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**Training and Psychological Empowerment:
The Case of Bantu Philippines' Youth Leaders**

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Abstract

Bantu Leadership Academy, a project of Bantu Philippines still in its pilot year, provides job skills training and employment opportunities for at-risk youths from low-income families ages 16-24. The leadership academy aims to help youth leaders find employment. However, some of the youth leaders encountered issues at work. Partner employers cited problems in attitude and behavior, which resulted in non-regularization after the 6-month probationary period. This study will look into the psychological empowerment of the youth leaders of Bantu Philippines gained through training and development. An online survey is deployed to the 18 youth leaders of the leadership academy. Results show that the training activities of BLAC do not affect the overall psychological empowerment of the youth leaders. However, it can be noted that training affects the sub-variable, "meaning," or how the youth leaders value their work.

Keywords: *Training and Development, Psychological Empowerment, Youth NEET.*

Introduction

In 2020, the OECD reported that one in five (22.4%) young people worldwide aged 15-24 are neither in employment, education, or training (NEET). In the Philippines, as of March 2022, the Philippine Statistics Authority reported that those between the ages of 15 to

24 are approximately 26% of the entire labor force of 76.3 million. The youth labor force participation rate was 36.9% or 7.44 million out of the 20.14 million youth population (Mapa, 2022), while 16.9% or 3.9 million are youth NEETs (Orbeta et al., 2021).

Youth NEET is a new concept, according to Orbeta et al. (2021) of the Philippine Institute for Development Studies. Common terms for youth exclusion are out-of-school children and youth or disadvantaged youth. In the same study, it was highlighted that dropout points of youths in school would start around age 12, and the biggest drop out points are at age 17 during grades 11 or 12, followed by ages 18 and 19 during the transition from senior high to college; and lastly, at ages 20 and 21 during the sophomore up to the senior years of college. Youth NEET is more vulnerable and at risk of becoming socially excluded; their incomes are below the poverty line, and they lack the skills to improve their economic situation (OECD, 2022).

In a study by Kuzminov et al. (2019), the authors pointed out that it is the human being, not other natural or financial resources, that significantly impacts socio-economic development. Human capital is a strategic resource comprised of knowledge, skills, and practices that allow human beings to create value through (1) income generation while receiving other benefits for themselves, (2) an increase in competitive advantage and firm performance for their employers, and (2) economic development for the society (Boon et al., 2018; Kuzminov et al., 2019).

The Philippines has rich human resources, and it is a shame that a national human resources development (NHRD) strategy and implementation needs to be present (Cecilia, 2022). Now that the economy is opening after experiencing the COVID pandemic, the youth is expected to drive the country's economic activities again (National Economic & Development Authority, 2021).

This study aligns with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal # 8, which promotes sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work. Results of the study can also be shared with the sister organizations of Bantu in Brazil and Australia as they have projects offered to at-risk youths in their respective countries. Psychological empowerment through training is part of bringing youth NEETS out of poverty.

Bantu Leadership Academy

Bantu Philippines is an NGO operating in the country since 2012. The organization has Capoeira Angola programs and other activities to empower and build self-control, patience, self-confidence, teamwork, other behavioral, social, and emotional skills, and critical thinking (Bantu Philippines, 2022).

One of Bantu's pillars is the Bantu Leadership Academy (BLAC) which provides job skills training and employment opportunities for at-risk youths through the generosity of Bantu's partner employers and professionals. Members of BLAC are from low-income families ages 16-24. They are also called youth leaders as they can help the organization teach Capoeira to younger children.

BLAC aims to help youth leaders find meaningful employment. According to Mr. Jaime Benedicto, the founder of Bantu Philippines, each employed youth earned approximately Php118,800 during BLAC's pilot year in 2021. However, several of the youth leaders encountered issues at work. Partner employers cited problems in attitude and behavior which resulted in non-regularization after the 6-month probationary period.

Since Bantu Philippines aims to empower the youth through training, this study will look into psychological empowerment and training and development as these two are closely related to productivity and other work-related outputs.

The research attempts to answer the following questions: (1) what the impact of training and development on the psychological empowerment of youth leaders is? Moreover, (2) what is the impact of training and development on the youth leaders' psychological empowerment sub-variables?

The objective of the research is to examine whether the training activities and development program of Bantu support the psychological empowerment of the youth leaders.

Review of Related Literature

The study focuses on the effect of training activities and the development program of Bantu on the youth leaders' psychological empowerment. The results are based on the data collected from the online survey deployed to the youth leaders reflecting the youth leaders' perception of the training provided by Bantu and its partner employers and their perception of psychological empowerment.

Psychological Empowerment

Psychological empowerment is a form of intrinsic motivation that makes individuals feel proactive, flexible, resilient, and persistent, which helps them adapt to changes by accepting failure and moving on to creating solutions to problems (Muduli, 2017).

Psychological motivation has four dimensions: meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact (Spreitzer, 1995, as cited in Skrinou & Gkorezis, 2020).

The psychological approach to empowerment is based on the individual's perceptions of oneself regarding one's work. The four dimensions are subjective and reflect the cognitive orientation of the individual to one's work.

- Meaning is how the individual judges the importance of work based on one's values and ideals.
- Competency is how the individual believes in his or her capabilities to perform the work.

- Self-determination is how the individual feels about his or her independence in doing the work.
- The impact is how the individual feels about his or her influence and role in the workplace.

Factors such as leader-member exchanges (Skrinou & Gkorezis, 2020), interpersonal relationships (Wang et al., 2019), organizational climate and culture (Richter & Kauffeld, 2020), and training opportunities (Raineri, 2017) contributes to psychological empowerment and motivation of employees which mediates and moderates effectiveness, innovativeness, work commitment, engagement, job involvement, satisfaction at the workplace (Skrinou & Gkorezis, 2020; Voegtlin et al., 2015).

Training and Development

Training activities such as cross-training and formal team training positively correlate with psychological empowerment (Voegtlin et al., 2015). Training and development programs are antecedent to psychological empowerment affecting all four dimensions or sub-variables: meaning, competency, self-determination, and impact (Skrinou & Gkorezis, 2020). When the training content accurately addresses the needs of the person and the requirements of his or her job, it will raise motivation and impact psychological empowerment as it will improve work opportunities (Richter & Kauffeld, 2020). Even perceived training support directly affects psychological empowerment (Chenli & Abrokwah, 2021).

The broad concept of training is defined as any course or educational program important for work or profession (Zhang et al., 2021). Training and development is an important function of HRM practices, defined as the degree of training the organization receive to develop skills (Delery and Doty, 1996, as cited in Bibi et al., 2018). The ambiguous definition of training and development is used in the study to encompass the diverse and wide range of learning activities and opportunities that can improve the cognitive

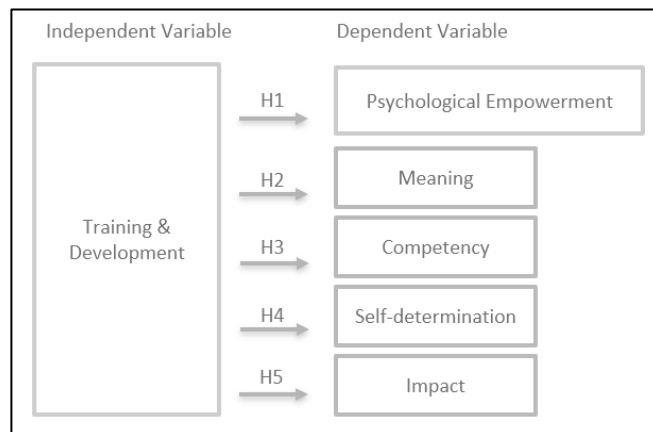
and non-cognitive skills important for work. Based on the human capital theory, training significantly improves human capital (Zhang et al., 2021).

Training in the latest technological advancements and development methods is a fast, effective way for organizations to be innovative and competitive while increasing employee performance, commitment, loyalty, retention, job match, and job satisfaction (Bibi et al., 2018; Mihardjo et al., 2021; Richter & Kauffeld, 2020; Zhang et al., 2021). Lastly, training must be conducted in an environment that fosters and nurtures individuals to express themselves to develop a conducive learning environment freely. Individuals can accumulate more knowledge and skills necessary in a global and fast-changing world when the organizational climate and culture encourage seeking ideas and knowledge creation (Muduli, 2017).

Framework

The human capital theory (HCT), the resource-based view (RBV) theory, and the social exchange theory will be used to know the impact of training and development on the psychological empowerment of Bantu Philippines' youth leaders.

The human capital theory (HCT) provides a context for the importance of investing in education, training, and skills development which benefits the individual, organization, and society (Becker, 1975 as cited in Arthur-Mensah & Alagaraja, 2018). Resource-based view (RBV) theory shows that HR practices such as training can directly impact and influence skills, attitudes, and behaviors in terms of outcomes. (Mihardjo et al., 2021). Lastly, social exchange theory suggests that individuals who receive benefits from one party tend to respond in kind. HR practices intended to benefit individuals are investments where the individuals reciprocate with a positive attitude and behaviors toward the organization to maintain the exchange relationship. (Jiang & Messersmith, 2018).

Figure 1*Conceptual Framework*

Training and development is the independent variable in this study; psychological empowerment is the dependent variable. In the study of Skrinou and Gkorezia (2020), they examined the determinants of psychological empowerment using the sub-variables: meaning, competency, self-determination, and impact.

Based on the framework, my proposed hypotheses are the following:

H1: Training and development do not affect psychological empowerment.

H2: Training and development do not affect the meaning.

H3: Training and development does not affect competency.

H4: Training and development do not affect self-determination.

H5: Training and development does not affect the impact.

Methodology

The study is quantitative, as I will use a deductive approach focusing on the data and its test result. The approach is positivism, as I have used a structured data collection method. The population size of the youth leaders who are part of BLAC is 20. I was able to get eighteen (18) respondents between the ages of 16 and 24. Two members are no longer active as they no longer live in San Andres, Manila, where the community is located.

The purpose of the study is to examine the relationship between the training activities and the development program of Bantu on the youth leaders' psychological empowerment. The study is causal, and it also follows a descriptive design to see the characteristics of the youth leaders of Bantu.

Data Collection and Treatment of Data

I adapted the online survey questions used in the studies of Bibi et al. (2018) and Skrinou and Gkorezia (2020). The online survey was divided into four sections. The first section contains the statements indicating that the survey is confidential, data is stored in an authorized database, there is a voluntary response, and agreement to informed consent. The second section asks for personal information such as gender, age, marital status, number of children, education, family size, household income, nature of employment, and class worker. The third section comprises four statements that measure training and development adapted from Delery and Doty (1996) as cited in Bibi et al. (2018). Lastly, the fourth section comprises twelve statements that measure psychological empowerment by Spreitzer (1995), as cited in Skrinou and Gkorezia (2020).

The 5-point Likert scale, with one being the lowest (strongly disagree) and five being the highest (strongly agree), was used to measure training and development and psychological empowerment. The instrument's Cronbach alpha is 0.938, higher than the rule-of-thumb, 0.7.

The data collected is stored in Google and is analyzed in open-source statistical software, Jamovi. The descriptive statistics of the variables used in the study will also be summarized. This includes the computations of central tendency and dispersion. Descriptive statistics were used to show the demographic and socio-economic profiles of the youth leaders and the summary of their answers regarding their perceived training and development

support being received and their sentiments on meaning, competency, self-determination, and impact at their jobs.

Since the sample size is only eighteen (18), it is difficult to establish if the data is normally distributed. I will use a nonparametric or distribution-free test, Kendall's tau-b correlation coefficient, to measure the association and strength of two variables (Laerd Statistics, 2018). This a statistical tool that does not require any assumption regarding the shape of the sample; however, it requires that data be ordinal (Laerd Statistics, 2018 Sirug, 2015). Another assumption, but not a strict one, is that the data follow a monotonic relationship.

The study is causal, and therefore, the extent of the effect of training and development on psychological empowerment will be measured using the Mann-Whitney U test and Cohen's d. The sample size will be divided into two independent groups. The median score of the respondents on the perceived level of training and development received will be used as the basis for creating the two independent groups. The first group perceived the training of Bantu to be low, while the second group perceived the training of Bantu to be high. The Mann-Whitney U test will be used to compare if there is a difference in the dependent variables' distribution for the two groups (Sirug, 2015). Cohen's D will also be used to measure the effect sizes of the difference between the means of the two groups (Glen, 2022).

Respondents

Eighteen youth leaders, ages 16 to 24, completed the survey. There are 15 males and three females, all of them single. Only one graduated college, five senior high, eight elementary, and four early childhood education. Most come from large family sizes of more than seven persons with an annual household income below 40,000 pesos. The youth leaders are from low-income families working in different capacities.

Permission was secured from Mr. Jaime Benedicto, the Director of Bantu Philippines, to deploy the online survey to the youth leaders. Some of them were minors. Therefore, their parent's consent was also secured.

Discussion of Results

Table 1 shows the respondents' sentiments, given the five-point Likert scale. They were positive about the training and development programs Bantu Philippines and its partner employers provided. They also rated themselves positively on psychological empowerment. However, it can be seen that impact, one of the sub-variables of psychological empowerment, was lower than the other sub-variables.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics of all Variables and their Sub-variables

Variable	Observations	Mean	Standard deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Training & Development	18	4.57	0.761	1.75	5
Psychological Empowerment	18	4.24	0.773	1.83	5
Meaning	18	4.59	0.780	2	5
Competency	18	4.26	0.829	2	5
Self-Determination	18	4.13	0.818	2	5
Impact	18	3.96	1.080	1.33	5

Dependent Variable: Psychological Empowerment

Psychological empowerment was measured using Spreitzer's (1995) 12-item scale with a 5-point Likert scale, which includes four 3-item sub-scales corresponding to its four dimensions: meaning, competency, self-determination, and impact. This was the scale used in

the study of Skrinou and Gkorezia (2020). The results in Table 2 show that the youth leaders rated themselves as psychologically empowered, with a mean score of 4.24

The first dimension, meaning, is the importance of the job to the youth leader. Among the four dimensions of psychological empowerment, meaning has the highest average score of 4.59. The second dimension, competence, is the belief in one's capacity to do work-related tasks. The youth leaders scored an average of 4.26. The third dimension, self-determination, is the freedom to choose and determine action plans at work. The youth leaders scored an average of 4.13. The last dimension, impact, is the youth leader's influence at work. The youth leaders have the lowest average score on this dimension, at 3.96.

Independent Variable: Training and Development

Training and development were measured using Delery and Doty’s (1996) four-item scale with a 5-point Likert scale, as cited in Bibi et al. (2018). Training and development have a mean score of 4.57. Table 3 shows the ratings the youth leaders chose for each statement. The first statement has a mean score of 4.61. The second statement 4.44. The third statement, 4.5. And the last statement, 4.72.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics of Training and Development

	Mean	Standard deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Training and Development	4.57	0.761	1.75	5
TD1: My institution provides extensive training for my development	4.61	0.979	1	5
TD2: My institution provides developmental training programs every year	4.44	0.856	2	5

TD3: In my institution, there is formal developmental training to teach the skills needed to perform our jobs	4.5	0.786	2	5
TD4: My institution provides formal developmental training to increase our chances of promotion or to apply for better work opportunities	4.72	0.752	2	5

The first research question of this study is to know the impact of training and development on the psychological empowerment of youth leaders. This question will be answered by testing *H1. Training and development do not affect psychological empowerment* using Kendall's Tau B. Moreover, Table 4 shows that training and development do not affect their psychological empowerment ($\tau_b = 0.213, p = 0.26$). The result in testing *H1* is the opposite of studies which shows that training is an antecedent to psychological empowerment (Chenli & Abrokwah, 2021; Richter & Kauffeld, 2020; Skrinou & Gkorezis, 2020; Voegtlin et al., 2015).

Table 3

Correlation Matrix

	Training and Development	
Training & Development	Kendall's Tau B	—
	p-value	—
	N	—
Psychological Empowerment	Kendall's Tau B	0.213
	p-value	0.26
	N	18
Meaning	Kendall's Tau B	0.481
	p-value	0.021
	N	18
Competency	Kendall's Tau B	0.008
	p-value	0.967
	N	18

Self-determination	Kendall's Tau B	0.392
	p-value	0.048
	N	18
Impact	Kendall's Tau B	0.178
	p-value	0.367
	N	18

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

The second question of the study is know the impact of training and development on the sub-variables of psychological empowerment of the youth leaders. This question will be answered by testing *H2 training and development has no effect on meaning; H3 training and development do not affect competency; H4 training and development do not affect self-determination; and H5 Training and development do not affect impact*. Table 3 also shows that among the four sub-variables, only meaning ($\tau_b = 0.481$, $p = 0.021$) and self-determination ($\tau_b = 0.392$, $p = 0.048$) are impacted by the training and development offered by BLAC to the youth leaders. Training and development do not affect the youth leaders' competency ($\tau_b = 0.008$, $p = 0.967$) and impact ($\tau_b = 0.178$, $p = 0.367$).

The Bantu Leadership Academy, known as BLAC, started in the 4th quarter of 2021. Bantu's main development program is Capoeira Angola, an art form that combines and draws elements from dance, martial arts, acrobatics, ritual, and music. After a decade of operating the NGO in the Philippines, the youths it serves have grown up and have different needs. They are now young adults and are expected to help with their family's finances. This was when Bantu formed BLAC to help the youth leaders gain employment. Bantu has partner employers who provide different pieces of training. However, due to limited resources, the training provided focused on the non-cognitive or soft skills (i.e., writing a CV and communication at work) that could help the youth leaders be employed.

The extent of training and development's impact on psychological empowerment is measured using the Mann-Whitney U test and Cohen's d, which can be seen in Tables 4 and 5.

In table 4, looking at the p-values from the Mann-Whitney U test, there is no difference in the psychological empowerment of the two groups (from the same sample size) representing those who gave a low score and a high score on their perception of training received formed. The first group perceived the training of Bantu to be low, while the second group perceived the training of Bantu to be high, and both groups perceived that BLAC's training and development activities do not affect their psychological empowerment.

Table 4 also shows that among the four sub-variables of psychological empowerment, BLAC's training and development only affect 'meaning' ($p = 0.09$). The training received by the youth leaders helps them find meaning and see the importance of their work. Competency ($p = 0.853$), self-determination ($p = 0.172$), and impact ($p = 0.468$) have no significance.

Since the training and development of BLAC only affect the sub-variable, Cohen's D will be used to find its effect size. In table 5, the measure of the effect size of training and development to meaning (0.785) between the means of the two groups is big. As per Glen (2022), the rule of thumb guideline is small effect = 0.2, medium effect = 0.5, and significant effect = 0.8. An increase in training will have a large effect on meaning.

The human capital theory supports the importance of investing in training to benefit an individual, which will positively affect society. The fact that BLAC provides training support, whether the content is valid, provides meaning to the youth leaders. This is a good start for the pilot program of BLAC. The youth leaders receive support, and they, in turn, also help the NGO in teaching younger children Capoeira Angola, which benefits the NGO. The social exchange theory supports that individuals who receive benefits from one party tend to respond in kind.

Table 4

Mann-Whitney U Test

		Statistic	df	p	Mean difference	SE difference	95% Confidence Interval	
							Lower	Upper
Psychological Empowerment	Student's t	-0.723	16	0.48	-0.2688	0.372	-1.057	0.52
	Mann-Whitney U	31.5		0.476	-0.25		-0.917	0.583
Meaning	Student's t	-1.655*	16	0.117	-0.5833	0.352	-1.33	0.164
	Mann-Whitney U	23.5		0.09	-3.94e-5		-1	7.21E-05
Competency	Student's t	0.227	16	0.824	0.0917	0.405	-0.766	0.949
	Mann-Whitney U	37.5		0.853	1.63E-06		-0.667	0.667
Self-Determination	Student's t	-1.15	16	0.267	-0.4417	0.384	-1.256	0.373
	Mann-Whitney U	24.5		0.172	-0.333		-1	0.667
Impact	Student's t	-0.268	16	0.792	-0.1417	0.529	-1.263	0.979
	Mann-Whitney U	31.5		0.468	-0.333		-1	1.333

^a Levene's test is significant ($p < .05$), suggesting a violation of the assumption of equal variances

Table 5

Cohen's D

		Effect Size	95% Confidence Interval	
			Lower	Upper
Psychological	Cohen's d	-0.343	-1.276	0.609
Empowerment	Rank biserial correlation	0.2125		
Meaning	Cohen's d	-0.785	-1.762	0.23
	Rank biserial correlation	0.4125		
Competency	Cohen's d	0.107	-0.826	1.036
	Rank biserial correlation	0.0625		
Self-	Cohen's d	-0.545	-1.494	0.431
Determination	Rank biserial correlation	0.3875		
Impact	Cohen's d	-0.127	-1.055	0.808
	Rank biserial correlation	0.2125		

^a Levene's test is significant ($p < .05$), suggesting a violation of the assumption of equal variances

Conclusion

The Bantu Leadership Academy (BLAC) is composed of 18 active youth leaders ages 16 to 24. BLAC aims to help youth leaders find employment, and Bantu's mission is to empower youths through Capoeira Angola. The training and development program of Bantu in its leadership academy and its impact on the psychological empowerment of the youth leaders are studied because psychological empowerment not only builds human capital, it also leads to job satisfaction, organizational commitment, job involvement, productivity, effectiveness and innovativeness (Skrinou & Gkorezis, 2020).

Eighteen youth leaders ages 16 to 24 completed the online survey. Results of the study show that training and development do not affect the psychological empowerment of youth leaders. However, among the four sub-variables of psychological empowerment, only 'meaning' is impacted to a large extent by BLACs training and development programs. It is then concluded that BLAC's training and development activities should be further improved to build the youth leaders' competency, self-determination, and impact affect their psychological empowerment.

It is recommended that BLAC further improves its training and development program and aims to improve the cognitive and non-cognitive skills to increase competency, self-determination, and impact/influence, which the youth leaders will need for work. A holistic and collaborative process should also be developed with the youth leaders to identify further their training and development needs (Kiernan, 2021).

It is also advisable to know their competency within their levels of education as these are resources readily available which can be enhanced to hone the skills needed for employment and to gain a competitive advantage. Assessing the youth leaders' current cognitive and non-cognitive skills is suggested to create a training and development program to impact their psychological empowerment and all its sub-variables.

In the study of Voetglin et al. (2015) of a Swedish company, the authors point out that training enhances psychological empowerment, which motivates employees to hone four types of cognitions: meaning, competency, self-determination, and impact, which is similar to what Skrinou & Gkorezis (2020) and Muduli (2017) concluded in their studies as well. Given the learnings taken from these cases, Bantu should create a training roadmap that includes the following: (1) Learn about the organization's vision, mission, goals, performance, and advocacy increases "meaning" as they will be able to see the importance of their roles. Moreover, when they connect their role to the organization's success, "impact" also increases.

(2) Teaching new skills on top of the youth leaders' current skillset increase "competency" as this will enhance their mastery, making them realize new things about themselves. The more confidence they gain through training, their "self-determination" or perceived autonomy increases (Voegtlin et al., 2015). (3) Conducting group training sessions are preferable to individual training for the group to form shared knowledge, perceptions, beliefs, values, or cognitions, which increases the collective psychological empowerment of everyone. The good attitude and behavior that one or two youth leaders possess can be transmitted to the entire group through active engagement.

Youth NEETs and poverty is a global issue. Since Bantu Philippines has sister organizations in Brazil and Australia, the organization may share its best practices and resources. Moreover, they can also look into the other case studies of other organizations done by researchers in this field to see if other organizations' practices can apply to the case of the Bantu youth leaders.

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

The study has limitations, as the focus was on the survey results. For future studies, it is recommended to do qualitative or mixed-method research. The sample size is also very small. Better tools of analysis can also be used to improve the findings.

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