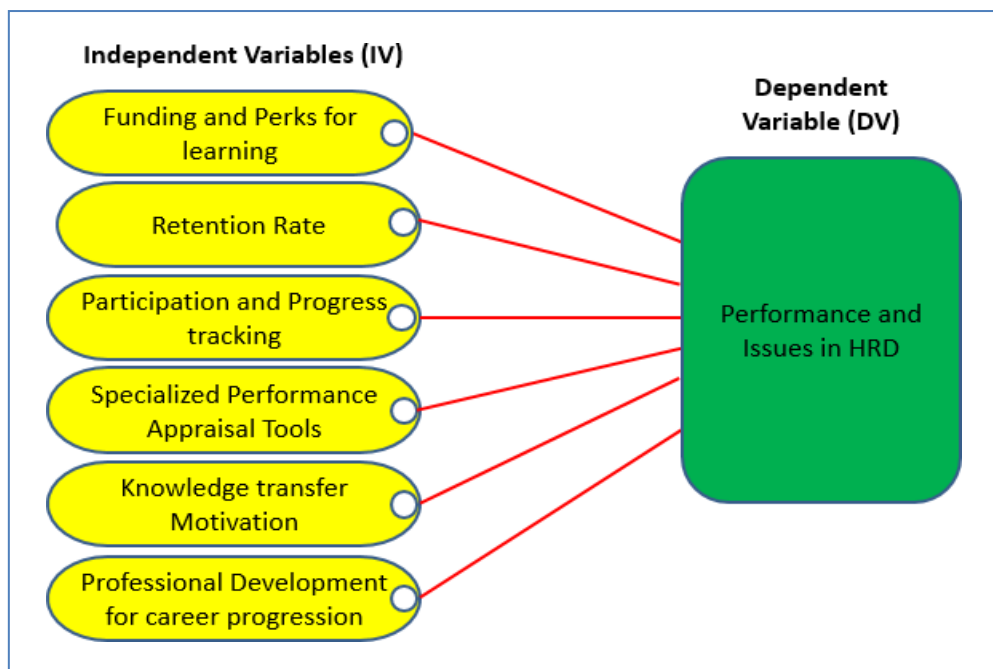
**Figure 2.1: HR Models: The Harvard Framework**



**Table 2.2: Employer Perspective vs Employee Perspective**

EMPLOYER PERSPECTIVE	EMPLOYEE PERSPECTIVE
Funds and perks allocated to distance education learners (employees)	Employees are motivated to transfer knowledge acquired in distance learning course to the workplace.
Distance learning improves employee retention rates	Distance education is for professional development and career progression
Human Resource Department in palm oil organizations track participation, involvement and progress of employees who pursue distance learning courses	
HR uses different tools to track performance of employees who pursue distance learning courses	

**Figure 2.2: Proposed Research Framework**



Based on Figure 2.2, there are about SIX independent variables and One dependent variable as shown below;

### **2.8.1 Funding and Perks for Long Distance Learning**

Affording financial expenses to study at university may concern all students and their parents. There are fees to pay for the courses and the need for finance of cost-of-living expenses. Therefore, some students take up part-time employment while some work during holiday term time as well as vacations to pay for the cost. Government and support agencies offer a variety of ways with scholarship and bursaries to help student accommodate the cost. There are financial institutions in Malaysia such as Jabatan Perkhidmatan Awam (JPA), Yayasan Negeri, Bank Negara and Khazanah. In this case the institutions will loan students a specific amount of money based on their field of study. Students will receive the amount of money at the beginning until the end of study. Repayment of the loan will start when the graduate starts working. The financial



charge is calculated with the same manner as other forms of borrowing or renting in which a loan will gain interest.

Students are not concerned about the interest rate on a loan application. This issue is crucial because they can decide which institution loan is better for them to choose a lower interest rate. Moreover, interest rate of the study loan in the form of annuity is very difficult to find since annuity uses a non-linear equation formulation. Therefore, a numerical method is required to solve the interest rate.

The repayment of loan is usually in the form of annuity. Most of the finance institutions apply ordinary annuity method to calculate the installment and interest rate of the study loan. However, the mathematical model involved is a non-linear equation that causes the difficulty in calculating the interest rate. To compute the interest rate in this research, Newton-Raphson method or Newton method is used in which it is a practical technique for solving equations numerically.

There has been numerous research conducted to look into how education effects on the employment opportunities. Riddell (2011), for example, studied the causal impacts of education on people's transitions between employment and unemployment, with a specific focus on the extent to which education enhances jobless workers' re-employment results. Wambugu (2011) studied the role of education on the structure of employment and wages for men and women in rural and urban Kenya. In 2016, Zimmer conducted a research on the value of education and its direct influence on pay in the re-employment market by linking unemployment and wage data.

Finally, Jamir and Ezung (2017) looked into the effects of education on employment, income, and poverty in Nagaland. According to the findings, there is a significant relationship between education and poverty from this study that shows that a large section of population with a low educational attainment is more likely to be

poor compared to the educated population. Based on the review of these studies, it can be concluded that education level has a significant impact on the employment opportunities that lead to a better job prospect career.

With a focus on the agriculture sector, Alam et al., (2009) investigated the possible underlining factors for agriculture's lower productivity. The education system is not helping the development of the agriculture business for a variety of reasons. This article recommends a policy shift in agriculture education with the goal of improving the country's farm economics, which will lead to national development. According to Wambugu (2011), education is not a barrier to entering the agricultural industry; nevertheless, low levels of education considerably increase the likelihood of entering the informal sector. In 2013, Brooks and his colleagues highlighted on how the agriculture attracts the Sub-Saharan Africa youth in the agriculture sector.

A study by Eric, Prince and Elfreda (2014) explored the impact of education on agricultural productivity of farmers, as well as how different types of education affect agricultural production of farmers in the Municipality. The main finding was that as educational levels rise, output rises, with secondary school education providing the largest returns on agricultural investment. Finally, Bernatonyte *et., al.* (2019) assessed the effects of higher education on employment and unemployment rates in the Lithuanian labour market. We've narrowed our focus to oil palm plantation. Based on our review, so far there is no study found which measure the effect of education on the oil palm sector, particularly in Malaysia.

Most people understand that education is one of the most important ways to improve one's life prospects, to move from lower to higher income and wealth levels. However, higher education is often troubled by challenges such as decreased government financial assistance, higher tuition fee and increased student debt loads.

Baradi and Malla (2017) states that education is significant as a source of input for economic, political, and social development, as well as a source of knowledge. Those with bachelor or diploma degrees earned more salary than those without one. The advantage of study loan is to provide deserving students with the opportunity to pursue education with financial assistance on reasonable terms and conditions.

In Malaysia, students rely on various funding options to pursue their studies in higher education institutes, which are typically provided by financial institutions in the form of loans or scholarships. Maybank, for example, awarded RM27 million in scholarships to students in 2018. CIMB Bank has disbursed RM10.6 million to 16 scholars to pursue undergraduate studies at reputable study institutions around the world as of December 2018. According to Petronas' 2018 Sustainability Report, more than 36,000 students worldwide received funding from the PETRONAS Education Sponsorship Programme (PESP), of which 387 students were awarded sponsorships in 2018, with 45 percent attending international universities and 55 percent attending Malaysian universities (Zakaria et al., 2020). A student loan is a critical financing tool for people, particularly students, who want to pursue higher education (Bertola and Hochguertel, 2007). Higher education costs, which rise year after year, are often out of reach for people with low or limited incomes.

It is critical to understand who chooses not to take out loans because these students have a significant advantage both during and after their studies. This could have long-term consequences for social mobility, especially if those who do not borrow are already from privileged backgrounds. Student loans, for example, are positively associated with dropout and negatively associated with graduation (Baker et al., 2017). Beyond academic success, those who do not take out student loans benefit

from post-graduation outcomes as well. The looming debt creates a massive financial divide between debtors and non-debtors.

Furthermore, as research on the long-term consequences of student loan debt demonstrates, having student loan debt can limit or constrain graduates' decisions and choices regarding employment and careers, postgraduate studies, home ownership, family formation, health, retirement savings, and financial well-being (Gayardon et al., 2018).

Many studies have shown that financial concerns and debt can put pressure on individuals, compounding existing pressures on students and raising concerns about how student debt affects students' stress levels. Inadequate funds result in high living costs for borrowers who do not have enough money to cover the costs. Borrowers must then forego repayment for two, three, or more times. A late payment is also considered delinquent, as is a repayment that has not been made (Redd, 2001).

Student's debt and other related economic problems are among the biggest sources of stress, according to a recent nationwide survey. Finance is the second most common source of stress among university students. More than one-third of those polled said their financial situation was painful or difficult to manage (Vaicondam & Wen, 2020). Furthermore, the majority of students who did not complete their studies were discovered to be in default on their study loan repayment (Woo, 2002).

Students' financial stress is measured through self-report, in which they consider the amount of debt that causes them to reduce their classroom burden, consider dropping out of school, or ignore their studies. Students who reported financial stress had lower scores, and their quarterly credits were reduced. Joo *et. al.* (2008) also discussed in terms of academic influence and financial pressure on college students. Students who have had their studies interrupted, such as due to financial problems and

the reduction of the burden of course or school students, have a greater personal financial pressure.

Fear of debt is directly associated to student stress, indicating that students who are more fearful of debt have experienced more stress. No significant relationship was seen between perceived stress and estimated or federal student loans. The study also discovered that students who scored higher on debt thinking and understanding which had lower estimations of student loans, federal loans, and study loans. Furthermore, students with better loan thinking and understanding ratings were able to repay their loans in a shorter period of time than those with lower scores (Park et al., 2015).

### **2.8.2 Retention Rate in Oil Palm Industry**

Oil palm plantation companies are lack of the employee due to several factors. So this oil palm plantation need to make strategies to make sure the employee is retained to work in the organization and to avoid higher turnover in the organization satisfaction is important during working because it will link to job performance and also productivity. Employees that have a high job satisfaction care more approximately the quality of their work and so are more committed to their organization (Scott *et. al.* 2005).

According to George and Jones (2008), job satisfaction is “the collection of sentiments and convictions that individuals have approximately their current occupations. People’s level of job satisfaction can extend from extraordinary fulfillment to extraordinary dissatisfaction”. Others have characterized job satisfaction as “a positive feeling almost a work coming about in an assessment of its characteristics” (Robbins and Judge, 2009).

Employee’s performance is an important factor for every organization. It can make substantial gains and highly contributes to improvement in a short time thus

impacting the organizations' performance. The more efficient the employees, the more successful the organization can be. Most studies agreed that employee performance is an important factor, but there is still a lot of misinformation about such influence and impact on their performance. The factors affecting employees' performance are not a new thing nowadays. The topic has become popular in research as there had been investigations by various scholars around the world.

The palm oil business has been marked by the Malaysian government as a vital player in aspiring the vision to change the nation throughout 2020. The Third National Agricultural Policy (1992-2010) mentions that various policies had been developed to create a positive position of the palm oil market, which is not only to sustain but add values to maintain its competitive edge [Ramasamy & Size, 2005].

To achieve these goals, the oil business has been called for consolidation and restructuring. The government aims are: (a) to produce the world's largest feather palm plantation company, in the hope to become an economic model for others to follow, (b) to enhance investors' interest and increase tradability of the stock, and (c) to spearhead efforts in making massive capitalization stock. Three rural development state agencies are responsible for planting feather palms with massive areas of land that are restored or newly opened. The agencies are Federal Development Authority (FELDA), Federal Land Consolidation and Rehabilitation Authority (FELCRA), and Rubber Business Smallholders' Development Authority (RISDA).

In the early 1960s, palm oil business cultivation redoubled considerably due to government diversification programs to scale back Malaya's dependency on the rubber and tin industry. At that point, FELDA opened new lands to be explored which turned out to be palm estates. Development within the palm oil industry was conducted to introduce the palm plantations fields to eradicate poverty among the native individuals.

During this time, the palm oil trade was spectacular on the industry focused on various analyses to provide new strategies of cultivation technology, quality seed production, as well as the production of the latest palm oil-based product. No doubt, the palm oil industry has become among the most important agricultural sector in the Asian nation. It also serves as the key to the economic growth of the country [Awalludin, Sulaiman, Hashim, & Nadhari, 2015]. Malaysia is among the successful countries that utilize the advantages of the feather palm trade and contributes to this industry globally through important contributions, improvement, and commitment.

Conversely, performance is a concept to manage human resource traits or can be viewed as a performance process based on work. Employee performance is an important aspect for many organizations [Salleh, 2019]. Employee performance is a key performance index that is affected by different factors within organizations [Salleh, 2020]. According to [Shahzadi, Javed, Pirzada, Nasreen & Khanam, 2014], an employee's performance is the accomplishment of a specific task measured against planned or known standards of accuracy, completeness, cost, and speed. The performance of workers at the digital computer is proscribed to the character and purpose of occupation pleasure, alteration of orderly growth, or depressing the work gratification higher than influence [Hussain, Saeed, Ibrahim, & Iqbal, 2019].

According to [Pawirosumarto, Sarjana & Muchtar, 2017], an employee's performance essentially depends on plenty of things, like performance appraisals, worker's inspiration, worker's happiness, payments, steerage and improvement, job safety as well as business configuration. [Pradifa & Welly, 2014] stated that once a worker has interaction, the worker is responsive to his or her responsibility within the business goals and motivates his or her colleagues aboard, for the success of the

structured goals. Hence, employees need to get more engaged and involved, especially in their jobs to perform excellent performance for the organization.

On the other hand, stress can be defined as an unpleasant mental condition that is synonymous with the emotions of worry, anxiety, disturbance, anger, sadness, and grief. It involves physiological responses to excessive and typically unpleasant stimulation to threatening events within the setting. For instance, the palm oil factory staff can face stressful challenges at work, which could be psychological or in other words emotional in nature. For example, misunderstanding between colleagues and leaders, as well as the employees' assumption that they should be treated fairly by the employers. Other situations include the employee's concern regarding increment and chances of promotion [Salleh, 2019]. Typically, once this stress occurs within the work environment, it will affect worker's performance and keenness in doing their tasks.

Employee retention is one of the troublesome to keep it in an organization. A great boss ought to know how to pull in and hold his workers (Qadria Alkandari, 2009). There are several factors that can affect employees to quit and find another job. Job dissatisfaction leads to job turnover. Turnover can be one of the most elevated costs ascribed to in the organization. This is because when the skilled employee quit the job, so the company must find a new employee and need to pay the cost of the training and it also takes time to make sure the employee master the job.

A retaining employee makes a difference create a much better environment, and to enroll quality talent and save cash. Retaining also can increase profits in the organization. This is due to keeping employees safe and satisfied can lead to higher sales, and lower costs. Employee retention also due to the loyalty of the employee to work in the organization. When employees feel the company has their best interface at heart, they regularly bolster its mission and work hard to assist accomplish its



targets. And, they may be more likely to tell their companions, which helps spread goodwill.

### **2.8.3 Participation and Progress Tracking**

In the case of voluntary turnover, many researchers hold the position that employees leave their jobs when their needs are not being satisfied by their present job and an alternative job becomes available. Huselid's (1995) extensive survey of literature found that perceptions of HR practices such as job security and compensation level are important determinants of employee turnover. Similarly, the negative relationship between working conditions and voluntary turnover has received attention from many researchers (Mowday, Porter, & Steers, 1982; Gupta & Jenkins, 1991; Saiyadain & Ahmad, 1997) indicating the propensity of employees quitting their jobs when working conditions are not conducive.

The study conducted by Saiyadain and Ahmad (1997) on Malaysia found that 90% and 68% of workers in the private and public estates, respectively, indicated that what they hated most is poor working conditions in their estates. This is confirmed by the response of the estate managers. Research also indicates that HR practices such as pay, benefits and training are negatively related to turnover because they motivate employees and "lock" them to their jobs (Lazear 1986; Madrian, 1994; Gruber & Madrian, 1994). Training can define roles more clearly to employees, thereby reducing job stress. Organizations with substantial training opportunities should thus have lower involuntary turnover rates.

Empirical studies such as those conducted by Shaw *et. al.* (1998) indicate that involuntary turnover is affected by staffing practices (recruitment and selection process) and employee monitoring (performance appraisal). Similarly, Schmidt and

Hunter (1983) argue that the attention organizations pay their employee selection affects the quality of those recruited. This is reflected in the staffing process – the selection ratio (that is how selective the organization can be) and the validity of the selection process.

Using valid selection procedures is likely to result in to better-informed recruitment and selection decisions leading to lower involuntary turnover. Huselid (1995) showed that selective staffing practices are related to total turnover. In the case of monitoring employee performance, the use of performance appraisal is a way organizations keep track of the contributions of each employee (Murphy & Cleveland, 1991). This enables the organization to terminate an employee when his/her contribution is less than desirable. In sum, organizations with effective performance appraisal systems are likely to be able to track down and terminate poor performers.

Motivation at the workplace can be explained as forces or drive that affects a person or an employee of their own direction, intensity, and persistence of voluntary behavior which is goal-directed. Motivation occurs to a person, but it is not their actual behavior. In a simpler word, motivation is an emotional condition that affects one's direction, intensity, and persistence which are cognitive and drive us to move. Motivation is important in the workplace to keep high productivity and makes everyone produce good and quality work. A condition where a person or an employee does not have that drive or motivation in the workplace is called demotivation. The implications of demotivational at the workplace, especially in the oil palm plantation sector are that the demotivated worker will have no interest in doing their job so they can be irresponsible towards their assigned work.

For instance, an irresponsible harvester that is demotivated and has no interest in doing their job may have unproductive working progress caused by delay of the

process of harvesting fresh fruit bunch (FFB) causing loose fruits to detach from the FFB, hence the organization cannot achieve maximum yield collection. Another example is during land clearing or maintenance, the worker who is responsible to do weeding control probably will put less effort in completing their tasks resulting in weeds not controlled correctly besides presence of volunteer oil palm seedlings (VOPS) which will compete with oil palm crops. Besides that, it also can cause a high rate of absenteeism and high staff turnover in a company or an organization. Thus, the organization may face labor shortage problems which then makes them unable to achieve an efficient oil palm operation.

As an employer or a leader, it is important for them to keep motivating their subordinates by setting a frequent smaller target since it is easier to keep motivated to achieve smaller targets, recognize great jobs and communicate with their subordinates, and offer interesting benefits.

#### **2.8.4 Specialized Performance Appraisal Tools in HRD/HRM**

Performance measurement is integral to the organization to attain better decision-making (Mohamad et al., 2013). It depends heavily on its valued human resource management as the workers design and support an organization's entire system (Gupta, 2022). Organizational performance refers to a company's performance based on achieving its goals and objectives (Cho & Dansereau, 2010). Tomal and Jones (2015) as the actual results or output of an organization measured against that organization's intended outputs. Measuring performance is critical for organizations to stay in business and remain competitive (Iveta, 2012).

The key to organizational performance is its employees as they work towards achieving the organization's goals (El-Ghorra et al., 2023). Workers with positive

behaviour will, therefore, lead to improved performance and greater organizational success (Truong and Le, 2020). Workers' role expectation is about them knowing what is required in their job or known as task efficacy (Michon et al., 2006). Efficacy is the belief that you can achieve a specific goal or perform a specific task (Cherian & Jacob, 2013). It is the ability to perform a task to an expected degree of satisfaction and will lead to increased performance and productivity (Nafei, 2017). The effectiveness of an organization consists of the efficiency of each employee (Mastrangelo et al., 2014). Many researchers used efficacy to measure workers' behaviour, such as (Davidescu et al., 2020).

Workers' initiative towards their jobs is increasingly important as it can predict organizational performance (Groen et al., 2012). Worker's initiative is described as doing the right thing without being told, the ability to act first or on one's own, and is much relatable with self-confidence (Michon et al., 2006). It is an anticipatory action that employees take to impact themselves and their environment (Wihler et al., 2017). An initiative worker is characterized as a proactive worker actively searching for opportunities to contribute to organizational success and can be considered as the organization's asset (Asari et al., 2014). Workers' initiative is measured by using their abilities to work continuously, independently looking for more work once finished with their current task, being willing to improve their working skills, eager to work and make their contribution.

Motivation is the degree to which an individual wants to achieve something and chooses to engage in his or her behaviour (Mitchell, 1982). It is an incentive or reason for doing something, especially in behaviour (Truong & Le, 2020). Employees tend to perform better when they are motivated because of the compensation received afterwards (Islam & Ismail, 2008). Motivated employees are eager to do their work,

which could translate to improved performance. Salary, recognition, compensation, workload, performance, and personal issues are the indicators used to measure motivation (Iveta, 2012). However, non-financial rewards, such as appreciation and recognition, are just as important as financial rewards (Davidescu et al., 2020). Motivation is a very popular variable associated with performance, as studied by Vliet (2017); Davidescu et al (2020); Truong and Le (2020) and others.

Classically, a dependable worker is one that the employer can place confidence in or rely upon them (Dudycha, 1941). It is a quality of being able to be counted on and doing what is required (Michon et al., 2006). The behaviour indicators for a dependable worker are abilities to recognize the relative importance of certain tasks and demonstrate commitment and reliability. In this study, workers' dependability level is measured based on their punctuality in finishing the task, presenting themselves for work, attendance, persistency in carrying their task to completion despite difficulties, and their capabilities to follow the rules and keep agreements. Cooperativeness is about how someone gets along and the degree to which a person is generally agreeable in their relations with other people (Lu et al., 2012).

Cooperativeness is related to the working environment, communication skills, and the workers' social relationships (Asari et al., 2014). Workers' cooperativeness has a direct impact on the organization's productivity, success, and performance (Patro, 2013; Aktar, 2016). It is measured based on a worker's capability to get along with co-workers, fitting in easily, readiness to take colleagues' tasks into consideration, and ability to converse with colleagues.

### **2.8.5 Knowledge Transfer Motivation**

Malaysian oil palm plantations are in urgent need of foreign labour as there has been a shortage of immigrant workers since 2020. According to the Malaysian Palm Oil Association (MPOA), the situation in plantations has deteriorated to a labour shortage of approximately 75,000 harvesters, up from 40,000 previously, resulting in a 20 % loss of yield since the foreign labour intake freeze was implemented on March 18, 2020 (Cheryl Poo, 2021). Due to these issues, technology and innovation have become essential for the smooth operation of oil palm plantations, which are currently facing a critical labour shortage, and to ensure the competitiveness of the Malaysian oil palm industry in the global market (Ghulam et al., 2021).

The Engineering and Processing Research Division under the Malaysian Palm Oil Board (MPOB) has pioneered continuous efforts to enhance the running efficiency of oil palm plantations by providing assistance in mechanisation and engineering technologies. This covers from the early stage of palm oil cultivation such as land preparation, fertiliser deployment, oil palm fresh fruit bunch (FFB) harvesting, FFB evacuation and up to the clearing of old palm trees. In an oil palm plantation, oil palm trees can be categorised into 3 stages, which are immature palms (up to 2 years old palm trees), mature palms (3 to 25 years) and old palms (more than 25 years) (Lewis et al., 2020).

During the immature palms stage, the plantation requires land preparation, seedling transplant, crop cover establishment, palm tree maintenance (fertiliser, pesticide and herbicide applications) and plantation maintenance (for roads and drains). Mature palms on the other hand not only require pesticide and herbicide applications, as well as road and drainage facilities, but also FFB harvesting and evacuation (Murphy et al., 2021).

As for the old palms, clearing them to restart planting the next generation of palms is needed where all of these activities require intensive labour force. However, the plantation industry is facing highly severe labour shortages. The current labour involved in the plantation consists of foreign workers which have caused several negative setbacks. The usage of manual labour is also inefficient, thus lowering the productivity of the palm oil industry. In addition, there has been concern on the safety and health issues of these foreign workers who were easily exposed to COVID-19 during the pandemic in the past two years (Wahab, 2020).

The mechanisation element has been introduced into the oil palm plantation and with the addition of this element, the number of imported labour workforce can be significantly reduced (Kushairi et al., 2019). This in turn will lead to less social problems associated with foreign labour workers. In addition, the lack of foreign workers flooding the workforce market will enable the locals to fill in the void left by their foreign counterparts. Hence, the issue of currency outflows can be tackled simultaneously. The other benefits that the plantation industry gains from mechanisation are an increase in productivity, reduction of operational cost, achieving operational sustainability and improvement in the working timeline.

As for the workers, mechanisation can secure jobs for locals, increase the take-home pay due to the higher expertise needed, hasten the field work, increase safety and limit hazardous elements in the plantation. Due to the vast sector of the plantation, the market for mechanisation is also proportionally vast as well. With the implementation of the Industrial Revolution 4.0, mechanisation can be further improved and its effectiveness and efficiency can be increased as well (Yang & Gu, 2021).

Thus, the objective of this article is to highlight the initiative to further enhance technology adoption in the Malaysian oil palm industry by the establishment of the Mechanisation Research Consortium for Oil Palm (MARCOP). The consortium carries out its functions through collaborative efforts and engagement with all relevant parties and agencies for the development of technical and economically viable oil palm mechanisation technologies to be adopted by the industry. MARCOP as a government-industry platform uses mechanisation and automation technologies to investigate, screen, design, and implement solutions for improving the productivity of Malaysia's oil palm plantation industry and thus reducing reliance on human labour. MARCOP is supported by matching grants from the Malaysian government and the Malaysian oil palm industry, and has appointed the Malaysian Palm Oil Board (MPOB) as the secretariat to manage the MARCOP fund application and approval process.

The Consortium consists of multi-groups of expertise, such as for fundamentals and design, fabrication and verification; and commercialisation and implementation. Besides, the application of technologies for plantations, estates and smallholders could also be investigated and implemented based on their mechanisation experience. The consortium's goal is to investigate mechanisation and automation technologies for oil palm plantations in order to increase productivity, with a particular emphasis on the operation of harvesting fresh fruit bunches (FFB), and to reduce reliance on oil palm harvesters. Furthermore, the consortium provides a technology development fund to eligible applicants for the development of cost-effective and versatile FFB harvesting technologies.

The firm's performance-related objectives are possible in a suitable, efficient, talented, skilled, having a good attitude, and less expensive workforce. The selection of employees by the human resource management makes it possible to appoint such



an efficient workforce. The fundamental objective of efficient human resource selection is to match the organizations' requirements with the candidates' qualifications and skills applying for the vacant job position. A good selection of on the part of human resource managers ensures that the firms will get the right group of employees with the right work behavior, and it is essential in the sense that the hiring of the appropriate resources enables the firm to increase the overall performance (O'Boyle, Patel, & Gonzalez-Mulé, 2016).

In contrast, if there is bad hiring resulting from the flawed selection process, the business activities will negatively be affected, and the inadequate resources are to be replaced, which cause high cost badly affecting the firm's overall performance. The selection process is favorable for the overall firm performance in which the most suitable person is selected for the vacant job position after the elimination of several candidates who don't fulfill the vacant job (Nieves & Quintana, 2018). In Malaysia's palm oil industry, efficient and effective methods are applied to select candidates for the vacant job positions, which considerably contribute to the firms' ultimate performance in the palm oil industry.

Innovations in the skills, attitudes, activities, and knowledge of the employees are needed for innovation in the operations, production, and marketing of the products, which adds to the firm's performance (Akram, Siddiqui, Nawaz, Ghauri, & Cheema, 2011). To attain up-dated-ness in the employees' skills, attitudes, and knowledge, the periodical training arrangement for the employees must be made (Georgiadis & Pitelis, 2016). Moreover, the training process improves employees' knowledge, and behavior as the training's efficient application creates awareness of the rule and methods to mend the behavior. It brings positive changes in the employees' knowledge, which increases the firm's operational and financial performance. For instance, when an

employee is moved from one assignment to another assignment, he needs to have the knowledge and skills required for the new assignment.

The periodical training makes him prepare to work on a new assignment as it improves the knowledge, skills, and talent to use the techniques, technology, and procedures required on the new assignment. The better skills and knowledge resulting from efficient training bring improvement in the operation, production, and market, which show superior performance among market rivals (Riley, Michael, & Mahoney, 2017). In the Malaysian palm oil industry, the human resource practice provision of periodical training to the employees enables them to achieve relatively better performance.

The provision of compensation on the part of human resource managers to the firm's employees brings improved operational performance, production quality, more fantastic marketing, and fewer waste financial performance. Adequate compensation is necessary for the firm's overall performance as it provides an employee with a reason to stick to the firm and work wholeheartedly (Maas, 2018). To exceed in the highly competitive market, it is compulsory that all the business functions are being performed effectively and efficiently, which is possible if the human resources perform their functions with a great sense of responsibility.

Different rewards, allowances, and facilities make the employees emotionally attached to the organization and result in the employees' efficient working. Similarly, the medical and residential facilities give the employees a sense of security and let them work wholeheartedly and with a great sense of responsibility (Perryman, Fernando, & Tripathy, 2016). The Malaysian palm oil industries have the firms providing compensation to their employees differently and showing outstanding overall performance.

The sense of having organizational support creates a desire in the employees to remain in the same firm, and the retention of the employees guarantees the firm's success as it creates satisfaction in the employees (Ajmal, Bashir, Abrar, Khan, & Saqib, 2015). While on the other hand, if the employees do not perceive encouragement, care, and financial support from the firm, it results in the employees' lack of motivation for their work and adverse effects on the firm's performance. Organizational support has a considerable link with human resource practices.

As firms spend on the employee with the free hand, they attempt their best to hire the best skilled and better-qualified workers, which prove to be an asset for the firms. Likewise, the firms providing organizational support to their employees actively arrange for giving periodic training to the employees, and better skills give better production and better performance. Besides, the firm's attempt to provide emotional and financial support to the employee's results in compensation to the employees and motivates them to work honestly, which adds to the firm's performance (Li & Wang, 2016).

The human resource practices such as selecting employees, training, and compensation to the employees contribute to the organizational learning capability, which further improves the firm's overall performance. Organizational learning capability is the ability of the organization to process information and knowledge. It can acquire, create, execute, use and transfer information and knowledge (Camps, Oltra, Aldás-Manzano, Buenaventura-Vera, & Torres-Carballo, 2016). The social practice, the process of selecting candidates for the vacant job position, contributes to organizational learning capability as in this way the firm interacts with many persons and acquires information required for the vacant job position.

Similarly, the experts and professionals appointed for giving training to the employees are supposed to acquire and execute information about the market shifts, changes in the business environment, changes in technologies and procedures that are further used to achieve superior performance. Besides, providing compensation benefits to employees for their welfare needs information about different compensation-related policies and employees.

#### **2.8.6 Challenges in Oil Palm Mechanisation**

Oil palm mechanisation provides advantages such as increasing workers productivity, hastening fieldwork and improving the sustainability of the oil palm plantation operation. However, most technologies available are only suitable or applicable to certain plantation conditions. Besides, harvesters continue to favour manual handling compared to new existing harvesting technologies. This is consistent with the study by Abdullah and Samah (2013), which focused on the factors influencing farmers' adoption of new agriculture technologies. Their observation revealed that the attitudes of farmers and low levels of education are the two primary factors that influence farmers' acceptance of technology (Abdullah & Samah, 2013).

In the oil palm plantation, some issues have arisen from the workplace environment, and human-machine interactions which include the technical aspects or are technology related such as not user friendly, expensive, bulkiness, noise, vibration, as well as difficulty to access in the plantation. The implication of these problems could be devastating due to the scarcity of labour sources and this might jeopardise the overall operation in the field. The previous studies on technology adoption in the oil palm plantation, and the reasons why harvesters refuse to use existing technologies (Abdullah & Samah, 2013). Several recommendations have been planned to further

increase the level of mechanisation adaptation in oil palm plantations. This will involve interactions with farms and the industry in order to identify the real concerns that cause low oil palm mechanisation utilisation rates and to further formulate strategies for mechanisation technology adoption.

#### **2.8.7 Professional Development for Career Progression**

Employees or employment are individuals who are involved in economic activities that are productivity to the production of goods and services of the country. Workers who are human resources in the economy are an important factor in the economy. Productive workers are important in the formation of the country towards development and a sustainable and competitive country (Ismail & Sulaiman, 2007). According to Navarette, García-Terán et al., (2019) quality employment is very important to increase national income.

Quality employment in terms of productive and innovative can meet the demand of the global market. However, the quality of labor in Malaysia is still at an unsatisfactory level compared to developed countries but is at a high level compared to Asian countries. Human resource development needs to be emphasized so that the quality of the labor force can be improved and can generate national demand in the oil palm industry. The role of government in creating productive employment needs to be intensified such as providing skills and training, attending seminars is very important to create an employment that can meet global needs and demands.

A study by Aziz *et. al.* (2018) states that the level of dependence of oil palm smallholders varies. These smallholders are not entirely dependent on oil palm-based employment alone, but there are also oil palm smallholders who are involved in entrepreneurship and business to improve their socio-economic status. Furthermore,

the problems faced such as the instability of fruit bunch prices and the volatile prices offered by manufacturers causing smallholders of oil palm to be affected in finding a source of income. Therefore, there are a number of those who venture into business and entrepreneurship as a source of side income.

Through this study also found that the factor they are involved in business is also due to family encouragement and to increase income to support the family. Through the study of Alam *et. al.* (2015) there are several issues in the oil palm sector. Among them is the shortage of labor. Based on a report in 2012, it recorded a total number of 491000 workers which consisted of foreign workers from Indonesia. Moreover, the ratio of cultivation labor land is 10.9: 1 ha which is equivalent to 1 worker for 10.9 hectares. This indicates that the occurrence of labor land deficit has a negative impact on oil palm cultivation. Based on the Malaysian embassy in Kuala Lumpur as many as 550, 000 workers which is equivalent to 80 percent of the workers in the oil palm sector are Indonesian workers.

This is because the labor force from Indonesia is given priority because of their fluency in communicating in Malay compared to other races. These foreign workers need to be taken into account by the Malaysian Government because it has a negative impact on the Malaysian socio -economy for example in terms of social disorders such as drug abuse cases, increase in sex cases among workers, sabotage, theft, robbery and so on.

## **2.9 Chapter Summary**

Potential contributions of this study is discussed at length summarized in a research framework. Although there are several practical viewpoints regarding Performance Management and Human Resource Management, the Distance Learning Opportunities and the Performance-Competency Gaps offer practical implications. In the following

chapter, data will contribute to a body of knowledge that is applied for palm oil organizations and distance learning institutions.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.0 Introduction**

Respondents consist of oil palm organization employees who have embarked on life-long learning attempts through distance education in Bintulu Sarawak. These employees are pursuing their study on part-time mode at Interface Global Education Bintulu. This group of population will be sampled for the purpose of this research as it is a purposive sampling technique. The researcher aims to understand from the students if indeed their organization's HR Management is on par with the expectations of their employees in encouraging distance education. It is due to various issues that are exhibited by these groups of students enrolled in distance education that motivated the researcher to conduct such a study.

This chapter discusses on the research design and methods which will be used in this study. This chapter will start with the explanation of research design as well as the measurement and instrumentation utilized for this study. On top of that, data collection procedures will be then explained through the subsections of sampling and data collection procedures. This is then followed by a brief explanation of data analysis techniques. This chapter is then concluded with a summary.

#### **3.1 Research Design**

Generally, this study is a cross-sectional sample survey. It is a non-experimental one-shot survey of the respondents to express their feedback on the respective research variables. The type of this study is exploratory through sample survey or survey research. Cavana et al. (2001) described that this type of study is undertaken when little is known about the situation at hand or when no information is available on how



similar problems or research issue have been resolved in the past. In such a case, extensive preliminary work needs to be done to gain familiarity with the phenomena in the situation, and understand what is occurring, before other researchers set up a design for a comprehensive research or study (Sekaran, 2001).

In a nutshell, the reason for an exploratory study was conducted to better understand the nature of the problem that has been the focus in a very few studies. Therefore, to understand the phenomena, an extensive interview with group of people to be carried out. A more rigorous study can be continued once a better understanding is obtained. Thus, it is concluded that exploratory studies are important for obtaining a good grasp of the phenomena of interest and for advancing knowledge through good theory building and hypothesis testing (Cavana et al, 2001).

Research design is a detailed plan and analytical strategy of completing a research and answering each research question validly and accurately (Kumar, 2010). In addition, a good research design must at least consist of four aspects, which are the clear statement of research problems, different procedures and techniques used for collecting information, the population to be studied and various methods to be carried out in analyzing and interpreting data (Kothari, 2004). On the other hand, Lee (2012) defined research design as the foundation for systems creation that responds to human needs. Besides, based on Kothari (2004), research design provides a conceptual structure for conducting the research and a blueprint for collecting, measuring and analyzing the data.

### **3.1.1 Purpose of Study**

The purpose of this study was exploratory. This type of study is undertaken when little is known about the situation at hand or when minimum information is available on

how similar problems or research issue have been resolved in the past, (Cavana, 2001). In this case the local community is at oil palm estate in Bintulu Sarawak. Extensive preliminary work needs to be done to gain familiarity with the phenomena in the situation, and understand what is occurring before embarking a comprehensive research or study, (Sekaran, 2001).

### **3.1.2 Study Setting**

Normally exploratory studies are conducted in the natural environment of the organization, so the researcher usually interfering minimally with the normal flow of work. This study is in compliance with this type of researcher interference because this researcher just has to develop a theoretical framework, collect the relevant data and analyze them and then come up with the findings, (Cavana, 2001).

As for the study setting, this research implements the non-contrived settings which means this study was carried out in the natural environment where the work proceeds normally, whereby the questionnaire are distributed with the help of enumerators.

### **3.1.3 Time Horizon**

This research was a cross-sectional study or also known as a one shot studies because the data was gathered just once in a period of 2 to 3 months to meet the research objective. (Delahaye, 2001). Once the data are collected, the data was analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software.

### **3.2 Qualitative Method**

Data collection method usually depends on which types of data that has been chosen. There are two types of data which include the primary data and secondary data. In this study, both primary and secondary data had been chosen in the research.

Primary data is the first-hand data or the information collected by researchers via direct observations (Panneerselvam, 2000). Normally, primary data is collected through observation method, surveys, interviews and experiments instead of other sources which are available for public access (Forshaw, 2000). Since the study is about the responses and opinions of respondents towards distance learning and job performance, primary data research is the best way to collect the information. The qualitative method to be apply by using survey questionnaires with open ended questions which is the most common technique used in primary data research.

Data collection is carried out to collate primary and secondary information and inputs. Primary data is collected from population samples while secondary data consists of materials referred to in the process of research (Gray, 2019). The collection of data takes place via email and face to face during class with cohorts that is being taught by the researcher. For all other cohorts not in his class, the researcher sends out the questionnaire survey via email.

Qualitative research is a system of inquiry which seeks to build a holistic, largely narrative, description to inform the researcher's understanding of a social or cultural phenomenon. Qualitative research takes place in natural settings employing a combination of observations, interviews, and document reviews. Many current studies use qualitative content analysis, which addresses some of the weaknesses of the quantitative approach. Qualitative content analysis has been defined as:

- i. a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005),
- ii. an approach of empirical, methodological controlled analysis of texts within their context of communication, following content analytic rules and step by step models, without rash quantification (Mayring, 2000)
- iii. any qualitative data reduction and sense-making effort that lot of qualitative material and attempts to identify core consistencies and meanings (Patton, 2002).

Qualitative research methods is not reliant on statistical or numerical forms of data collection but can be used in tandem with quantitative methods to provide further insights into the subject matter being studied (Bhangu et al., 2023). Thus this particular method of data collection is of particular use to the present study to supply non-quantifiable data such as worker experiences and struggles in pursuing further education.

The qualitative approach usually produces descriptions or typologies, along with expressions from subjects reflecting how they view the social world. By this means, the perspectives of the producers of the text can be better understood by the investigator as well as the readers of the study's results (Berg, 2001). Qualitative content analysis pays attention to unique themes that illustrate the range of the meanings of the phenomenon rather than the statistical significance of the occurrence of particular texts or concepts.

As suggested by Smith, "qualitative analysis deals with the forms and antecedent- consequent patterns of form, while quantitative analysis deals with duration and frequency of form" (Smith, 1975). Weber (1990) also pointed out that the

best content- analytic studies use both qualitative and quantitative operations. Qualitative content analysis is a valuable alternative to more traditional content analysis, when the researcher is working in an interpretive paradigm. The goal is to identify important themes or categories within a body of content, and to provide a rich description of the social reality created by those themes/categories as they are lived out in a particular setting. Through careful data preparation, coding, and interpretation, the results of qualitative content analysis can support the development of new theories and models, as well as validating existing theories and providing thick descriptions of particular settings or phenomena.

### **3.3 Research Instrument**

In this research, researcher is using questionnaire as an instrument for collecting the data from the respondents. The questionnaire is a set of research instrument which provide a set of written questions and a choice of answers. The questionnaire is often used by the researcher now to conduct their research because implementing the questionnaire to collecting data is easier, efficient and cheap as compared to the other methods. On the other hand, researcher also can avoid from the biased result of the research by using a questionnaire to collect data because questionnaire frequently involve face to face interview or telephone interview.

The concepts used during this type of research are in the form of distinct variable. The measures are systematically created before data collection and are standardized. The data for quantitative research are in the form of numbers from precise measurement. The procedures adopted to carry out this type of research are standard, and replication is assumed.

Creswell (2009) stressed that qualitative research is a mean for testing objective amongst the studied variables. Creswell further elaborated that those who engage in

this form of inquiry is having assumptions about testing theories deductively, building in protection against bias, controlling for alternative explanations, and being able to generalize and replicate the findings.

The strategy of enquiry is a non-experimental design is using structured questionnaires and structured interviews. According to Creswell (2009), survey research provides an attitude or opinions of a population by studying a sample of that population. Creswell in the same opinion with Babbie (1990) believes that survey research includes cross-sectional and longitudinal studies using questionnaires or structured interviews for data collection.

### **3.3.1 The Purpose of Using a Questionnaire**

The questionnaire is simple tool to collect the information from respondents. There are a lot of advantages of implementing the questionnaire as a research instrument. The questionnaire is an instrument which is cheaper as compare to other instruments. The researcher can provide questionnaire to the large amount of respondents with the cheaper price. The information presented on research resulted in a better understanding by respondent as compare to the information presented by video display terminal (Belmore, 1985). So the questionnaire may provide research an unbiased result of the research.

### **3.3.2 Questionnaire Design**

Questionnaire is divided into 8 parts as mentioned in study framework. First part is the demographic profile of respondents such as age, gender, education level and others. Second part is the Independent Variables with Six study constructs. The last part is about the dependent variables, which is job performance, as elaborate below. On an

overall, both *Bahasa Melayu* and English is used in designing the questionnaire in this study.

**Table 3.1: Questionnaire Components**

Section	Detail	No of Statement
Section A :	Demographic Background	8
Section B:	Funding and Perks for Learning	10
Section C:	Retention Rate	10
Section D:	Participation and Progress Tracking	6
Section E:	Specialized Performance Appraisal Tools	7
Section F:	Knowledge Transfer Motivation	8
Section G:	Professional Development for Career Progression	8
Section H:	Job Performance	10

Questionnaire is chosen as one of the research tools to carry out the investigation because the researcher felt that this would be the most appropriate type of instrument that provide better insights into the general view of the issues being investigated. Subjects are allowed to respond at their own time and they would not feel intimidated, as it does not demand an immediate oral response. Another advantage is that the questionnaire would be able to elicit more truthful responses from the subjects because confidentiality could be guaranteed. Thus, the questionnaire is considered a useful instrument for collecting survey information, besides being comparatively easy and straight forward to analyse (Ary et al., 1990).

A questionnaire is a pre-formulated written set of questions to which respondents record their answer, usually within closely defined alternatives. Questionnaires are an

efficient data collection mechanism when the researcher knows exactly what are required and how to measure the variables of the study. This is a popular technique of data collection because much of researcher's work requires gathering information from special populations who have firsthand knowledge and experience and it is usually cost-effective (Parmjit Singh et al., 2006). Amongst the advantages of structured questionnaires is that it can be administered personally, mailed to respondents or electronically distributed.

Questionnaires allow the researcher to progress from gathering the ideas and suggestions of a few respondents at the quantitative stage to confirming whether the ideas and suggestions are widely held throughout the whole organization or target population.

### **3.3.3 Questionnaire Administration**

The questionnaire is later administered to the by the researcher within the study area only. The questionnaire is prepared in English and Bahasa Melayu to enable the slow learners or those respondents whom have poor command of English to provide their answers. Respondents are given thirty minutes to answer the questionnaires. Prior to answering the questionnaire process, the researcher gave a brief verbal explanation of the purpose of the survey and answered any questions asked by the participants for clarification of items in the questionnaire. The researcher distributes and collects the questionnaires personally and the rationale was to ensure that all the respondents completed the questionnaires and handed it on time. Apart from that, this is to ensure the confidentiality of the participants' responses and avoidance of non-response.



### **3.3.4 Previous Study for Questionnaire Components**

In addition, the development of the world food industry has further boosted the demand for the oil and fats industry, including palm oil globally (Rashid, 2018). The satisfactory growth in the oil palm industry can bring great benefits to the country. This is because it can provide various employment opportunities at various levels in the oil palm industry ecosystem, which includes the upstream, midstream and downstream sectors (Sahbuddin et al., 2021). The upstream sector involves plantation activities such as the production of germinated seeds, seedlings, fresh fruit bunches and other agricultural inputs such as fertilisers. The midstream sector consists of the processing and manufacturing sectors (crude palm oil production), and new product research; while the downstream sector consists of final processes involving other manufacturing sectors and low-value-added products to meet the demand for food as well as energy resources (MPOB, 2020).

All three of these activities require the workforce to carry out the various tasks involved in each stage. Hence, the impact of this sector has opened more employment opportunities to the people of this country, especially the youth. However, the things youth take into account such as labour rights, fair wages, and safe working conditions are important considerations within the industry's labour dynamics. If wages and benefits in the palm oil sector are not competitive compared to other industries or urban areas, it can make these jobs less appealing to young people. Likewise, young workers may lack proper training and protective equipment, exposing them to health and safety risks. In addition, remote locations, and limited access to modern amenities like internet and telephone lines can discourage young people from getting involved in the palm oil industry.

These challenges can make the work environment less attractive and more difficult for young individuals. Therefore, the development of human capital also known as human resource development is important for the future growth of the country. Youth are an important asset in every country because they are the group needed to govern and develop the country in the future (Yunus, 2007). However, the issue of unemployment among youth is becoming more serious as many of them especially graduates cannot get a job after six months of graduation (Alkatheri and Abdullah, 2019).

Despite the unemployment, certain sectors are experiencing labour shortages, especially the agricultural sector which is difficult for the youth to fill. This causes foreign workers from countries such as Indonesia, Bangladesh and India being employed in this sector. The latest data showed that in 2022, there were 391 000 workers employed in the oil palm plantation sector. Out of the total, 74% were foreigners, mostly Indonesians (New Straits Times, 2022). However, the recruitment of foreign labour is a temporary solution to the problems faced.

The vacancies that exist in the agriculture sector, especially in the oil palm plantation sector should be filled by the unemployed (Bernama, 2020), especially the youth. However, the extent to which these young people are interested in the oil palm plantation sector is still not clear. This is because most of them are quite sceptical towards jobs classified as 3D jobs (Dirty-Dangerous-Difficult) (Mohamed et al., 2019). The challenge of attracting unemployed youth, who often hold reservations about jobs categorised as 3D jobs like those in the oil palm plantation sector, is a significant concern for the agriculture industry. Other than that, the lack of knowledge and skills development programs can make it difficult for young individuals to enter these roles (Saad, 2016). According to Abdullah the plantation sector includes

improvement of the working environment, job status, facility and benefit in the plantation field.

Addressing this issue requires a strategic approach that emphasises the potential benefits and opportunities within the sector while also addressing the concerns and perceptions that discourage youth from considering these opportunities. Graduates or young people are not spared from making choices in their careers (Che Yaacob and Ramli, 2004). Proper and accurate selection of relevant jobs or occupations by graduates or job applicants is very critical as it determines their purpose as job incumbents. Moreover, job incumbents or employees who are clear with their “purposeful missions” tend to be more involved and engaged with their work (Charles and Florah, 2021).

It is one of the most important processes in one’s life when one begins to think of entering the working world. Locke and Schattke (2019) argued that job selection must be in line with an individual’s desires and interests. A job done without interest will cause boredom and affect the quality of work done (Danckert and Eastwood, 2020). The foundation of a career or job selection is formed by several elements. The job selection theory founded by Anne Roe and Siegelman (1964) concludes that humans tend to improve their self-efficacy to achieve a good career, and parental upbringing strongly influences their career choices and lifestyles. In fact, this theory is based on the hierarchy of needs developed by Maslow (1943), which will be discussed further in the next section. Roe’s theory was later updated by Anne Roe and Siegelman (1964) and contains three components namely;

- i) generic background influences,
- ii) psychology, and
- iii) genetics and hierarchy of needs.

Whether individuals remain with their choices or not depends on several other theories as explained by Ginzberg (1989), namely: i) accidental theory, whereby individuals accidentally or intentionally enter the career as a result of an event, pressure, influence or by chance. b) Impulse theory, which is based on feelings or emotions towards a career seen, read, researched, or experienced by other individuals who are significant to them. c) Vocational guidance refers to career information found from vouchers, handouts or career counselors.

The basic needs of employees are an important factor in attracting them to be in a job. Basic needs are needs that must be met prior to other needs (Maslow, 1943). Generally, Maslow's theory relates to human survival. Stum (2001) stated that the motivation for basic needs is the main motive for individuals choosing a job, which is based on two main parts; economic and non-economic. From an economic perspective, the motivation for basic needs means that individuals view employment in terms of the salary offered by the employer (Yuhong and Johnes 2003). Most people will mention that salary is a major factor to look at when applying for a job.

This means that the higher the wage, the more individuals want the job (Brown and Medoff, 1989). In fact, according to Meyerding (2018), young people will usually immediately reject an offer if the salary offered is below expectations. Furthermore, the wage factor has a positive relationship with the involvement of rural youth in the oil palm plantation industry. The results of the study by Ayob *et. al.* (2015) showed that one of the reasons why youth do not get involved in the oil palm plantation industry is because the salary is low. This minimum wage level ultimately affects unemployment among youth (Gorry, 2013). Wages and benefits need to be balanced to satisfy the wants of employees and to keep them competitive (Chiu et al., 2002).

Abdullah *et. al.* (2016) argued that the unfavourable monthly salaries in the oil palm plantation sector have caused difficulties among the employees in applying for loans and obtaining facilities offered by banking institutions. This is because salary is an important element in approving a financial loan in addition to several other factors. As jobs in this sector are more challenging and categorised under the 3D sector, the salary offered needs to reflect the job's difficulty and hazards (Kamaruddin *et al.*, 2018).

In addition, job selection also depends on job prospects. This is related to the future of the job such as promotion opportunities, salary increments, and so on. According to Meyerding (2018), the perception of the future is the most important feature in choosing a job in the agricultural field. Ko and Jun (2015) empirically demonstrated that a high salary is an important factor that motivates university students to enter the public sector. Students also choose to work in the public sector because of the higher social benefits compared to the private sector (Molnár and Kapitány, 2014).

This situation is different in the agricultural sector. Malaysians think that the agricultural industry is an industry that pays low wages and does not provide a bright future. Meanwhile, basic needs from a non-economic perspective are seen in terms of environmental health as well as security and safety (Greenhalgh and Rosenblatt, 1984). Involvement in oil palm plantations is an agricultural activity that is largely outdoor activity. According to a study conducted by Hofmann *et. al.* (2009), the health of those working in the agricultural sector will be affected due to exposure to sunlight and the physical strength needed.

Environmental factors have their own definition, which is everything that is around us (Arthur and Lawrence, 1984). It relates to the job suitability factor, in which this factor is very important to one's job selection (Savickas and Porfeli, 2011). This

is because, the workplace environment is a factor that is often beyond the control of individuals such as floods and natural disasters; and it affects economic and career conditions. Thus, it is very important that the job seekers identify suitability as a critical factor before venturing into a job (Hofmann *et. al.* 2009). Similarly, the issue of occupational safety is an important aspect especially in high-risk work.

Safety issues are accidents that workers are aware of as well as those they are not aware of. Tripathi *et. al.* (2019) stated that job security is the most important factor in career choice for youth. This situation clearly illustrates that youth desire jobs that are of the lowest risk. Next, family members also play a role in influencing or determining a youth's career choices. Raychaudhuri and Jana (2016) stated that family background could be influential in career decision making.

Meanwhile, a study by Mukembo *et. al.* (2014) found that parents are the most influential career guides for youth. This means parents have greater influence over their children. All the factors discussed are important factors influencing job selection among job seekers. Therefore, to encourage the specific involvement of young people, these factors need to be given attention and priority in formulating employment-related policies. Fostering interest in working in the agricultural sector, especially oil palm, is also important. A study about Malaysian youth working in the oil palm plantation sector was conducted by Kamaruddin *et. al.* (2018).

The study discovered that job satisfaction among Malaysian youth is influenced positively by economic profitability offered, government or employer's policy and social facilities provided by employer; and negatively influenced by working environment factor and perception of social job status toward this occupation. However, their study did not take into account the role of family, peers, society and health in influencing youth interest in the oil palm plantation sector.

According to Mukembo et al. (2014) parents play a role in cultivating interest and guiding their children's career choices. Meanwhile, health is the primary consideration for young people when choosing a career (Tripathi et al., 2019). Employees or employment are individuals who are involved in economic activities that are productivity to the production of goods and services of the country. Workers who are human resources in the economy are an important factor in the economy. Productive workers are important in the formation of the country towards development and a sustainable and competitive country (Ismail & Sulaiman, 2007).

According to Navarette, García-Terán et al., (2019) quality employment is very important to increase national income. Quality employment in terms of productive and innovative can meet the demand of the global market. However, the quality of labor in Malaysia is still at an unsatisfactory level compared to developed countries but is at a high level compared to Asian countries. Human resource development needs to be emphasized so that the quality of the labor force can be improved and can generate national demand in the oil palm industry.

The role of government in creating productive employment needs to be intensified such as providing skills and training, attending seminars is very important to create an employment that can meet global needs and demands. A study by Aziz *et al.* (2018) states that the level of dependence of oil palm smallholders varies. These smallholders are not entirely dependent on oil palm-based employment alone, but there are also oil palm smallholders who are involved in entrepreneurship and business to improve their socio-economic status.

Furthermore, the problems faced such as the instability of fruit bunch prices and the volatile prices offered by manufacturers causing smallholders of oil palm to be affected in finding a source of income. Therefore, there are a number of those who

venture into business and entrepreneurship as a source of side income. Through this study also found that the factor they are involved in business is also due to family encouragement and to increase income to support the family.

Through the study of Alam et al. (2015) there are several issues in the oil palm sector. Among them is the shortage of labor. Based on a report in 2012, it recorded a total number of 491000 workers which consisted of foreign workers from Indonesia. Moreover, the ratio of cultivation labor land is 10.9: 1 ha which is equivalent to 1 worker for 10.9 hectares. This indicates that the occurrence of labor land deficit has a negative impact on oil palm cultivation. Based on the Malaysian embassy in Kuala Lumpur as many as 550, 000 workers which is equivalent to 80 percent of the workers in the oil palm sector are Indonesian workers.

This is because the labor force from Indonesia is given priority because of their fluency in communicating in Malay compared to other races. These foreign workers need to be taken into account by the Malaysian Government because it has a negative impact on the Malaysian socio -economy for example in terms of social disorders such as drug abuse cases, increase in sex cases among workers, sabotage, theft, robbery and so on.

#### **i. Job Performance**

Job Performance is considered the ultimate dependent variable in human resource management (Linda, 2019). Campbell and Wiernik (2015) reviewed job performance as behaviours under workers' control that contribute to organizational goals. Briefly, Task performance (TP) refers to activities that contribute to the organization's technical core either directly by implementing a part of its technological process, or indirectly by providing it with needed materials or services (Nikolaou, 2018). The indicators of TP are completing job task, work quantity, work quality, job



skills, job knowledge, keeping knowledge up to date, working accurately and neatly, planning, and organising, admiration, decision making, solving problems, oral and written communicating and controlling resources.

Task Performance which refers to the behaviours that contribute to the production of a good or the provision of a services vary across jobs likely to be role-prescribed and that are usually included in the job functions (Linda, 2019). Contextual performance (CP) refers to activities that shape the context in which task performance occurs in a social and psychological way (Nikolaou, 2018).

CP indicators are extra tasks, effort, initiative, enthusiasm, attention to duty, resourcefulness, industriousness, persistence, motivation, dedication, proactivity, creativity, cooperating with and helping others, politeness, effective communication, interpersonal relations, organizational commitment (Linda, 2011). Contextual Performance refers as behaviours that contributes to the goals of the organization by contributing to its social and psychological environment also includes task beyond job duties, initiative, proactive, cooperating with others, or enthusiasm (Linda, 2019).

## **ii. The Big Five Personalities**

A personality trait is a specific pattern of thought, thinking, or performing that manages to be faithful over time and beyond essential places includes Oil Palm Plantations Companies. The Big Five Personalities Namely Openness to Experiences, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness and Neuroticism. Common acronyms are OCEAN, NEOAC or CANOE (Irina, 2013). Previous research revealed a growing interest in defining the personality and behaviours of people in field such a career development which is also in line with present study for an Assistant Manager's being successor of Oil Palm Plantation Companies (Manisha, 2020).

#### **a. Openness to Experience (O)**

Openness to experience is defined as imagination, creativity, unconventionality, and a broad range of interest (Salgado, 2004). Singh (2018) concluded that people with high openness are individualistic, and more self-determined towards growth and such categories of people could be of creative designers, scientist. Sing (2018) also in opinion that people with low openness are drawn towards convention and details – these of whom who would make good accountants, office workers, or police officers. People who score high on Openness to Experience (also called Openness, culture, or Intellect) are usually artistic, curious, imaginative, and original; and have wide interests, sensitivity to aesthetic experiences and fantasy, and a rich emotional life. People low in Openness have a narrower set of interests and are more conventional in their outlook and behaviour; they are closed to new ideas and experience their emotions less intensely (Irina, 2013).

#### **b. Conscientiousness (C)**

It describes a person who is meticulous, self-disciplined, hardworking, and competent (Singh, 2018). With high conscientiousness, we see an overlay with the previous low openness, for such people possess characteristics that make them excellent office workers, managers, accountants, and teachers. We can posit that such people are responsible, prim and proper. They will put more effort into their appearance than suppose those of low conscientiousness, whom we know are messy and work at their own pace (Singh, 2018). Career Research (2016) stated that a person of low conscientiousness shares a low openness, people are diverse so such a person could be more technical or hands-on. Again,

we can see an embodiment of engineers, craftsmen, technicians, security analyst, and so on.

Otherwise, a person who embodies high openness with low conscientiousness would be of artisans, writers, and self-start entrepreneurs who work with their own time (Singh, 2018). Persons who have high score on conscientiousness strive to achieve high standards and are self-disciplined, orderly, deliberate, responsible, thorough, and dutiful. Low-conscientiousness persons rarely plan; they may be careless and disorganized in personal matters, and often fail to establish a well-defined set of life goals (Irina, 2013). Barrick, Mount, and Strauss (1993) tested and found support for a model where overall performance was predicted by conscientiousness which exerted its influence through goal settings (Viswesvaran, 2000).

### **c. Extraversion (E)**

Extraversion is defined by sociability, dominance, gregariousness, ambition, and positive affectivity (Salgado, 2004). Barrick & Mount (199) and Career Research (2016) agreed that those with high extraversion could easily tend to management, to be event organisers and the like. They can spur people into action and influence them. Those with low extraversion could be cerebral, more incline to duties behind the scenes (Singh, 2018). Highly extraverted (or Surgency) people are warm, talkative, assertive, active and energetic, cheerful, and high in positive affect; they generally like to be around others and prefer stimulating environments. Introverted people, in contrast, like to be alone or with a few close friends; they are reserved and serious, value their independence, and prefer quiet environments (Irina, 2013). It was found that extraversion is a valid

predictor of performance in jobs characterised by social interaction, such as sales personnel and managers (Rothmann, 2003).

Extraversion can be categorized as a positive emotion of personality (Bakker et al., 2002) because individual that have a high in extraversion tend to be self-confident, dominant, active and excitement seeking. For example, when actions that reflect high levels of extraversion or agreeableness are the most effective responses to difficult interpersonal and social challenges, people high on these traits should be more likely to learn this (Motowidlo, 1997). Employee higher in extraversion are less likely to experience anger (Jensen-Campell et al., 2006) (Intan, 2013). As such, this study assumes that Assistant Managers that high in extraversion personality criterion is more likely to demonstrate likely score high in his job performance that would influence by Critical Thinking Ability as well.

#### **d. Agreeableness (A)**

Agreeableness consists of cooperativeness, kindness, compliance, and affability (Salgado, 2004). Agreeableness likewise asserts a person who is altruistic, conflict-avoidant, and conforming. As such we can see positions as agreed by Ozer & Benet-Martinez (2006), such as teachers, nurses, or social relations for such people. Those with low agreeableness would do well in autonomous positions or creative fields like those with high openness (Singh, 2018). People with high Agreeableness are altruistic, cooperative, compassionate, appreciative, forgiving, generous, kind, sympathetic, and trust the good intentions of others. Disagreeable people, in contrast, tend to be characterized by antagonism, scepticism, and a competitive rather than cooperative approach to life (Irina, 2013). An agreeable person is fundamentally altruistic, sympathetic to others and

eager to help them, and in return believes that others will be equally helpful (Rothmann, 2003).

The disagreeable/antagonistic person is egocentric, sceptical of others' intentions, and competitive rather than co-operative. According to Tett et al (1991), Agreeableness is a significant predictor of job performance. Salgado (1997) found that Agreeableness is related to training success. The co-operative nature of agreeable individuals may lead to success in occupations where teamwork and customer service are relevant (Rothmann, 2003).

#### **e. Neuroticism (N)**

Neuroticism is a dimension of normal personality indicating the general tendency to experience negative effects such as fear, sadness, embarrassment, anger, guilt, and disgust (Rothmann, 2003). According to Ackerman (2017), Neuroticism would defer people with intense melancholic emotions that may be sensitive, with a study proposing they are easily affected by the environment. They may do well in fields relating to theatre or the arts, wherever they may direct their deep emotions to. Those with low neuroticism have a much stable emotional wavelength, fairly remaining in control, suiting those careers where one is needed to stay calm in a fast, reactive, and difficult situation (Singh, 2018).

People who score high on Neuroticism are emotionally sensitive; they become upset easily and frequently experience negative emotions. This pole of Neuroticism also includes sadness, anger, anxiety, worry, self-consciousness, vulnerability to stress, and a tendency to act impulsively. People who score low on Neuroticism are calm and emotionally stable (the N factor is sometimes referred to by its low pole- "Emotional Stability"). Even under stressful

conditions, low – N people remain confident and experience few negative emotions (Irina, 2013). Emotional Stability typically consists of low anxiety, control, personal security, and absence of depression vs. anxiety, somatic complaints, feeling of insecurity, and hostility (Salgado, 2004).

#### **i. Critical Thinking Abilities**

Present-day definitions of critical thinking are just extensions of early version by pioneer researchers. Critical Thinking is defined as reasonable reflective thinking that is focused on deciding what to believe and do and, on some level, includes the correct assessing of statements and by implication, we might add, actions and beliefs (Ennis, 2011). The philosophical perspective focuses on hypothetical qualities and characteristics of the individual, rather than his/her actual behaviours to perform what he/she think (Bailin et al., 1999; Facione, 1990).

Approach Definition of “Critical Thinking” Philosophical Perspective are “the skill and propensity to engage in an activity with reflective skepticism” (McPeck, 1981); “the analysis of good reasons for belief, understanding the various kinds of reason involves understanding complex meanings of field-dependent concepts and evidence” (McPeck, 1981); "disciplined thinking that is clear, rational, open-minded, and informed by evidence” (Halpern, 1998) and “aimed at forming a judgment,” where the thinking itself meets standards of adequacy and accuracy (Bailin et al, 1999) (Ching, 2014).

The cognitive psychological perspective focuses on how people think or how they could think under hypothetical ideal conditions, and encompasses behaviours demonstrated during thinking (Halpern, 1998; Sternberg, 1986; Willingham, 2007). Cognitive Psychological Perspective are “the mental processes, strategies, and representations people use to solve problem, make decisions, and learn new concepts”

(Sternberg, 1986); “reasonable reflective thinking focused on deciding what to believe in or do, and provides a set of criteria for assessing it ” (Ennis, 2002); “the use of those cognitive skills or strategies that increase the probability of a desirable outcome” (Halpern, 1998). “Seeing both sides of an issue, being open to new evidence that disconfirms your ideas, reasoning dispassionately, demanding that claims be backed by evidence, deducing and inferring conclusions from available facts, solving problem, and so forth” (Willingham, 2007 & Ching, 2014).

The educational perspective stresses instructional applications of critical thinking in classroom practices as well as the real-world interactions (Kennedy et al., 1991). For example, the highest levels of Bloom’s hierarchical taxonomy, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation, are commonly used to define what critical thinking is and how it functions in learning environments. Educational Perspective further are “the ways of analysing, synthesizing and evaluating information during the learning process” (Anderson et al., 2001); “the learning process of actively and skilfully conceptualizing, applying, analysing, synthesizing, and evaluating information to reach an answer or conclusion” (Kennedy et al., 1991). Conceptual Framework for Critical Thinking Abilities as Mediator in between the Big Five Personalities and Job Performance.

## **ii. Job Performance and Job Satisfaction**

Fisher (2003) also stated that there is only a modest positive correlation between job performance and job satisfaction. However people are thought to believe strongly that satisfied or happy employees are more productive at work. According to him, “happy workers are productive workers or that employees who are satisfied with their jobs are likely to be better performers’.

Job satisfaction is explained as a function of job features, other people and personal dispositions and generally there is only a modest to weak correlation between job satisfaction and job performance and the causal direction is inconclusive (Bergh, 2011). The majority of the studies have shifted their focus on defining job performance in terms of outcomes and behavior, since these are easier and more objective to define and to observe than personal traits (Hersen 2004).

In a study involving 846 employees in high-tech industries in Israel and in England, the investigator found a significant positive relationship between the need for achievement and job performance. The higher the measured achievement motivation, the higher was the employee's job performance (Baruch, 2004). A survey of more than 3200 workers in Britain showed that factors such as money and recognition were not the primary sources of motivation. In line with Herzberg's theory, the motivator needs played a more important role in the job performance of these employees (Bassett- Jones& Lloyd, 2005).

From an employee's point of view, job performance is essentially the result of a series of behaviors. The various tasks performed on a daily basis contribute to job performance in general. From a supervisor's perspective, on the other hand, outcomes are the key elements for job performance appraisal as in the end of the day results are more important to an employer than the activities leading to those results. However both approaches have advantages and disadvantages. (Cardy 2004 p.13) Judge *et. al.* (2001) argued that there are seven different models that can be used to describe the job performance and satisfaction relationship. Which means, some of these models view the relationship between job performance and job satisfaction to be unidirectional, that either job satisfaction causes job performance or vice versa.



Sarmiento and Beale (2007) referred to job performance as the result of two aspects, which consist of the abilities and skills (natural or acquired) of employees to use their skills and abilities to perform a better job, but according to a research by (A-Ahmadi, 2009), there is no significant association been found between age and education among the employees while at the same time, education and job performance were found to have a negative relationship and this was further supported in a study by.

Ng and Feldman (2009), revealed differing results in which education positively related to employee job performance. In the other hand, (Karatepe, Uludag, Menevis, Hadzimehmedagic & Baddar, 2006) believes that employees' self-efficacy, competitiveness and effort were also found to have a significant positive effect on the job performance of employees serving as front liners.

Self-efficacy and psychological climate were positively associated with the job performance of hospital employees in a study by D'Amato and Zijlstra (2008). Past researchers on job performance such as (Ahmadi, 2009) found several factors that can influence the employees' job performance ranging from individual-related factors, organizational level factors as well as organizational environmental factors. For instance, employees' commitment has been found to affect job performance.

Knight, Kim and Crutsinger (2007), in their attempt to examine the causal relation between role stress, customer orientation, selling orientation and job performance of retail salespeople, revealed that role conflict and role ambiguity affected customer orientation while affecting job performance when mediated by customer orientation. Schermerhorn *et. al.* (2001) defined job satisfaction as the degree to which an individual feels positively or negatively about his or her job.

Studies show that job satisfaction is the general attitude that people have about their jobs, job factors such as the pay, the job itself, promotion opportunities, support from supervisors and relationship with co-workers that can affect employee satisfaction or dissatisfaction if employees consider these job factors positive or otherwise (Ahmad et al., 2002).

(Rynes, Colbert, & Brown, 2002) argued that the major practitioner knowledge gaps in employees' attitudes and job satisfaction are the causes of employee attitudes, the results of positive or negative job satisfaction and how to measure and influence employee attitudes. In the other hand, (Judge & Bono, 2001) findings show that, one of the primary causes of job satisfaction is the perception of the job itself, while in another research, evidence indicates that some other personality traits, such as extraversion and conscientiousness, can also influence job satisfaction (Judge, Heller, & Mount, 2002).

Whereas (Saari & Erez, 2002) in their most recent analyses have shown that country and culture is as strong a predictor of employee attitudes as the type of job a person has. According to (Judge & Church, 2000), research studies across many years, organizations and type of jobs show that when employees are asked to evaluate different facets of their job such as supervision, pay, promotion opportunities, coworkers and so forth, the nature of the work itself generally emerges as the most important job facet.

In the other hand, (Harter et al., 2002) argued that one of the important factors that create satisfaction among employees is the motivator to fulfilling individual's needs for meaning and personal growth. This includes achievement, recognition, the work itself, responsibility and advancement. (Koys, 2001) continue by stating that many researchers found different results in the relationship between job satisfaction

and job performance, but only few researches have advocated the existence of such ‘linkages’.

While on other research conducted on job satisfaction, studies shows that a majority of the respondents in study on inexperienced undergraduates agreed that ‘employees who are satisfied with their jobs are usually good performers’ (Fisher, 2003). Job satisfaction found to have a significant relationship with employees’ job performance (Gu & Chi, 2009). However according to (Families & Work Institute, 2005), more overworked employees are more likely to make mistakes at work.

### **iii. Performance Appraisal and Training and Development of Human Resource Management Practices**

Human Resource Management’s (HRM) notion stresses upon the aspect that human capital employed in any particular organization must be considered as the organization’s asset instead of cost. Organizations, in general, employ a diverse set of human HRM policies and procedures specifically related to recruitment, training, development, appraisal and organizational commitment in order to synchronize the HRM policies with the core business objectives of the organization (Meyer & Smith, 2000). Research and studies, pertaining to the (direct and indirect) effects of Human Resource Practices towards organizational performance, conducted in many developed countries exhibited indications of a noticeably encouraging relationship between the human resource management practices of an organization and the organization’s overall performance (Singh, 2004).

Most of the research and studies undertaken in the field of HRM in the past were conducted by asking the human resource related personnel to answer the questions related to the practices in place for the purposes of recruitment, training, development, retention and performance appraisal methods but very few studies had focused on the

importance of an individual employee's perceptions regarding the effectiveness of the devised HRM policies on the overall performance of an organization (Boselie & Wiele, 2002).

Previously, studies conducted at organizational level had mainly focused the effects of the HRM practices on the numeric indicators (at organizational level) such as total production, increase in sales, revenue generation and others (Huselid, 1995), whereas not much research had been conducted with the aim to determine how would an individual perceive and act upon the HRM practices with regards to his/her behavior and commitment towards the achievement of the goals of the organization (Hemdi & Nasurdin, 2006). HRM practices that may be helpful in gaining commitment of the employees towards the organizational goals and the effect(s) of those practices in terms of reduction in employee turnover are the aim of this study.

One of the most critical HRM practices is performance appraisal. This is because the appraisal of an employee would either shape a satisfied frame of behavior after being appreciated or a frame of dissatisfaction after not being appreciated. In addition to performance appraisal, training and development of employees also shape their engagement and commitment towards the organizational development (Arthur, 1994). Training and development programmes are undertaken to make the employees capable enough to perform the assigned tasks efficiently and effectively and thus, employees feel more involved towards their jobs.

In addition to that employee turnover has become a major problem that faced by every organizations in many of the Asian country such as Malaysia, Singapore, Hong Kong, Taiwan and South Korea (Khatri et al., 2011). Barnard and Rodgers (1998) states that the monthly average of resignation rates in organization in Malaysia, South Korea and Taiwan were 3.4%, 2.9% and 2.7% respectively. Moreover, employee

turnover also incurs a huge burden to the organizations in terms of financial cost (Kaye & Jordan-Evans, 2005).

The highest turnover crisis ever recorded in Malaysia was during the year period of 2009-2010 on average 18.3% which forced the entity to conduct multiple employee loyalty programs as consequences of failure to retain their valuable employees (Ken, 2013). Therefore, it is extremely important to address the problems above and to find out preventive reasons that initiates turnover intentions.

#### **a. Human Resource Management Practices**

Human resources are significant in establishing and sustaining competitive advantage for the enhancement of organizational effectiveness since both are priceless, unique and irreplaceable resources. The definitions of human resource can be categorized under two broad strands which are generalist and distinctive. Based on the generalist perspective, human resources refer to a group of human capital controlled in a straightforward manner through employment by the organization which constitutes a source of competitive advantage (Machado, 2015).

Meanwhile, the distinctive approach emphasize on employee skills, knowledge, abilities, attitudes, experience and wisdom. Human Resource Management can be seen as the utilization of employees to gain competitive advantage, articularly through human resource practices (Dzansi & Dzansi, 2010). Majumder, (2012) regards HRM as organization's philosophy, policies, and procedures linked with the management of people HRM as a customer prioritized management practices which regards the employees as the essence of the organization that focuses on attaining organizational goals.

According to Swathi, (2014), management is said to be responsible for all practices and decisions that directly affect the employment relationship. Essentially, the conduct of human resource management aims to optimize the effectiveness of its employees in order to maximize organization's productivity.

Human resource practices is defined as the planned human resource deployment and the organization's progress is targeted towards reaching the goals through efficient management of human capital (Babu & Reddy, 2013). In overall, HRM practices can be concluded as a tool implemented by the organization that helps to motivate and retain them through efficient practices, policies and philosophy (Singh & Jain, 2014).

Effective HRM will results in acquiring and retaining qualified employees, motivates them to optimize performance and assists them to meet their psychological and social needs. This leads to the establishment of long-term commitment among employees to maintain employment relationship with the organization. There are numerous researches study about the relationship between HR practices and organizational commitment by using different types of HR practices. Jeet and Sayeeduzzafar (2014) studied five HR practices such as employee training, performance appraisal, teamwork, employee participation and compensation and found that there is a significantly positive relationship between the HR practices and organizational commitment.

Similarly, Bal and Bozkurt (2014) has studied about six HR practices such as recruitment and selection, training and development, performance appraisal, work conditions, compensation rewards and involvement. Prabhakar and Ram (2011) also indicated that job design and employee empowerment is positive associated with organizational commitment. The study of Umoh, Amah &

Wokocha (2014) reported that there are positive relationship between employee benefits and measures of continuance commitment. The study also revealed that there is a significant relationship between pay structure and continuance commitment. Hong, Hao, Kumar, Ramendran and Kadiresan (2012) explained that management should not ignore the importance of human resource management practices on fulfilling the expectations of employees as it creates great satisfaction and commitment on job.

As stated above, this study hypothesize the factors used in the previous literature of HRM practices, which consists of performance appraisal, training and development impact organization commitment hence, retaining the employees and minimizing voluntary turnover. The description of each practice is offered in the following section in the following section.

#### **b. Performance Appraisal**

Performance appraisal in Malaysia has been practiced and implemented a few decades ago and the proof is listed in several articles such as Ahmad and Ali (2004), Kumar (2005), Poon (2004). They observed an important relationship between the implementation of performance appraisal and organizational commitment in Malaysia. Given the current circumstances, organizations are focusing and utilizing on one specific developmental HRM practice - Performance Appraisal that potentially affects organization's efficiency and performance (Ikramullah, Shah, Hassan, Zaman, & Khan, 2011) As a matter of fact, it has been used as tool in the process of performance appraisal for enhancing employee's performance, distributing rewards and enhance competencies. In addition, organization is able to discover the employee strengths development needs (Moulik & Mazumdar, 2012).

Although it is costly to conduct performance appraisal, organizations still adopt this practice as it serves as a fundamental organizational decisions in certain situations where promotions, bonuses and training needs are determined which potentially creates work motivation and commitment to the organization. Therefore the performance evaluation practice is an inherent and inseparable part of the organization (Poursafar, Rajaeepour, Seyadat, & Oreizi, 2014).

This is in line with the statement in the study of Getnet, Jebena and Tsegaye (2014) which proposed that performance appraisal is commonly adopted by organization in order to incentivize and measure the performance of their employees. Furthermore it is also revealed that this performance evaluation practice can used to detect employee's perception, preferences, beliefs and developmental areas with regard to the organizaional goals.As a results, they are valued and seen as part of organization team. Thus the employees may develop a greater commitment to their organization (Ikramullah et al., 2011).

Several studies support the notion that perception of fairness of performance appraisal is closely related to employee's commitment to their organization (Shigutu, & Tensay, 2014). If the employee perceive that the decision are fair, they would reciprocate with high commitment and would be willing to contribute more effort towards the attainment of organizational goals. Employees would reciprocate their perception in the form of low organizational commitment (Salleh, Amin, Muda, & Halim, 2013).

Thus, it can be concluded that the perception of employee towards the performance appraisal activities is important since it determine employee acceptance and the development of commitment to the organization (Akhtar & Khattak, 2013). Therefore, it is vital for organization to be aware of employee's



perception of the performance evaluation and make improvement on it in since performance appraisal has a predictive role in changing employee's attitude and affective commitment (Roberts, 2003). Thus, it can be concluded that the perception of employee towards the performance appraisal activities is important since it determines employee's commitment and acceptance to the organization.

### **c. Training and Development**

In today's world, most of the organizations accentuates on the training and development programs to the employees as one of the human resource practices that is crucial for the evolvement of organizational commitment of the employees. Employee is considered valuable assets to an organization. Therefore it is fundamental for organizations to invest in programs like training and development to improve their competency and performance.

Training and development deals with increasing and updating the skills, knowledge, competencies and experiences of an employee through a series of training and development programs (Obeidat et al., 2014). It is crucial to equip employees with necessary skills and competencies in today's competitive environment in order to enhance productivity, organization competitiveness and performance.

According to Ahmad and Bakar (2003), training can be described as a planned and systematic effort of employee to achieve effective performance in an activity or range of activities. On the other hand, Noe, Hollenbeck, Gerhart and Wright (2004) expressed that development prepares employees for different positions in the organization and builds their capacity to move into jobs in the future. Therefore, development is mainly about planning and preparing for the changes in the future in relation to unfamiliar jobs, requirements and

responsibilities. As for (Lamba & Choudhary, 2013), development is a practical exercise of studying and development by which managerial staff acquire and employ knowledge, skills, attitudes and insights to handle their work efficiently and effectively. It is essential for the managerial staff as an effort to cope up with the complexity of organization and technological.

The development also helps to recognize their social and public responsibilities. Kooij, de Lange, Jansen, & Dikkers (2008) suggested that career development could fit workers' needs by creating opportunities for new job and enhancing their skills (Riaz, Idrees, & Imran, 2013). This supports a comparative study has been done between Malaysia and European Union (EU) on various factors where the findings implicits that training aims to bridge the gap between job requirements and present competence of an employee in terms of job security and skills of employee's being employed (Ramendran, Supian, Kadiresan, Kumar, & Rethinam, 2014).

Lambert, Vero and Zimmermann (2012) explained that development is able to increase employee's self-fulfillment where their capability at work can be rejuvenated and able to absorb and preparing for more obstacles. So, combination of training and development is an endless process to make sure their employees keep improving all the times. When an organization provides trainings, it usually lead to greater commitment from the employee which can be viewed such as "psychological contract".

It is reciprocal attitudes and behaviors from the employees based on their perception to the effort of the organization in improving their skills, competencies and providing them future development opportunities (Jehanzeb, Rasheed, & Rasheed, 2013; Dockel, Basson, & Coetzee, 2006). It is argued that

employees tend to perceive that organization make investment in their training as sign of continuity in their jobs and in higher compensation based on human capital theory (Scheible & Bastos, 2013; Maurer & Rafuse, 2001).

Previous studies proved training contributes to intangle results such as high organizational-based self-esteem, enhanced organizational commitment and improved participant knowledge and ultimately could affect employee retention and enhance organizational effectiveness (Babu & Reddy, 2013; Jehanzeb et al., 2013; Armstrong, 2006; Ahmad & Bakar, 2003; Bartlett & Kang, 2004;). It is further supported by Ashar, Ghafoor, Munir, and Hafeez (2013) that organization required to manage training on employees with integrity which can enhance the commitments and prevent intention to leave.

#### **iv. Organizational Commitment**

Several constructs of organizational commitment has been conceptualized over the years. According to Lee and Jamil (2003), there are various definitions of organizational commitment are found in the literature. The various definitions and measures of organizational commitment share a common theme which is the linkage of an individual to the organization. On the other hand Organizational commitment is said to be associated with human relation issues such as employee performance, job satisfaction, turnover, absenteeism and achieving organizational goals and objectives thereby it is extremely significant to organization (Memari, Mahdieh, & Marnani, 2013).

According to (Smothers, 2008), organizational commitment can be conceptualized as the feeling and behaviour employee's display by the way they exhibit behavioural activities. In a simple word, it is the binding of individuals to behavioural acts (Meysam & Mohammadi, 2013) opined organizational commitment

to accordance between an individuals' goal and the organization where an individual identifies the relative strength and extend to attempt to represent the goals of an organization.

Salleh, Nair and Harun (2012) viewed organizational commitment as a psychological state that connects an individual to the organization, which reduces the occurrence of turnover. In the study of Prabhakar and Ram (2011), organizational commitment is defined as the psychological attachment formed by an employee in relation to his identification and involvement with the respective organization. It emphasizes on the linkage between employees and the organization. Similar findings from the study of Aries (Miradipta & Jie, 2013) also focuses on a member's relationship with an organization where individual yields an emotional attachment that brings up commitment with a particular organization.

Meyer and Allen (1997) further describes organisational commitment as the backbone of an individual's attachment to the organization, characterized by strong beliefs, acknowledgement and acceptance of the organization's objectives and values. This is being illustrated by the employee's powerful urge to maintain and sustain the membership in the organization by exhibiting the eagerness and willingness to exert additional effort for its benefits.

Organizational commitment is thought to be the linkage between the individual employee and the organization since individuals think over the extent to which their own values and goals relate to that of the organisation as part of organisational commitment (Faisal & Al-Esmael, 2014). Therefore the higher the level of effort provided by employees, the higher the commitment level will be and consequently leads to higher level of performance and effectiveness of both the individual and the organization level (Sharma & Bajpai, 2010).

## **v. Turnover Intention**

At this current stage of globalization era many companies fail to keep hold on to their employees in the long terms. According to (Oluwafemi, 2013), turnover intention explains on the relative strength of an individual's purpose or intent toward voluntary permanent withdrawal from an organization. It is basically a motive or purpose that drives an employee to quit from his or her current workplace. Abassi and Hollman (2000) explain turnover of employee as the rotation of workers between the condition of employment and unemployment, jobs and occupations and around the labor market and firms.

According to (Abdali, 2011), turnover is the ratio of the number of employees who leaves an organization at a particular time period with the average number of employees staying in that organization at the same time. It is a behavior which describes the process of leaving of replacing employees in an organization. Turnover intention is associated with elements of employee which is; the thought or feeling to quit the job, the intention to find for another job and intention to quitting the job (Carmeli & Weisberg, 2006).

In most cases, turnover intention can happen either voluntarily where employee decides to leave the company by willingly (Schyns, Torka, & Gossling, 2007) or involuntarily, replacing an employee for a job position, mostly without the prior willingness of the employee (Bothma & Roodt, 2013) According to (Ibrahim, Usman, & Bagudu, 2013), the rate of turnover varies from institutions to institutions. Sometimes employee turnover is a benefit to an organizations in a positive way. Sometimes it is seen that a poor performer is replaced by a better skilled employee and also a retired employee is replaced by a young one.

According to Terez (2000), there are several costs that organizations will incur in the view of high level of turnover, which are training cost, replacement cost, vacancy cost and separation cost. Employee turnover is also costly as it incorporates with different cost such as recruitment cost, cost that needs to be covered during the time when there is a vacancy, the cost of training new employees, etc. Turnover occurs for many different reasons. A new job may attract an employee and force them to leave the old job. There are various factors that lead to turnover intention such as employee's attitude, job satisfaction, commitment, management, compensation offered and their own evaluation and judgement regarding decisions (Berry, 2010).

#### **vi. The Relationship between Organizational Commitment and Turnover**

Organizational commitment is widely accepted as a backbone in strengthening the in order to reduce turnover intention (Mohammad, 2006). It is also believed that employees may feel obliged when employers give some acknowledgement to their efforts by offering them proper benefits and opportunities to excel which subsequently leads to reciprocation of commitment in the organizations (Tansky & Cohen, 2001).

Social exchange theory asserts that organizational commitment is expected to lower turnover intentions (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). Employees feel that they ought to remain with an organization and thus they stay by virtue of their belief that it is morally right to do so. Many scholars have frequently studied on organizational commitment and agreed on the general perception that employee who demonstrate strong commitment towards the organization are likely to leave the organization as well (Siong, Mellor, Moore, & Firth, 2006; Allen & Meyer, 1990; Tett & Meyer, 1993). Firth, Mellor, Moore and Loquet (2004) mentioned that turnover intention is mainly influenced by employees' commitment and their dissatisfaction from job.

Several studies have confirmed the importance of organizational commitment as a role in influencing intention to leave (Chen & Yu, 2014) and organizational commitment's negative relationship to intention to leave (Vecina et al., 2011). Furthermore, Wong (2002) present that organizational commitment might contribute more significantly to predict employee turnover intention, which is being agreed by Khatri et al. (2011), where it has resulted a negative relationship towards turnover intentions.

### **3.4 Population and Sampling**

Sampling design is the process of selecting a number of units from a larger group in this study. According to Nonan (2008), sampling measures a small portion of population and then making a general statement about the whole thing. Besides that, it includes the target population, sampling frame and location, sampling elements, sampling technique and sample size.

Singleton and Straits (2005) defined population as an element about overall persons targeted to be study by researcher. They note that experience researcher always get a clear picture of the population before selecting the sample. Sampling is part of the element in the population. While simple in principle, sampling can be fraught with difficulties in practice. However, sampling is an important subject in statistics and it is easier to ask more questions with sample. Sampling is economical, convenient and can provide quicker results and a good sample must be valid in terms of precision.

Judgment sampling involves collecting information from subjects who are in the best position to provide the information required. By virtue of having gone through experiences and processes themselves, they might be expected to have expert knowledge and perhaps be able to provide good data or information to the researcher.

Thus, the judgment sampling design was used when a limited number of category of people have the information that is sought. In such cases, any type of probability sampling across a cross-section of the entire population is purposeless and useless, (Sekaran, 2001).

Judgment sampling may curtail the generalizability of the findings because we are using a sample of experts who are conveniently available to us. However, it is the only viable sampling method for obtaining the type of information that is required from very specific pockets of people who alone possess the needed facts and can give the information sought. (Delahaye, 2001).

In this study, the study population was the employees at Oil palm plantations such as Trade Wind, BBC, Wilmar, SOPB, SIME DARBY and BLD at Bintulu Division, Sarawak. The sample was used as a representation of the estimated total of 160,000 people working in the oil palm industry in Sarawak (Felix, 2022). Sampling techniques in this study was a probability sampling. Probability sampling is based on the concept of random selection, a controlled procedure that assures each population a known nonzero chance of being selected as a sample. Simple random sampling which is the simplest form of probability sampling was used in this study. Zikmund (2003) supported that this sampling type has equal chances to be selected. Hence, this study will try to include about 200 employees as study population with limited time frame.

#### **3.4.1 Target Population**

Roughly 200 local employees amongst executives, administrative, assistant managers and managers at oil palm plantations in the Bintulu Division, as the study populations' or the target of population, whereby this sample would be targeted for collection of the complete observations related to the research for the purpose of allowing the researcher



able to make the necessary conclusions (Kitchenham & Pfleeger, 2002). As mentioned previously this study sample was used as a representation of the estimated total of 160,000 people working in the oil palm industry in Sarawak (Felix, 2022). For the purpose of this DBA, as a purely academic exercise, foreigners and general workers with low educational levels shall be excluded from the study sample.

### **3.4.2 Sampling Frame and Location**

Set of elements used by the researchers to select a sample of the target population is defined as sampling frame. It may not be important to the non-probability technique. According to Trochim (2006), non-probability technique cannot depend upon the rationale of probability theory. Hence, non-probability technique cannot be used to deduce and make inferences from the sample to the population. Besides that, the study was carried out at the entirely employees.

### **3.4.3 Sampling Elements**

Sample elements can be defined as the respondents who participate in the research study (Latham, 2007). In order to participate in the research, the respondents should have some of characteristics, for example, the respondent must have an experience dealing with HR activities. In addition, the researchers will look for the targeted respondents who have not done the questionnaire before (in pilot test) so that they can avoid for the repetition data.

### **3.4.4 Sampling Technique**

The convenient sampling method or non-probability sampling method is suitable used as a sampling technique in this research study. Convenient sampling is a non-probably sampling method. As per the work of Rahi (2017), convenience sampling alludes to

the process of data collection from a research population which is conveniently within reach to the researcher as per this study. The convenience sampling method offers significant practical benefits, most importantly for the present study is in reducing the cost and expediting data collection within the allotted time frame (Lohr, 2021) which leads to its selection for application in the present study. The respondents selected to become the sample is due to their convenient accessibility to the researchers. Additional information from interviews with respondents as per Lune and Berg (2018) would be obtained whenever the opportunity arose to garner further perspectives from the point of the interviewee. The validity of the research questionnaire developed for this study in terms of content, predictive, concurrent and construction has been vetted by the supervisor through rigorous discussion in relation to fulfilling the study objectives.

The researcher will distribute the study questionnaire to the respondents who are willing to participate and must qualify in term of the pre-set sampling elements. Besides, the non-probability sampling method is selecting sample from population and it does not involve random selection. One advantage of this method is low cost as compared to the probability sampling. Questionnaires distribution is the best instruments to collect the respondents' information. This is because these instruments will give an accurate and efficient result and are the most inexpensive method among the others. Impromptu interviews with selected respondents will also be utilized to garner additional data from the sampled group.

### **3.4.5 Sample Size**

Sample size is relevant in this study because it will be more accurate if obtain large sample size. According to Krejcie and Morgan (1970), the appropriate sample size to

be use can be determined by using the table to determinate sample size from a given population. This table is creating by Krejcie and Morgan in one of their research name Determining Sample Size for Research Activities. The population for this research is the employees at two oil palm companies in Bintulu, Sarawak. The estimation of the total numbers of the employees are about 200 persons for 2021.

With the advantage in technology, the sample size could also be determined using computer software downloaded from <http://www.raosoft.com/samplesize.html>. In using this software, researcher needs to determine the percentage of confidence level, which is the amount of uncertainty researcher can tolerate. Based on the 95% confidence level, the sample size recommended for this study is at 76 respondents.

Higher confidence level requires a larger sample size. An alternative option for sampling size is at 90% confident level with recommended sampling size at 68 persons. The study is said to be most reliable with maximum confidence level. Therefore, with a confidence level of 95%, the sample size of 76 is acceptable. Table 3.2 below based on Raosoft Calculator shows the above calculation:

**Table 3.2: Sampling Size Based on Raosoft Calculator**

<b>Confidence level</b>	<b>Population</b>	<b>Sampling Size</b>
At <b>95 %</b>	200	<b>76</b>
At 90 %	200	68

*Source: <http://www.raosoft.com/samplesize.html>*

### **3.5 Chapter Summary**

This chapter described research methodologies employed in data collection for this study purpose. The measurement used in the survey are open ended questions, which is using email and the internet to send out the survey questionnaires to all students

whom sampling size and population was described. This finding is enhanced to ensure there is consistency with corresponding findings from population sample.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **STUDY FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS**

#### **4.0 Introduction**

Due to the devastating effects of the COVID-19 virus on a wide range of human activities, there is a need to rethink suitable educational approaches to complement traditional face-to-face learning at all levels. Countries around the world have risen to the occasion and have implemented immediate measures not only to curb the spread of the virus but also to provide uninterrupted learning to their students. In Malaysia, the pandemic has led to the closure of physical based learning at all learning institutions starting in early 2020; these institutes were instructed to offer online classes instead. Most, if not all were caught off guard. In response, the MOE has taken efforts to promote online learning as the “new normal” for learning institutions through improving Internet access and speeding up infrastructure development and telecommunication network upgrades.

In addition to that, the Teaching and Learning at Home for distance learning programmes was implemented as an alternative learning model. Distance learning was offered online, offline as well as off-site. Lecturers could conduct teaching and learning lessons through online learning platforms such as Digital Educational Learning Initiative Malaysia (DELIMa), Cikgootube, EduWebTV, and other social media platforms. Online meeting applications such as Google Meet, Google Classroom, Google Hangouts, Microsoft Teams, and Zoom (Arumungam, 2020) were utilized alongside gamification, recorded videos, audio clips, and eBooks. On top of that, students who had no Internet or suitable devices for online learning could still

access their studies by downloading pre-recorded lectures and workbooks whenever access was available.

Online learning is traditionally known as distance education (Hassan & Tahir, 2011). The tools required for the facilitation of online learning such as computers, laptops, tablets and mobile phones with internet access in synchronous and asynchronous environments become the approach of learning methods (Singh & Thurman, 2019). There are two methods in online learning which are synchronous and asynchronous depending on the application of applying timing of interaction (Algahtani, 2011). The synchronous online learning delivers the non-stop communication between the lecturers and students during class over tools such as video conference or chat rooms. While asynchronous online learning offers the chance for the lecturers and students to work together before or after the online class over thread discussion and emails (Algahtani, 2011).

Nevertheless, online learning can be challenging where a major threshold includes the inability to access and be involved in online learning which also taxes the students' commitment and discipline, specifically for vulnerable students who need communication that allows them to reinforce their social skills (UNESCO IESALC, 2020). In developed countries such as Korea and Australia, the students are given the option to choose flexible time for learning. The reason is to make it easier for students to access the teaching handouts (Misko et al., 2004).

Moreover, for developed countries online learning has developed as a new approach of learning (Iqbal & Ahmad, 2010). However, the difficulties had arisen when online learning had been introduced in developing countries (Folorunso et al., 2006). The situation shows that students need to adapt with the new situation in virtual classrooms from traditional classrooms, which is a challenging assignment (Sanchez

Gordon & Luj`an-Mora, 2014). Randy (2011) stated certain students have less knowledge about computer literacy and self-motivation which lead them to access the online learning. Whereas Bhuasiri (2012) mentioned the constraint in online learning for developing countries including investments in technology including hardware, software licenses, learning material development, equipment maintenance, and training.

Usage barrier begins when the original belief is offended by the innovation. Borraz- Mora et al., (2017) defined usage barrier as the innovations that are inconsistent with the way ordinary people work, practice, or habits. Generally, the traditional learning mode is more effective than online learning. However, due to the fight against COVID-19, educational institutions were unable to hold traditional learning sessions and most of the lessons were taking place online. The major challenges with online learning in Malaysia is the poor internet access or lack of devices in a household. From this study perspective, it is predicted that B40 groups will struggle in adoption of online learning due to irregularity of their current practice. Lee (2020) informs from data collected, 60% of the students at Sabah stated that the internet access is unstable or inadequate while in urban areas only 24% of them have devices equipped with internet access.

#### **4.1 Respondents' Demographic Background**

This chapter presents the findings and discussion of the study concerning the student's difficulties and mitigation measure towards distance learning at Oil Palm Plantation at Bintulu, Sarawak. This study is conducted based on the study's objectives and framework as stated in Chapter 1.

Since, the study method adapted for this academic exercise was descriptive analysis, there were more elaboration and discussion based on the statements given by

respondents. The returned questionnaires numbered 76 sets in total, which were accepted for analysis. For the study purposes, the study focuses on manager, supervisor, and clerk exclusively amongst the local workers, foreign workers were excluded from the sampling exercise. As a moderator to the study variables, demographics were taken into consideration. According to Sumbek (2010) stated that attitude towards the questions given in the questionnaires showed collation with the demographic background of the respondents. The mean age amongst respondents was 42.5 years old, still actively employed and predominantly male at 82% of total respondents as shown in Table 4.1.

However, for this academic exercise there were no gender biases in selecting respondents. Operations and management posts amongst plantation workers were mainly male, whereas female staff was mainly in clerical and financial posts at the office. Education background shows that the majority of respondents had completed secondary school at 78 percent, while another 12 percent were diploma holders and above.

**Table 4.1: Breakdown of Respondents According to Gender**

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Respondents</b>
Male	62
Female	14
<b>Total</b>	<b>76</b>

#### **4.1.1 General Demographic Changes**

The demographic dynamics of the major ethnic communities of Malaysia play a pivotal role in the eventual success of the nation. The sustainability of the economic



development of Malaysia depends on the interaction of the hard economic variables and social capital of the major ethnic communities. The aggregated economic variables include the number, percentage share and parity share of the main ethnic groups in income, occupation, industrial sector parity share and social capital.

This is because the parity share of any ethnic group is very sensitive to the relative population size of the ethnic group. For example the parity share of the Bumiputera's in tertiary education will become smaller if the rate of increase of the Bumiputera students in tertiary education is smaller than the population growth rate of the Bumiputera people. The social cohesion of a multi-ethnic society may become imbalanced if the economic parity of an ethnic group is eroded by the higher population growth rate of ethnic group. Hence population dynamics may be the key determinant which needs to be embedded in the design of policies, programs and strategies for national unity and integration.

**Table 4.2: Population Distributions of Malaysia by Regions 1970-2010**

Year	1970	1980	1991	2000	2010	CGR (%)	
						1970- 1990	1991- 2010
Sarawak	976,269	1,308,000	1,718,380	2,008,768	2,354,048	2.73	1.67
Sabah	636,431	1,011,040	1,734,685	1,988,881	2,316,963	5.14	1.54
Peninsula Malaysia	8,826,673	10,780,960	14,321,135	17,892,251	21,342,345	2.33	2.12
<b>Malaysia</b>	<b>10,439,430</b>	<b>13,100,000</b>	<b>17,774,200</b>	<b>21,889,900</b>	<b>26,013,356</b>	<b>2.448</b>	<b>2.02</b>

*Note.* CGR= Compound Growth Rate

Table 4.2 shows that the overall compound annual growth rate of the population of Malaysia from 1991 to 2010 is 2.02 per cent while the compound annual growth rates for Sarawak and Peninsula Malaysia are 1.67 per cent and 2.12 per cent respectively. Computation of the compound annual growth rate during the 1970-1991 period shows that Sabah has an unusually high growth rate of 5.14 per cent. The growth rates for the Sarawak and Peninsula Malaysia are consistent to the growth rate of most developing nations during the 1970-1991 period while Sabah registers a growth rate of 5.14 per cent.

Such a high growth rate is not consistent with the natural growth rate of a developing state. This implies that the population structure of Sabah has been used instrumentally by 'Political Entrepreneurs' to achieve their economic and political goals. As a result, as of 2000, Sabah has 614, 324 Non-Malaysian Citizens (NMC) which is 30.9 per cent of all the NMC in Malaysia. Apart from Labuan which has 21.2 per cent NMC, the percentages of NMC in all the other states of Malaysia, range from 1.5 per cent to 6.5 per cent.

The sudden influx of population from neighbouring countries could have a negative impact on the political stability of Sabah and Malaysia as a whole. The 2010 Labour Force Survey Report indicates that 60.4 per cent of the Non Malaysian Citizens in the labour force have either only primary or no formal education while only 5.8 per cent have tertiary education. Their participation in the labour force significantly lowers the labour productivity of the Malaysian labour force.

#### **4.1.2 Sarawak Population Projection**

At state level over the 10-year period (2000-2010), the population reported average growth at 1.8 per cent, whereas for Kuching is reported to experience a 1.9 per cent

growth as shown in Table 4.3. In contrast Bau District recorded average growth rate at 2.3 per cent compared to Lundu District at 1.7 per cent.

This rapid population growth is mainly due to natural growth and migration of workers from other districts of Sarawak. Inter-district migration has accounted for approximately 8.5 per cent of the growth throughout the state. In 2000, the population density of Kuching Division was approximately 200 persons per sq. km. This trend is expected to continue in future and inevitably will put pressure on living space, recreational facilities and public infrastructures, especially within the city center. Based on the 2010 census, more than two thirds of the total population of Kuching Division are residing in urban areas with the rest found in the city outskirts. Within the city outskirts lie the scattered townships such as Batu Kitang, Batu Kawa, Kota Sentosa, Kota Padawan, Beratok, Sg. Maong Bazaar, Muara Tuang, Santubong, Siburan, Tapah, Bau and Lundu.

**Table 4.3: Sarawak: Population by Administrative District 2010 & 2017**

<b>Administrative District</b>	<b>2010</b>			<b>2017</b>		
	<b>Total</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Total(p)</b>	<b>Male(p)</b>	<b>Female(p)</b>
<b>SARAWAK</b>	<b>2,471,140</b>	<b>1,273,112</b>	<b>1,198,028</b>	<b>2,789,700</b>	<b>1,453,200</b>	<b>1,336,500</b>
Kuching	<b>617,887</b>	313,442	304,445	<b>684,900</b>	348,700	336,300
Bau	<b>54,246</b>	27,903	26,343	<b>60,000</b>	31,100	28,800
Lundu	<b>33,413</b>	17,349	16,064	<b>37,600</b>	19,800	17,800
Samarahan	<b>87,923</b>	43,532	44,391	<b>98,400</b>	49,000	49,400
Serian	<b>91,599</b>	46,536	45,063	<b>101,800</b>	52,100	49,700
Simunjan	<b>39,226</b>	20,111	19,115	<b>44,700</b>	23,200	21,500
Asajaya	<b>31,874</b>	16,172	15,702	<b>36,100</b>	18,500	17,600
Sri Aman	<b>66,790</b>	33,846	32,944	<b>74,900</b>	38,200	36,700
Lubok Antu	<b>27,984</b>	13,830	14,154	<b>31,700</b>	15,800	15,800
Betong	<b>62,131</b>	31,044	31,087	<b>70,200</b>	35,400	34,800

Saratok	<b>46,094</b>	22,912	23,182	<b>52,000</b>	26,100	25,900
Sarikei	<b>58,021</b>	29,344	28,677	<b>64,800</b>	33,000	31,800
Maradong	<b>29,441</b>	14,429	15,012	<b>33,300</b>	16,500	16,800
Julau	<b>15,816</b>	7,840	7,976	<b>17,900</b>	8,900	8,900
Pakan	<b>15,480</b>	7,916	7,564	<b>17,600</b>	9,200	8,500
Sibu	<b>247,995</b>	127,192	120,803	<b>277,700</b>	144,200	133,500
Kanowit	<b>28,954</b>	14,125	14,829	<b>32,700</b>	16,200	16,500
Selangau	<b>22,819</b>	11,512	11,307	<b>26,100</b>	13,400	12,700
Mukah	<b>42,922</b>	23,460	19,462	<b>49,900</b>	27,900	22,000
Dalat	<b>19,062</b>	9,203	9,859	<b>22,100</b>	10,900	11,200
Matu	<b>17,369</b>	8,672	8,697	<b>20,300</b>	10,400	9,800
Daro	<b>30,671</b>	16,101	14,570	<b>36,000</b>	19,400	16,600
<b>Bintulu</b>	<b>189,146</b>	102,647	86,499	<b>220,000</b>	121,800	98,200
Tatau	<b>30,383</b>	16,101	14,282	<b>35,400</b>	19,200	16,200

Kapit	<b>56,053</b>	27,695	28,358	<b>63,000</b>	31,300	31,700
Song	<b>20,595</b>	10,295	10,300	<b>23,400</b>	11,900	11,500
Belaga	<b>36,114</b>	21,083	15,031	<b>42,500</b>	25,300	17,200
Miri	<b>300,543</b>	160,377	140,166	<b>342,800</b>	185,600	157,200
Marudi	<b>64,018</b>	33,684	30,334	<b>73,500</b>	38,900	34,500
Limbang	<b>48,186</b>	24,551	23,635	<b>54,400</b>	27,900	26,600
Lawas	<b>38,385</b>	20,208	18,177	<b>44,000</b>	23,300	20,700

*Source : Department of Statistics, Malaysia*

Notes : Population projections 2017 based on the adjusted Population and Housing Census of Malaysia 2010.

The added total for population 2017 may differ due to rounding. (p) preliminary

The population projection for the state of Sarawak was estimated for 2015, 2020 and 2030 in-line with SCORE development and future master plan planning, projection for 2025, 2040 and 2050 was estimates by the respective Consultant. In general and for better understanding, the State of Sarawak was divided into three major regions namely; Northern Region, Central Region and Southern Region. Hence, the population projection for each region are as shown in the respective Table 4.4, Table 4.5 and Table 4.6.



**Table 4.4: Population Forecast 2006-2050, Northern Region of Sarawak**

Division	District	2000	2006	2010	2015	2020	2025	2030	2035	2040	2045	2050
Miri	Miri	220	263	304	340	378	426	475	514	592	619	661
	Marudi	71	83	96	106	120	130	140	152	150	157	160
Limbang	Limbang	40	46	55	61	70	78	81	88	96	100	110
	Lawas	33	38	45	50	53	58	62	67	70	74	80
Total Northern Region		364	430	500	557	621	692	758	821	908	950	1,011
% Population Share		18.1	18.2	18.0	17.4	16.9	16.9	16.5	16.3	16.0	15.2	15.0

**Table 4.5: Population Forecast 2006-2050, Central Region of Sarawak**

Division	District	2000	2006	2010	2015	2020	2025	2030	2035	2040	2045	2050
Sibu	Sibu	205	255	290	305	320	355	370	395	435	478	560
	Selangau	20	22	22	23	24	24	25	25	28	30	40
	Kanowit	27	30	30	31	31	31	32	32	35	37	40

Bintulu	Bintulu	138	167	250	367	480	575	607	664	800	889	949
	Tatau	23	28	29	35	40	42	45	45	55	65	80
Kapit	Kapit	58	65	70	80	85	100	110	115	130	140	155
	Belaga	23	28	30	32	33	34	35	35	35	44	55
	Song	19	22	22	22	22	22	22	23	25	28	40
Mukah	Mukah	31	35	65	95	120	165	220	248	390	425	475
	Dalat	17	21	23	25	26	28	35	45	50	65	75
	Matu	15	23	23	25	25	26	35	45	62	67	70
	Daro	26	30	45	60	105	120	177	202	230	256	280
Sarikei	Sarikei	48	55	74	95	100	120	130	140	150	165	195
	Bintangor	26	28	28	20	30	31	32	37	40	50	65
	Julau	17	20	22	22	22	22	22	27	30	45	50
	Pakan	15	17	18	18	20	20	20	26	30	35	40

<b>Total Northern Region</b>	<b>708</b>	<b>846</b>	<b>1,041</b>	<b>1,255</b>	<b>1,483</b>	<b>1,715</b>	<b>1,917</b>	<b>2,104</b>	<b>2,525</b>	<b>2,819</b>	<b>3,169</b>
<b>% Population Share</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>47</b>

**Table 4.6: Population Forecast 2006-2050, Southern Region of Sarawak**

		Year										
<b>Division</b>	<b>District</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2025</b>	<b>2030</b>	<b>2035</b>	<b>2040</b>	<b>2045</b>	<b>2050</b>
Kuching	Kuching	496	572	657	735	841	884	1,037	1,154	1,196	1,293	1,300
	Lundu	27	31	34	35	38	45	50	56	60	63	100
	Bau	42	48	51	57	60	68	73	80	85	88	125
Samarahan	Samarahan	47	55	66	75	85	92	101	112	120	125	130
	Asajaya	29	32	40	46	52	56	60	69	70	85	90
	Serian	80	91	110	126	142	154	160	178	185	190	200
	Simunjan	38	42	44	44	46	48	56	60	70	75	80
Sri Aman	Sri Aman	54	60	72	82	95	106	119	140	154	165	190

	Lubok Antu	27	34	35	36	38	40	43	44	46	55	60
Betong	Betong	57	71	73	79	89	118	125	139	160	175	183
	Saratok	43	48	55	67	79	85	88	95	98	97	105
<b>Total Northern Region</b>		<b>940</b>	<b>1,084</b>	<b>1,237</b>	<b>1,382</b>	<b>1,567</b>	<b>1,696</b>	<b>1,912</b>	<b>2,127</b>	<b>2,244</b>	<b>2,411</b>	<b>2,563</b>
<b>% Population Share</b>		<b>47</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>SARAWAK</b>		<b>2,012</b>	<b>2,360</b>	<b>2,778</b>	<b>3,194</b>	<b>3,671</b>	<b>4,103</b>	<b>4,587</b>	<b>5,052</b>	<b>5,677</b>	<b>6,180</b>	<b>6,743</b>
<b>% AAGR</b>			<b>2.71</b>	<b>4.16</b>	<b>2.83</b>	<b>2.82</b>	<b>2.25</b>	<b>2.26</b>	<b>1.95</b>	<b>2.36</b>	<b>1.71</b>	<b>1.76</b>

1. 2000 Census (Unadjusted)
2. 2006 and 2010 – UPEN estimates
3. 2015, 2020 and 2030 – SCORE estimates
4. 2025, 2040 and 2050 – Consultant's estimate

### 4.1.3 Bintulu District Profile

Bintulu Division comprises of two administrative districts namely Bintulu District and Tatau District with a total land area of 12,166.2km<sup>2</sup> (7,220.4 km<sup>2</sup> for Bintulu Districts and 4,945.80km for Tatau District). Overall, the division accounts for 9.8 per cent of the total land area of Sarawak. Whereas, the population comparison from 2000 to 2010 show increasing pattern as shown in Table 4.7 below. Bintulu District recorded almost 200,000 people, compared to 31, 300 people in Tatau District.

**Table 4.7: Sarawak Population Distribution According to District**

Administrative District	2000			2010		
	Male	Female	Total	Urban	Rural	Total
<b>SARAWAK</b>	<b>1,018,308</b>	<b>991,585</b>	<b>2,009,893</b>	<b>964,393</b>	<b>1,0045,500</b>	<b>2,506,500</b>
<b>Kuching</b>	<b>247,537</b>	<b>246,572</b>	494,109	<b>422,240</b>	<b>71,869</b>	<b>600,200</b>
Bau	21,499	20,325	41,824		41,824	49,700
Lundu	13,950	13,395	27,345		27,345	33,700
<b>Samarahan</b>	<b>23,583</b>	<b>23,383</b>	46,966	<b>23,064</b>	<b>23,902</b>	<b>54,700</b>

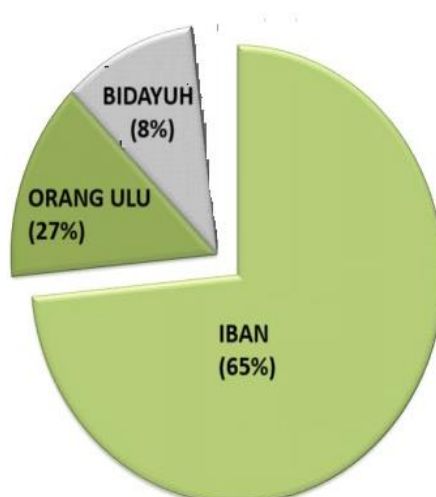
Serian	40,002	39,630	79,632		79,632	96,00
Simunjan	18,852	18,435	37,287		37,287	43,100
Asajaya	14,477	14,036	28,513		28,513	33,700
<b>Sri Aman</b>	<b>31,244</b>	<b>31,531</b>	62,775	<b>21,243</b>	<b>41,532</b>	<b>76,500</b>
Lubok Antu	11,584	11,671	23,255		23,255	25,100
<b>Betong</b>	<b>25,346</b>	<b>25,046</b>	50,392		<b>50,392</b>	<b>72,900</b>
Saratok	21,032	21,003	42,035		42,035	52,000
<b>Sarikei</b>	<b>28,725</b>	<b>28,371</b>	57,096	<b>25,053</b>	<b>32,043</b>	<b>66,700</b>
Maradong	14,180	14,762	28,942		28,942	33,300
Julau	16,185	15,538	31,723		31,723	40,000
<b>Sibu</b>	<b>104,814</b>	<b>105,304</b>	210,118	<b>167,427</b>	<b>42,691</b>	<b>257,800</b>
Kanowit	13,228	13,915	27,143		27,143	32,700
<b>Mukah</b>	<b>23,054</b>	<b>21,783</b>	44,837		<b>44,837</b>	<b>55,100</b>
Dalat	11,358	12,104	23,462		23,462	29,200

Matu	5,286	5,897	11,183		11,183	14,500
Daro	7,446	7,405	14,851		14,851	18,900
<b>Bintulu</b>	<b>73,693</b>	<b>65,319</b>	139,012	<b>103,733</b>	<b>35,279</b>	<b>199,900</b>
Tatau	12,225	11,016	23,241		23,241	31,300
<b>Kapit</b>	<b>28,166</b>	<b>28,543</b>	56,709	<b>13,610</b>	<b>43,099</b>	<b>71,100</b>
Song	9,562	9,674	19,236		19,236	24,400
Belaga	12,778	10,118	22,896		22,896	30,300
<b>Miri</b>	<b>113,715</b>	<b>107,340</b>	221,055	<b>169,005</b>	<b>52,050</b>	<b>281,300</b>
Marudi	37,333	34,380	71,713		71,713	90,100
<b>Limbang</b>	<b>20,400</b>	<b>19,417</b>	39,817	<b>19,018</b>	<b>20,799</b>	49,700
Lawas	17,054	15,672	32,726		32,726	<b>42,500</b>

Source: Sarawak Fact and Figure, 2015

Ethnic composition shows that the Iban respondents (65 %) followed by Orang Ulu at 27 percent and the remaining were Bidayuh (8%) as shown in the following pie chart (Figure 4.1)

**Figure 4.1: Ethnic Compositions of Respondents**



Their position range from clerk to manager level, whereas their experience range from 3 years to more than 10 years working in plantation. The entire respondents claim that they are willing to further their study to the higher level. According to the MPOB's smallholder report for 2017 the number of independent palm oil smallholders for each district in Sarawak is listed as per Table 4.8 as follows:

**Table 4.8: Independent Oil Palm Smallholders in Sarawak by District**

District	No of Independent Smallholders	Total Area (ha)
Betong	3 672	15 933
<b>Bintulu</b>	<b>3 398</b>	<b>20 360</b>
Kapit	870	4 591
Kuching	1 482	12 062
Limbang	1 021	4 878
Miri	11 565	71 258



Mukah	1 719	9 692
Samarahan	4 512	27 244
Sarikei	2 087	12 672
Sibu	2 188	11 979
Sri Aman	2 466	10 596
<b>Total</b>	<b>34 980</b>	<b>201 266</b>

*Source: MPOB, 2017*

Bintulu has the second highest number of palm oil smallholders in Sarawak at 3,398 individuals farming a total of 20,360 ha of palm oil.

#### **4.2 Funding and Perks for Learning**

Distance education is a provision of flexible opportunities due to which students can access formal learning from wherever they are located. The three characteristics that define distance education are as follows: (1) the learning community is mostly in a separate space; (2) the process of instruction is assisted by two-way interaction between the instructors and students; (3) technology is used to facilitate learning and communication [Casey, 2008]. In the past decade, many universities worldwide started to offer distance learning programs and courses to reach students who find it difficult to pursue their studies due to constraints of time, geographical distance and commitments.

Various tools have been developed to digitalize educational resources as well as to enable instructors to meet and engage the learners virtually, such as the learning management system, digital books and so on [Martin, Stamper, and Flowers, 2020]. Despite the increasing adoption of technology, some institutions have not yet implemented online distance learning as they are not prepared for an entirely web-

based experience [Coman, Țîru, Meseșan-Schmitz, Stanciu, and Bularca, 2020]. Online learning is normally considered an alternative or complementary to physical classroom instruction for gaining knowledge and integrating technology [Arifiati, Nurkhayati, Nurdawati, Pamungkas, Adha, Purwanto, Julyanto & Azizi, 2020].

However, the emergence of the deadly coronavirus disease at the end of 2019, which gradually effected the whole world, brought instant and dramatic changes in education. As a measure to control and minimize virus transmission, the governments in many countries around the world, including Malaysia, implemented mandatory closure of educational institutions and all their physical teaching and learning activities. In Malaysia, the disease started to emerge at the end of February 2020, and the lockdown was then imposed on the 18th of March, 2020, following the Movement Control Order (MCO) issued by the government. To ensure continuation of learning, academic institutions had no choice but to implement emergency remote education [Hasani, Adnan, Sensuse, Kautsarina & Suryono, 2020].

This abrupt paradigm shift from traditional face to face methods of learning to completely internet-based instruction greatly impacted everyone involved, particularly the students who registered for face-to-face education in campus, but, all of a sudden, had to switch from the conventional style of learning that they desired and had been accustomed to. Further, those residing in rural areas or in a non-conducive environment faced greater challenges to learning efficiently online [Ilias, Baidi, Ghani, and Razali, 2020].

Educators and learning institutions also encountered difficulties in adapting to the sudden change [Alturise, 2020]. For instance, lecturers were forced to tailor activities and assessments to the digital environment and also had to learn to use various technology-enhanced educational tools in a short span of time. Moreover,

unstable or insufficient networks also posed unprecedented challenges for both lecturers and students when conducting live video conferencing sessions [Sia & Abbas Adamu, 2020].

Any business firm's primary objective is to show superior performance and exceed the competitors in the market. This objective does not provide a base for their survival only but also for their success in the emerging market. And the performance of any firm depends on the firm's workforce (Kianto, Sáenz, & Aramburu, 2017). Human resources are taken as the most significant firms' sources (Haq, Nawaz, Mahtab, & Cheema, 2012). Human resources are more critical to the firm's survival and performance than any other resources as it is the workforce in the firms that uses other assets to operate the firm's functions, create competitive advantages, and realize the firms' goals in the form of superior performance.

Similarly, in the palm oil industry, human resources' crucial role cannot be denied as it is the workforce that performs function from the exploration, acquisition, cleanliness of palm to its distribution in the market. Keeping in mind the core significance of human resources in a firm, the human resource management practices must be efficiently implemented and executed so that the human resources have skills, talent, proper education, knowledge, organizational commitment, and work motivation (Ogunyomi & Bruning, 2016).

Their study addresses three significant human resource management practices, such as selecting employees, training, and compensation to employees. The selection of human resources for business firms is a significant process because hiring adequate resources can help the firms gain superior performance. Similarly, the employees' periodical training creates the required skills in them for doing their jobs qualitatively and effectively, which results in the firm's superior performance (Delery & Roumpi,

2017). Moreover, the compensation on the part of the firm to the employees creates work motivation and organizational commitment in them, bringing improvement in the performance. Malaysia's palm oil industry is growing rapidly, with effective selection and training of employees and right compensation to the employees.

Selection is one of the effective practices of human resource management, choosing and picking the right candidate who seems to be most appropriate for the vacant job position in the business firm. In the words of Abernethy, Dekker, and Schulz (2015), the selection is the way of interviewing the candidate for the vacant job and judgment of their qualities required for the vacant position and then choosing an appropriate candidate. The study proposes that the candidate's selection by the human resources managers for a specific job ultimately affects their performance. The selection of competent, educated, talented, and experienced persons for a vacant position will surely be an asset to the firm, helping achieve performance-related goals (Bender, Bloom, Card, Van Reenen, & Wolter, 2018).

Training is an essential human resource management practice that affects the employees' skills and attitudes, which further affects the overall firm's performance. Training is the way to provide the employees with the required skills to perform their functions efficiently, accurately, and skillfully. It's not a continuous process, but it's provided periodically within a given timeline, and training must be provided by a professional or an expert in the concerned field. Long term research and investigation have proved that training is needed almost at every stage of the job and for all employees. The quality of the employees to be Up-dated contributes a lot to the firm's overall performance and keeps them updated with the rapidly changing environment, concepts, and technologies periodical training proves to be significant (Alasadi & Al Sabbagh, 2015).

For improved and consistent performance, organizational retention and organizational commitment are needed, which is possible if the human resource management arrangement compensation to the employees. Compensation is the provision of rewards to employees in return for their labor, and it consists of payments such as profit sharing, bonuses, overtime payment, sales commission, recognition awards, retirement benefits, pension, and different allowances. Compensation is an essential practice of human resource management that encourages the workforce and improves organizational effectiveness and overall performance (Bennett, Bettis, Gopalan, & Milbourn, 2017).

In Malaysia, some of the reasons for firms' consistent performance are efficient ways of selecting suitable applicants for the vacant positions, the arrangement of training for the employees, and the provision of compensation to the workforce. Organizational support plays a moderating role between human resource practices such as selection, training, compensation, and a firm's financial performance. Organizational support is the employees' perception that the organization values their work and their contribution to the business performance and the sense that the organization cares for their welfare (Hur, Han, Yoo, & Moon, 2015).

The employees who have organizational support are more willing to work for the better performance of the firms. Organizational support also results in inefficient selection, training, and compensation to the employees. On the other hand, organizational learning capability is a mediator between the selection and training of employees and compensation to them and firms' performance. Human resource practices like selection, training, and compensation to the employees add to the organizational learning capability, which further improves the firm's overall performance.

The first study construct was 'Funding and Perks for Learning' comprised of 10 statements as listed in Table 4.9. Respondents' feedback were compiled according to rank, with Rank 1 being the highest feedback, in contrast Rank 10 being the lowest feedback. For the First Rank is the statement saying "Difficulties Access to Finance Aid for Further Study", this refers specifically to difficulty in obtaining funds for studying such as study loans, scholarships or other means of financial support. Study loans are available especially for younger students in the form of PTPTN, Yayasan Sarawak, JPA, besides a portion of EPF.

However, for distance learning this was mainly limited to personal or educational loans from financial intuitions. Hence, they are depending on their own salary to fund their studies. The second statement is "The Study Fees Is Too High, Burden, Not Affordable", directly correlates to the first statement. The limited avenues for securing financial aid for studying amongst respondents becomes a burden to them, which affected their expenses and capability to further study.

Another major hurdle faced by distance learning students was the ready availability of internet and communication facilities. For online learning internet access is compulsory, not only for studying but for daily tasks such as sending reports, updating and reviewing report. There were four statements related to internet connection and telecommunications services. Poor internet connection affected their study become slow and always missed online class. Since, most of the respondents staying in the workers quarters, within the plantation area which is one reason for the poor internet penetration. This is because the plantation only provided internet connection to their office building but not to the worker quarters. Installing a personal internet device is costly. The age of the respondents was another contributing factor. Older respondents are not well versed with ICT and internet device in comparison to

the Y-generation. Their lack of knowledge and capability for utilizing internet devices contributed to the lack of connectivity.

In-contrast, online classroom and material available online recorded the lowest rank. Online classroom and materials were prepared by the respective lecturers according the subjects they taught. Respondents claimed that they faced a major hurdle due to internet connection and penetration.

**Table 4.9: Funding and Perks for Learning**

NO.	STATEMENT	RANK
i.	Difficulties Access To Finance Aid For Further Study	1
ii.	The Study Fees Is Too High, Burden, Not Affordable	2
iii.	Poor Internet Connection At Quarters	3
iv.	Face Difficulties For Online Transaction	4
v.	Organization Not Provided Internet Services To Quarters	5
vi.	Not Well Verse With Internet Equipment/Tools	6
vii.	Have To Scarified Wage Increment If Choose Further Study	7
viii.	Lecturer Not Only Available Online	8
ix.	Experience Of Online Line Classroom Not Like Physical Classroom	9
x.	Online Classroom Not Well Prepared	10

### 4.3 Retention Rate

When a vacancy opens then a new employee to be taken and retrained and this process is called employee turnover (Hussain et al., 2013). Turnover will cause costs to rise when hiring a company re-employment as well as a negative impact on the quality of

service or product (Boudreau, 1992). Moreover, Sarminah (2011) revealed that employers will be lost of benefits and friendships due to the loss of workers technical skills and experiences. Predictors of turnover behaviour have historically been the primary focus of the literature (Maertz et al., 2007). Turnover is influenced by several factors that could predict turnover intention (Sarminah, 2011).

Malaysia still depends on the agricultural sector as a major catalyst for economic growth, employment opportunity, and food security. Interestingly, the palm oil industry as contributed RM67 billion for GNI in 2018. However, the increase in oil palm planted area to 5.81 million hectares (Kushairi et al., 2018) has led to the demand of the labor market, particularly the oil palm industry to rise. Subsequently, most oil palm estates face labour shortages especially in terms of Malaysian unskilled workers and the trend is rising every year (Azman, 2014). The utilization of the local unskilled workforce in the palm oil sector is very limited and it has led the country to continue to be over dependent on foreign workers. In addition, the local worker turnover intention in this sector also high (Zaki et al., 2015).

When there is competition for the local workforce, the estate is willing to offer the best deals to attract workers, the phenomenon of employee turnover is high among oil palm plantation workers. Turnover among local workers in oil palm plantations can be the root of a number of negative effects. Therefore, a study on turnover among local unskilled workers in oil palm sector is vital to determine the level of their tendency to shift to another sector and understand the factors that influence them. The main objectives of this research are to investigate the contribution of demographic and motivation factors on intention to quit among local unskilled employees in oil palm plantation and to determine the turnover intention level among the Malaysian.



#### **4.3.1 Turnover Intention**

Jacob and Roodt (2007) defined turnover intention as an individual decision making either to remain or quit the organization. Turnover intention is associated to turnover behaviour and roles as an immediate indicator to genuine turnover (Salahudin et al., 2016). Lashley (2000) conceptualizes employee turnover to two groups namely as avoidable and the unavoidable situations. He explains the avoidable situations as little salary, physical difficulty of nature of work, work load, poor administration styles, lacking training support, stress, uncomfortable working environments and transportation insufficient. Meanwhile the unavoidable reasons are such as retirement, disability, accident, wedding, delivery leave, further study reasons and others.

Moreover, Moore (2000) agreed that worker's intention to leave is a clear signal of the definite quit. This statement supported by Theory Planned behaviour, conceptualize that intention to accomplish a specific attitude is the good predictor of the behaviour (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975).

Although Sauza-Poza (2007) found that only 25% a turnover intention led to a definite turnover, Price (2001) recommended the turnover intention concept as an option in measuring real turnover. The rates of employee turnover are the essential elements that determine the success of the organizations, the lower rate of turnover will give an advantage to the organization (Akova et al., 2015). Therefore, lower turnover levels are important for organizations in order to continue their operations (Baum, 2006). Thus, it's essential for the institutions to have better retention programs.

#### **4.3.2 Motivation**

Motivation factor is a vital element at the workplace due to productivity and effects the organization performance. However, each individual has need different motivation

(Susan, 2019). Lindner (1998) defined motivation as the inner force that brings individuals to achieve personal and organisation goals. They are several motivation factors studied by past researcher such as job security, freedom, promotions, appreciation of work done, working condition, salary (Zaki et al., 2015; Aarabi et al., 2013; Lindner,1998). Meanwhile, Johnston et. al. (1993) posited that promotions are commonly known as wages increases and subsequently affect lessen withdrawals.

Moreover, Griffeth *et. al.* (2000) revealed that individual satisfaction will influence them to remain in the organization. In addition, social exchange theory conceptualizes that work satisfaction has an insignificant relationship with worker turnover (Lee and Hong, 2011). Likewise, workers might encourage to voluntarily resigning due to the stressful nature of their work environments. If the workers believe the organizations can't fulfill their needs, they will quit the jobs (Hidayati & Fadilah, 2015). Specifically, this study focuses on five motivational factors namely, (a) higher salary and allowance, (b) free health service, (c) career development, (d) retirement scheme and (e) working environment. The ranked importance of motivational factors of employees at oil palm plantation provide useful information for future use by the palm oil industry in Malaysia.

Table 4.10 shows the respondents feedback on retention rate as plantation workers at the Estate under the present study. The 1<sup>st</sup> rank was 'With the available opportunity to further study, hard to maintain staff to be loyal', which is related to the supply and demand workers within plantation industry. By furthering study to the higher level or acquiring better skill, respondents are able to penetrate other estate. This scenario become crucial with better salary offered at other estates. Hence, respondents also agreed that it's difficult to hold or bond any individual from jumping to another estate. Furthermore, the previous estate did not have ant bond amongst

workers while perusing their study. The 2<sup>nd</sup> rank 'With better academic level staff are potentially to moving across the industry' indicated that respondents with better academic not only moving within plantation industry but across the industry. Again, this is their freedom to choose their own carrier especially for the better future prospects. In contrast, if the organization fully sponsored their workers to pursuing their study, bonding for certain period, for sure employee will retain at the same estate, as 3<sup>rd</sup> rank.

However, not all respondents agreed with the movement within or across the plantation industry. The 4<sup>th</sup> rank indicated 'After completed their study not many staff are willing to go back to their previous firm', loyalty with the previous estate. Factor such as comfortable with the work conditions at the office, familiar with the staff and seniority were the attracting factors to retain there. In addition, if the organization do offer promotion to the higher level will become bonuses to retain at the previous organization. Based on feedback from respondents, higher salary was not a good factor to retain staff as mentioned in the 5<sup>th</sup> statement.

The lowest rank was 'If the organization denied their willingness to further study, staff will move to other firm', which indicated the even though staff are not granted to further study, it will not be a reason for them to move out. This is part of retention. Second lowest rank 'Organization don't bother to bonding their staff due to low retention rate', as mentioned earlier not many organization or estate would like to bonding their staff for study in future. Amongst the reasons given were staff movement in future was unpredicted. Beside, other staffs reluctant to be bond especially for longer period. Hence, for both win-win situation no bonding and no staff restrictions, it become an individual decision.

**Table 4.10: Retention Rate**

NO	STATEMENT	RANK
i.	With the available opportunity to further study, hard to maintain staff to be loyal	1
ii.	With better academic level staff are potentially to moving across the industry	2
iii.	More experiences staff are potentially to moving across the industry	3
iv.	After completed their study not many staff are willing to go back to their previous firm	4
v.	Higher salary is not a good motivation for retention	5
vi.	Organization have no authority to control staff movement/resignation	6
vii.	Bonding exercise is good practices to support staff to further study	7
viii.	Organization/firm shall offer incentive for their staff upon completion their study	8
ix.	Organization don't bother to bonding their staff due to low retention rate	9
x.	If the organization denied their willingness to further study, staff will move to other firm	10

The finding demonstrated male respondents have higher turnover intention compared to the female employees. The inclination to shift jobs was high among male workers, whereby about 62% intended to do so in the future whereas for females this was only 49.5%. This result contradicts some past studies. Chen and Francesco (2000) conducted a study in China that found female employees are less committed to the

organization and have a higher intention to quit compared to male employees. The male respondents higher intention to leave, may due to their assumption that working in oil palm plantation in long run, will not permit them to achieve their expected goals.

The age factor had a significant impact on the respondent in regards to changing jobs. The findings of this study revealed that 71.3% intended to move the work are from the Y Generation, which are`aged between 18 years to 35 years. In other words, the younger they are, the higher their intention to leave the oil palm industry. This finding similar to Kabungaidze and Mahlatshana (2013) which revealed that young teachers are more prone to “job hop” to other sectors. Interestingly, the results demonstrated the respondent’s intentions to quit are lower when they are older. This statement supported by Lewis (1991) that found young individuals have high turnover, but continuously declines as employee aged. Another reason, they are still young and need to develop themselves to have a better livelihood.

Their results indicated that respondents with shorter tenure has higher intention turnover compared with respondent with longer tenure. Interestingly, this finding is similar to Lim (2001), who found that Malaysian employees were active job hoppers within the first three years after they are attached with an organization. On a similar note, Hokanson et al. (2011) revealed that the X and Y generation have an average of three years of employment tenure. In addition,Maden (2014) mentioned the long-tenured workers are keen to stay in the organization due to the benefits and compensation provided by the organization to increase worker length of tenure, employers should have retention policies that provide the employee with the vast prospect to continue working with the organization such as recompense the employee’s good performance. This strategy has been proven by past research.

Their results shown that the motivation factors influencing their decisions to remain working in the oil palm plantation were, in order of priority is to get (1) high salary and allowance, (2) the organization need to provide free health services, (3) career development, (4) retirement scheme and lastly (5) working environment. The results demonstrated that motivation factors such as high salary and allowance, provide free health service, career development and retirement scheme are encouraging factors for the workers to remain with an organization. This statement supported by Bouckennooghe *et. al.* (2013) who agreed that rewarding system such as pay for performance could retain the employee with the organization.

Along similar lines of thought, Menefee and Murphy (2004) and Nazirah *et. al.* (2019) mentioned that several factors such as good salary, job satisfaction, promotion opportunities, satisfaction with benefits, and feel satisfied with the working environment would led them to remain in organization. However, to overcome the challenges faced in the working environment, the organization needs to create a culture such as relationship, recognition, involvement and communication in which individuals are motivated by their work.

#### **4.4 Participation and Progress Tracking**

##### **4.4.1 Labour Productivity**

Labour productivity is a major concern for all economic sectors this is because it is a key performance indicator which is directly linked to economic competitiveness, production increases, as well as living standards. In general the term labour productivity can be defined as the volume of output produced per unit of labour (Day, 2018). Thus when labour productivity increases it allows industries to complete a similar output of work using a lesser sized workforce (Langemeier, 2018).

For the administrative aspect, the term labour productivity is based on the concepts of efficiency and effectiveness of labour in achieving optimal use of available resources, and the administration's ability to convert the input to the output of the Organization specifications required and at the lowest possible cost (Al Hawari, 2008). While oil palm is a higher- yielding crop when compared to other vegetable oils, Malaysia and Indonesia are being left behind in terms of productivity improvements. Over the past 20 years, the Malaysian palm oil industry had improved its production yield by 5%, but this was a far cry from the US soybean oil and European rapeseed oil, whose yields had grown by 50% and 45% respectively during a similar period.

Measured labour productivity will vary as a function of other input factors as well as the efficiency with which the factors of production are used (total factor productivity). So, two firms or countries may have the same total factor productivity (productive technologies) but because one has more capital to use, its labour productivity will be higher. Output per worker corresponds to the 'average product of labour' and can be contrasted with the marginal product of labour, which refers to the increase in output which results from a corresponding (marginal) increase in labour input. On top of that, industry player pointed out that the usual harvesting interval or cycle of 20 days has to be extended to 30 days in many Malaysian plantations due to the acute labour shortage. On average, one worker in the plantations (at the field level) in Malaysia produced 174 mt FFB per year.

On a regional basis, labour in Peninsular Malaysia was more productive when compared with the other regions. One worker in Peninsular Malaysia produced about 199 mt FFB per year compared with 161 and 156 mt per year in Sarawak and Sabah, respectively. A FFB harvester and collector in Peninsular Malaysia produces a total of 437 mt FFB per year, higher than in the other regions (MPOB, 2018).

#### **4.4.2 Wages**

According to the Sarawak Labour Ordinance 1952, it is stated that an employee is a person who has signed a service contract with an employer and earns a salary not exceeding RM2,500 per month. Dependency on foreign workers in the oil palm sector is mainly attributed to the lack of interest amongst locals due mainly to low wages and perceived lower social status (Salleh et. al, 2023). Many empirical works have been conducted to examine the relationship between real wages and labour productivity in the developed and developing economies. They found that real wages and labour productivity are closely connected, but the direction of causality for these variables remains ambiguous.

Two theories have rooted the causal relationship between real wages and labour productivity. First, the marginal productivity theory postulated that employers usually practice the performance-based wages and profit optimization strategy. They will recruit labour up to a level where the marginal productivity of labour equal to the marginal cost that is labour wages. As supported by Ting (1997), his study declares the significant of pay that it is strong determinant of job satisfaction. Moreover, he explains two different type of pay practices have effect on job satisfaction; satisfaction with pay itself and satisfaction with financial prospects in the future. There is a longstanding interest of two items which are correlated with job satisfaction.

#### **4.4.3 Benefit**

Although pay, benefits and organizational culture tend to be key indicators of job satisfaction, little attention is given to specific types of benefits, Audry Tillman (2013) advised that one way to mitigate employee turnover was for an organization to offer robust benefits. According to him, those who work for organizations that offer benefits



with which employees are extremely satisfied or very satisfied are six times more likely to stay with their current employers than those who are dissatisfied with benefits. Boushey and Glynn (2012) found that some policies can help to reduce employee turnover, including family- friendly policies that give workers the flexibility to balance work and family.

Meanwhile a recent academic survey showed, employees in faculty, staff or administrators, they tend to be satisfied if they feel their pay reflects their market value and if they have the respect of their co-worker (Bozeman and Gaughan, 2011). As the labor force participation of women and the fraction of dual-earner households in Western countries have increased dramatically in recent years, employers have responded by providing employment benefits, ranging from flexible scheduling to daycare and parental leave, which support a balance between work and family life, the researcher do not find evidence the majority of family supportive benefits increase productivity (Shuja et al, 2017). The exception is that employers offering flexible sick leave and childcare assistance have significantly lower turnover rates.

#### **4.4.4 Positive Climate**

Maimunah (2018) stated that productivity techniques will only flourish in organization which has a positive climate. Working conditions, such as salary and overall environment are important indicators of employment satisfaction and engagement (Hermesen and Rosser, 2008). The International Labour Office (2014), indicates low productivity of workers in the medium and small enterprises in developing countries, Because of poor physical working conditions in the workplace and occupational safety risks and inadequate health facilities. The study of Hameed and Amjad (2009) concluded to strong correlation between workplace design and productivity, and that

58% of the variation in employee productivity due to the design of the work environment. Results of the study Hoskins (2006) indicates that 90% of the senior officials noted that the design of the workplace is important to them and affect their productivity and expected to increase in the employee's performance up to 22%, if their offices are suitably designed.

#### **4.4.5 Appreciation (Reward)**

Every organization requires a strategic reward system for employees (Schaufeli WB et al, 2002). Rewards play an important role in organizations (Bartol and Srivastava, 2002). Merit pay is more likely to be considered as a reward programmes (O'Reilly and Chatman, 1986). Also, merit pay is the allocation of pay raises based on individual performance, and one of the most prevalent compensation practices used by most employers in private sector, state government and local governments (Harmon, 2007). Performance bonus is a monetary reward that is given by employer to employees based on their performance appraisal and organization's profit (LaBelle, 2005).

A bonus scheme is not an easy task to accomplish successfully in the organizations (Teddle and Tashakkori, 2007). A successful bonus scheme depends on performance of organization and focus on efficiency of goal setting process. Monetary rewards that is preferred by employees especially in the lower level category, is money in a form of bonus, trips paid for by the organization, gifts from a rewards catalog, or services such as cell phone or paid cable (Dada, 2004). The recognition of employee successes is a powerful tool in improving employee performance, morale, motivation, and employee productivity (Ahmad et al, 2010). Recognition is an important feeling that a person is made to feel special and appreciated, this type of recognition must

come from those held in high esteem and job positions, such as the managers (Cho et al, 2006).

Challenging work means an increase in the scope of work to the highest level of individual's capability so that employees become more energetic in handling and performing their job (Wong et al, 1999). Let employee have a freedom to make mistake and from this mistake they will learn something new and become better persons. This will improve their performance (Schaufeli WB et al, 2002). Monetary rewards are financial inducement that positively leads to high productivity in the organization.

There were seven statements for this study variables as compiled in Table 4.11. For Participation and Progress Tracking reveal that 'Staff are free moving from one firm to another firm', no restriction from organization amongst their employees as first rank. Hence, any decision to further study is individual decision. On the other hand, higher managerial level also not influenced individual to further study as stated in second rank 'No motivation from higher managerial level for staff to further study'. As discussed earlier organization have no control for staff to further study, moving within industry or across industry. This affected the retention rate among employees. The third rank 'Staff were not expose enough with the opportunity to further study', were due to the location of most plantation at rural and remote area, with lack of internet penetration, minimal basic facilities contributed to lack external exposure and opportunity to further study. In contrast, the learning institute situated at major town. Traveling and driving distance from major towns or learning centers to the respective estate is another restrictive factor.

**Table 4.11: Participation and Progress Tracking**

NO	STATEMENT	RANK
i.	Staff are free moving from one firm to another firm	1
ii.	No motivation from higher managerial level for staff to further study	2
iii.	Staff were not expose enough with the opportunity to further study	3
iv.	Firm are not encourage staff to further their study	4
v.	No rules and regulation for staff to compulsory report their action furthering	5
vi.	Firm did not keep proper record for staff further study	6
vii.	Number of staff furthering their study secretly	7

Interestingly, number of staff furthering study were well known especially among staff within estate, scored as lowest rank, which stated ‘Number of staff furthering their study secretly’. As noticed, almost each of individual whom furthering study via distance learning were knowingly due to not many staff at the respective estate. Action taken and record by organization recorded second lowest rank, ‘Firm did not keep proper record for staff further study’, again due to personal matter among staff. At the moment there is no proper rules and regulation for staff to report if they want to further study. From the organizations perspective, no study leave guaranteed to the staff, if the prefer to further study, staff can apply annual leave or sabbatical leave or unpaid leave.

Employee engagement refers to the level of commitment workers make to their employer, seen in their willingness to stay at the firm and to go beyond the call of duty.<sup>1</sup> Firms want employees that are highly motivated and feel they have a real stake in the company’s success. Such employees are willing to finish tasks in their own time

and see a strong link between the firm's success and their own career prospects. In short, motivated, empowered employees work hand in hand with employers in an atmosphere of mutual trust. Companies with engaged workforces have also reported less absenteeism, more engagement with customers, greater employee satisfaction, less mistakes, fewer employees leaving, and naturally higher profits.

From the employee point of view, it is easy to view engagement as a management fad, particularly if the company fails to demonstrate the necessary commitment. Some also feel that in a recession, employee engagement becomes less of a priority when in fact it could be the factor that enables a business in trouble to stay afloat. Others feel that in an environment where recruitment is easier due to increasing unemployment, firms tend to slacken their commitment to engagement.

#### **4.5 Specialized Performance Appraisal Tools**

Employee's performance appraisal is a subject of great interest in any organisation. In every organisation, employees play a vital role in determining its survival (Rusli Ahmad, 2007a). In line with that, an employee is perceived as an important or valuable asset to an organisation and is the key or prerequisite factor to make sure the operation of the organisation or factory runs as planned. Employees become the heart and pulse of the organisation and really important to determine the needs and expectancies of the client or customers (Muhd Rais Abdul Karim, 1999).

This is aligned with the purpose of performance appraisal in the contemporary approach which emphasizes on employee who has full potentials that can be explored and expanded. Employees can be used positively to sustain the quality of service or product of the organisation. This is associated with the roles and responsibilities of the employees to perform at the highest level of their work competencies. Performance appraisals become more constructive and therefore the progress of the employees are

improved (Rusli Ahmad, 2007b). With the achievement of the organisation's vision and mission, employees can work together collaboratively with the organisation itself based on the win-win basis. In this context, performance appraisal can turn out to be a good device to plan a better career path for the employees.

The term performance appraisal is also known as performance review, employee appraisal, performance evaluation, employee evaluation, employee rating, merit evaluation, or personnel rating. Performance appraisal is a system that involves a process of measuring, evaluating, and influencing employees' attributes, behaviour and performance in relation to a pre-set standard or objective. Performance appraisal can be seen as the systematic description of individual job-relevant strengths and weaknesses for the purposes of making a decision about the individual. In another term, performance appraisal is a process of evaluating the behaviour of the employees in the workplace, or can also be referred as a process of giving feedback on a particular employees' performance.

It involves a very complicated process whereby various factors can influence the process. Therefore, the process of evaluating employee's behaviour should be looked at as a reciprocal process or using a matrix perspective and not as a straightforward process (Rusli Ahmad, 2007a). There are a number of different appraisal approaches/ methods commonly used in organisations with methods used has their advantages as well as disadvantages and there is no right and wrong methods or approaches. Consistency and focus on the usage of the approaches or methodology are crucial to ensure they are successful.

Performance appraisal (PA) is a formal system of review and evaluation of individual or team task performance. A critical point in the definition is the word

formal, because in actuality, managers should be reviewing an individual's performance on a continuous basis.

PA is especially critical to the success of performance management. Although performance appraisal is but one component of performance management, it is vital, in that it directly reflects the organization's strategic plan. Although evaluation of team performance is critical when teams exist in an organization, the focus of PA in most firms remains on the individual employee. Regardless of the emphasis, an effective appraisal system evaluates accomplishments and initiates plans for development, goals, and objectives.

According to Russell and Russell (2010) performance appraisal is often a negative, disliked activity and one that seems to elude mastery. Houghton (2020) stated that managers do not like giving them and employees do not like receiving them. In fact, in one survey, almost 80 percent of workers stated dissatisfaction with their PA process. If this is so, why not just eliminate it? Actually, some managers might do just that if they did not need to provide feedback, encourage performance improvement, make valid decisions, justify terminations, identify training and development needs, and defend personnel decisions as stated by Fox (2010).

Performance appraisal serves many purposes, and improved results and efficiency are increasingly critical in today's globally competitive marketplace. Therefore, abandoning the only program with performance in its name and employees as its focus would seem to be an ill-advised overreaction. On top of these considerations, managers must be concerned about the many legal ramifications. Developing an effective performance appraisal system has been and will continue to be a high priority for management at all organizations.

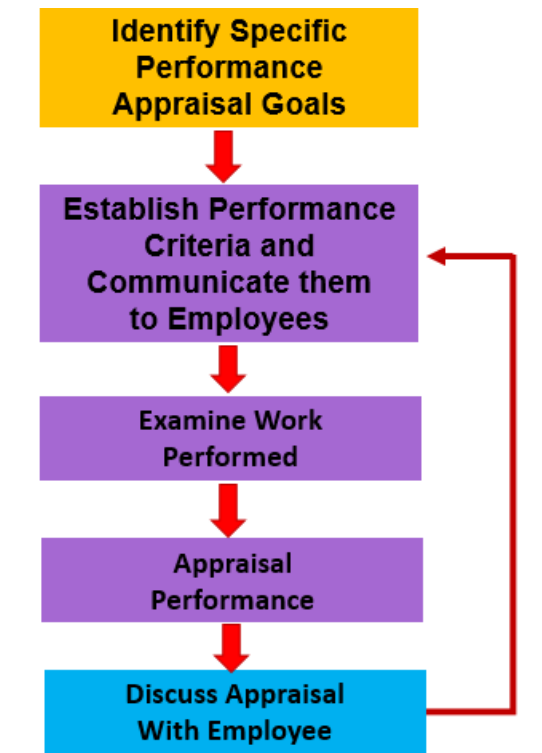
#### **4.5.1 Performance Appraisal Process**

As shown in Figure 4.2, the starting point for the PA process is identifying specific performance goals. An appraisal system probably cannot effectively serve every desired purpose, so management should select the specific goals it believes to be most important and realistically achievable. For example, some firms may want to stress employee development, whereas other organizations may want to focus on pay adjustments. Too many PA systems fail because management expects too much from one method and does not determine specifically what it wants the system to accomplish.

The next step in this ongoing cycle continues with establishing performance criteria (standards) and communicating these performance expectations to those concerned. Then the work is performed and the supervisor appraises the performance. At the end of the appraisal period, the appraiser and the employee together review work performance and evaluate it against established performance standards. This review helps determine how well employees have met these standards, determines reasons for deficiencies, and develops a plan to correct the problems. At this meeting, goals are set for the next evaluation period, and the cycle repeats itself continuously.



**Figure 4.2: Performance Appraisal Process**



For Specialized Performance Appraisal Tools, there were 8 statements given to the respondents as shown in Table 4.12. The first rank for ‘Academic achievement is the key performance appraisal tools’. Commonly higher academic achievement related with higher position in organization. Hence, the performance appraisal were based on this criteria, especially for annual increment. For second rank was ‘Working experiences is good to support performance appraisal tools’, referring to the position working in the organization. Working experiences was good factor for better performance appraisals.

Again, more experiences with better performance appraisal driven to promotion to the higher level. Employees’ performance in the workplace is a continuous process and need to be monitored on a timely basis. This is to ensure that improvements in performance are continuous and within time, the organization becomes a learning organization. Several important purposes of mentoring are to identify the gap that exists between existing employees (with abundance of experience) with new

employees (with minimal experiences); to identify opportunities that can assist existing employees with unfamiliar task or challenges; to identify any problems in advance to achieve the existing standards; and to collect documentation data on the employee's performance for the final appraisal.

Another factor is Multi-discipline background is an advantages for performance appraisal tools scored as third rank. With multiple discipline background staff can master in different field as their advantages. The contemporary approach of performance appraisal is associated with employees as individuals. In this approach, performance appraisal is used as a contributor to employee motivation, development and human resources planning. In the contemporary approach, the purpose of performance appraisal emphasizes that employees have full potentials that can be explored and expanded.

Employees with promising abilities and expertise can be employed positively to sustain the quality of service and product of the organisation. Consequently, with the employees' roles and responsibility to perform at the highest level of their work competencies, performance appraisal tend to be more constructive, parallel with the employees' work development. Employees can cooperate with employers to assure a win-win situation.

**Table 4.12: Specialized Performance Appraisal Tools**

NO	STATEMENT	RANK
i.	Academic achievement is the key performance appraisal tools	1
ii.	Working experiences is good to support performance appraisal tools	2
iii.	Multi-discipline background is an advantages for performance appraisal tools	3

iv.	Individual job performance shall be review in performance appraisal tools	4
v.	Group job performance shall be review in performance appraisal tools	5
vi.	Office Politic' is negative factor for performance appraisal tools	6
vii.	Favoritism occurred in the organization	7
viii.	Biases amongst staff will deviate from the main purposes of performance appraisal	8

One of the most difficult requirements of an effective performance appraisal system is that it is as free as possible from bias. Raters as a human being cannot deny the involvement of bias in their decision making on performance of the ratees. The only thing that the raters can do is to minimise the level of unfairness as possible. Work professionalism plays an important role for the reliability of the assessment process. There are many types of bias that creep into appraisal system and the most reported are recency effect, halo effect, central tendency and prejudice. The lowest rank is for statement saying 'Biases amongst staff will deviate from the main purposes of performance appraisal', which means no biases occurred during conducting performance appraisal. This statement is supported by 7th statement saying 'Favoritism occurred in the organization', again referring to deviance attitude.

#### **4.6 Knowledge Transfer Motivation**

Beyond government investment in the agricultural sector, the industry must look inward to increase the economic feasibility of adopting technology and good agricultural practices. These goals are representative of progress for which Malaysia must strive, not only for the productivity of the plantation industry, but also for the

country's continued economic development. Malaysia has affirmed its support of the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), most recently through the Shared Prosperity Vision 2030, and the agricultural sector provides ample opportunities for progress in the realms of both economic and environmental sustainability (PMO 2019).

As previously stated, smallholder farming practices are a major barrier to sustainability and productivity. Smallholders should be of particular concern for Malaysia under SDGs 8 and 9, which highlight the need to create sustainable job options and also encourage entrepreneurship and productive employment (UNDP 2020). Respondents asserted that a promising strategy is to get larger companies more invested in smallholder success. While smallholders have only a small plot of land and are primarily motivated by making money to support their families, larger companies are more responsive to the demands of their supply chains and the international community (pers. interview, 14 February 2019).

To incentivize investment in smallholders, the most recent iteration of RSPO standards includes investment in the productivity and profit of smallholders as one of the three pillars of their membership criteria. One sustainability advocate explained that larger companies "want a good story;" that is, they are motivated to have business models that show investment in sustainability and local agriculture (pers. interview, 11 April 2019). RSPO members like Johnson and Johnson work to link smallholders to the market by buying their crude palm oil and initiating programs focused on smallholder productivity and capacity development (pers. interview, 11 April 2019).

Although RSPO membership is voluntary, Malaysian Sustainable Palm Oil (MSPO) certification will be mandatory for all in 2020, presenting an opportunity for Malaysia to encourage similar practices that bring together sustainability and

productivity. According to a representative of the Ministry of Primary Industries, improving productivity among smallholders and encouraging them to reinvest part of their income in better farm management and mechanization is one of the goals of MSPO (email correspondence 2019).

While increased investment in smallholder mechanization is beneficial, plantation companies are also recognizing that palm oil harvesting is always going to be labor- intensive, and therefore, trying to improve upon human efficiency is, at best, a short-term approach. Malaysia's industry does not need to clear more land, one sustainability consultant cautioned; to do so will just require more labor that they do not have. Instead, the industry must focus on increasing yields and improving seed varieties (pers. interview, 11 April 2019). On this topic, respondents differentiated between land productivity and harvesting productivity; in terms of land use, palm oil is about 11 times more productive than soybean, 10 times more than sunflower, and seven times more than rapeseed (canola) per hectare per year.

Furthermore, oil palms are a perennial crop, so they produce fruit all year for decades without having to be replanted. Yet in terms of harvesting, all other cooking oils are more efficient than palm oil because the plants are small, allowing for greater mechanization of the harvesting process (pers. interview, 9 January 2019). Therefore, one plantation executive asserted, a longer mechanical harvesting pole may be a short-term solution, but the "long- term solution is a shorter palm tree; the future of the industry is genetics" (pers. interview, 11 February 2019).

Innovations like genetically engineered dwarf palms provide a potential solution to issues of productivity, labor shortages, and sustainability. For example, dwarf palm seedlings of Nigeria's Clonal Palm Series 2 (CPS2) variety are being bred in a government research center in Johor to be 30 percent smaller at maturity than regular

palms. These plants are not without problems; because they are clones, they may not be resistant to pest and diseases. They also cost up to twice that of normal plants, again raising the economic feasibility issue as a barrier to wider adoption. But such innovations show the potential of genetics, both to solve some of Malaysia's plantation industry problems and to work toward SDGs 12–15, which address environmental sustainability (UNDP 2020).

With palm oil coming under fire on the global stage, investment in sustainable planting and harvesting is more important than ever. MPOB asserts that the new variety is an important development in response to labor shortages and limited land availability (Raghu 2018). CPS2 is bred to grow more slowly, adding up to a decade to the economic viability of each tree. What is more, they are reportedly capable of producing about 35.7 MT of fruit per hectare, about two times the current national average in Malaysia (Raghu 2018). Smaller trees and higher yields allow farmers to maximize their land use, thereby increasing the oil yield per hectare and reducing the need to clear more land for planting and protecting against pollution and loss of biodiversity.

Crop diversification is another suggestion that respondents raised as a step toward plantation industry advancement. MPOB encourages diversification among smallholders to supplement their incomes and thereby offset the short-term loss associated with replanting. If smallholders can show that they have committed to livestock breeding with proper ranch facilities, then MPOB can give those funds for livestock (pers. interview, 23 January 2019). Palm oil growers should also consider other crops that are increasingly in demand in international markets, such as coconut products. One company executive reported plans to diversify into crops like coconut, coffee, coco, and stevia.

Currently, India and the Philippines are two of the main growers of coconuts, but both have experienced recent weather disasters, causing large areas of crops to be wiped out. Because of this, the respondent was approached about selling before the company had even started growing, foretelling strong market outlooks (pers. interview, 8 May 2019). The respondent also predicted that Malaysia and Indonesia could become the main producers of stevia in Southeast Asia to serve the demand in the region (pers. interview, 11 February 2019). What is more, with the government's 2019 sugar tax, breaking into the sugar-substitute market is a particularly promising option for Malaysia (Abas 2019). Meijer *et. al.* (2015) espoused that knowledge transfers could potentially add to the sustainable path of reliance directly leaning on transfers of knowledge which in turn results in higher clarification amongst communal farmers and lower workers in the industry on the intention of the policy makers especially in terms of approach and shared philosophies as well as strategies of information procurement.

In sum, migrant labor availability may have created a culture of complacency in the past, but major stakeholders in the sector know that palm oil harvesting is inherently labor- intensive and foreign labor is no longer as cheap, available, or flexible as it once was. Efforts to address labor shortages and productivity challenges provide an opportunity to innovate sustainably and encourage productive work in keeping with Malaysia's commitment to the UN SDGs. However, even with recent increases in technology adoption and innovation, the industry does not have enough labor to operate plantations at maximum productivity, further motivating stakeholders to search for alternatives to traditional mechanization goals.

Table 4.13 shows the Knowledge Transfer Motivation feedback from respondents, referring to traditional knowledge and technology knowledge. The first

rank was statement stated ‘With good academic background will facilitate knowledge transfer’, which due to understanding the instruction and knowledge before shared or transfer to other workers. This is really important to ensure that the information and knowledge was correct to the right persons. The organization will gain benefit from better knowledge amongst workers. To ensure that the knowledge transfer is smoothly, mentor-mentee concept shall be applied. The second rank was for statement ‘More easier transfer knowledge amongst same level of staff’, in a organization with multiple level of staff, communication barriers always occurred.

Hence, transferring knowledge amongst same level of staff were more-easier due their homogeneity in education background, working experiences and daily task, especially refer to the subject matter. For instance, among manager from different block within estate or across the estate. The term use were common and understood. The third highest rank was ‘No barrier in knowledge transfer in the organization’, the knowledge gained from seminar, workshop or training need to shared or transfer to others, for the benefit of organization. In an organization normally manager or supervisor attended seminar, workshop or training for knowledge and to be share with their sub-ordinate in formal session or informal such as at plantation site. Without sharing the knowledge it will be waste of resources.

**Table 4.13: Knowledge Transfer Motivation**

No	Statement	Rank
i.	With good academic background will facilitate knowledge transfer	1
ii.	More easier transfer knowledge amongst same level of staff	2
iii.	No barrier in knowledge transfer in the organization	3



iv.	Knowledge transfer is important to sustain career in the organization	4
v.	Number of staff refuse to received knowledge transfer	5
vi.	Effective in-situ training for knowledge transfer	6
vii.	Result from distance learning is advantages for knowledge transfer	7
viii.	Effective knowledge transfer can be judge for job performance	8
ix.	It is difficult to use local language for knowledge transfer	9

The lowest rank was for the statement stated ‘It is difficult to use local language for knowledge transfer’, based on the understanding of the knowledge, it can be translate and disseminate to other workers to be applied at site. For instance, manager attended courses for applying fertilizer in English language need to translate to Malay Language to ensure understood by local and foreign workers. Even though no need to translate each words for workers. From the knowledge transfer organization gain benefit and improve job performance among staff as supported by the statement ‘Effective knowledge transfer can be judge for job performance’.

#### **4.7 Professional Development for Career Progression**

The oil palm sector contributes the job opportunities to the local community to participate work in plantation sector. However the acceptance of mechanization in oil palm plantation due to high cost of machineries and acceptance of local to work in plantation. Based on Azman (2014), 8.8% of plantation workers dominance by foreign workers which majority were Indonesian workers. The rural youth prefer to work in urban area which provides cozy environment rather than work in the agriculture or

plantation sector which exposed with sunlight. Unfortunately, most of them not interested to work in plantation when they choose agricultural sector as the third choice after manufacturing and retail sector (MOHR, 2016).

According to Aman *et. al.* (2015), the plantation jobs are 4D job (Difficult, Dangerous, Dirty and Demeaning). This is supported by past studies by Norsida (2008) the local youth claimed work in agricultural sector as burdening and tiring work. Lack of knowledge or skill is found to be another factor affecting the interest of youth to involve in the agriculture sector (Frick et al., 1995). Simultaneously, the alarming social issues among unemployed local youth in Settlers Scheme such as hanging culture, drug addicts and free sex cases has brought attention of the government (Junoh 2011). Based on Seng (1994), the hanging culture contributed negative impact on attitude due to unemployment. Hence, unemployment give personal implication such as psychology, social and financial factor (Shadare and Tunde, 2012).

Thus, this oil palm plantation sector and the government need to find the ways to substitute the foreign workers with local youth by upgrading the socio economic factors. Oil palm plantation companies would enhance the social-economic value of the local youth people who work in the field. All benefits and facilities required by the workers as a high basic salary, housing, water and electricity, allowance, Employees Provident Fund (EPF), medical benefits, school aid, insurance and others should be given to local people and should be reviewed (Selvakumaran and Shanmugam, 1995). Based on Alangseri et.al. (2010) the EPF and better facilities will be attracted the locals to work in oil palm plantation. This paper aims to identify factors affecting the perception of Sabah local youths on socio –economic prospect towards career in oil palm plantation.

In Malaysian oil palm plantations, work force is needed when the use of mechanization and high technology is not yet comprehensive. In addition, the acceptance of mechanization among the smallholders is the cause of the high labor intensive in FELDA Scheme. Sufficient workforce is important to ensure the operation of the farm will be completed to meet the needs of Malaysian palm oil industry. The overwhelming dominance of foreign workers in the plantation sector in Malaysia is commonplace. Statistics published by the Malaysian Labor Department stated a total of 300,000 foreign workers employed in farm and industrial commodities, especially in oil palm plantations at the moment (Che Johari, 2008). Malaysia Palm Oil Board Statistic in 2010 recorded a total of plantation labors were 500,817 workers, which 73.69 % were foreign labor and 94.81 % were from production operation as an oil palm harvesters. This fact clearly which show dangerous indication and unsustainability of oil palm plantation industry in Malaysia.

Based on the Malaysia Immigration Statistic 2010, the foreign labor has decreased from 347,659 persons in 2008 to 218,268 persons in 2009. Specifically, the number of Indonesian workers has decreased from 287,786 to 166,570 workers. Moreover, these foreign workers migrated from Indonesia to Malaysia as unskilled workers (Che Hashim Che Hassan 2009). The reduction of foreign employment is due to several factors. First, the government is trying to reduce dependency on foreign workers in the plantation sector, and secondly, migrants from Indonesia have declined following the opening of large-scale oil palm plantations in Indonesia. Low intake of foreign labor migration in the local area can further safeguard the socio-economic activities of the local population. As the plantation sector is still oriented labor force, companies need local workforce to replace the foreign labor force. Proactive measures

should be taken as the opening of oil palm plantations on a large scale in Kalimantan, Indonesia.

Most of the local youths in the suburban area were preferred to work in manufacturing and retail sector which available and more choices in the sub urban area unfortunately, most of them they choose agricultural and plantation sector as the third choice after manufacturing and retail sector.(Malaysia Human Resource Statistic 2013). In addition due to influence of formulation of government policies such as Malaysia New Economic Policy (1971-1990), National Development Policy (1991-2000) and National Vision Policy (2001-2020) attracted the local youth migrate to urban areas.

According to Norsida (2008), the local youth claimed work in agricultural sector as burdening and tiring work. Past studies have indicated negative perceptions and attitudes among the local youth as to why they are not interested to work in oil palm plantation (Gidakou 1999). Lack of knowledge or skill is found to be another factor affecting the interest of youth to involve in the agriculture sector (Frick et al., 1995). Simultaneously, the alarming social issues among unemployed local youth in Settlers Scheme such as hanging culture, drug addicts and free sex cases has brought attention of the government (Husin, 2011). Based on Ann (1994), the hanging culture contributed negative impact on attitude due to unemployment. Hence, unemployment give personal implication such as psychology, social and financial factor (Shadare and Tunde 2012).

Thus, this plantation sector and the government need to find solution regarding the local youth as they could be the finest substitute to decrease the dependency on foreign labor. While sustaining the oil palm plantation sector, and they can boost their economy. Oil palm plantation companies would enhance the social-economic value of

the local youth people who work in the field. All benefits and facilities required by the workers as a high basic salary, housing, water and electricity, allowance, Employees Provident Fund (EPF), medical benefits, school aid, insurance and others should be given to local people and should be reviewed (Selvakumaran and Shanmugam, 1995).

The basic needs of employees are an important factor in attracting them to be in a job. Basic needs are needs that must be met prior to other needs (Maslow, 1943). Generally, Maslow's theory relates to human survival. Stum (2001) stated that the motivation for basic needs is the main motive for individuals choosing a job, which is based on two main parts; economic and non-economic. From an economic perspective, the motivation for basic needs means that individuals view employment in terms of the salary offered by the employer (Yuhong and Johnes 2003). Most people will mention that salary is a major factor to look at when applying for a job. This means that the higher the wage, the more individuals want the job (Brown and Medoff, 1989).

In fact, according to Meyerding (2018), young people will usually immediately reject an offer if the salary offered is below expectations. Furthermore, the wage factor has a positive relationship with the involvement of rural youth in the oil palm plantation industry. The results of the study by Ayob *et. al.* (2015) showed that one of the reasons why youth do not get involved in the oil palm plantation industry is because the salary is low. This minimum wage level ultimately affects unemployment among youth (Gorry, 2013). Wages and benefits need to be balanced to satisfy the wants of employees and to keep them competitive (Chiu et al., 2002). Abdullah *et. al.* (2016) argued that the unfavourable monthly salaries in the oil palm plantation sector have caused difficulties among the employees in applying for loans and obtaining facilities offered by banking institutions.

This is because salary is an important element in approving a financial loan in addition to several other factors. As jobs in this sector are more challenging and categorised under the 3D sector, the salary offered needs to reflect the job's difficulty and hazards (Kamaruddin et al., 2018). In addition, job selection also depends on job prospects. This is related to the future of the job such as promotion opportunities, salary increments, and so on. According to Meyerding (2018), the perception of the future is the most important feature in choosing a job in the agricultural field.

Ko and Jun (2015) empirically demonstrated that a high salary is an important factor that motivates university students to enter the public sector. Students also choose to work in the public sector because of the higher social benefits compared to the private sector (Molnár and Kapitány, 2014). This situation is different in the agricultural sector. Malaysians think that the agricultural industry is an industry that pays low wages and does not provide a bright future. Meanwhile, basic needs from a non-economic perspective are seen in terms of environmental health as well as security and safety (Greenhalgh and Rosenblatt, 1984). Involvement in oil palm plantations is an agricultural activity that is largely outdoor activity. According to a study conducted by Hofmann *et. al.* (2009), the health of those working in the agricultural sector will be affected due to exposure to sunlight and the physical strength needed.

The study findings shows that 'Distance learning is key for professional development' as first rank as shown in Table 4.14. Since the respondents were among working adult, distance learning is the only mode to furthering their study. They reluctant to choose conventional full time learning due to their work commitment and to support family in term of financially. Hence, distance learning was the most suitable option, they can study while working and still receive monthly salary. The second rank was for the statement stated 'Internal course to improve professional development',

compared to fulltime classroom by face to face method with lecturer. Both statements supported by the third rank which stated ‘Without professional development staff were left behind’, only by attending distance learning course for their own development is a method to not be left behind. Their working experience in plantation would be not sufficient for self-development especially if they prefer for promotion to higher position or looking better posture with other organization.

**Table 4.14: Professional Development for Career Progression**

NO	STATEMENT	RANK
i.	Distance learning is key for professional development	1
ii.	Internal course to improve professional development	2
iii.	Without professional development staff were left behind	3
iv.	Professional development contribute to career progression	4
v.	Professional development contribute to job performance	5
vi.	Professional development is for organization	6
vii.	Professional development to support staff moving ahead	7
viii.	Organization always encourage staff to attend short term course for Professional Development	8
ix.	Organization always encourage staff to attend long term course for Professional Development	9

In-contrast, respondents claimed that their current organization were less intervention for self-development as stated ‘Organization always encourage staff to attend long term course for Professional development’, as discussed earlier option to furthering study amongst respondents was personal decision. The organization were in neutral way, either encourage or discourage, hence no bonding and financial aid

from organization. Upon completion study, respondents were freely to go for interview for higher position within same organization in plantation industry or with other organization across the industry. However, organization were encourage respondents to attend short course for self-development especially related to their respective task and position in the organization as feedback for statement stated 'Organization always encourage staff to attend short term course for Professional development'. In general the organization were supportive for respondent to move ahead either furthering study, interviewing for higher position or moving across the organisation within same industry or across industry.

#### **4.8 Job Performance**

According to the online dictionary of Wikipedia, Job performance is the quality and quantity expected in a particular job from an employee to perform their job well, which is most of the time determined, by motivation and the will and ability of the individual employee to do the job. Fisher (2003) also stated that there is only a modest positive correlation between job performance and job satisfaction. However people are thought to believe strongly that satisfied or happy employees are more productive at work. According to their study, "happy workers are productive workers or that employees who are satisfied with their jobs are likely to be better performers'. The current ratio of workers in comparison to oil palm plantation area in Malaysia is one person for every 10 hectares of oil palm plantation (Jasni & Othman, 2017). Over the years there have been many attempts at mechanization with the introduction of many different technologies and machineries designed to ease plantation work, however in spite of all this the need for manpower still remains largely indispensable due to the mostly manual nature of everyday operations in oil palm plantations (Nawi et al., 2016).



Job performance is the general attitude that people have about their jobs. Job factors such as the pay, the job itself, promotion opportunities, support from supervisors and relationship with co-workers can affect employee's satisfaction. (Ahmad et al., 2002). According to a recent JobStreet.com survey that was conducted in September 2012 on Employee Job Satisfaction in Malaysia, 78% of the respondents claimed that they were unhappy with their current job. Dissatisfaction with their scope of work was the top reason many felt unhappy at work (Daily Express, 2012). Job dissatisfied employee is most likely to show poor performance at work which indirectly affects the productivity of the organization. Organizational commitment and job involvement of the employees will also be a question mark if the employee is not satisfied with his job.

Employees are the most important resources of each organization. How they feel about the work and the results from it, have a direct impact on the organization's performance and ultimately its stability (Milliman et al., 2008). For example, if the employees are happy and satisfied with their work, they will be highly motivated to perform the best of their ability to achieve the goals of the organization. Therefore, to compete in the global market and achieve organizational goals, the organization should do more for an employee than the job requires which could lead to higher job performance.

The success of an organization always depends on the participation and job performance of their employees. They are the one who is responsible in achieving the vision and goals of the organization. Employee's positive characteristic and feelings towards the work they perform lead to job satisfaction. Job satisfaction is influenced by many factors and each employee's job satisfaction is totally different from one another. Some of the factors that influence attitude and job satisfaction among

employees in organizations are the working environment, chances of promotions, increment, management and co-workers.

Job satisfaction trends can affect labor market behavior and influence work productivity. It is also considered a strong predictor of intentions or decisions of employees to leave a job (Gazioglu and Tansel, 2002), as well as a good predictor of overall individual well being (Diaz-Serrano and Cabral Vieira, 2005). An online survey by Adecco Malaysia (2009) shows that 44% of the respondents think that job satisfaction remains to be the key importance factor for being happy at work. Employee attitude and job performance are essential to the success of any organization, regardless big or small. In the modern workplace, human resources are valued above all others. Motivated, happy and committed employees are the productive employees (Coleman, 2010).

Similarly in the plantation companies, employees are the important resource of their organization that play the major roles and contribute to the success of the plantation. In order to maintain high productivity and keep the employees loyal to the organization, the management provides training & development programs, rewards in the form of bonus and promotion to satisfactory performance to motivate the employees. However, issues related to job satisfaction and performance of employees continues to arise from time to time. Thus, this study is to investigate and identify the factors that affect job performance among plantation employees, which influence their work satisfaction.

Table 4.15 shows Respondents' Feedback on job performance as dependent variable for this study, which comprises 11 statements. The first rank was statement stated 'Job performance for promotion' which received positive feedback from almost entire respondent. Job performance was key component in performance appraisal

which will contribute to promotion for higher position, recommended for enumeration increment, rewards such as bonuses and etc. These is one way for organization to appreciate employees performance and achievement for certain period targeted. Generally, individual job performance was to measures individual achievement which contributed to the organization achievement.

This feedback supported by the second rank as stated ‘Yearly bonus based on job performance’, as discussed earlier good job performance to be rewarded in term of monetary, in oil palm industry the most recognized rewards was annual bonuses either a month or months. There should be a form of reward for the whole year of work besides the regular monthly enumeration. Again, to improved job performance respondents believe that by furthering study via distance learning can improve their job performance as recorded in third rank statement ‘With higher educational level will increase job performance’. Commonly, upon graduation, most of the employees apply for higher position with better pay either within organization or across organization.

**Table 4.15: Respondents’ Feedback on Job Performance**

NO	STATEMENT	RANK
i.	Job performance for promotion	1
ii.	Yearly bonus based on job performance	2
iii.	With higher educational level will increase job performance	3
iv.	Team work played important roles in job performance	4
v.	Job performance were measures based on the stated goal	5
vi.	Good job performance shall be rewarded	10
vii.	Professional development contributed to job performance	6

viii.	Successful knowledge transfer affected job performance	7
ix.	Merits given by organization influenced job performance	8
x.	Incentive for furthering study from organization will enhanced job performance	9
xi.	Burn out amongst staff will reduce job performance	11

Interestingly, job performance were affected by employees' attitude as recorded by the lowest rank which stated 'Burn out amongst staff will reduce job performance'. Burn out effected employee work routine, they start to avoid ordinary task by given reasons, toward the end affected low job performance. If burn out as individual or in a small group the effect to organization were not really seen. However, if the burn out at big scale it affected organization performance, no output produced, in severe case can drive to blockade. Hence, the organization manager in organization shall be able to identify burn out amongst employees and mitigation measures shall be taken to avoid any severe case.

#### **4.9 Conclusion**

The high contribution of the oil palm sector to the growth of the country's economy as a whole and the State of Sarawak in particular has become clearly evident. This can be clearly shown through the annual increases seen in the palm oil sector. The oil palm sector contributes significantly to the socio-economic development of the rural communities especially in East Malaysia. In conclusion, the descriptive analysis were performed based on the respondents' feedback for independent variables and dependent variable. The study findings shows that the importance of distance learning which contributed to higher job performance which measures by individual

achievement and organization performance in general. Based on the study findings as discussed earlier, recommendations were suggested in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER 5

### DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

#### 5.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the conclusion and recommendations detailed in the present study.

#### 5.1 Conclusion

As per the Sarawak Oil Palm Plantation Owners' Association (SOPPOA) (2022), Sarawak's palm oil industry is faced with a dire need of additional labour force, even prior to the Covid-19 pandemic; this labour shortage was already evident. The shortfall of labour for the palm oil industry in Sarawak is estimated at over 45,000 workers (Vietnam, 2021), this highlights the importance of attracting new workers as well as retaining current workers in the industry especially in light of the current situation where Sarawak is heavily reliant on foreign labour to prop up the oil palm industry (SOPPOA,2022). In fact all companies in the Sarawak palm oil industry have a preference to hire locals for available jobs if there are willing and able local workers (Saad et al., 2021).

However, the situation of dependence on foreign workforce is still dire especially in lower tier jobs within the oil palm industry due to reasons outlined previously such as low pay rates, stagnation of career development, uncomfortable rural life, and mainly 3D sector jobs i.e. difficult, dirty, and dangerous (Kamaruddin *et. al.* 2018). Thus continued dependence on foreign workforce will weaken the industry and threatens its long term longevity. This is extremely worrying as the oil palm industry is Malaysia's key socio-economic driver which is directly responsible for the eradication of poverty provision of numerous job opportunities in the country.

Based on study findings as discussed in Chapter 4, the present study has shown the importance of distance learning as a contributing factor towards higher job performance which measures by individual achievement and organization performance in general. The descriptive analysis based on the 75 sets of usable filled questionnaires by respondents amongst oil palm workers comprised of managers, filed supervisors and clerical staff working at oil palm estate in Bintulu Division, Sarawak. Their mean age was 42.5 years old with dominantly by male staffs. Education background revealed that range from secondary school to tertiary level. Foreign workers were excluded from this academic exercise. The conclusion of study findings were based on study objective.

#### **5.1.1 Study Objective No 1**

To identify the perceptions of the employees on how, Distance learning for career development, training and development provided by HRD and HRM of oil palm estate.

##### **i) Funding and Perks for distance learning**

While furthering study via distance learning respondents claimed that they faced difficulties in access to the financial aid from financial intuition and their employer. Hence they are depending on portion of their EPF and personal loan to funding their study. The financial burden is severely affected low income, mostly who claim that the tuition fees were too high and unaffordable for them. Since the distance learning method of delivery is mainly through means of the internet, respondents tend to disparage about their poor internet connection, internet device not provided and not fully utilized internet and online material.

## **ii) Participation and progress tracking**

From a positive perspective, the employer or previous organizations does not limit staff movement either within organization or across organization and also across oil palm industry. Hence, no bonding is typically applied to the employee by the organization. The decision to further their study was a personal matter, so there is less intervention from managerial level in the organization. The organizations also do not keep records regarding this matter.

### **5.1.2 Study Objective No. 2**

To identify the employees' competency levels, educational background and technology facilities provided by estate to facilitate distance learning.

#### **i) Professional Career Development**

Majority of respondents claimed that professional career development can be enhance via furthering study, for them distance learning were most appropriate. Beside that working experience in the same industry another advantages for career development and promotion to higher position. Multi discipline skill undeniably contribute to the professional career development among respondents.

#### **ii) Knowledge Transfer Motivation**

In an organization such as oil palm estate with various level of employees, knowledge transfer was importance to ensure that organization achieve good performance. Respondents believed that with better education background gain from distance learning will facilitate knowledge transfer among employees at various level, no barriers set by organization. However, the knowledge transfer was far more- easier



if the same level of communication and position within the organization from both parties.

### **5.1.3 Study Objective No. 3**

To examine the effectiveness is distance learning for enhancement of career development contributed to job performance and reduce turn over intention among the studied plantations estates' employees.

#### **i) Retention Rate**

At the moment, no bonding exercise is typically applied by the organization to control employees movement either within organization or across organization. Employees have freedom to apply higher position or other position. With better academic achievement from distance learning, it becomes an advantage for employees to move. As noted, once the employees completed their distance learning only few of them willing to go back to the same organization.

#### **ii) Job Performance Appraisal**

Performance appraisal was crucial and as milestone for each employee at the organization. From performance appraisal result, employees are eligible for promotion to the higher level, enumeration increment and get rewards from organization. Hence, each employees target better result each year for the performance appraisal. Strictly, no biases and favoritism occurred in conducting performance appraisals by their superior.

## **5.2 Recommendations**

The oil palm industry in Malaysia is over 100 years old and throughout the decades Malaysia has risen to be the 2<sup>nd</sup> largest producer and exporter of palm oil, second only

to its close neighbour Indonesia (Ahmad et al., 2012). For decades the industry, trade unions and institutions of higher learning have collaborated in order to provide a better understanding of the issues and to provide mitigating solutions to any of the challenges faced by Malaysian oil palm plantation industry. Thus the findings of the present study can contribute to the knowledge pool on this particular subject matter to aide stakeholders such as Sarawak Oil Palm Plantation Owners' Association (SOPPOA), the Malaysian Palm Oil Board (MPOB) and other relevant government and non-government agencies to work together to jointly formulate more effective strategies to entice the targeted groups and further increase local workers involvement in the oil palm sector. Under the current situation there is a drastic need for revision of the policies and strategies for foreign labour in the palm oil industry and manage them in a more integrated manner, similarly more safeguards and incentives for local workers should be in place to entice new workers especially for the ministries, agencies and industry associations related to the palm oil industry (Crowley, 2020).

**i) Funding and Perks for Distance Learning**

To avoid financial burden among employees, we suggest that the Oil Palm estate or organization create 'Tabung Pendidikan' or "study fund" for staff furthering studies in future using the study loan concept at low interest rates. The amount allocated would be based on tertiary level such as diploma, bachelor degree, master or doctor of philosophy. In return, there should be bonding agreements for both parties to be signed. Local youths should have greater exposure to the job opportunities in oil palm industry and efforts should be made by relevant authorities to improve on the misconceptions of the work related to the industry including the possibilities of furthering studies while on the job.

As for internet penetration, beside organization provided device, Sarawak Multimedia Authority (SMA) actively erected telecommunications towers including all rural area. Hence, Oil Palm Estate can in the near future utilize these facilities for employees furthering study and for office use.

## **ii) Participation and Progress Tracking**

Bonding may be also good step to keep record tracking of employees. Beside that it is also suggested that each staff furthering their studies to be compulsory for them to submit their final project paper to the organization. These final project papers can be held as a resource for use within the organization and for future references.

## **iii) Professional Career Development**

Lifelong learning concepts and self-development are subjective to the individual worker, hence it recommendation that the organization encourage their employees to further study, enhance professional career development. This is for the individual development and for organization achievement. Salary incentives should be implemented by the Malaysian and Sarawak State government in order to attract locals to have a bigger participation in jobs in the oil palm agriculture sector. Currently although the plantation sector in general provides wider employment opportunities with salary and benefits initiatives almost comparable to other sectors, this sector is still not strong enough to attract locals to participate due to a variety of factors including isolation, negative perception etc. A clear pathway for potential career development and growth must be available for local workers to willingly participate en-masse in the oil palm industry.

#### **iv) Knowledge Transfer Motivation**

The quest to attain more knowledge should not be blocked thus the researcher suggests more knowledge gain from outside of the work`organization to be disseminated to the sub-ordinate via in-house training, workshop and lunch talk. These should be carried out by experts in the various fields. A major element to increase motivation amongst the workforce is through the provision of varied amounts of high quality training choices to employees. Moreover, employers in the palm oil industry should search for innovative methods to keep their employees suitably motivated. Although the present study is largely limited due to the sample size and breadth of the study it is still clearly shown that several factors impact meaningfully on the encouragement turnover amongst the local palm oil workers. Thus, for future studies it is strongly recommended to focus on more in depth examination of education factors as well as location as key influencing factors for workers' tendencies to move to other industries. These findings are of great importance towards the reduction of high worker turnover in the palm oil industry sector.

#### **v) Retention Rate**

Again, for better retention rate the most effective recommendation is through a bonding exercise, for the benefit of employees and employer. This is to ensure that the organization do not loose their valuable assets after graduation.

#### **vi) Job Performance Appraisal**

Job performance appraisal should be continued with improvements and additions to the characteristics of an Effective Appraisal System. The basic purpose of a performance appraisal system is to improve performance of individuals, teams, and the entire organization. The system may also serve to assist in making administrative

decisions concerning pay increases, promotions, transfers, or terminations. In addition, the appraisal system must be legally defensible. Although a perfect system does not exist, every system should strive to meet this criterion. Organizations should seek an accurate assessment of performance that permits the development of a plan to improve individual and group performance. The system must honestly inform people of how they stand within the organization. The following factors assist in accomplishing these purposes. Additionally it may be pertinent for organizations to place greater emphasis on worker motivation in order to improve plantation performance. Thus plantation management should fine tune their resources to better utilize available information on workers' efficacy, motivations, initiative, reliability and cooperativeness as the correct tools required to enhance worker capabilities for gaining higher performance metrics. The use of these worker behavioural variables will in the long term be of great benefit to the plantation industry as it strives to bring out the best performance from their workers.

#### **vii) Job-Related Criteria**

Job-relatedness is perhaps the most basic criterion needed in employee performance appraisals. The Uniform Guidelines on Employee Selection Procedures and court decisions are quite clear on this point. More specifically, evaluation criteria should be determined through job analysis. Subjective factors, such as initiative, enthusiasm, loyalty, and cooperation may be important; however, unless clearly shown to be job-related, they should not be used.

#### **viii) Performance Expectations**

Managers and subordinates must agree on performance expectations in advance of the appraisal period. How can employees function effectively if they do not know

what they are being measured against? On the other hand, if employees clearly understand the expectations, they can evaluate their own performance and make timely adjustments as they perform their jobs, without having to wait for the formal evaluation review. The establishment of highly objective work standards is relatively simple in many areas, such as manufacturing, assembly, and sales. For numerous other types of jobs, however, this task is more difficult. Still, evaluation must take place based on clearly understood performance expectations.

**ix) Standardization**

Firms should use the same evaluation instrument for all employees in the same job category who work for the same supervisor. Supervisors should also conduct appraisals covering similar periods for these employees. Regularly scheduled feedback sessions and appraisal interviews for all employees are essential. Formal documentation of appraisal data serves several purposes, including protection against possible legal action. Employees should sign their evaluations. If the employee refuses to sign, the manager should document this behavior. Records should also include a description of employee responsibilities, expected performance results, and the role these data play in making appraisal decisions. Although performance appraisal is important for small firms, they are not expected to maintain performance appraisal systems that are as formal as those used by large organizations. Courts have reasoned that objective criteria are not as important in firms with only a few employees because in smaller firms top managers are more intimately acquainted with their employees' and their work performance.

**x) Trained Appraisers**

A common deficiency in appraisal systems is that the evaluators seldom receive training on how to conduct effective evaluations. Unless everyone evaluating performance receives training in the art of giving and receiving feedback, the process can lead to uncertainty and conflict. The training should be an ongoing process in order to ensure accuracy and consistency. The training should cover how to rate employees and how to conduct appraisal interviews. Instructions should be rather detailed and the importance of making objective and unbiased ratings should be emphasized. An e-learning training module may serve to provide information for managers as needed.

**xi) Continuous Open Communication**

Most employees have a strong need to know how well they are performing. A good appraisal system provides highly desired feedback on a continuing basis. There should be few surprises in the performance review. Managers should handle daily performance problems as they occur and not allow them to collect and only address them during the performance appraisal interview. Continuous feedback is vitally important to help direct, coach, and teach employees to grow and improve performance. When something new surfaces during the appraisal interview, the manager probably did not do a good enough job communicating with the employee throughout the appraisal period. Even though the interview presents an excellent opportunity for both parties to exchange ideas, it should never serve as a substitute for the day-to-day communication and coaching required by performance management.

**xii) Conduct Performance Reviews**

In addition to the need for continuous communication between managers and their employees, a special time should be set for a formal discussion of an employee's

performance. Since improved performance is a common goal of appraisal systems, withholding appraisal results is not correct and can cause negative feelings amongst employees. Employees are severely handicapped in their developmental efforts if denied access to this information. A performance review allows them to detect any errors or omissions in the appraisal, or an employee may disagree with the evaluation and want to challenge it. Constant employee performance documentation is vitally important for accurate performance appraisals. Although the task can be tedious and boring for managers, maintaining a continuous record of observed and reported incidents is essential in building a useful appraisal. The appraisal interview will be discussed in a later section.

#### **xiii) Due Process**

Ensuring due process is vital. If the company does not have a formal grievance procedure, it is imperative to develop one for the purpose of providing employees an opportunity to appeal appraisal results that they consider inaccurate or unfair. They must have a procedure for pursuing their grievances and having them addressed objectively and in an unbiased manner.

### **5.3 Closing Notes**

The issue of local labour shortage within the agriculture sector in general is a problem faced nationally and not just in Sarawak, however this issue hits especially hard in the oil palm industry of the state with Sarawak being most affected by this condition (Saad et al., 2021). Thus a more cohesive and effective approach to allow for the development of local workers especially in terms of further education and increased youth involvement in the oil palm plantation sector at the grassroots level has the potential to resolve many important issues in Malaysia. Increased local workers



involvement and retention through education can improve the country's economic potential through the spread of new oil palm plantations; which in turn increases Malaysia's export revenue.

The creation of multi tiers jobs within the oil palm industry can also help to curb the issue of unemployment amongst youth and fresh graduates while also greatly reducing the country's dependence on foreign labour. Thus the satisfactory growth of the oil palm industry in Malaysia provides many employment opportunities throughout the palm oil industry ecosystem which includes upstream, midstream and downstream sectors (Sahbuidin et al., 2021). This will have positive impacts on both economic and social issues and thus must be duly addressed as soon as possible.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix A- Questionnaire

#### **QUESTIONNAIRE**

(English)

**SURVEY ON  
THE EMPLOYEES' PERCEPTION ON LIFELONG LEARNING AND JOB  
PERFORMANCE: AN EXPERIENCE AMONG EMPLOYEES OF OIL  
PALM ESTATES IN SARAWAK**

You are kindly requested to spare few minutes to help complete this questionnaire set. This survey is part of a research leading to a Doctorate Business Administrative. So please note that your input is considered valuable to this survey and to be used for the academic purposely only.

ASIA e UNIVERSITY

Contact: Mr. Ambrose Emang  
Matrix: M70201190001  
H/P: 013-845 9545

## SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC BACKGROUND

1. Age____	5. Current Position_____
a. 50 – 60 and above	a. Managerial level
b. 40 – 49 years	b..Executive level
c. 30 – 39 years	c. Non-executive level
d. 20 – 29 years	d. Clerical level
2. Gender:	6. Working Experience: _
a. Male	a. 30 – 40 years
b. Female	b. 20 – 29 years
	c. 10 – 19 years
3. Educational Level	d. 5 – 9 years
a. No formal education	
b. Primary The organisation	7. Have you planning further study in future:
c. Secondary The organisation	a. YES
d. Tertiary level	b. NO
	c. NOT sure
4. Ethnic	d. NOT interested
a. Orang Ulu	
b. Iban	
c. Malay	
d. Melayu	
e. Other	

**Section B: FUNDING AND PERKS FOR LEARNING****B1: Difficulties access to finance aid for further study**

YES ☐ REASON: \_\_\_\_\_  
NO ☐ REASON: \_\_\_\_\_

**B2: The study fees is too high, burden, not affordable**

YES ☐ REASON: \_\_\_\_\_  
NO ☐ REASON: \_\_\_\_\_

**B3: Have to scarified wage increment if choose further study**

YES ☐ REASON: \_\_\_\_\_  
NO ☐ REASON: \_\_\_\_\_

**B4: Face difficulties for online transaction**

YES ☐ REASON: \_\_\_\_\_  
NO ☐ REASON: \_\_\_\_\_

**B5: Poor internet connection at work station**

YES ☐ REASON: \_\_\_\_\_  
NO ☐ REASON: \_\_\_\_\_

**B6: Not well verse with internet equipment/tools**

YES ☐ REASON: \_\_\_\_\_  
NO ☐ REASON: \_\_\_\_\_

**B7: The organization not provided internet services to work station**

YES ☐ REASON: \_\_\_\_\_  
NO ☐ REASON: \_\_\_\_\_

<b>B8: Online classroom not well prepared</b>		
YES	<input type="checkbox"/>	REASON: _____
NO	<input type="checkbox"/>	REASON: _____
 <b>B9: Lecturer not only available online</b>		
YES	<input type="checkbox"/>	REASON: _____
NO	<input type="checkbox"/>	REASON: _____
 <b>B10: Experience of Online line classroom not like physical classroom</b>		
YES	<input type="checkbox"/>	REASON: _____
NO	<input type="checkbox"/>	REASON: _____
 <b>Section C: RETENTION RATE</b>		
<b>C1: With the available opportunity to further study, hard to maintain staff to be loyal</b>		
YES	<input type="checkbox"/>	REASON: _____
NO	<input type="checkbox"/>	REASON: _____
 <b>C2: With better academic level staff are potentially to moving across the industry</b>		
YES	<input type="checkbox"/>	REASON: _____
NO	<input type="checkbox"/>	REASON: _____
 <b>C3: More experiences staff are potentially to moving across the industry</b>		
YES	<input type="checkbox"/>	REASON: _____
NO	<input type="checkbox"/>	REASON: _____
 <b>C4: If the organization denied their willingness to further study, staff will move to other firm</b>		
YES	<input type="checkbox"/>	REASON: _____
NO	<input type="checkbox"/>	REASON: _____
 <b>C5: Organization don't bother to bonding their staff due to low retention rate</b>		
YES	<input type="checkbox"/>	REASON: _____



NO	<input type="checkbox"/>	REASON:
C6: After completed their study not many staff are willing to go back to their previous firm		
YES	<input type="checkbox"/>	REASON:
NO	<input type="checkbox"/>	REASON:
C7: Organization/firm shall offer incentive for their staff upon completion their study		
YES	<input type="checkbox"/>	REASON:
NO	<input type="checkbox"/>	REASON:
C8: Bonding exercise is good practices to support staff to further study		
YES	<input type="checkbox"/>	REASON:
NO	<input type="checkbox"/>	REASON:
C9: Organization have no authority to control staff movement/resignation		
YES	<input type="checkbox"/>	REASON:
NO	<input type="checkbox"/>	REASON:
C10: Higher salary is not a good motivation for retention		
YES	<input type="checkbox"/>	REASON:
NO	<input type="checkbox"/>	REASON:

**Section D: PARTICIPATION AND PROGRESS TRACKING****D1: Staff are free moving from one firm to another firm**

YES	<input type="checkbox"/>	REASON:	_____
NO	<input type="checkbox"/>	REASON:	_____

**D2: Firm did not keep proper record for staff further study**

YES	<input type="checkbox"/>	REASON:	_____
NO	<input type="checkbox"/>	REASON:	_____

**D3: Number of staff furthering their study secretly**

YES	<input type="checkbox"/>	REASON:	_____
NO	<input type="checkbox"/>	REASON:	_____

**D3: No rules and regulation for staff to compulsory report their action furthering study**

YES	<input type="checkbox"/>	REASON:	_____
NO	<input type="checkbox"/>	REASON:	_____

**D4: Firm are not encouraging staff to further their study**

YES	<input type="checkbox"/>	REASON:	_____
NO	<input type="checkbox"/>	REASON:	_____

**D5: No motivation from higher managerial level for staff to further study**

YES	<input type="checkbox"/>	REASON:	_____
NO	<input type="checkbox"/>	REASON:	_____

**D6: Staff were not expose enough with the opportunity to further study**

YES	<input type="checkbox"/>	REASON:	_____
NO	<input type="checkbox"/>	REASON:	_____

**Section E: SPECIALIZED PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL TOOLS****E1: Academic achievement is the key performance appraisal tools**

YES

☐

REASON:

NO

☐

REASON:

**E2: Working experiences is good to support performance appraisal tools**

YES

☐

REASON:

NO

☐

REASON:

**E3: Multi-discipline background is an advantages for performance appraisal tools**

YES

☐

REASON:

NO

☐

REASON:

**E3: 'Office Politic' is negative factor for performance appraisal tools**

YES

☐

REASON:

NO

☐

REASON:

**E4: Favoritism occurred in the organization**

YES

☐

REASON:

NO

☐

REASON:

**E5: Biases amongst staff will deviance the main purposes of performance appraisal**

YES

☐

REASON:

NO

☐

REASON:

**E6: Individual job performance shall be review in performance appraisal tools**

YES

☐

REASON:

NO

☐

REASON:

**E7: Group job performance shall be review in performance appraisal tools**

<b>YES</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>REASON:</b>
<b>NO</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>REASON:</b>

**Section F: KNOWLWEGE TRANSFER MOTIVATION**

**F1: With good academic background will facilitate knowledge transfer**

<b>YES</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>REASON:</b>
<b>NO</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>REASON:</b>

**F2: It is difficult to use local language for knowledge transfer**

<b>YES</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>REASON:</b>
<b>NO</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>REASON:</b>

**F3: Result from distance learning is advantages for knowledge transfer**

<b>YES</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>REASON:</b>
<b>NO</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>REASON:</b>

**F3: Easier transfer knowledge amongst same level of staff**

<b>YES</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>REASON:</b>
<b>NO</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>REASON:</b>

**F4: No barrier in knowledge transfer in the organization**

<b>YES</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>REASON:</b>
<b>NO</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>REASON:</b>

**F5: Effective knowledge transfer can be judge for job performance**

<b>YES</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>REASON:</b>
<b>NO</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>REASON:</b>

**F6: Effective in-situ training for knowledge transfer**

YES	<input type="checkbox"/>	REASON:	
NO	<input type="checkbox"/>	REASON:	
<b>F7: Number of staff refuse to received knowledge transfer</b>			
YES	<input type="checkbox"/>	REASON:	
NO	<input type="checkbox"/>	REASON:	
<b>F8: Knowledge transfer is important to sustain career in the organization</b>			
YES	<input type="checkbox"/>	REASON:	
NO	<input type="checkbox"/>	REASON:	
<b>Section G: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR CAREER PROGRESSION</b>			
<b>G1: Distance learning is key for professional development</b>			
YES	<input type="checkbox"/>	REASON:	
NO	<input type="checkbox"/>	REASON:	
<b>G2: Internal course to improve professional development</b>			
YES	<input type="checkbox"/>	REASON:	
NO	<input type="checkbox"/>	REASON:	
<b>G3: Without professional development staff were left behind</b>			
YES	<input type="checkbox"/>	REASON:	
NO	<input type="checkbox"/>	REASON:	
<b>G3: Professional development contribute to career progression</b>			
YES	<input type="checkbox"/>	REASON:	
NO	<input type="checkbox"/>	REASON:	
<b>G4: Professional development contribute to job performance</b>			

YES	<input type="checkbox"/>	REASON:	
NO	<input type="checkbox"/>	REASON:	
<b>G5: Professional development is for organization</b>			
YES	<input type="checkbox"/>	REASON:	
NO	<input type="checkbox"/>	REASON:	
<b>G6: Professional development to support staff moving ahead</b>			
YES	<input type="checkbox"/>	REASON:	
NO	<input type="checkbox"/>	REASON:	
<b>G7: Organization always encourage staff to attend short term course for Professional development</b>			
YES	<input type="checkbox"/>	REASON:	
NO	<input type="checkbox"/>	REASON:	
<b>G8: Organization always encourage staff to attend long term course for Professional development</b>			
YES	<input type="checkbox"/>	REASON:	
NO	<input type="checkbox"/>	REASON:	
<b>Section H: JOB PERFORMANCE</b>			
<b>G1: Job performance for promotion</b>			
YES	<input type="checkbox"/>	REASON:	
NO	<input type="checkbox"/>	REASON:	
<b>G2: Yearly bonus based on job performance</b>			
YES	<input type="checkbox"/>	REASON:	
NO	<input type="checkbox"/>	REASON:	
<b>G3: With higher educational level will increase job performance</b>			
YES	<input type="checkbox"/>	REASON:	
NO	<input type="checkbox"/>	REASON:	

**G3: Team work played important roles in job performance**

YES	<input type="checkbox"/>	REASON:
NO	<input type="checkbox"/>	REASON:

**G4: Job performance were measures based on the end result**

YES	<input type="checkbox"/>	REASON:
NO	<input type="checkbox"/>	REASON:

**G5: Good job performance shall be rewarded**

YES	<input type="checkbox"/>	REASON:
NO	<input type="checkbox"/>	REASON:

**G6: Professional development contributed to job performance**

YES	<input type="checkbox"/>	REASON:
NO	<input type="checkbox"/>	REASON:

**G7: Successful knowledge transfer affected job performance**

YES	<input type="checkbox"/>	REASON:
NO	<input type="checkbox"/>	REASON:

**G8: Merits given by organization influenced job performance**

YES	<input type="checkbox"/>	REASON:
NO	<input type="checkbox"/>	REASON:

**G9: Incentive for furthering study from organization will enhanced job performance**

YES	<input type="checkbox"/>	REASON:
NO	<input type="checkbox"/>	REASON:

**G10: Burn out amongst staff will reduce job performance**

<b>YES</b>		<b>REASON:</b>
<b>NO</b>		<b>REASON:</b>

@ @Thank You@ @