

The Role of Learning Agility in Improving Employee Performance during The Covid-19 Pandemic Crisis

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Abstract

The Covid-19 pandemic has had a huge impact on the global economy. Various companies, from small to large scale, went into bankruptcy because they could not survive the Covid-19 pandemic. A company's success is closely related to the quality of its human resources. Improving the quality of employees based on good performance is a strategy to make the company able to compete with other companies. Learning agility is a capital for employees to maintain performance while working amid instability during the pandemic. This study aims to describe the important role of learning agility for employee performance when facing the covid-19 pandemic crisis. The method in this study is a literature study based on previous studies using criteria following the research variables. In this study, the results showed that learning agility could improve the performance of employees when facing unexpected difficult situations. Employees with high learning agility will be able to adapt quickly and utilise experience to overcome the present problems.

Keywords: Learning Agility, Employee Performance, Covid-19

Introduction

The Covid-19 pandemic is a major challenge for every company to maintain the stability of the company's revenue and employees' daily performance. Things have changed a lot since the Covid-19 pandemic emerged, and this condition has dragged on the business world. Companies face uncertainty, uncertainty, instability and simplification in these conditions, which can be said as VUCA (Millar et al., 2018). The turbulence companies face employees as human resources to adapt and innovate quickly to present the best solutions in unfavourable conditions for the company (Millar et al., 2018). Employees are required to have a stable performance and can continue to improve at any time. Companies need the right strategy to maintain the performance of each employee so that the company's goals will be achieved well (Dai et al., 2013).

The ability of employees to adapt well to the organisation to manage changes and unstable situations, such as in the business world, is learning agility (Dai et

al., 2013). De Meuse (2017) explained that individuals who have high learning agility would be able to be more involved in each work group because the individual will be motivated to get maximum results despite being in an unstable situation. Learning agility is the ability to process understanding and learning from past experiences to solve current problems (De Meuse, 2017). Derue (Derue et al. 2012) says companies that can build learning agility in each employee will be able to anticipate change better than other companies. Learning agility is also defined as an individual's willingness to learn by always trying to increase knowledge, ask for advice or provide input to others and apply the knowledge and experience that the individual has to problem-solving. De Meuse (De Meuse et al. 2012) says that learning agility has four dimensions: mental agility, change agility, people agility and results in agility, where the four dimensions have interrelated positions for individuals to survive in unfavourable situations by utilising their previous knowledge and experience.

An employee's inability to change is the cause of employees experiencing stagnant careers. Employees who fail in developing career paths will experience setbacks and become unproductive for the company. The employee must be able to adapt to every rapid change and have the desire to continue learning so that the competence is increasing (Braun et al., 2017). Employees with the awareness to learn and improve their skills for the right tasks in the workplace will be valuable capital for the company to survive any crisis in the business world.

Covid-19 has had a serious impact, especially on aspects of the global economy. In suppressing the spread of the virus, several countries have implemented lockdowns, namely stopping all activities outside the home, including work and school (Pak et al. 2020). This has an impact on several aspects of the economy in each country, such as China, which experienced a decline in its production index by 54% due to the closure of various factories and the United States, which experienced an increase in the unemployment rate in April 2020 (Pak, A et al. 2020). Manufacturing, tourism, aviation, and small businesses owned by the public, such as food, must lose because global supply stops and consumer orientation shifts to various health products. Developed countries with health care systems such as the UK, Germany, Japan, and the United States are still fighting against Covid-19 because their economies have declined drastically.

However, several industries have increased, namely the health industry, such as masks, hand sanitisers, and vitamins. Each country has policies to maintain economic stability, one of which is by focusing on increasing employee productivity. Through this research, we can see the role of learning agility when it helps employees to adapt quickly to changes and the resulting performance while working remains stable even if it must be done remotely. This study will focus on identifying the role of learning agility on employee performance during the Covid-19 pandemic crisis. This study aimed to determine the role of learning agility and strategies to improve learning agility in employees in the workplace.

Method

This study uses a literature review method by reviewing the findings of several previous researchers and then used as reference material to discuss problems related to the role of learning agility on employee performance during the pandemic crisis. The data in this study are secondary data obtained from the literature study. The data is then analysed to draw conclusions and foundations regarding the role of learning agility on employee performance.

Results

a. The Impact of Learning Agility

The first study by Cristy Leask and Shaun Ruggunan (Leask & Ruggunan, 2021), conducted on 180 permanent employees in South Africa that focused on looking at the role of learning agility that employees have during the Covid-19 pandemic are able can stressors due to social and economic changes that occur in South Africa. The results of the study stated that employees have high learning agility so that during the pandemic, employees can go through difficult times well. In addition, the study found that gender, age, organisational communication, and individual renewal strategies in the workplace contributed to an employee's level of learning agility. Researchers also advise organisations to encourage employees to improve their competence and desire to learn so that they are motivated to continue learning and renew their abilities. Learning agility cannot run independently without being encouraged by the willingness of employees to change following the surrounding conditions (Leask & Ruggunan, 2021). Employees with a positive spirit and support in the workplace will easily improve high learning agility (Leask & Ruggunan, 2021).

The next research came from Indonesia. Ayu meryka Santoso and Yuzarion researched teachers in Yogyakarta (Santoso & Yuzarion, 2021). This study aims to reveal the role of learning agility in teachers during the covid-19 pandemic. During the pandemic, the world of Education experienced an impact on the

change in the learning process for teachers and students. Teachers must adjust quickly so that the learning process can continue to run even with distance learning (Santoso & Yuzarion, 2021). The results showed that teachers with good achievements in Yogyakarta would be followed by high learning agility. These teachers will try to display maximum work performance, take lessons from work experience, and respond to changes with awareness and a high spirit of learning to improve skills, knowledge, and self-competence (Santoso & Yuzarion, 2021). The researcher stressed the need for social support and goal orientation in building learning agility in teachers. Learning agility plays an important role in improving the quality of teacher performance so that the quality of Education and the spirit of learning can continue to be improved so that it becomes an inspiration for the next generation of young people (Santoso & Yuzarion, 2021).

The third study was conducted by XinYun Peng et al. (Peng et al., 2022) in the United States. Participants who were life sciences or health care L&D practitioners and in relevant positions were recruited via email through the LTEN and its partner pharmaceutical, biotech, or medical devices organisations. Interviews with 12 L & D professionals were conducted between June and August 2020 through phone or online conferencing, covering 22 open-ended questions to stimulate ideas that could be explored further in the survey. Findings revealed generally positive organisational and individual responses to the changes brought about by the pandemic (Peng et al., 2022). The results also indicated that a disruptive crisis, such as the shift from working in the office to working from home (WFH), required professionals' learning agility to both self-initiate their learning and support the learning agility of others in the organisation. The pandemic made everyone focus on improving health. Therefore various practitioners in the world of good health who come from pharmaceuticals are competing to improve the latest innovations and promises to improve human health (Peng et al., 2022). Companies must be able to

position employees to quickly deal with changes in the work environment so that employees can answer every problem appropriately and keep their physical and mental condition stable amid anxiety exposed to Covid-19. Learning agility is one of the keys the company can emphasise to every employee (Peng et al., 2022). The researcher also explained that companies should be able to provide a safe and comfortable work environment so that the work climate can continue to make employees feel calm while trying to overcome any problems in the workplace (Peng et al., 2022). Employees who have high learning agility will be able to produce good products as well so that they have an impact on consumer satisfaction.

b. How to Maximise Learning Agility for Employee

Lombardo and Eichinger (De Meuse, 2017) explained that four dimensions are the main focus in improving the learning agility of an individual, namely people agility focus on the extent to which individuals know themselves well, learn from experience, treat others constructively, and are cool and resilient under the pressures of change (De Meuse, 2017). An employee who can know himself well, has a desire to learn from experience, can treat people constructively and survive in various stressful conditions at any time will be able to survive in unstable circumstances such as the current pandemic (Peng et al., 2022). Change agility is the level to which individuals are curious, have a passion for ideas like experimenting with test cases, and engage in skill-building activities (De Meuse, 2017). Employees who succeed in change agility will greatly be interested in challenging new things. For these employees, new things are fun to learn, and they are ready to make innovations in the workplace. Next, result agility is focused on the extent to which individuals get results under tough conditions, inspire others to perform beyond normal, and exhibit the sort of presence that builds confidence in others (De Meuse, 2017). Employees who successfully build result agility in themselves will tend to be good leaders in a group. Employees will try to

pass each challenge well and be an example for their colleagues.

These employees will also be able to increase motivation and a positive work climate when working together with other employees because of their ability to motivate and influence others. Mental agility is a degree to which individuals think through problems from a fresh point of view and are comfortable with complexity, ambiguity, and explaining their thinking to others (De Meuse, 2017). Employees who can create a new perspective on each problem will be able to get through the problem well. Employees will feel comfortable and calm if they manage to change their point of view on the problems that have been faced. However, employees who already feel pessimistic and failed when faced with problems will tend not to want to change and choose a safe zone so that it can not develop in the workplace.

Companies that want employees to have high learning agility must be able to improve the four dimensions of this learning agility. However, it must be emphasised that each employee has different characteristics requiring different handling methods when strategising for them. Bienkowska (Bieńkowska et al., 2022) explained that during the pandemic, the role of human resource management is very large because it takes a targeted strategy for employees to remain stable amid the pandemic crisis. Companies are responsible for increasing employee motivation, job satisfaction and organisational commitment. His study found that through learning agility, an employee can feel satisfied and motivated continuously to change and follow the needs of consumers (Bieńkowska et al., 2022). Companies can do several strategies to maximise the abils' abilemployeese company must help employees recognise their weaknesses and advantagesng so that they can make the most of their employees while working. Employees who understand themselves will be faster to learn from experience and calm when facing change so that people's agility will increase (Dai et al., 2013). Second, the company provides support for every performance result provided by employees to the company so that

employees will be motivated to innovate continuously. Employees limited to developing ideas will have difficulty achieving high change agility (De Meuse, 2017). Third, the company is required to prepare good leaders for each division in the company. A good leader can bring their members to work more optimally and according to the company's goals. This is related to result in agility because the employee will be result-oriented and try to influence other colleagues to try the same thing as he did. The last strategy is to help employees to form a new mindset when facing problems. Employees with high mental agility will try to look at different points of view if faced with problems and find the most effective solution (De Meuse, 2017). Companies can incorporate any of the above strategies into training or intervention directly to employees through the help of human resources in the company.

Conclusions

Learning agility is a concept that emphasises the ability of employees to adapt to any change quickly and draw on the experience they already have to address current and future problems. Employees who have high learning agility will be able to adjust to the various crisis conditions that are facing the company. Although several researchers have carried out research on learning agility over the past decade, it is still interesting to study it further to develop the knowledge further. Researchers hope there will be more research on learning agility and employee performance in crisis conditions such as the Covid-19 pandemic.

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