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IMPACT OF EMPLOYEE TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT ON ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE IN MALAWI: EVIDENCE FROM THE PUBLIC GOVERNANCE SECTOR

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ABSTRACT

Employee training and development are fundamental components of strategic human resource management because they enhance employee competencies, institutional capacity, and organizational performance. Within Malawi's public governance sector, continuous investment in employee development is essential for improving public service delivery, accountability, transparency, and institutional effectiveness. However, limited empirical evidence exists on the relationship between employee training and organizational performance in Malawi's public governance institutions. This study examined the impact of employee training and development on organizational performance using one public governance institution as the research setting and assessed the influence of training relevance and frequency on performance.

The study adopted a quantitative descriptive survey design guided by Human Capital Theory and Lifelong Learning Theory. A census approach targeted all 66 employees, with 55 completed questionnaires returned, representing an 83.3% response rate. Data were collected through structured questionnaires and analysed using frequencies, percentages, and tables. Secondary data from Malawi Vision 2063, the Public Sector Reform Programme, and scholarly literature supported contextual interpretation.

Findings show that employee training and development positively influence organizational performance by improving productivity, competence, confidence, teamwork, and service delivery. However, challenges included inadequate training opportunities, irregular implementation, limited specialised professional development, and weak monitoring of outcomes. The study concludes that competency-based and continuous training is a strategic investment for strengthening organizational performance in Malawi's public governance sector. It recommends regular training needs assessments, stronger training policies, increased investment in professional development, and effective monitoring systems to align employee development with governance reforms and Malawi Vision 2063 and sustainable institutional transformation.

KEYWORDS: Employee training and development; organizational performance; human capital; public governance; public sector reform; Malawi.

1. INTRODUCTION

Employee training and development are key strategic human resource management practices that enhance employee competencies, institutional capacity, and organizational performance. In a rapidly changing work environment, organizations must continuously develop employees' knowledge and skills to improve productivity, innovation, and service delivery (Armstrong, 2020). Human Capital Theory (Becker, 1993) views investment in employee competencies as a driver of organizational performance, while Lifelong Learning Theory (Jarvis, 2009) emphasizes continuous professional development as essential for maintaining employee competence and adaptability.

In the public governance sector, employee development strengthens accountability, transparency, and effective service delivery. Although international organizations such as the UNDP, World Bank, and OECD promote human resource development as a foundation for institutional effectiveness, many African public institutions continue to face challenges, including inadequate funding, irregular training programmes, limited specialised training, and weak monitoring systems (Kupeta & Paliani, 2021; Hussein, 2024).

In Malawi, Malawi Vision 2063 and the Public Sector Reform Programme (PSRP) identify continuous professional development as a priority for improving public sector performance. However, gaps in the implementation of employee development programmes persist. Despite growing evidence that training improves organizational performance, limited research has examined the influence of training relevance and training frequency within Malawi's public governance sector. This study addresses this gap using one public governance institution as the research setting and provides evidence to inform human resource policies and capacity-building initiatives that support organizational performance and public sector reform.

2. Research Objectives

2.1 General Objective

The general objective of this study was to examine the impact of employee training and development on organizational performance in Malawi's public governance sector using one public governance institution as the research setting.

2.2 Specific Objectives

The study was guided by the following specific objectives:

1. To examine the influence of training relevance on organizational performance.
2. To assess the effect of training frequency on organizational performance.
3. To examine employees' perceptions of the contribution of employee training and development to organizational performance.

3. Literature Review

3.1 Conceptual Review

Employee training and development are key components of strategic human resource management that enhance employee knowledge, skills, competencies, and organizational effectiveness. While training focuses on improving employees' abilities to perform current duties, development emphasizes long-term professional growth and preparation for future roles (Armstrong, 2020).

In public governance institutions, training and development contribute to institutional capacity, accountability, policy implementation, service delivery, and adaptation to changing governance demands. Training methods may include on-the-job training, workshops, coaching, mentoring, job rotation, and professional development programmes. However, their effectiveness depends on relevance to employees' responsibilities, frequency, and alignment with institutional objectives.

Organizational performance refers to an institution's ability to achieve its goals through effective use of resources. In the public sector, performance is reflected through employee productivity, operational efficiency, accountability, transparency, service quality, and effective policy implementation. Employee training improves these outcomes by strengthening competence, commitment, innovation, and service delivery (Armstrong, 2020).

Therefore, this study examines training relevance and training frequency as key dimensions of employee development and their contribution to organizational performance in Malawi's public governance sector.

3.2 Theoretical Review

This study was guided by two complementary theories: Human Capital Theory and Lifelong Learning Theory.

3.2.1 Human Capital Theory

Human Capital Theory (Becker, 1993) views employees' knowledge, skills, and competencies as valuable organizational assets. It argues that investment in employee training and development enhances productivity, institutional capacity, and organizational performance. In the public governance sector, the theory explains how competency-based training contributes to improved service delivery and institutional effectiveness.

3.2.2 Lifelong Learning Theory

Lifelong Learning Theory (Jarvis, 2009) views learning as a continuous process throughout an employee's career. Continuous professional development enables employees to adapt to technological, policy, and organizational changes, thereby improving competence and organizational performance within public governance institutions.

Together, Human Capital Theory and Lifelong Learning Theory provide the theoretical foundation for this study by explaining how continuous investment in employee development enhances organizational performance through improved knowledge, skills, and competencies.

3.3 Empirical Review and Research Gap

Previous studies consistently report a positive relationship between employee training and organizational performance. Effective training improves employee productivity, competence, innovation, and organizational commitment. For example, Khan and Ahmad (2021) found that structured training enhances workplace productivity and service delivery, while Li and Wang (2022) reported that continuous professional development improves employee adaptability and organizational effectiveness.

Studies in African public institutions highlight both the benefits and challenges of employee development. Mensah (2023) found that continuous training improves service delivery and accountability, whereas Kupeta and Paliani (2021) and Hussein (2024) identified inadequate funding, irregular training, and weak monitoring systems as major barriers to effective organizational performance.

In Malawi, Malawi Vision 2063 and the Public Sector Reform Programme (PSRP) emphasize continuous professional development as a key driver of public sector performance. However, limited empirical evidence exists on how training relevance and training frequency influence organizational performance within Malawi's public governance sector. This study addresses this gap using one public governance institution as the research setting and contributes evidence to inform human resource development and public sector reform.

4. METHODOLOGY

4.1 Research Design

This study adopted a quantitative research approach using a descriptive survey research design to examine the impact of employee training and development on organizational performance in Malawi's public governance sector. The quantitative approach was appropriate because it enabled the collection and analysis of numerical data to identify patterns in employees' perceptions regarding training practices and organizational performance.

A descriptive survey design was selected because it allows researchers to examine existing conditions, experiences, and perceptions of respondents without manipulating the research environment (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This design was suitable for assessing how training relevance and training frequency influence organizational performance within a public governance institution.

Although primary data were collected from one public governance institution, the institution served as the research setting rather than the sole unit of inference. The findings are interpreted within the wider context of Malawi's public governance sector to provide insights into human resource development practices and institutional performance.

4.2 Research Setting

The study was conducted within a prominent public governance and anti-corruption institution in Malawi. To comply with institutional research ethics, confidentiality protocols, and Institutional Review Board (IRB) requirements, the specific name of the organization has been withheld, and it is referred to generally as a public governance institution. This institution was strategically selected due to its core national mandate in spearheading the prevention, investigation, and prosecution of corruption cases, where maintaining a highly specialized, technically competent, and continuously developing workforce is critical. Given the complex legal, investigative, and administrative functions inherent in its operations, this setting provides an ideal environment for examining the relationship between employee training and organizational performance. The empirical evidence obtained from this setting provides vital insights into employee training experiences and their perceived contribution to organizational performance, while supporting broader discussions on capacity development and public sector reforms within Malawi.

4.3 Population and Sampling

The target population consisted of 66 employees from different functional departments and professional levels within the selected public governance institution. The respondents represented various areas of operation, including administration, finance, investigations, prosecution, public education, and other institutional functions.

Due to the relatively small population size, the study adopted a census sampling approach**,** where all 66 employees were invited to participate in the study. A census approach was considered appropriate because it allowed all members of the accessible population to provide their views, thereby reducing sampling limitations.

Out of the 66 questionnaires distributed, 55 completed questionnaires were returned, representing an 83.3% response rate**.** This response rate was considered adequate for analysing employees' perceptions regarding training and organizational performance.

4.4 Data Collection

The study employed both primary and secondary data sources. Primary data were collected using a structured questionnaire administered to employees of the selected public governance institution. The questionnaire consisted mainly of closed-ended questions measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5)**.**

The questionnaire collected information on employee training practices, including training relevance and frequency, as well as employees' perceptions of the contribution of training and development to organizational performance. Demographic information was also collected to describe the characteristics of respondents.

Secondary data were obtained through a review of relevant policy documents and academic literature. These included Malawi Vision 2063, the Public Sector Reform Programme (PSRP)**,** human resource development documents, peer-reviewed journal articles, books, and reports from organizations such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), World Bank, and Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). These sources provided contextual support for interpreting the findings within Malawi's public governance environment.

4.5 Data Analysis

The collected questionnaires were checked, coded, and analysed using Microsoft Excel. Descriptive statistical techniques including frequencies, percentages, mean scores, and standard deviations were utilized to summarize respondents' demographic characteristics and perceptions regarding training relevance, training frequency, and organizational performance, with results presented using tables. Furthermore, Excel's Data Analysis toolpak (specifically

Pearson correlation and multiple regression tools) was employed to empirically test the relationships and measure the extent of the impact of training relevance and frequency on organizational performance. The findings were interpreted in relation to the study objectives, theoretical framework, and existing literature to provide a comprehensive understanding of how employee training influences organizational performance.

4.6 Validity and Reliability

To ensure validity, the questionnaire was developed based on the study objectives and informed by existing literature on employee training and organizational performance. The research instrument was reviewed by the research supervisor and academic experts to assess the clarity, relevance, and suitability of the questions before data collection.

Reliability was enhanced through the use of a standardized questionnaire and consistent data collection procedures for all respondents. These measures helped reduce measurement errors and improve the consistency of the collected data.

4.7 Ethical Considerations

Ethical principles were observed throughout the research process. Permission to conduct the study was obtained from relevant institutional authorities before data collection. Respondents were informed about the purpose of the study and participation was voluntary.

Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained by ensuring that respondents' identities were not recorded or disclosed in the research findings. Participants were informed that the information collected would be used strictly for academic purposes and that they had the right to withdraw from participation at any stage without negative consequences.

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

5.1 Response Rate and Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

A total of 66 questionnaires were distributed to employees of the selected public governance institution. Of these, **55** completed questionnaires were returned, representing an 83.3% response rate. The response rate was considered adequate for analysis and provided sufficient representation of employees from different departments and professional backgrounds.

The demographic characteristics of respondents are presented in Table 1. The findings indicate that female respondents constituted the majority **(**61.8%**),** while male respondents represented 38.2% of the sample. Regarding age distribution, most respondents were between 31 and 40 years (49.1%)**,** followed by those aged 41–50 years (29.1%). In terms of educational qualifications, the majority held a Bachelor's degree (45.5%) or Diploma qualification (**36.4%**), indicating that respondents generally possessed the academic background required to provide informed views on employee training and organizational performance.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents. (N = 55)

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	21	38.2
	Female	34	61.8
Age	18–30 years	9	16.4
	31–40 years	27	49.1
	41–50 years	16	29.1
	Above 50 years	3	5.5
Education Level	Diploma	20	36.4
	Bachelor's Degree	25	45.5
	Master's Degree	6	10.9
	PhD	1	1.8
	Other	3	5.4
Note. N = 55.			

5.2 Training Relevance and Organizational Performance

The first objective examined the influence of training relevance on organizational performance. Although respondents acknowledged the importance of training, many indicated that existing programmes did not adequately address their job responsibilities and competency needs. Employees identified a need for specialized training in leadership, investigation techniques, prosecution, information technology, communication, and project management.

The findings indicate that training improves organizational performance when it is aligned with employees' roles and institutional objectives. This supports Human Capital Theory (Becker, 1993), which views investment in employee competencies as a driver of organizational effectiveness. The findings are also consistent with Armstrong (2020) and Khan and Ahmad (2021), who argue that training based on identified employee needs enhances productivity and organizational performance.

Table 2 Employees' Perceptions of Training Relevance. (N = 55)

Statement	**Strongly Disagree (%)**	**Disagree (%)**	**Neutral (%)**	**Agree (%)**	**Strongly Agree (%)**
Training programmes are relevant to my current job duties	14.5	72.7	—	—	—

Note. Percentages are based on valid responses (N = 55).

5.3 Training Frequency and Organizational Performance

The second objective examined the effect of training frequency on organizational performance. The findings showed that training programmes were not conducted regularly, with 40.0% of respondents indicating limited access to continuous professional development. Irregular training may hinder employees' ability to update their knowledge and skills in response to changing technologies, policies, and workplace demands.

The findings support Lifelong Learning Theory (Jarvis, 2009), which emphasizes continuous learning as essential for maintaining employee competence and organizational effectiveness. They are also consistent with Mensah (2023), who found that continuous employee development improves service delivery and organizational commitment, and Hussein (2024), who reported that irregular training contributes to competency gaps in African public institutions.

Table 3 Employees' Perceptions of Training Frequency. (N = 55)

Statement	Strongly Disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly Agree (%)
Training and development programmes are conducted regularly	—	40.0	21.8	38.2	—

Note. Percentages are based on valid responses (N = 55).

5.4 Employee Training and Perceived Organizational Performance

The study found that employee training and development positively influence organizational performance. Respondents indicated that training enhanced their professional competence, confidence, problem-solving skills, teamwork, and ability to perform their responsibilities effectively. These findings suggest that employee development strengthens institutional performance by improving individual productivity and service delivery.

The findings are consistent with Armstrong (2020), who argues that continuous investment in employee development enhances productivity, innovation, service quality, and employee commitment. Similarly, Li and Wang (2022) reported that continuous professional development improves employee adaptability and organizational effectiveness. These findings underscore the importance of treating employee training as a strategic investment through competency-based programmes, regular training needs assessments, and effective monitoring and evaluation systems to support organizational performance in Malawi's public governance sector.

5.5 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This section discusses the findings in relation to the study objectives, theoretical framework, and existing literature on employee training and organizational performance.

5.5.1 Influence of Training Relevance on Organizational Performance

The study examined the influence of training relevance on organizational performance. Although respondents acknowledged the importance of training, many indicated that existing programmes were not adequately aligned with their job responsibilities and competency needs. Employees identified a need for specialized training in areas such as leadership, investigation techniques, prosecution, information technology, communication, and project management.

The findings suggest that training is most effective when it addresses employees' specific job requirements and institutional priorities. This supports Human Capital Theory (Becker, 1993), which views investment in employee knowledge and skills as a driver of productivity and organizational performance. Similarly, Armstrong (2020) argues that training yields better results when it is based on identified training needs. The findings therefore highlight the need for regular training needs assessments to ensure that employee development programmes are aligned with institutional objectives and the evolving demands of Malawi's public governance sector.

5.5.2 Effect of Training Frequency on Organizational Performance

The findings indicated that training programmes were not conducted regularly, limiting employees' access to continuous professional development. Irregular training may hinder employees' ability to update their knowledge and adapt to changing technologies, policies, and workplace demands, thereby affecting organizational performance.

These findings support Lifelong Learning Theory (Jarvis, 2009), which emphasizes continuous learning as essential for maintaining employee competence. They are also consistent with Mensah (2023) and Hussein (2024), who found that regular employee development enhances service delivery, while inconsistent training contributes to competency gaps in public institutions. The findings highlight the need for public governance institutions in Malawi to strengthen continuous professional development through regular and well-planned training programmes.

5.5.3 Contribution of Employee Training to Organizational Performance

The study established that employee training and development positively influence organizational performance by enhancing employees' competence, confidence, problem-solving skills, teamwork, and job performance. These improvements contribute to greater institutional effectiveness and improved public service delivery.

The findings support Human Capital Theory (Becker, 1993), which views employee development as a strategic investment that enhances organizational performance. They also agree with Li and Wang (2022), who reported that continuous professional development improves employee adaptability and organizational effectiveness. Consequently, public governance institutions should prioritize competency-based training and regularly evaluate training outcomes to ensure sustained organizational performance.

5.6 Summary of Key Findings

Overall, the study established that employee training and development positively influence organizational performance. However, the effectiveness of training programmes depends on their relevance, regularity, and alignment with institutional needs.

The major findings were:

- Training improves employee competence, confidence, productivity, and service delivery.
- Employees require more specialized and job-related training programmes.
- Training opportunities need to be provided more consistently to support continuous professional development.
- Effective training systems require stronger planning, monitoring, and evaluation mechanisms.

These findings demonstrate that strengthening employee development practices can contribute significantly to improving organizational performance within Malawi's public governance sector.

6. CONCLUSION AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Conclusion

This study examined the impact of employee training and development on organizational performance in Malawi's public governance sector using one public governance institution as the research setting. The findings indicate that relevant and continuous employee training enhances competence, productivity, confidence, problem-solving skills, and service delivery, thereby improving organizational performance.

However, the study identified gaps, including inadequate training opportunities, limited specialized professional development, and irregular implementation of training programmes.

These findings support Human Capital Theory (Becker, 1993) and Lifelong Learning Theory (Jarvis, 2009), emphasizing that continuous investment in employee development is essential for sustaining organizational effectiveness. The study concludes that competency-based and continuous training should be integrated into institutional strategies to strengthen performance within Malawi's public governance sector.

6.2 Policy and Managerial Implications

The study recommends that public governance institutions conduct regular training needs assessments to align training programmes with employee responsibilities and institutional priorities. Institutions should strengthen continuous professional development through relevant training, mentoring, coaching, and workplace learning.

Policymakers should enhance public sector human resource development policies, increase investment in employee development, and establish monitoring and evaluation systems to measure training outcomes. These actions support the objectives of Malawi Vision 2063 and the Public Sector Reform Programme by promoting a competent, innovative, and effective public service.

6.3 Limitations and Future Research

The study was conducted in one public governance institution; therefore, findings may not fully represent all public institutions in Malawi. In addition, the use of self-reported questionnaire data may reflect respondents' perceptions rather than objective performance measures.

Future studies should examine multiple public institutions using mixed-method or longitudinal approaches to provide broader evidence on the long-term effects of employee training and development on organizational performance.

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