

THE EFFECTS OF NEGATIVE FEEDBACK ON INTENTION TO IMPROVE EFFICIENCY OF JOB AND WORK PERFORMANCE OF GENERATION Y

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Abstract

This research aimed to study the effects of negative feedback on intention to improve job efficiency and work performance for generation Y employees. The research participants were 31 employees aged between 18-35 years. A quasi-experimental approach (A-B-A design) was conducted to examine the effect. There were 9 data collections (once a week) which included questionnaires and performance assessment forms. Then, the data were analyzed using one-way repeated measures ANOVA. The study found that the intention to improve job efficiency during the experimental period was higher than the pre-experimental period at a level of significance of 0.01. There was no statistically significance difference between the experimental period and the post-experimental period. The level of work performance during the experimental period was higher than for the pre-experimental period at a level of significance of 0.01. There was no statistically significant difference between the experimental period and the post-experimental period. Thus, it can be concluded that negative feedbacks had a positive effect on the intention to improve job efficiency and work performance for employees.

Keywords: Negative feedback; intention to improve the job efficiency; generation y

Introduction

Giving feedback is an important tool, which organizations have adapted to enhance job efficiency. Loew (2015) found that representatives of High-Performance Organizations in 15 countries agreed that giving feedback was a good method of performance management and that improvement in managers' ability to give feedback will be important to performance management in the future. Relevantly, Lipman (2016) discovered that 65 percent of employees wanted feedbacks. Basically, feedback is divided into two types based on signs, namely, 1) positive feedback; feedback which signals to a receiver in a positive way and 2) negative feedback; feedback which signals to a receiver in a negative way and indicates job failure, below standards or criticism (Steelman et al., 2004; Woo et al., 2008; Bodroza, 2011). Most studies found that positive feedbacks result in positive responses, for instance, having a positive mood, perseverance, accepting the righteousness of information and having positive thinking toward feedback givers (Bodroza, 2011). As for the negative feedback, most of the studies showed different outcomes. It decreases positive mood, for example, being less happy (Ilies et al., 2007) but increases negative feeling such as anger (Svensson, 2015; Niemann et al., 2014) anxiety (Leitner, 2014), shame and sadness (Hu et al., 2015). Finally, the studies showed that negative feedback causes a more negative emotional response than for positive feedback. However, Zenger and Folkman (2014) found that employees wanted to hear negative feedback rather than the positive because they felt it would help them improve their job efficiency and lead to better work performance.

According to a literature review, it was found that studies on the effects of the negative feedback on job improvement were few and did not include obvious conclusions. Steelman and Rutkowski (2004) found that negative feedback decreased the intention to improve job efficiency which is opposite to Rickards (2011) who discovered that negative feedback heightened intention to use feedback for self-improvement. However, most of the previous studies were exploratory which had no control of extraneous variables, environments or conditions which were not needed for the study. Hence, the internal validity of the research was less than experimental or quasi-experimental. Furthermore, some previous studies emphasized that negative feedback did not relate to

performance management directly. The results could not explain the working contexts well enough. In addition, other research conducted on the effects of negative feedback on work performance found no clear conclusion. A number of researchers found that the negative feedback leads to a higher work performance (Forza and Salvador, 2000; Beach, 2013; Brown et al., 2016). But, on the other hand, some researchers found that the effectiveness of the work could not be assumed with negative feedback (Emmerik et al., 2008; Zheng et al., 2015)

According to the above, this study was conducted in order to seek a clearer conclusion in terms of the effects of negative feedback on the intention to improve job efficiency and work performance. This study might help to develop knowledge on giving employees negative feedback. This study focused on Generation Y employees because this group will be about 50% of the world labor force in around 2020. They are an important part of the development of organizations and they can become managers in the future (PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2011). The study also focused on the food industry because it is the industry that was the top ranked for exportation in the Thai manufacturing sector. In 2017, the first quarter saw the value of exportation net 6,508.52 million US dollars (Office of Industrial Economy, 2017). About 1.71 million were employed and the employment trend is upward (Intelligence Center for Food Industry, 2017).

Research Boundaries

1. Independent or manipulate variable is the negative feedback.
2. Dependent variables are the intention to improve job efficiency and work performance.
3. Controlled variables are 1) feedback provider; the supervisor of each participant, 2) feedback methods; verbal and face-to-face communication, 3) feedback giving manners; not using vulgar language while speaking and using daily expressions that are not too emotional, 4) feedback was about the results of the 5Ss, 5) feedback frequency was set at once a week, and 6) the time for giving feedback was the day after the 5Ss checking date.
4. The research site were cassava starch factories in Srisaket Province.

Definitions

1. Negative feedback is the information that tells participants about their 5Ss performance that did not meet the good criteria, indicates mistakes and gives suggestions for improvement.

2. Intention to improve job efficiency means the need, gladness, and planning of employees to use the negative feedback to improve and develop their jobs.

3. Work performance refers to the score of the 5Ss practice of participants.

4. Generation Y employees were persons aged, between 18 and 35 years old who work in business organizations in 2017.

Literature Review

Reactions of Receiver Toward Feedback

Giving feedback is defined as providing information about the effectiveness of current work, goals and telling employees things that need improvement (Dobbelaer et al., 2013). The responses to the feedback have both positive and negative aspects (Kluger and DeNisi, 1996) and the responses reflect different aspects which are affective reactions, cognitive reactions, learning motivation, and intentions to use feedback. Consequently, it leads to certain work behaviors and work performance (Anseel et al., 2015). The way people respond to feedback depends on several factors, for example, 1) feedback sign, 2) feedback detail, 3) feedback source, 4) source credibility, 5) feedback delivery method, 6) personality of the receiver and 7) environmental matters, for instance, culture (Ilies et al., 2007; Belschak and Hartog, 2009; Strijbos, et al., 2010; Kuvaas, 2011; Rijt et al., 2013; Boudrias et al., 2014; Niemann et al., 2014; Kogler et al., 2016; Shu and Lam, 2016).

Negative Feedback and Intention to Improve Efficiency of Job

Most studies found that negative feedback would increase the negative mood of receivers (Bodroza, 2011; Svensson, 2015; Leitner, 2014; Hu et al., 2015), leading to the receivers responding in a negative way cognitively. For example, they may believe information is less accurate (Bodroza, 2011). The

previous studies did not contain a clear conclusion as to whether negative feedback caused behavioral intention. Emmerik et al. (2008) found that the intention to leave a job could not be predicted by negative feedback, but Belschak and Hartog (2009) found that negative feedback led to the intention to leave the job.

Regarding the effects of the negative feedback on the intention to use the feedback for job improvement, Steelman and Rutkowski (2004) discovered that the more frequently people received negative feedback, the less the intention to use the feedback for job improvement. However, the intention to use this feedback increases if the employees know that the negative feedback is fair or comes from a reliable manager. Rickards (2011) found that the more the receivers knew the feedback was positive, the less the intention to use the feedback for self-improvement. Contrarily, the more the receivers knew the feedback was negative, the more the intention to use the feedback for self-improvement.

Negative Feedback and Work Performance

Work performance means the result which occurs from work which might be measured by time, quantity or quality. Giving feedback is a factor affecting a person's work performance. If there is no feedback, workers will not know how well they work. This means that work performance may not be improved (Rummler and Brache, 2013). Previous studies showed different conclusions about the effects of negative feedback on work performance. Beach (2013) found that negative feedback made work performance better which was no different from positive feedback. It might have to do with the way the feedback was given, for instance, giving negative feedback with politeness as Rungaroon (2013) found gave the same result as when positive feedback was given. In comparison with a group getting a high level of feedback, it was revealed that a higher work performance resulted than when a group received a low level of feedback. Brown et al. (2016) explained that negative feedback results in better work performance because negative feedbacks gives workers crucial information that they haven't done their job properly. As a result, they improved their weaknesses in order to achieve the goals (Locke and Latham, 2002). In contrast, some researchers found that negative feedback could not predict work performance (Zheng et al., 2015; Emmerik et al., 2008)

Generation Y and Feedback

According to Howe and Strauss (2007), Generation Y is a group of people born between 1982 and 2005. Attitude toward work of Generation Y usually aims for a work-life balance (Hammill, 2005), teamwork (Howe and Strauss, 2007), informality, supervision, and they do not prefer chain of command and complex organizational structures, no plan for an organization in the long-term (Burke, 2004), and need of meaningful work (Glass, 2007). For feedback, Generation Y prefers instant, invariable (Sabattini et al., 2010), detailed feedback (Glass, 2007). Moreover, they tend to look for the feedback from a person familiar with them or their supervisor with the leadership (Anseel et al., 2015)

Research Hypotheses

From the literature review mentioned above, two hypotheses can be generated as shown in Figure 1.

H1: The intention to improve the job efficiency of employees during the experimental period is higher than the pre and post-experimental period.

H2: The work performance of employees during the experimental period is higher than the pre and post-experimental period.

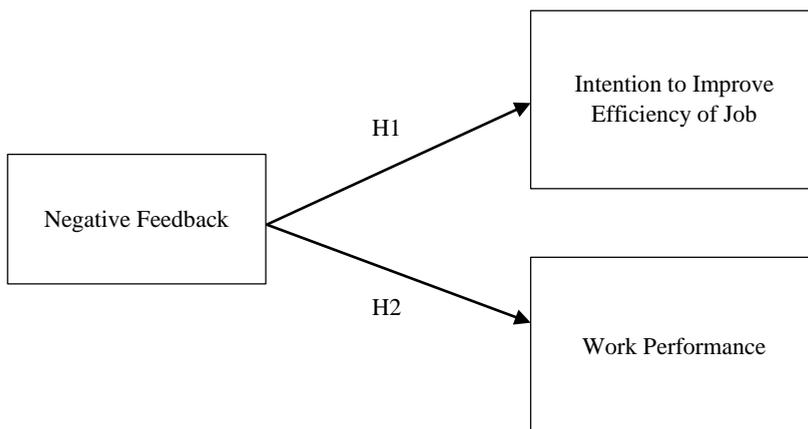


Figure 1: Conceptual Model

Methodology

Participants

The target population was Generation Y employees working in the food industry in Thailand. The sample size was determined by using G*Power (Faul et al., 2007). The reliable sample size should be at least 28. For the present study, 33 people were selected using purposive sampling. The organization was chosen with the following criteria: 1) it is a food industry business organization, 2) the organization allowed researchers to conduct their study there, 3) the organization included more Generation Y employees than the sample size specified earlier and 4) it is a hierarchical organization. The qualified organizations were three cassava starch factories in Ubon Ratchathani, Sra Kaew, and Si Sa Ket respectively. With a simple random sampling by lottery method, the factory in Si Sa Ket was chosen. Selecting the participants was based on 1) the employees aged 18-35 years old, 2) the employment had to be more than six months, 3) the supervisors needed to be willing to take part in the study and 4) the employees needed to be willing to take part in the study. Then the qualified employees were asked to join the study.

Design

This study is quasi-experimental research. The Single Subject A-B-A Design was used in the study. The experiment is divided into three periods, three weeks a period as shown in Figure 2.

Pre-experimental Period	Experimental Period	Post-experimental Period
(A)	(B)	(A)
T1 T2 T3	X1T4 X 2T5 X3 T6	T7 T8 T9

Figure 2: The Experimental Design

Remark: Tk refers to numbers of time to measure dependent variables (k = 1-9).

Xk refers to numbers of time giving the negative feedback (k = 1-3).

During the study, the participants did not have to change their area of responsibility or working methods. They were following their 5Ss work assignment as usual. In the pre-experimental period (weeks 1-3), the procedures were that on Monday, the assessors checked and evaluated the 5S performance of participants. On Wednesday, participants did the self-report assessment of their intention to improve the job efficiency. In the experimental period (weeks 4-6), the procedures were that on Monday, the assessors checked and evaluated the 5S performance of the participants. Then on Tuesday, the supervisor of each participant gave feedback to the participants (the intervention). Moreover, on Wednesday, the participants did the self-report evaluation of their intention to improve the job efficiency. The last period is the post-experimental period (weeks 7-9), the procedures were similar to the pre-experimental period.

Intervention

The intervention for this study was the supervisor giving negative feedback to participants following standard guidelines. The guideline was that firstly; the feedback provider has to be the participants' supervisor. The feedback giving methods had to be verbal and face-to-face communication. The feedback giving manners had to be polite, and follow the natural behaviors (daily manner) of each feedback provider. The feedback was given once a week on the day after the 5S checking date.

Research Instruments

The instruments used in the experiment included 1) the guidelines for giving negative feedback, 2) the guidelines for work performance evaluation and 3) the guidelines for giving and receiving questionnaires. These instruments were developed by using the information from the literature review and three experts who examined the validity of the content of the instruments. Then the language used in the questionnaire was adjusted and improved according to the experts' instructions.

The guideline for giving negative feedback was a document that identifies the method for giving negative feedback to participants. The purpose was to give the feedback provider methods to give negative feedback to participants following good practices and standardized processes. The content consists of 1) meaning and examples of negative feedback, 2) scope of feedback, 3) method for giving feedback, 4) emotion of the feedback provider, 5) the frequency for providing feedback, and 6) the period for providing feedback.

The guideline for the work performance evaluation was a document that identifies the method for work performance evaluation. The objective is for the assessors to have standardized evaluation criteria. The content consists of 1) the scope of the evaluation, 2) the evaluation period 3) the criteria, 4) the responsibility area of each assessor, and 5) the evaluation submission method.

The guideline for giving and receiving the questionnaires was a document that identifies the method for distributing the questionnaire. The objective is to provide a proper process for the distribution of the questionnaire for the assessors and the participants. The content consists of 1) the questionnaire number definition, 2) the method for distributing the questionnaire to participants, and 3) the method for sending back the completed questionnaire.

The instruments used to collect the data were 1) the questionnaire of the participant's general information, 2) the questionnaire of the intention to improve the efficiency of the job, and 3) the work performance evaluating form. The content validity of the instruments was examined by three experts. The questions where the index of item-objective congruence (IOC) was lower than 0.50 were removed (Boonjai, 2012). Afterwards, the instruments were applied to 30 employees in one cassava starch factory similar to the participants. Then the data were analyzed to find out the reliability.

In regards to the intention to improve the job efficiency, the questionnaire was developed from the questionnaires previously developed by Rickards (2011) and Pussanee (2003). The questionnaire used a 6-point interval scale (1 = non intention, 6 = very high intention). There were 5 items and the Cronbach's alpha value was 0.76. This meant that the reliability was relatively high when compared with the criteria of Suchart (2012).

In regards to the work performance evaluation form, the assessment of the participants' 5S performance was conducted by the Safety and Occupational Health Staff of the factory. The evaluation form was developed by using information from the related literature review. The evaluation form used a 3-point scale (1 = Needs to improve, 2 = Fair and 3 = Good). There were 19 items which were divided into 7 aspects and the inter-rater reliability was recorded between 0.519 and 0.828. This means that the reliability was between a fair level and a very high level (Fleiss, 1981).

Data Analysis

Statistical analyses of the data were performed using the SPSS Version 21. The fundamental data for the participants was analyzed using descriptive statistics. Hypothesis one and two were examined by a one-way repeated measure ANOVA and The Bonferroni's method was used for Pairwise Comparisons.

Research Ethics on Human

This study was approved by the Ethics Committee for Researches Involving Human Subjects, Suranaree University of Technology.

Results

Demographic Data

Thirty-one out of the 33 initial participants completed the study. Most of the participants were males (64.52%), aged between 30-35 years old (41.94%), who held a high school degree (45.16%). Their duration of employment in this factory was between six months and three years (83.87%). Most of the participants worked in the manufacturing department (41.94%). All the participants were employees at the operational level.

The Effects of Negative Feedback on Intention to Improve Efficiency of Job

The mean score of the intention to improve the job efficiency from week 1 to 9 was 5.03, 4.97, 5.13, 5.23, 5.45, 5.37, 5.34, 5.24, and 5.27 respectively. Figure 3 depicts the trend of the intention during the pre-

experimental period, the experimental period and the post-experimental period.

The results of a one-way repeated measure ANOVA showed that the mean score of the intention to improve the job efficiency from week 1 to 9 was significantly different at level 0.01. The F statistic, P-value and effect size were 3.78, 0.00 and 0.11 respectively. The results of pairwise comparisons showed that the mean score of the only pair was different. The fifth week's mean was significantly higher than the second week at level 0.05. The rest were not significantly different. This showed that the intention to improve job efficiency during the experiment period was higher than the pre-experimental period but it was not different from the post-experimental period. In conclusion, the first hypothesis of the study was partially accepted.

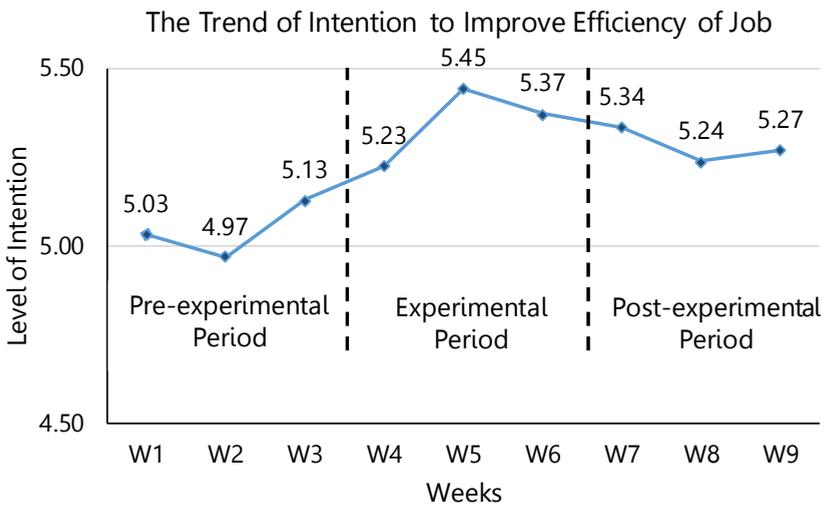


Figure 3: The Trend of Intention to Improve Efficiency of Job

The Effects of Negative Feedback on Work Performance

The mean score of the work performance from week 1 to 9 was 45.42, 46.55, 52.35, 54.13, 55.10, 55.45, 54.90, 54.84 and 55.23 respectively. Figure 4 depicts the work performance trend during the pre-experimental period, the experimental period and the post-experimental period.

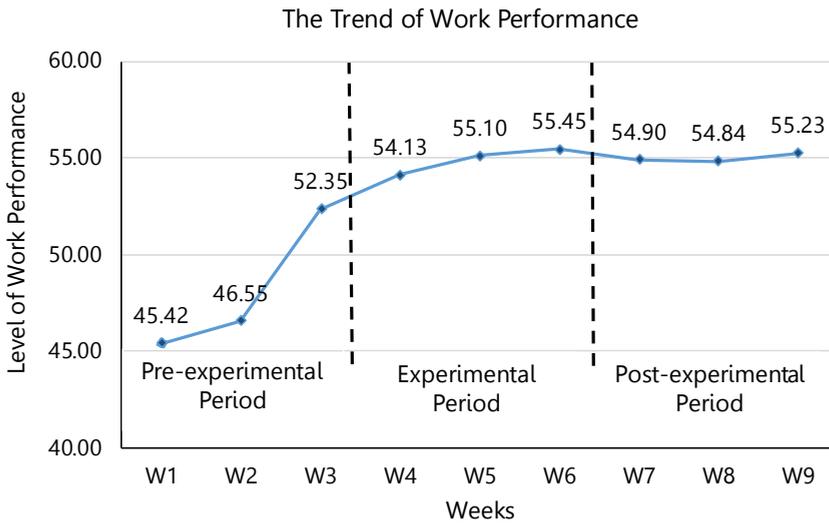


Figure 4: The Trend of Work Performance

The results of a one-way repeated measure ANOVA showed that the mean score of the work performance from week 1 to 9 was significantly different at 0.01. The F statistic, P-value and effect size were 73.31, 0.00 and 0.71 respectively. The results of pairwise comparisons showed that the mean score of work performance in the fifth and sixth weeks was significantly higher than for the third week. When comparing the work performance in the fourth, fifth, and sixth weeks and the ones in the seventh, eighth and ninth weeks, it was revealed that there was no pair which was significantly different. It showed that the work performance during the experiment period was higher than during the pre-experimental period but it was not different from the post-experimental period. In summary, the second hypothesis of the study was partially accepted.

Discussion

The result of the present study indicate that the negative feedback led to increased employee' intention to improve their job efficiency. It could be explained by the theory of planned behavior of Ajzen (1991) which specifies that behavioral intentions are derived from the attitude towards the behavior. This attitude could change when the individual received new information,

experience, or are in a new context. The more an individual had a positive attitude towards a certain behavior, the more that individual would exhibit behavioral intention. During the pre-experimental period, it may be because the employees did not receive negative feedback about the 5S, and they did not know their performance or what they should do differently. Thus, the intention to improve job efficiency was lower than the experimental period when their supervisors gave them the negative feedback about their weakness in following the 5S standard. They told the employees what they needed to improve and gave them advice for improvement. These included new information that helped employees understand the usefulness of the feedback. This perception enhanced the attitude to accept the negative feedback. Thus, the intention to improve job efficiency was higher and thus similar to the study by Rickards (2011) who found that the more the individual received negative feedback, the more the intention to respond the negative feedback increased. However, it might be because they did not consider that the information told to them whether they did well or not, but they considered the properness and benefits they were given from the feedback. Although the feedback was negative, it told them what they should improved. Hence, they intentionally used the feedback to improve their job.

The theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1991) presented that if the more a person believes that they can demonstrate any behavior, the more they intend to demonstrate that behavior. In this study, during the pre-experimental period, participants may see the problems of 5S activity but they do not know how to solve these problems because the supervisor does not provide any suggestions. Moreover, the participants do not have much experience so the belief in their potential to improve 5S performance is possibly lower than during the experimental period which is the period that participants get the negative feedback with the way to improve their 5S performance. As a result, the intention to improve the 5S performance of the participants was increased which matched the study of Linderbaum and Levy (2010) who found that the belief of the participants about their capability to use negative feedback in order to improve their works had a positive correlation with the intention to use feedback for job improvement.

The results found that after canceling the negative feedback for three weeks, the intention to improve the job efficiency remained. It was likely that the good attitude towards negative feedback remained. Similarly, the study of Rickards (2011) revealed that when canceling to give the negative feedback for six weeks, participants' intention to use the feedback for self-improvement was still high. It might be because the participants had some time to think of the benefits of the feedback and the possibility to use the feedback for job improvement.

The result of the present study appeared to indicate that negative feedback increased the work performance. It could be explained by the control theory (Sandelands et al., 1991) which specified that the employees sometimes did have the feedback of work performance or could not compare the work performance with the target. Thus, the supervisors were in charge of receiving the results of their employees' work performance. Then they compared the information with the target. When the distortion was found, there was resolution of giving the employees the feedback in order to improve their behavior or to change the target or both. For the experimental period, when assessors sent the result of work performance to the supervisors and they found that the work performance was not successful, they gave the employees negative feedback by indicating the points that needed to be improved and gave them some advice for job improvement. When the employees received the feedback, they focused more on their task, adapted their behavior and put more effort into their job. This led to better work performance than the pre-experimental period when the feedback was not given. Relevantly, previous studies pointed out that feedback increased work performance (Ellison, 2015) because good feedback could be a guideline for work, increases the motivation, promote good behavior and decreases bad behavior (Steelman and Rutkowski, 2004).

The results after canceling to give negative feedback for three weeks showed that, the work performance remained. It could be explained by the expectation theory (Lunenborg, 2011) which mentioned that the individual was more motivated when they believed that they had the ability to achieve the work goals. This success rewarded them and had meaning to them. For the present study, it might be because the 5S task was not difficult and they were able to do it quickly. When they could accomplish their work they received satisfactory

prizes which were not money or valuable things but mental reward, for example, acceptance from the supervisors or the freedom of working without the invasion of supervisors so they could work more happily. Hence, the work performance results remained steadily good. Similarly, Tolbize (2008) found the following reasons for Generation Y employees to be happy with their work. The first reason was the feeling of worthiness and the second was the acceptance. The results of the study correlated well with the study of Dobbelaer et al. (2013) who discovered that after receiving feedback for four weeks, the participants continued in the behavior of responding to feedback to improve their job efficiency.

Recommendations

Supervisors may adapt the methods of giving negative feedback from this study by giving negative feedback to Generation Y employees with more details and suggestions for improvement. In terms of method, negative feedback should be given face to face or in person. The supervisors should have normal facial expression and sound not be angry while giving negative feedback. The negative feedback should be given on the day after the work performance evaluation so that they can remember the situation.

The results found that giving negative feedback increased the employees' intentions to improve their job and work performance. Thus, the organization should determine the topics for giving the feedback in the personal development plan, for example, the effective method of giving the negative feedback, especially the supervisors.

The results from this study found that the intention to improve job efficiency in the post-experimental period tended to decrease, but it was not significantly different from the experimental period. Because of time limitation, the data collection in the post-experimental period lasted only three weeks. Hence, the long-term trend was not seen when the intention may have decreased differently from that of the experimental period with significance. Thus, the next studies should be based on the A-B-A-B design because it made the results of the study more accurate than the A-B-A design. In addition, the duration of the data collection in each period should be longer. The results of the study might

help the providers of feedback to determine the frequency for giving negative feedback appropriately.

A recent study found that personal factors were moderators of the relationship between negative feedback and cognitive reaction (Shu and Lam, 2016). Future research should explore the moderating role of personal variables in the relationship between negative feedback and the intention to improve job efficiency.

Strength and Limitation

For this research, the quasi- experimental design is a strength due to it allowed us to draw causal conclusions and to have high internal validity (Mook, 1983). However, the generalizability of our findings is a concern. One reason may be that the participants for this research were employee who work for a tapioca starch company.

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