
EVALUATING THE INFLUENCE OF ORIENTATION PROGRAMS ON EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE: A STUDY OF THE AIRPORT POLICE BRANCH AT KAMUZU INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT, MALAWI

***Daniel Chikopa, BSC, MBA**

Lecturer II, DMI St John the Baptist University, Lilongwe, Malawi.

Article Received: 21 December 2025, Article Revised: 09 January 2026, Published on: 29 January 2026

***Corresponding Author: Daniel Chikopa**

Lecturer II, DMI St John the Baptist University, Lilongwe, Malawi.

DOI: <https://doi-doi.org/101555/ijarp.8310>

ABSTRACT

Employee orientation is a critical practice in human resource management, as it facilitates the integration of new staff into the work environment, equips them with essential knowledge, and enhances their performance. This study evaluated the influence of orientation programs on employee performance within the Airport Police Branch (APB) at Kamuzu International Airport, Malawi. A quantitative descriptive research design was employed, with structured questionnaires administered to 99 respondents. The findings revealed that orientation programs significantly improved officers' confidence, promoted teamwork, ensured adherence to Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), and enhanced task accuracy, thereby reducing errors. The study also identified some weaknesses in the orientation process, including outdated training materials, irregular delivery, and limited supervisor involvement. The study concluded that orientation is essential for operational readiness, particularly in security-sensitive contexts. Based on these findings, recommendations include updating orientation content, incorporating scenario-based learning, standardizing frameworks across units, and strengthening mentorship to enhance long-term performance. Overall, the study contributes to knowledge in organizational management, human resource development, and aviation security.

KEYWORDS: Orientation, Employee Performance, Airport Police, Malawi, Onboarding, Human Resource Development.

INTRODUCTION

Employee orientation, often referred to as onboarding or induction, is a structured process of introducing new employees to organizational culture, values, policies, and job roles. Effective orientation enables newly recruited staff to understand expectations, develop confidence, and adapt quickly to their work environment. In public security institutions such as the police, where tasks are highly sensitive and errors can compromise safety, orientation is particularly critical.

The Malawi Police Service (MPS), through its Airport Police Branch (APB) at Kamuzu International Airport, is responsible for safeguarding the airport. APB officers oversee passenger screening, inspect baggage, control access points, and coordinate with aviation authorities. These duties demand high standards of discipline, technical competence, and teamwork. However, anecdotal evidence indicates that orientation practices within the APB are inconsistent. While some officers receive formal induction covering policies and operational procedures, others commence duties with minimal or delayed orientation.

This study evaluates the influence of orientation programs on employee performance within the Airport Police Branch at Kamuzu International Airport. Specifically, the study seeks to:

1. Assess the structure and coverage of orientation programs within the Airport Police Branch.
2. Examine the relationship between orientation programs and employee performance.
3. Identify challenges affecting the effectiveness of orientation programs.
4. Recommend strategies to strengthen onboarding for improved security operations and workplace performance.

By achieving these objectives, the study highlights how a well-structured orientation program helps officers integrate into their roles, build confidence in daily tasks, and develop a clearer understanding of security procedures. This ultimately enhances overall performance and promotes a safer, more efficient working environment within aviation law enforcement.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Orientation and Employee Performance

Research consistently links structured orientation programs to positive employee outcomes. Bauer (2010) demonstrated that effective onboarding enhances job satisfaction, employee performance, and retention. Chao (1997) emphasized the role of socialization theory, highlighting that new employees adapt more effectively when provided with guided learning,

peer support, and exposure to organizational norms. Spencer and Spencer (1993) argued that orientation should extend beyond technical knowledge to include behavioral competencies, such as teamwork and communication. Khandelwal (2011) further confirmed that structured orientation improves role clarity, which is directly associated with task efficiency and accuracy.

African Experiences in Orientation

Public institutions in Africa face unique challenges in onboarding new staff. Okolie (2015) observed that orientation programs in the Nigerian Police Force were often irregular and under-resourced, undermining service delivery. Similarly, Van der Westhuizen (2016) found that South African police officers who received structured induction committed fewer procedural errors, particularly in aviation security operations. These studies suggest that well-organized orientation programs can strengthen law enforcement capacity in high-risk environments.

Orientation in Other Sectors

Research beyond policing also supports orientation as a key driver of performance. Saks and Gruman (2011) reported that standardized induction frameworks improve employee engagement and organizational commitment. Klein and Heuser (2008) emphasized the importance of aligning orientation programs with organizational culture to facilitate smoother integration and faster productivity.

Gaps in Existing Studies

Despite the established benefits, persistent challenges remain. Wanous and Reichers (2000) noted issues such as outdated training materials, generic program content, and limited supervisor involvement. In law enforcement contexts, weak post-orientation mentoring often results in skill degradation over time. Few studies, however, have examined the influence of onboarding on performance within Malawi's security sector, particularly in the Airport Police Branch (APB). This study addresses that gap by exploring how structured orientation programs affect employee performance in a high-security aviation environment at Kamuzu International Airport.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study adopted a **quantitative descriptive research design**, which was appropriate as it allowed the researcher to collect quantifiable data and describe current orientation practices

within the Airport Police Branch (APB), while examining their relationship with employee performance (Creswell, 2014).

Population and Sample

The study population comprised all police officers serving under the Airport Police Branch across Malawi's airports. A total of **99 officers were purposively sampled**. Participants included officers present at their duty points during the data collection period, regardless of whether they had previously undergone an orientation program, provided they were actively engaged in airport policing. This sampling strategy ensured a diverse representation of relevant experiences.

Data Collection Instruments

The primary data collection instrument was a **structured questionnaire**, divided into three sections:

1. **Demographic Information:** age, gender, rank, and years of service.
2. **Orientation Experiences:** timing, duration, structure, and supervisor involvement.
3. **Performance Indicators:** confidence, punctuality, teamwork, task accuracy, and compliance with procedures.

Most items employed **Likert-scale questions** to capture levels of agreement. Secondary sources, such as training manuals, policy documents, and internal reports, were also reviewed to complement the data collected.

Validity and Reliability

Content validity was established through expert review by human resource management and training professionals within the Malawi Police Service. A **pilot test** was conducted with five officers outside the study sample, leading to minor adjustments for clarity. **Internal consistency** was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, resulting in a reliability coefficient of **0.82**, indicating strong reliability (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011).

Data Collection Procedure

Following formal approval from the Malawi Police Service management, the university Research Department, and Ethics Board, questionnaires were distributed in both electronic and printed formats. Officers were requested to complete and return questionnaires on the

same day. **Participation was voluntary**, and informed consent was obtained. Confidentiality was maintained by ensuring no personal identifiers were recorded.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using **SPSS Version 20**. Descriptive statistics, including means, frequencies, and percentages, summarized demographic data and orientation practices. **Pearson correlation analysis** examined the relationships between orientation programs and performance indicators, with statistical significance set at $p < 0.05$. Findings were presented using tables and figures for clarity.

Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to ethical principles, ensuring **confidentiality**, voluntary participation, and the right to withdraw at any stage without consequences. Data were securely stored and used solely for academic purposes.

RESULTS

Response rate

The response rate was calculated based on the number of questionnaires distributed and the number of questionnaires returned. It was discovered that there was a 100% response rate, as shown in the table below;

Method	Targeted response	Actual response	Response rate
Questionnaire	99	99	100%
Total	99	99	100%

Source: Primary data

Participation in the orientation

It was revealed that a total of about 91% had undergone the orientation program upon joining the Airport Police Branch.

	Frequency	Valid Percentage
Those who were oriented	90	90.9%
Those who were not oriented	9	9.1%

Source: Primary data

Timing of the orientation program

The findings revealed that 91% of officers received orientation within their first week of posting, as indicated in the table.

Timing	Frequency	Percentage
First week	90	90.9%
Second week	0	0%
No orientation	9	9.1%
Total	99	100%

Source: Primary data

Duration of the orientation

As per the findings, most of the times, the orientation sessions lasted between 1–2 weeks.

Orientation duration	Frequency	Percentage
One week	21	21.2%
Two weeks	60	60.6%
More than two weeks	18	18.2%
Total	99	100%

Source: Primary data

Structure of the Orientation

The study revealed that the orientation program at the Airport Police Branch (APB) combined classroom-based learning **and** on-the-job training, although the balance between these approaches varied across different units.

Content and Effectiveness

The APB orientation program covered a wide range of operational and procedural areas relevant to policing within the aviation environment. Key topics included airport security protocols, passenger screening procedures, baggage handling processes, and the proper use of specialized security equipment. This comprehensive coverage ensured that new officers were well-acquainted with the essential tasks and responsibilities they would encounter in their daily duties.

Regarding effectiveness, the majority of respondents expressed positive perceptions of the orientation they received. **89.9% of** officers reported that the program effectively prepared them for their assigned duties, providing both the necessary information and practical exposure to operate confidently. Additionally, **85.9% of** respondents indicated that the orientation improved their confidence levels and enhanced their understanding of their specific roles and responsibilities. These findings highlight that well-structured orientation programs are crucial for building employees' self-assurance and ensuring role clarity, particularly in security-sensitive environments such as airports.

Supervisor Involvement

The study also examined the role of supervisors in the orientation process. Only **24.4% of officers** reported strong supervisor support during onboarding, while **50.5%** indicated moderate involvement. Many respondents highlighted the weakness of mentorship following the formal training sessions, suggesting that supervisory engagement in post-orientation support remains limited.

Supervisor involvement	Frequency	Percentage
Very involved	24	24.4%
Somehow involved	50	50.5%
Not involved	25	25.1%
Total	99	100%

Source: Primary data

Performance Impact

The orientation program had a notable positive effect on employee performance within the Airport Police Branch (APB). Over 90% of respondents rated their post-orientation performance as either good or very good, indicating a high level of preparedness and competence following the training. Additionally, 74.7% of officers reported executing tasks without errors, demonstrating that the program contributed to greater accuracy and adherence to procedures.

The orientation also positively influenced key workplace behaviors. Officers reported significant improvements in punctuality, reflecting enhanced discipline and time management, as well as in teamwork, suggesting that the program fostered stronger collaboration and coordination among colleagues. These outcomes underscore the importance of structured orientation programs in equipping personnel not only with technical skills but also with behavioral competencies critical in security-sensitive environments.

Overall, the findings indicate that comprehensive and well-delivered orientation programs can directly enhance operational effectiveness, reduce mistakes, and strengthen team cohesion, ultimately contributing to higher performance standards in aviation policing contexts.

Correlation Analysis

Pearson correlation analysis confirmed a strong positive relationship between orientation programs and performance indicators such as punctuality, task accuracy, and compliance with procedures ($p < 0.05$).

DISCUSSION

The findings affirm that orientation plays a significant role in enhancing employee performance at the APB. Structured onboarding increased role clarity, confidence, and punctuality, consistent with Bauer (2010) and Khandelwal (2011). The results also align with Van der Westhuizen (2016), who found that proper orientation reduced procedural errors in aviation policing.

However, several weaknesses were evident. Limited supervisor involvement supports Wanous and Reichers (2000), who argue that poor post-orientation support diminishes program effectiveness. Similarly, outdated training modules reflect Okolie's (2015) findings in Nigeria, where induction lacked sufficient resources. The absence of soft-skills training, such as customer service and communication, highlights a gap, as frontline officers must interact effectively with passengers and stakeholders.

These gaps suggest that orientation must be dynamic, continuously updated, and complemented by mentorship. In aviation security, where risks evolve rapidly, failure to adapt orientation content may compromise national security and passenger safety.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrated that orientation programs significantly enhance employee performance within the Airport Police Branch at Kamuzu International Airport, with structured induction improving confidence, punctuality, teamwork, and task accuracy, thereby directly contributing to operational readiness. However, gaps such as outdated content, inconsistent delivery, and weak supervisor involvement limit program effectiveness. To address these challenges, it is recommended to regularly update training materials to reflect emerging aviation threats, incorporate scenario-based and practical exercises, standardize orientation frameworks across all units, and strengthen post-orientation mentorship through active supervisor engagement. Implementing these measures would enhance employee morale by fostering a supportive and well-informed work environment, reduce operational errors through improved knowledge and procedural clarity, and sustain

long-term operational effectiveness in aviation policing by ensuring officers are consistently well-prepared to manage security challenges.

REFERENCES

1. Bauer, T. (2010). *Onboarding new employees: Maximizing success*. SHRM Foundation.
2. Bryman, A. (2016). *Social research methods* (5th ed.). Oxford University Press.
3. Chao, C. (1997). Socialization theory and employee adjustment. *Academy of Management Review*, 22(1), 67–90.
4. Creswell, J. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. Sage.
5. Khandelwal, P. (2011). Impact of structured onboarding on role clarity and performance. *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 22(3), 385–400.
6. Klein, H., & Heuser, A. (2008). The learning outcomes of effective orientation programs. *Human Resource Development Quarterly*, 19(3), 253–278.
7. Okolie, U. C. (2015). Induction and employee integration in the Nigerian Police Force. *African Journal of Public Administration*, 10(2), 77–94.
8. Pallant, J. (2020). *SPSS survival manual* (7th ed.). McGraw Hill.
9. Saks, A. M., & Gruman, J. A. (2011). Getting newcomers engaged: The role of socialization tactics. *Journal of Vocational Behaviour*, 79(1), 1–15.
10. Spencer, L. M., & Spencer, S. M. (1993). *Competency at Work: Models for Superior Performance*. Wiley.
11. Tavakol, M., & Dennick, R. (2011). Making sense of Cronbach's alpha. *International Journal of Medical Education*, 2, 53–55.
12. Van der Westhuizen, J. (2016). The role of orientation in South African Police Service performance. *South African Journal of Human Resource Management*, 14(1), 1–9.
13. Wanous, J. P., & Reichers, A. E. (2000). New employee orientation programs. *Human Resource Management Review*, 10(4), 435–451.