

Learning and Growth as a Driver of Employee Satisfaction and Engagement in Auto Dealership: The Top Management Perspective

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ABSTRACT : *This study explores the perspectives of top management on the role of learning and growth in driving employee satisfaction and engagement within auto dealerships in the Philippines. The research addresses three key questions: the impact of learning and growth on organizational performance, the aspects of job satisfaction and engagement that should be emphasized, and the initiatives that can enhance employee performance. A qualitative methodology was employed, involving in-depth interviews with five top managers from various regions. Thematic analysis of the responses revealed that top management views learning and growth as crucial for organizational success, emphasizing structured performance evaluations, robust training programs, and a supportive workplace culture. Key initiatives identified include targeted training programs, mentorship and coaching, performance recognition, investment in technology and tools, and fostering innovation and creativity. These findings suggest that a multifaceted approach to learning and growth, aligned with strategic goals, can significantly enhance job satisfaction, employee engagement, and overall performance in auto dealerships. This study contributes to the understanding of strategic human resource management in the automotive sector, providing actionable insights for top managers aiming to foster a high-performing and engaged workforce.*

KEYWORDS –auto dealerships, engagement, job satisfaction, learning and growth, top management

I. INTRODUCTION

The automotive industry is undergoing a remarkable transformation driven by the growth of emerging markets, rapid technological advancements, sustainability policies, and changing consumer behavior. Disruptive trends such as vehicle electrification, autonomous driving, shared mobility, and intelligent-connected vehicles are reshaping the industry landscape (Bertoncello & Wee, 2015 as cited in Singleton, 2019). This evolving environment necessitates a reassessment of operational models, identification and unlocking of efficiencies, development of new strategies, and workforce upskilling (Llopis-Albert, Rubio, & Valero, 2021). In Southeast Asia, including the Philippines, the production and demand for vehicles continue to rise, leading to a flourishing auto market (Abu Hassan, Mokhtar, & Husin, 2022).

Within this dynamic context, understanding how an organization learns, adapts, and improves its operations to create value over time is crucial. This concept aligns with the "learning and growth" perspective, one of the four dimensions of Robert Kaplan and David Norton's Balanced Scorecard (BSC) introduced in 1992. The BSC integrates financial metrics with key performance indicators related to customer satisfaction, internal business processes, and learning and growth, offering a comprehensive view of organizational performance (Enriquez, 2021). It emphasizes both traditional financial measures and qualitative aspects such as job satisfaction, continuous process improvement, and customer loyalty.

The "learning and growth" perspective focuses on the development and effective coordination of individual and group skills, serving as the foundation for the other three BSC dimensions (Utomo, Machmuddah, & Setiawanta, 2019). Enhancements in learning and growth lead to improvements in internal business processes and customer satisfaction (Jeong, Lee, & Park, 2022), ultimately impacting overall financial performance and long-term shareholder value. Nurturing professional development within an organization thus plays a pivotal role in boosting both individual and collective performance.

Common perceptions among top management about learning and growth often highlight its critical role in driving organizational success (Kumar et al., 2023). Many leaders view continuous employee development as essential for maintaining competitive advantage and fostering innovation. They believe that investing in training and professional growth not only enhances individual capabilities but also strengthens the overall organizational capacity to adapt to market changes and technological advancements. Additionally, top management often recognizes that a strong focus on learning and growth can lead to higher employee satisfaction and engagement, which in turn boosts productivity and loyalty (Rikantasari, 2024). These perceptions underscore the importance of creating a supportive environment that encourages ongoing learning and skills development.

Despite the widespread adoption of the BSC by various enterprises, there remains a gap in the effective implementation of the learning and growth perspective, particularly in the auto dealership industry in the Philippines. This research aims to explore how top management in auto dealerships across different regions of the Philippines perceive the impact of learning and growth on organizational performance. It seeks to address the following research problems:

1. How do top management view the learning and growth perspective in terms of its impact on organizational performance?
2. What initiatives can be considered to improve employee performance given the current levels of job satisfaction and employee engagement?

By examining these questions and picking up from the perspective of top managers, this study is able to identify specific learning and growth interventions that can enhance job satisfaction and employee engagement, thereby improving overall employee performance in the auto dealership sector. Relatively, this study makes significant contributions to the business discipline, particularly in human resource management within auto dealerships, by providing a comprehensive understanding of how top management perceives the impact of the learning and growth perspective on organizational performance. By identifying key aspects of job satisfaction and employee engagement that should be prioritized, the research offers valuable insights into creating a more supportive and productive work environment. Based on the perceived job satisfaction and employee engagement scenarios, the study is able to elicit recommendations from the top managers as regards programs or initiatives to enhance the learning and growth framework in the organization, thereby driving employee performance and overall organizational success. The findings of this research can guide auto dealership administrators and HR professionals in designing targeted development programs, fostering a culture of continuous improvement, and implementing strategies that align employee growth with business objectives, ultimately leading to sustained competitive advantage in the dynamic automotive industry.

Study Framework

This research study that explored the perspectives of top managers of auto dealerships on learning and growth can be underpinned by several theories that provide a robust framework for addressing the research problems. These are the Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM), Expectancy Theory of Motivation, and Learning Organization Theory.

The SHRM emphasizes the alignment of human resource practices with the strategic goals of an organization to enhance performance (George et al., 2024). This theory can support the investigation into how top management perceives the strategic importance of learning and growth initiatives. By aligning these initiatives with organizational goals, auto dealerships can ensure that employee development efforts contribute to overall business success.

The Expectancy Theory of Motivation, which was developed by Vroom (Uka& Prendi, 2021), suggests that individuals are motivated to engage in behaviors they believe will lead to desirable outcomes. This theory can reinforce the exploration of initiatives to improve employee performance by linking job satisfaction and engagement to performance outcomes. Thus, by understanding the motivations of employees, management can design initiatives or programs that enhance job satisfaction and engagement, ultimately improving performance.

Peter Senge's Learning Organization Theory emphasizes the importance of continuous learning and adaptive capability within organizations (Hutasuhut, Aduce, & Jonathan, 2021). It focuses on creating an environment where employees are encouraged to learn and grow, leading to improved organizational performance. This theory can strengthen the investigation into initiatives that promote continuous learning and growth. Moreover, it supports the idea that fostering a culture of learning can enhance employee satisfaction, engagement, and performance.

II. METHODS

The study employed a qualitative research design to explore the insights and perspectives of top management in auto dealerships across different regions of the Philippines. The research methodology involved conducting in-depth interviews with five top managers from selected auto dealerships nationwide. The top managers were selected based on accessibility to the researcher but preference was given to those representing the major islands in the country. This qualitative approach was chosen to gain a comprehensive understanding of the managerial views on learning and growth and its impact on employee satisfaction and engagement.

The interviews were structured around three key questions designed to elicit detailed responses regarding job satisfaction, employee engagement, and the effectiveness of current learning and growth strategies:

1. What needs to be done to sustain or improve the level of job satisfaction in the organization?
2. What needs to be done to sustain or improve the extent of employee engagement in the organization?
3. What programs should be considered to improve employee performance given the present job satisfaction and employee engagement scenarios?

Each interview was conducted in a semi-structured format, allowing for flexibility in probing deeper into the respondents' answers while ensuring that all key areas of interest were covered. The data analysis approach for this study involved coding and thematic analysis to identify common themes and patterns across the responses. This approach elicited meaningful conclusions about the views of top management on learning and growth, job satisfaction, employee engagement, and organizational performance. The findings from these interviews provide a rich, qualitative understanding of the strategic considerations and practical measures that can enhance employee satisfaction and engagement through targeted learning and growth initiatives in the auto dealership sector.

III. RESULTS

This particular research question was addressed through the interview with members of the top management, such as the CFOs from the different dealerships across regions. To ascertain their views regarding learning and growth in the context of making an impact to organization performance, the respondents were asked what needs to be done to sustain or improve the level of job satisfaction and extent of employee engagement in the organization. Likewise, they were asked to recommend programs on learning and growth

that will further improve employee performance thereby making an impact to organizational performance. The succeeding table provides the thematic analysis of the answers provided by the participants.

Table 1. Themes of Strategies for Enhancing Job Satisfaction and Employee Engagement from Top Management Perspective

Theme	Sub-theme	Description
On Job Satisfaction	Performance evaluation and feedback	Recognizing employees' accomplishments, pinpointing areas for improvement, and fostering a culture of accountability and growth all depend on regular performance reviews and constructive criticism.
Theme	Sub-theme	Description
	Training and development programs	To ensure that employees are satisfied in their roles and equipped with the necessary skills for success, it is essential to allocate resources towards tailored training and development initiatives.
	Communication and transparency	Employees are more likely to feel valued, educated, and empowered to voice their thoughts and take part in decision-making when the company prioritizes open communication and transparency.
	Competitive compensation and benefits	To maintain high work satisfaction, engagement, it is essential to provide competitive wage and benefits packages. This should also include awards based on performance and opportunities for professional advancement.
On Employee Engagement	Collaborative and inclusive work environment	Fostering an inclusive and supportive work environment that appreciates different perspectives improves teamwork, innovation, and collective problem-solving.
	Recognition and rewards	Publicly acknowledging and rewarding outstanding accomplishments may help foster a culture of appreciation and motivation.
	Employee well-being and work-life balance	Wellness initiatives and more flexible work arrangements are great ways for businesses to demonstrate they care about their employees. When employees feel valued, they are able to thrive in all areas of their life.

	Career development and advancement	Encouraging employees to participate in mentorship programs, seminars, and leadership training empowers them to drive their professional development, leading to advancement and career progression.
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Top Management Perspectives on Enhancing Employee's Job Satisfaction

As provided in the above thematic analysis table (Table 1), in terms of sustaining or improving job satisfaction, the interviewed participants mentioned four (4) major themes: (1) performance evaluation and feedback, (2) training and development programs, (3) communication and transparency, and (4) competitive compensation and benefits. In terms of **performance evaluation and feedback**, they emphasized the need of consistently giving workers with evaluations of their job performance. The company should cultivate a culture of responsibility and development by acknowledging successes and pinpointing areas for improvement, leading to increased work satisfaction. As quoted in CFO 1's response, *"regular performance evaluations and constructive feedback to employees [are ways] to recognize their contributions and address areas for improvement."* This shows that the company's top management recognizes the value of performance evaluation as it provides chances for constructive criticism, encouraging workers to acknowledge their strengths and faults, and directing them towards professional growth.

As for the theme on **training and development**, the interview results show that the top management acknowledges that investing in employees' skill sets is a fundamental principle of training and development programs. Employees report higher levels of job satisfaction when they participate in tailored trainings that address their specific needs and help them reach their professional goals. As CFO 2 suggests, *"investing in comprehensive training and development programs tailored to employees' needs is essential for equipping them with the skills and knowledge necessary for success."*

Another theme that emerged during the interview with top management is **communication and transparency**. CFO 3 stated that *"enhancing communication channels and transparency within the organization ensures that employees feel valued and informed."* This theme highlights the need of creating channels for honest and open communication within the company. A more satisfied workforce is likely to be one in which employees are well-informed, valued, and given space to voice their opinions. Likewise, employees and supervisors benefit from stronger relationships when there is open and honest communication. A company that values transparency and open dialogue creates welcoming workplaces where employees may thrive in their roles and contribute to the company's success.

The last theme that emerged from the interview question for top management regarding what needs to be done to sustain or improve job satisfaction is **competitive compensation and benefits**. This is about competitive compensation packages highlighting the significance of offering attractive pay and benefits to employees. According to CFO 4, *"offering competitive compensation and benefits packages is crucial for attracting and retaining top talent and incentivizing high levels of job satisfaction."* This theme demonstrates that the company's top management recognizes that employees are more likely to remain satisfied and committed to their jobs when they get competitive pay and other benefits, such as performance-based incentives and opportunities for professional advancement. When employees get fair compensation for their labor, they are motivated to do their best and remain loyal to the company. As a result, investing in competitive pay and benefits is critical for keeping employees happy in their jobs and retaining them.

Top Management Perspectives on Enhancing Employee Engagement

The interview findings with top management participants on ways to maintain or improve employee engagement in the company revealed several key themes: (1) collaborative and inclusive work environment, (2)

recognition and rewards, (3) employee well-being and work-life balance, and (4) career development and advancement. First, the theme on **collaborative and inclusive work environment** is about promoting an inclusive and supportive work environment that honors diverse opinions, eventually enhancing cooperation, creativity, and collaborative problem. As cited by CFO 3, *“fostering a collaborative and inclusive work environment promotes teamwork, innovation, and collective problem-solving.”* Collaboration and inclusivity in the workplace provide a sense of belonging and encourage active participation from all team members, which is essential for increasing employee engagement. By welcoming variety and valuing other perspectives, companies may increase innovation and creativity, raise employee engagement, and eventually boost organizational performance.

The theme **recognition and awards** is about motivating and inspiring others by publicly acknowledging and honoring outstanding accomplishments. To sustain the extent of employee engagement, CFO 4 cited that *“recognizing and rewarding outstanding performance reinforces a culture of appreciation and motivation.”* Thus, this highlights that opportunities for recognition and awards are crucial to promote excellent behavior and maximize staff performance. Employees are more likely to dedicate themselves to their work when they feel acknowledged and valued. Formal recognition programs and celebrating successes may further enhance organizational morale and involvement.

The third theme that emerged regarding sustaining or improving the extent of employee engagement is **employee well-being and work-life balance**. This stemmed from the response of CFO 5 that *“demonstrating a commitment to employee well-being and work-life balance supports employees in thriving both personally and professionally.”* This theme demonstrates that top management acknowledges the company’s efforts to give care for their employees by implementing wellness programs and providing flexible work hours. Workers who feel valued are more likely to give their all on the job. Emphasizing the importance of employee well-being and promoting a good work-life balance is key to increasing workplace engagement and productivity. Focusing on employee health and offering flexible work alternatives are ways for organizations to show they are committed to supporting workers' overall well-being. When employees are valued and supported, they tend to be more invested, enthusiastic, and content in their work, which in turn leads to better performance and employee retention.

Lastly, in the context of sustaining the extent of employee engagement, is the theme on **career development and advancement**. According to CFO 2, *“providing opportunities for career development and advancement empowers employees to take ownership of their growth and development.”* This shows that top management acknowledges the fact that employees are more inclined to take control of their professional growth and progress when they are motivated to participate in mentorship programs, seminars, and leadership training. Providing opportunities for professional development and advancement is essential to foster employee engagement and retention. Employees are more inclined to have confidence in the company's future success when provided with opportunities for growth and development, such as mentorship programs and training seminars. An organization's investment in employee development programs leads to a highly engaged and productive crew.

In sum, the interview findings from the perspective of top management provide crucial insights on how to sustain or enhance employee engagement and job satisfaction in the workplace. Through the interview it was acknowledged that the company can establish a positive work environment by prioritizing performance evaluation and feedback, investing in training and development programs, fostering inclusivity and collaboration, rewarding and recognizing employees, prioritizing their health and work-life balance, and offering opportunities for career growth and advancement. Implementing these strategies may improve both employee satisfaction and engagement, eventually boosting organizational performance and success. Companies may foster a dynamic and engaged workforce through collaboration, leading to long-term growth and success.

Programs to Improve Employee Performance from Top Management Perspectives

Consistent with their perception regarding ways to sustain or improve the level of job satisfaction and extent of employee engagement in the company, the participants were asked about their recommended programs to improve the employee performance given the current state of employee satisfaction and engagement.

Table 2. Programs to Enhance Employee Performance from Top Management Perspective

Theme	Description	Significant Statements
Targeted training programs	Developing specialized training programs that aim to improve certain skills and abilities highlighted in performance assessments and feedback promotes ongoing learning and growth.	"Implementing targeted training programs focused on enhancing specific skills and competencies identified through performance evaluations fosters continuous learning and development."
Mentorship and coaching initiatives	Mentorship and coaching initiatives match top-performing individuals with seasoned executives to provide advice, support, and customized development plans, promoting skill improvement and career advancement.	"Introducing mentorship and coaching initiatives provides guidance and support, fostering skill enhancement and career growth opportunities."
Theme	Description	Significant Statements
Performance recognition programs	Implementing performance recognition programs publicly recognizes and pays workers for outstanding performance, inspiring others to aim for greatness.	"Establishing performance recognition programs publicly acknowledges and rewards exceptional performance, motivating others to strive for excellence."
Technology and tools investment	Investing in technology and tools enhances operational efficiency, enabling staff to concentrate on high-value activities by minimizing administrative hassles.	"Investing in technology and tools streamlines processes, improves efficiency, and enables employees to work more effectively."
Culture of innovation and creativity	Promoting an environment that values innovation and creativity motivates workers to exchange ideas, explore new methods, and work together on initiatives that promote corporate success, enabling them to assume responsibility for their tasks.	"Fostering a culture of innovation and creativity encourages employees to share ideas and collaborate on projects, empowering them to take ownership of their work."

Five (5) themes emerged from the interview responses, such as (1) targeted training programs, (2) mentorship and coaching initiatives, (3) performance recognition programs, (4) technology and tools investment, and (5) culture of innovation and creativity. First, the need of continuous learning and growth is emphasized by highlighting tailored or **targeted training programs**. These programs are focused on specific needs identified through performance assessments and feedback, eventually equipping employees with the critical skills for professional success. By narrowing in on specific goals, the impact of training is maximized and the alignment of personal and organizational objectives is ensured.

Another theme that came into view is **mentorship and coaching initiatives**. This theme highlights programs that emphasizes the significance of individualized support. Pairing seasoned experts with high-performing individuals, as explained by CFO 2, can enhance knowledge exchange, skill development, and advancement prospects. Such initiatives not only empower individuals but also fosters a development mentality and collaboration among staff members.

Recommended by CFO 3, **performance recognition programs** are approaches to acknowledge that positive reinforcement is beneficial. These initiatives motivate individuals to strive for excellence and inspire others to do the same by recognizing and rewarding their outstanding achievements. Overall performance is improved because recognition fosters appreciation and reinforces positive behavior.

The theme on **technology and tools investment** is about making technology as enabler of performance. This theme recognizes that acquiring equipment and software involves more than just automating regular operations. As cited by CFO 4, *“investing in technology and tools streamlines processes, improves efficiency, and enables employees to work more effectively.”* This demonstrates that the capacity of technology to streamline procedures, save paperwork, and free up resources are acknowledged by top management participants. Organizations may enhance efficiency and productivity by equipping staff with the necessary tools to focus on jobs that provide more value.

Finally, the theme on **culture of innovation and creativity** is highlighted that improving employees' abilities is only one part of encouraging a creative and innovative society. As stressed by CFO 5, *“fostering a culture of innovation and creativity encourages employees to share ideas and collaborate on projects, empowering them to take ownership of their work.”* The importance of creating a setting that encourages discovery, sharing of ideas, and collaboration is emphasized in this theme. Inspiring a sense of ownership and responsibility among employees may help organizations tap into their collective creativity. This, in turn, can lead to improved performance and the development of innovative solutions.

To sum up, these programs, as recommended by top management participants, provide a thorough overview of methods for employee development that take into account the requirements of both the company and its employees. An engaged, productive, and successful workforce is the result of an environment that allows employees to thrive. From the perspective of top management, the company can achieve this by investing in targeted training, offering personalized guidance, recognizing accomplishments, effectively leveraging technology, and fostering a culture of innovation.

IV. DISCUSSION

Through interviews, the perceptions of top management were revealed. Based on this perspective, the learning and growth aspect of the organization can be improved through alignment with management's vision and the implementation of several key initiatives.

The alignment of learning and growth initiatives with management's vision is critical and finds its theoretical basis in Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM). SHRM posits that human resource practices should be aligned with organizational strategy to achieve improved performance (George et al., 2024). By aligning the learning and growth initiatives with the broader strategic goals of the auto dealership, the

organization ensures that employee development directly supports the company's objectives, creating a coherent path for both organizational and individual growth.

Relatively, recognition programs are essential for fostering a culture of continuous learning and motivation among employees (Ovezberdiyeva, Mayiyev, & Sh, 2024). The Expectancy Theory of Motivation (Vroom, 1964, as cited in Uka & Prendi, 2021) supports this initiative, suggesting that employees are motivated to engage in behaviors they believe will lead to desirable outcomes. Recognizing and rewarding learning participation can thus drive employee engagement and commitment to personal and professional development. Previous studies have demonstrated that recognition programs not only enhance motivation but also lead to higher job satisfaction and retention rates (Kerketta & Chauhan, 2023).

Similar to recognition programs, performance reviews that are focused on development goals rather than just evaluative metrics are also crucial for nurturing a growth mindset among employees. The concept of the Learning Organization, as introduced by Senge (1990, as cited in Hutasuhut, Aduce, & Jonathan, 2021), highlights the importance of continuous learning and adaptive capabilities within organizations. By integrating development goals into performance reviews, organizations can emphasize the value of learning and growth, aligning with the principles of a learning organization.

Empirical studies support the various programs recommended by the interview respondents of this study. For instance in Nardo & Aprilyani (2024), it highlighted the pragmatic significance of developing targeted training programs to foster a culture of innovation and optimize the potential of the organization's personnel. In Al Hamad et al. (2024), it was underscored that mentorship and coaching programs enhance individual professional development and strengthen the organization's commitment to corporate social responsibility. Additionally, Deo (2023) espoused that organizations must recognize the need of dedicating resources to technology (software and hardware) expenditures in order to enhance worker efficiency. These findings underscore the importance of a strategic approach to learning and growth, reinforcing the perspectives revealed through the interviews with top management.

V. CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis of interview responses, top management views on the learning and growth perspective were indicated as integral to enhancing organizational performance through various key dimensions. Thus, the following conclusions were drawn:

Top managers recognize the importance of a holistic approach to employee development. They acknowledge that structured performance evaluations and constructive feedback are essential for personal and professional growth, while robust training and development programs ensure that employees continuously upgrade their skills in alignment with organizational needs.

Top managers from auto dealerships highlight the strategic value placed on creating a supportive and motivating workplace culture. They understand that fostering collaboration, recognizing and rewarding contributions, ensuring employee well-being, and providing clear career progression pathways are crucial for maintaining high levels of engagement.

Top management views a multifaceted approach as essential for boosting employee performance. By implementing these initiatives—targeted training programs, mentorship and coaching initiatives, performance recognition programs, technology and tools investment, and fostering a culture of innovation and creativity—auto dealerships can create a supportive and motivating environment that not only improves performance but also enhances job satisfaction and engagement, leading to sustained organizational success.

As a final point, the study underscores the critical role of top management in shaping the learning and growth strategies within auto dealerships. By adopting a comprehensive and integrated approach to employee development, management can drive significant improvements in both individual and organizational

performance. These insights highlight the necessity for continuous investment in learning and growth initiatives that align with strategic objectives, ultimately fostering a resilient and high-performing workforce capable of sustaining competitive advantage in the dynamic automotive industry.

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