

## TRAINING MOTIVATION: A PREDICTOR OF TRANSFER TRAINING IN THE MALAYSIAN ARMY INFANTRY CORPS LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

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### Article Info:

#### Article history:

Received date: 25.06.2024

Revised date: 17.07.2024

Accepted date: 15.08.2024

Published date: 30.09.2024

#### To cite this document:

Zainol, N. A. M., Abidin, Z. Z., Johari, M. D., Salleh, D. M., & Taib, K. N. (2024). Training Motivation: A Predictor of Transfer Training in The Malaysian Army Infantry Corps Leadership Development Program. *International Journal of Law, Government and Communication*, 9 (37), 99-113.

DOI: 10.35631/IJLGC.937009

### Abstract:

Military leaders strive to achieve their organization's vision and mission in accordance with their duties, authorities, and responsibilities. The challenging climate in military units due to misconduct, lack of discipline, and ineffective leadership has highlighted the need for more effective leadership development activities. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to measure the influence of training motivation in the relationship between leadership development programs and training transfer. A total of 412 completed questionnaires filled out by respondents serving in the Malaysian Army Infantry Corps were analyzed using the SmartPLS 3.3.9 software package. The findings of the factor validation analysis show that the measurement scale of this study has reached the standard level of validity and reliability analysis. Further, the results of hypothesis testing using the SmartPLS path model highlight two important findings: first, the relationship between course content and training motivation has a positive and significant relationship with training transfer. Second, the relationship between training methods and training motivation has a positive and significant relationship with training transfer. Based on a statistical perspective, the findings of this study confirm that training motivation acts as an intervening variable between the leadership development program and the transfer of training in the study organization. Therefore, discussion, research implications and conclusions are also given attention in this study.

**Keywords:**

Infantry Corps, Leadership Development, Malaysian Army, Training Motivation, Training Transfer

**Introduction**

Leadership development programs (LDPs) are among the most widely adopted strategies for developing leadership competencies in organizations, whether formally or informally (Day & Harrison, 2011; Kirchner & Akdere, 2019; Noe, 2019). In military settings, these programs are particularly critical for preparing leaders to navigate an increasingly complex and dynamic security environment (Erasmus & Uys, 2012; LDP Handbook, 2009; Metz, 2011). To generate high-performing military personnel, the training program must be triangulated in both theoretical and practical elements. Leadership is a vital military quality and should be viewed as a continuous process (Díez, Martínez-Morán & Aurrekoetxea, 2023; Noor Azmi et al., 2018). However, challenges related to unethical behaviours, lack of discipline, and inadequate leadership in military units have underscored the need for more effective leadership development initiatives (Beheshtifar & Panah, 2012; Rahimi, 2007). For instance, recent incidents of misconduct in the Malaysian Army have raised concerns about the existing leadership frameworks and their ability to instill long-lasting, ethical leadership behaviors.

Scholars, including Beheshtifar and Panah (2012), Day and Harrison (2011), and Erasmus and Uys (2012), argue that the success of LDPs largely depends on two key components: the course content and the training methods utilized. The course content encompasses essential concepts, principles, and skills needed to enhance trainees' knowledge and performance (Azman et al., 2016; Noor Azmi et al., 2013). Meanwhile, effective training methods such as lectures, simulations, and practical exercises are crucial for conveying information and maximizing learning outcomes (Goldstein & Ford, 2002; Blanchard & Thacker, 2003). Despite this, existing research shows that training motivation is a pivotal factor influencing training transfer—defined as a leader's ability to apply the skills and knowledge gained during training in real-world scenarios (Blume et al., 2010; Elangovan & Karakowsky, 1999). However, the role of training motivation in leadership development programs, especially in the military context, remains underexplored (Azman & Inani, 2010; Mullen et al., 2006). Given the crucial role of motivated leaders in ensuring mission success, further research is necessary to understand how motivation impacts the transfer of training. Therefore, this study aims to investigate two key objectives: (1) to evaluate the relationship between LDP components (course content and training methods) and training transfer, and (2) to assess the mediating role of training motivation in the relationship between LDP and training transfer in the Malaysian Army Infantry Corps.

**Literature Review**

The interaction between leadership development programs (LDPs) and employee attitudes and behaviors is well-examined through the lens of motivational theories, particularly Vroom's Expectancy Theory (1964, 1973) and Knowles' Adult Learning Theory (1984). Vroom's (1964, 1973) Expectancy Theory suggests that individuals are motivated to act based on their expectations of the outcomes. In the realm of training programs, this theory implies that when management effectively designs training methods and course content that are relevant to

trainees' tasks, it enhances their motivation to engage with the training and apply the acquired knowledge, skills, and attitudes (Azman & Inani, 2010). This alignment is pivotal for facilitating the transfer of training, which refers to the application of learned competencies in the workplace (Azman et al., 2011; Rahimi, 2007).

Knowles' (1984) Adult Learning Theory complements this perspective by emphasizing that adults learn best when they can relate training content to their personal and professional experiences. This theory underscores the necessity for training programs to be experiential and problem-solving oriented, thereby fostering intrinsic motivation among trainees (Balkisnah & Norhasni, 2009; Black & Earnest, 2009). When training programs resonate with learners' existing knowledge and address relevant challenges, trainees are more likely to be motivated to implement what they have learned, enhancing training transfer.

### ***Summary of Past Findings***

A comprehensive review of existing studies reveals consistent support for the positive impact of LDP components on training transfer. Table 1 summarizes key findings from notable research in this area.

**Table 1: Summary of Past Findings on LDP, Training Motivation, and Training Transfer**

<b>Author(s)</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Sample</b>	<b>Key Findings</b>
<b>Mullen et al.</b>	2006	194 U.S. Army Personnel	Highlighted the mediating role of training motivation in enhancing training transfer.
<b>Rahimi</b>	2007	190 Malaysian Army Infantry Battalion	Effective course content and engaging training methods significantly promote training transfer.
<b>Paul et al.</b>	2009	883 U.S. Military Academy Officer Cadets	Established training motivation as a mediator between LDP components and training transfer.
<b>Hatfield et al.</b>	2011	21,000 U.S. Army Leaders	Identified course content and training methods as critical predictors of training transfer.
<b>Azman</b>	2012	250 Malaysian Army Paratroopers	Demonstrated a positive relationship between LDP components and training transfer.
<b>Azman et al.</b>	2016	163 Malaysian Army Leaders	Reinforced the importance of training motivation in the LDP-training transfer relationship.
<b>Noor Azmi et al.</b>	2017	382 Malaysian Army Infantry Other Enlisted Ranks	Further supported training motivation as a key mediator in training transfer processes.
<b>Alias et al.</b>	2019	215 Malaysian Public Service Managers	Found that well-structured LDPs lead to higher training transfer rates.
<b>Dyah Anissa et al.</b>	2022	Content analysis	To lead effectively today, leaders must develop their understanding and practice of leadership in order to address new challenges that come

			from multiple directions and with rapid change.
<b>Zainol &amp; Abidin</b>	2023	329 Malaysian Army Muslim Personnel	This study confirmed that training motivation mediates the relationship between training syllabus and instructors' responsibilities in training transfer.

Source: Illustrated by Authors

Theoretical Framework

**Vroom's Expectancy Theory**

This study leverages Vroom's Expectancy Theory and Knowles' Adult Learning Theory to explore the dynamics between LDP components, training motivation, and training transfer within the Malaysian Army Infantry Corps. By emphasizing the relationship between effort, performance, and outcomes, this theory provides a foundation for understanding how well-designed course content and effective training methods can enhance trainees' motivation to engage with the training and apply their learning in their roles (Vroom, 1964, 1973).

**Knowles' Adult Learning Theory**

This theory highlights the importance of experiential learning and the relevance of training content to the learners' existing knowledge and professional responsibilities. It supports the notion that when training programs are aligned with adults' learning preferences and practical needs, motivation and subsequent training transfer are positively affected (Knowles, 1984).

These theories collectively inform the conceptual framework of this study, which hypothesizes that both course content and training methods directly influence training transfer, and that training motivation serves as a mediator in these relationships.

Conceptual Framework

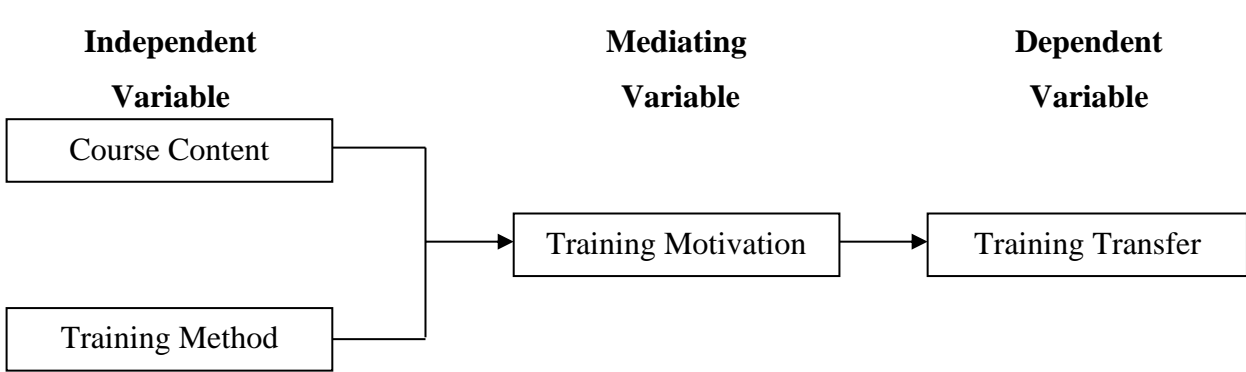


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Source: Illustrated by Authors

Based on this framework, the following hypotheses are proposed:

- H1: There is a positive relationship between course content and training transfer.
- H2: There is a positive relationship between training methods and training transfer.
- H3: Training motivation mediates the relationship between course content and training transfer.

H4: Training motivation mediates the relationship between training methods and training transfer.

### Research Methodology

This study employed a mixed-methods approach, integrating both qualitative and quantitative research techniques. The rationale for choosing this approach lies in its ability to provide a comprehensive understanding of the research problem. By combining in-depth interviews (qualitative) with a structured questionnaire (quantitative), the study captures both the subjective experiences of leaders in the Malaysian Army Infantry Corps and measurable data regarding the effectiveness of leadership development programs (LDPs). The qualitative data offers insights into the lived experiences and perceptions of military leaders, while the quantitative data allows for statistical analysis and hypothesis testing. This approach ensures that the study benefits from the depth of qualitative insights while maintaining the rigor of quantitative methods (Creswell & Clark, 2017).

The study was conducted between January and June 2023 at various locations associated with the Malaysian Army Infantry Corps, with a specific focus on battalions stationed at the Army Combat Training Centre in Ulu Tiram, Johor. The training centre plays a critical role in delivering leadership development programs for Company Commanders, Platoon Commanders, and Section Commanders.

### Data Collection

A flowchart illustrating the data collection process is provided below. This flowchart outlines the sequential steps involved in the research design, data collection, and analysis:



**Figure 2: Research Process Flowchart**

Source: Illustrated by Authors

The study targeted intermediate and junior leaders from the Malaysian Army Infantry Corps. Purposive sampling was used to select Company Commanders, Platoon Commanders, and Section Commanders with relevant experience in leadership roles. A total of 500 questionnaires



were distributed, yielding 412 valid responses (82.4% response rate). Managing this sample size and ensuring that responses were complete and accurate posed logistical challenges.

The distribution of questionnaires was conducted through official channels, coordinated with the Army Headquarters-Infantry Directorate. Data collection was complex due to the dispersed nature of the battalions and the operational duties of military personnel. Follow-up reminders and coordination with unit commanders were necessary to ensure high response rates.

The analysis process involved the use of SmartPLS software, which presented challenges in managing and interpreting large datasets, particularly ensuring that both reflective and formative models were correctly analyzed. Additionally, ensuring the data met the assumptions for Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) and path analysis required careful preprocessing.

The survey instrument for this study was adapted from established literature. Course content was measured using ten items adapted from the works of Broucker (2009), Azman & Inani (2010), and *Jabatan Arah Infantri* (2009). Training methods were assessed using eight items derived from Pont (1990), Thayer (1995), Azman & Inani (2010), and *Jabatan Arah Infantri* (2009). Training transfer was evaluated through eight items based on the studies of Rahimi (2007), Azman & Inani (2010), and Azman et al. (2011). Finally, training motivation was measured using six questions adapted from Kang (2007) and Azman & Nurul (2010).

The interview questions were developed based on the key themes of leadership development, focusing on course content, training methods, and challenges encountered in applying leadership principles in operational settings. These questions were piloted with a small group of respondents to ensure clarity and relevance before being finalized for the main study.

The questionnaire utilized a seven-point Likert scale (ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree) to capture the respondents' perceptions. It was structured into several key sections. The first section gathered demographic information, which included basic details such as the respondents' rank, years of experience, and their participation in leadership development programs (LDPs). The second section focused on course content, consisting of ten questions that assessed the relevance, clarity, and practical applicability of the training material. The third section examined training methods through eight questions designed to evaluate the effectiveness of various instructional techniques, including lectures, simulations, and hands-on exercises. The fourth section addressed training transfer, with eight questions aimed at determining how well the respondents could apply the knowledge and skills acquired during the training to their operational roles. Finally, the last section measured training motivation, using six questions to assess both the intrinsic and extrinsic motivation of participants to engage with the training program.

## Findings

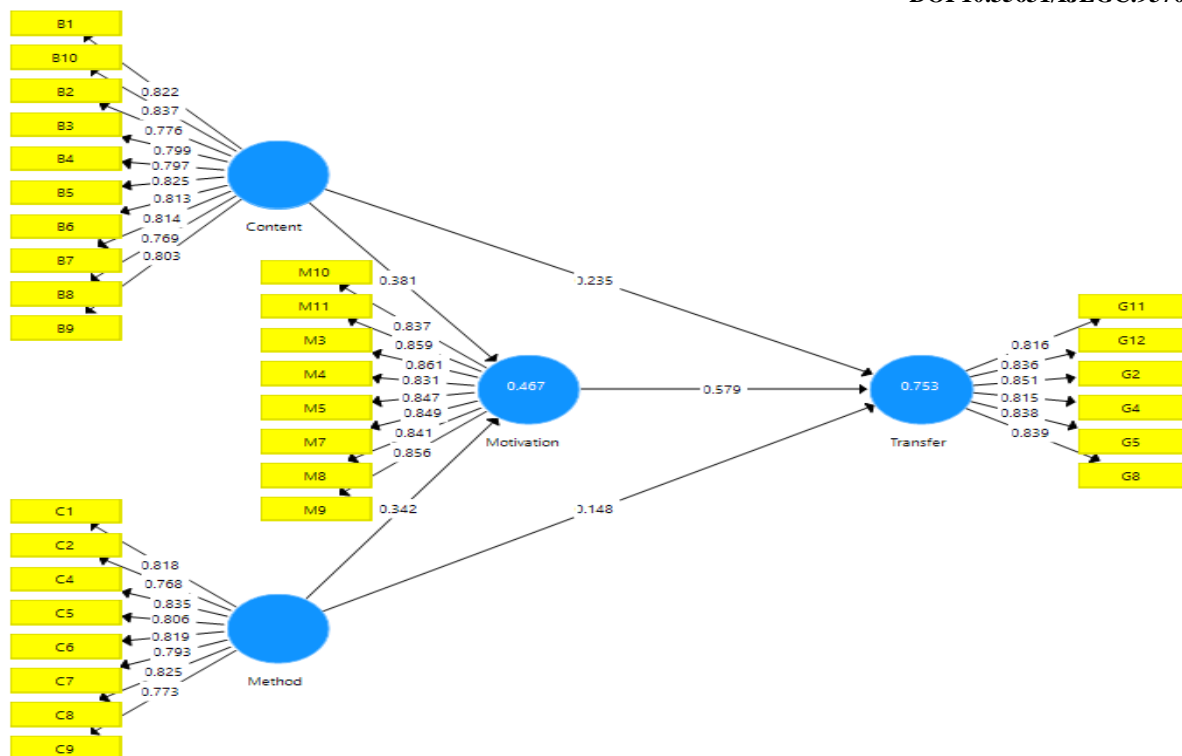
Table 2 shows that most respondents with the rank of Corporal/Lance Corporal (42.2%), aged between 31 - 35 years (36.4%), have serving for 16 to 21 years (36.2%), currently serving in the infantry unit (89.3%), currently serving as a section commander (68.7%) and having experience following the Section Commander course (75.5 %).

**Table 2. Respondent Profile (N=412)**

<b>Respondent Profile</b>	<b>Sub-Profile</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Rank	Major	20	4.9
	Captain/Lieutenant	81	19.7
	Staff Sergeant/Sergeant	137	33.3
	Corporal/Lance Corporal	174	42.1
Age	21 -25 year	37	9.0
	26 -30 year	122	29.6
	31 - 35 year	150	36.4
	36 year and above	103	25.0
Length of Service	Below 5 years	51	12.4
	6 – 10 years	55	13.2
	11 – 15 years	137	33.3
	16 – 21 years	149	36.2
	22 year and above	20	4.9
Current Unit/Attachment	Formation HQ	25	6.1
	Training Centre	19	4.6
	Infantry Unit	368	89.3
Current Appointment	Company Commander	17	4.1
	Platoon Commander	54	13.1
	Section Commander	283	68.7
	Admin Staff	45	10.9
	Instructor	13	3.2
Highest LDP Course Attended	Company Commander	30	7.3
	Platoon Commander	71	17.2
	Section Commander	311	75.5

Source: Illustrated by authors

Figure 3 shows the Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) procedure. This procedure is implemented to test the fit of the measurement model with the research data by assessing the level of validity and reliability of the items in the measurement model. Through this procedure, the values of convergent validity, discriminant validity and item reliability will be obtained. Detailed information is as discussed in Table 3.



**Figure 3. Confirmatory Factor Analysis**

Source: Describe from SmartPLS 3.3.9 by Authors

Table 3 shows the results of convergent, discriminant and item reliability tests. All the items in the constructs have factor loadings above 0.7, indicating indicates that the items have met the level established in the factor loading (Chin, 1998; Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Gefen & Straub, 2005; Henseler et al., 2009). In addition, average variance extracted (AVE) exceeded 0.5 ( $> 0.5$ ) indicates that the constructs of the study have met the criterion of convergent validity (Barclay et al., 1995; Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Henseler et al., 2009). For the discriminant validity test, the square root of AVE ( $\sqrt{\text{AVE}}$ ) shown diagonally is greater than the correlation between other constructs shown non-diagonally. This demonstrates that the results of this research met the discriminant validity test criteria (Henseler et al., 2009). Next, the item reliability test was tested by looking at the composite reliability value and Cronbachs alpha value. The value shown is above 0.8, indicating that the measurement scale has high internal consistency (Chua, 2020; Henseler et al., 2009; Bougie & Sekaran, 2020). Therefore, the level of validity and reliability of this measurement model meets the criteria of CFA.



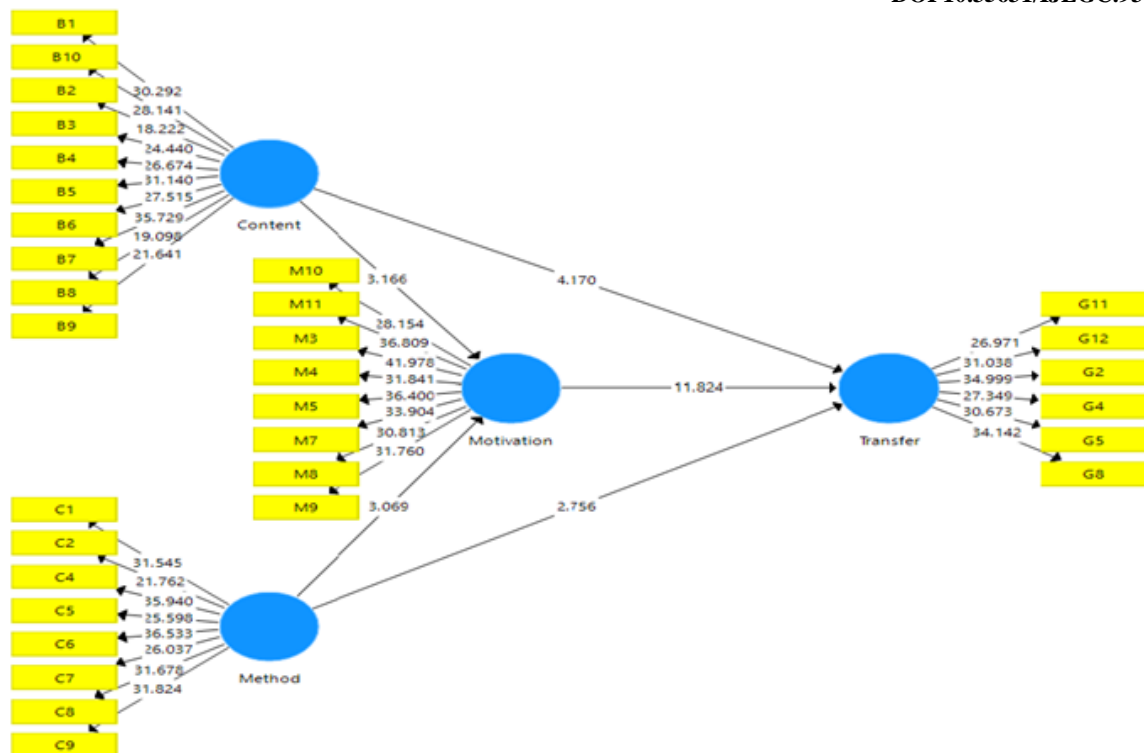
**Table 3: Results of Convergent, Discriminant, and Item Reliability Tests**

	No. of Item	Loading Factor	Composite Reliability	Alpha Cronbachs	AVE	CC	TM	TM <sub>v</sub>	TT
<b>Course Content (CC)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>0.769 – 0.825</b>	<b>0.949</b>	<b>0.940</b>	<b>0.64 9</b>	<b>0.80 6</b>			
<b>Training Method (TM)</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>0.768 – 0.835</b>	<b>0.936</b>	<b>0.922</b>	<b>0.64 8</b>	<b>0.78 5</b>	<b>0.80 5</b>		
<b>Training Motivation (TM<sub>v</sub>)</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>0.831 – 0.861</b>	<b>0.953</b>	<b>0.944</b>	<b>0.71 9</b>	<b>0.64 9</b>	<b>0.64 1</b>	<b>0.84 8</b>	
<b>Training Transfer (TT)</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>0.815 – 0.851</b>	<b>0.931</b>	<b>0.911</b>	<b>0.69 3</b>	<b>0.72 7</b>	<b>0.70 4</b>	<b>0.82 6</b>	<b>0.83 3</b>

Note:  $\sqrt{\text{AVE}}$  shown diagonally

Source: Describe from SmartPLS 3.3.9 by Authors

Figure 4 shows the results of hypothesis testing using the bootstrapping method. For testing the direct effect hypothesis, the results show two important findings: first, the course content has a significant relationship with the transfer of training ( $\beta=0.235$ ;  $t>4.170$ ); and second, the training method has a significant relationship with the transfer of training ( $\beta=0.148$ ;  $t>2.756$ ). Therefore, H1 and H2 are accepted. Next, the mediating variable effect relationship was assessed by testing the role of training motivation in the research model. The findings show that the relationship between course content (H3) and training methods (H4) with training motivation is significant, namely H3 ( $\beta=0.381$ ;  $t>3.166$ ), while H4 ( $\beta=0.342$ ;  $t>3.069$ ). Next, the relationship between training motivation and training transfer shows a significant value ( $\beta=0.579$ ;  $t>11.824$ ). This suggests that training motivation is able to act as an mediating variable in the relationship between course content and training methods with training transfer. However, the mediating effect is categorized as a complementary mediating effect (partial mediating); that is, a direct relationship and positively significant mediating (Hair et al., 2017). From the aspect of model robustness, the inclusion of training motivation into the analysis has contributed as much as 75.3 percent (See Figure 2) to changes in training transfer and this achievement is considered substantial (Chin, 1998; Henseler et al., 2009). The detail explanation of hypothesis testing using is shown in Table 4.



Note: Significant at \* $t > 1.96$ ; \*\* $t > 2.58$ ; \*\*\* $t > 3.29$

**Figure 4. Hypothesis Testing using the Bootstrapping**

Source: Describe from SmartPLS 3.3.9 by Authors

**Table 4. Summary of Hypothesis Testing**

Variables' Relationship	$\beta$	t	p	R <sup>2</sup>
Course Content → Training Transfer	0.235	4.170	0.000	0.753
Training Method → Training Transfer	0.148	2.756	0.006	
Course Content → Training Motivation	0.381	3.166	0.002	
Training Method → Training Motivation	0.342	3.069	0.002	
Training Motivation → Training Transfer	0.579	11.824	0.000	

Source: Describe from SmartPLS 3.3.9 by Authors

## Discussion And Implications

The findings of this study confirm that training motivation acts as an mediating variable in the relationship between LDP and training transfer. In the military context, LDP was designed and implemented formally and informally for intermediate and junior leaders to achieve the goals and strategies of the Malaysian Army Infantry Corps. Most respondents believe that designing and implementing course content and training methods on a regular basis will boost training motivation. They also agree that this strong training motivation will culminate in a high level of training transfer inside the organization. The scenario demonstrates that the organization's ability to formulate course content and implement an appropriate method of training can boost training motivation in leadership development program. Next, it may strengthen training transfer inside the studied organization.

The study's implications can be classified into three categories: contribution to theory, robustness of research methodologies, and contribution to human resource practitioners. In terms of theoretical contribution, this research yielded two key findings. First, course content and training methods are major determinants of training transfer. This is consistent with research undertaken by Rahimi (2007), Balkisnah (2009), Azman et al. (2011), Hatfield et al. (2011), Azman (2012), and Noor Azmi et al. (2018). Second, training motivation plays a mediator role in the relationship between the course content and training methods, and training transfer. This finding is consistent with those published by Mullen et al. (2006), Paul et al. (2009), and Azman et al. (2016).

In terms of strengthening the research methodology, the data obtained from the questionnaire has reached the set standards of validity and reliability. This situation will be able to produce accurate and credible research. From the aspect of contribution to human resource management practitioners, the outcomes of this study can be used as a guide by the management in enhancing the implementation of the LDP programme. To attain the objectives of the LDP, priority should be focused on the following recommendations. First, improve the course content and implementation method of LDP. For example, the course content can be improved by emphasising cognitive aspects (new knowledge), psychomotor (physical abilities), and emotions (emotional regulation). Second, the upgraded course's content can be strengthened through a variety of training methods, including the transmission of concepts and theories, practical training, and the use of advanced and more effective teaching tools. Improvements in course content and training methods that are appropriate for the current circumstances may lead to training transfer within the organization.

Third, selecting and placing policy for those who will occupy crucial jobs must be set up on organizational criteria and procedures, as well as the innovative thinking and creativity that they provide. The implementation of this policy will ensure that only employees with substantial knowledge and expertise in the field of training development are chosen to manage and supervise leadership development training program. Their qualifications will assist organizations in designing and implementing training programs that adhere to the relevant training need analysis principles. Training programs planned and conducted in accordance with these principles have the potential to improve the attitude and behaviour of military leaders. Finally, the selection policy for the course should be tightened to ensure that only highly qualified and interested candidates are chosen. This is done to ensure the quality of the leaders who would be produced after they accomplish the LDP. If these guidelines are implemented, they will be able to assist intermediate and junior-level leaders in achieving organizational objectives.

## Conclusion

This study set out to explore the relationship between leadership development programs (LDP), training motivation, and training transfer in the Malaysian Army Infantry Corps. The objectives of the study were to assess the impact of course content and training methods on training transfer and to examine the mediating role of training motivation. The findings confirm that these objectives were successfully achieved, as both course content and training methods were found to have a significant positive relationship with training transfer. Additionally, training motivation played a crucial mediating role, further enhancing the effectiveness of LDP in facilitating training transfer.

The study makes several contributions to both theory and practice. Theoretically, it extends the current understanding of leadership development by incorporating training motivation as a key factor that influences the success of LDPs, especially in non-Western, military contexts. While much of the existing literature has focused on Western settings, this study provides valuable insights into the Malaysian Army's leadership development practices, thereby addressing a significant gap in the research. Practically, the study highlights the importance of well-designed course content and effective training methods in boosting training motivation, which in turn enhances the transfer of training. This insight can be directly applied by human resource and training departments within military organizations to improve the effectiveness of leadership programs.

While this study has provided important insights, there are opportunities for further research. Future studies could explore additional variables that might influence training transfer, such as organizational support, leadership styles, or individual trainee characteristics like learning styles or self-efficacy. Moreover, expanding the research to other branches of the military or even non-military organizations would provide a more comprehensive understanding of the factors that influence the success of leadership development programs. Finally, longitudinal studies that track training transfer over time would offer valuable data on the long-term effectiveness of LDPs, particularly in dynamic and challenging environments.

### Acknowledgements

The authors wish to thank the Faculty of Defence Studies and Management, National Defence University of Malaysia for funding this publication.

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