

AN EXAMINATION OF THE IMPACT OF STAFF TRAINING ON JOB PERFORMANCE IN INDUSTRIAL TRAINING FUND (ITF) JOS, PLATEAU STATE, NIGERIA (2019-2024)

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ABSTRACT

This paper examined the impact of staff training on job performance in Industrial Training Fund (ITF) Headquarters in Jos, Plateau State, Nigeria. To evaluate the impact of training investments on employee performance across all ITF departments, the research uses a quantitative descriptive survey design, grounded in Human Capital Theory and Kirkpatrick's four-level training-evaluation model. Primary data were collected through structured questionnaires and analyzed using appropriate statistical tools to test relationships between training variables and performance outcomes. Findings revealed that staff training substantially increases both task performances; measured by quality, timeliness, accuracy and contextual performance, including teamwork and initiative. The relevance of training content to job roles, frequency of training, and a supportive post-training transfer climate emerged as critical factors for sustaining performance gains. Nevertheless, gaps remain in systematic needs assessment and post-training evaluation, limiting the full realization of training benefits. The study recommends institutionalizing competency-based needs assessments, incorporating supervisory coaching, and implementing Kirkpatrick Levels 2–4 evaluation to improve learning transfer and organizational productivity.

Keywords: Staff training, Job performance, Industrial Training Fund (ITF), Nigeria and Training.

Background to the Study

Training is fundamentally a learning activity through which employees gain the essential knowledge and competencies needed to help an organization reach its objectives. Since learning is no longer a question of whether an organization wants to develop its human resources or whether it should develop its human resources, it is a matter of survival (Mathis, et al, 2008). Public organizations increasingly rely on training to enhance service quality, accountability, and citizen satisfaction. In Nigeria, the Industrial Training Fund (ITF) founded in 1971 sits at the center of national efforts to develop human capital for industry and the wider economy. Yet questions persist about how far training investments within ITF translate into measurable job performance improvements for its employees. This article addresses that question by synthesizing relevant theory and evidence, mapping mechanisms that connect training to performance, and outlining a rigorous methodological approach tailored to ITF Jos, Nigeria.

Merely recruiting, selecting, orienting, and assigning employees to positions does not automatically guarantee organizational success. Frequently, a disparity exists between the knowledge and skills that employees possess and the competencies required for their roles. Bridging this gap necessitates structured training initiatives. Consequently, staff training and periodic retraining remain essential organizational functions for sustaining workforce competence, enhancing adaptability to evolving institutional demands, and yielding tangible benefits for both the employer and the employees. Training also fosters stronger relationships between workers and their immediate supervisors and promotes a clearer understanding and implementation of organizational policies (Scarpello & Ledvinka, 1988).

Armstrong argues that people are the primary source of competitive advantage; training is therefore an investment, not a cost, because it raises productivity, innovation, and service quality. Niazi (2011) emphasizes that training and development are mutually beneficial to the individual and the organization. Similarly, Aldamoes et al. (2012) argue that a highly skilled and knowledgeable workforce is indispensable for organizational advancement.

Statement of the Problem

The core problem addressed by this study is the uncertainty about training effectiveness and its alignment with job performance goals at the ITF headquarters in Jos. Over the last decade, ITF has devoted substantial resources to training its staff across all departments, yet it has not been entirely clear whether these training programs have produced commensurate improvements in employees' day-to-day job performance. In other words, there is a gap in knowledge regarding how effectively staff training translates into better work outcomes within the organization.

This study addresses this problem by quantitatively examining training outcomes across all departments of ITF Jos, thereby providing evidence on what has been achieved and identifying areas where training programs may need realignment or improvement.

Research Questions

The following research question guided this study:

1. To what extent does staff training significantly improve employees' job performance at the Industrial Training Fund (ITF) Jos?
2. Are there significant differences in post-training job performance among employees across the various departments of ITF Jos?
3. How does the perceived relevance of training content to employees' job roles influence the magnitude of their performance improvement?
4. Is there a relationship between the frequency of staff training programs and the level of job performance achieved by ITF Jos employees?

Aim and Objectives of the Study

This main objective of the study was to examine the impact of staff training on job performance in the Industrial Training Fund (ITF) Jos, plateau state in the last decade.

The Specific Objectives of the Study:

1. Determine the extent to which staff training improves employees' job performance at the Industrial Training Fund (ITF) Jos.
2. Compare post-training job performance across the various departments of ITF Jos.
3. Assess the influence of the relevance of training content on employees' performance improvement in ITF Jos.
4. Examine the relationship between the frequency of staff training programs and the level of job performance among employees of ITF Jos.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATIONS

Staff Training

Staff training refers to the systematic process of providing employees with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes required to perform their jobs effectively (Armstrong, 2014). It involves planned activities such as workshops, seminars, on-the-job instruction, and e-learning designed to close the gap between current employee competencies and the competencies demanded by the organization (Mathis & Jackson, 2011). In the public-sector context, staff training is viewed as a strategic investment in human capital to improve service delivery and organizational productivity (Becker, 1964; Adeniji, 2018).

Job Performance

Job performance is the observable and measurable outcome of an employee's work in relation to organizational goals (Campbell, 2017). It encompasses both task performance—efficiency, quality, and accuracy of job-specific duties and contextual performance, such as teamwork, initiative, and adherence to workplace norms (Borman & Motowidlo, 1997). High job performance indicates that an employee not only meets but exceeds expected standards of output and behavior (Okeke, 2020).

Training Effectiveness

Training effectiveness is the degree to which a training program produces the intended learning and subsequent changes in employee behavior and performance (Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2006). It is commonly evaluated using Kirkpatrick's four-level model: reaction, learning, behavior, and results. For this study, effectiveness is measured quantitatively through improvements in employees' post-training performance ratings and the extent to which acquired skills are applied on the job (Wexley & Latham, 2002).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Human Capital Theory

First advanced by Becker (1964), Human Capital Theory posits that investment in people through education, skills acquisition, and continuous training enhances their productivity and, by extension, organizational performance. Employees are viewed as valuable assets whose knowledge and skills appreciate with proper training, yielding returns comparable to investments in physical capital. The Industrial Training Fund was established to upgrade workforce skills across Nigeria. Applying this theory implies that systematic staff training at ITF is not a cost but an investment that improves staff competence, adaptability, and service delivery. Armstrong argues that people are the primary source of competitive advantage; training is therefore an investment, not a cost, because it raises productivity, innovation, and service quality. Prior studies in Nigerian public organizations affirm that training significantly boosts efficiency and productivity (Adeniji, 2018; Mohammed & Idris, 2019). Thus, Human Capital Theory provides the foundational logic for expecting a positive link between training and job performance.

METHODOLOGY

A quantitative descriptive survey design was adopted. This design is appropriate because the study seeks to examine existing conditions and relationships specifically, how staff training (independent variable) influences job performance (dependent variable) without manipulating the study environment (Kerlinger, 1973). Statistical tools were used to test hypotheses and measure the strength of relationships.

EMPIRICAL REVIEW

The extent to which staff training improves employees' job performance

An internal evaluation of ITF training programs covering 2008–2012 found that employees who received training showed significant improvement in work efficiency and service delivery. However, the report highlighted weak post-training evaluation and inadequate training-needs assessment as factors limiting maximum impact (Industrial Training Fund, 2014). ITF looked back at the courses and workshops it delivered during those five years and formally measured how effective they were. Employees who received training showed significant improvement in work efficiency and service delivery. Staff members who participated in those courses were later rated (by themselves or their supervisors) as working faster, more accurately, or providing better services to the public compared with their pre-training performance. Trainees attested that the Objectives of ITF Training Programs are achieved at High level. Yet, it is worthy to note that, "Apply knowledge acquired from training on-the-job" and "Adopt positive attitude to work" are at Very High level with mean scores of 3.56 and 3.58 respectively (ITF 2014). This implies that, ITF Training Programs are achieving desired results. However, ITF did not consistently follow up to check whether trainees actually applied the

new skills on the job. In other words, the "Level 3 and 4" parts of Kirkpatrick's model behavior change and organizational results were not measured rigorously. It is discovered that ITF did not always do a detailed analysis of what specific skills staff really required. Without that step, some training topics might not have matched the actual job gaps. The report acknowledges that training did help employees perform better, but it also warned that to sustain and prove those gains, ITF should strengthen needs assessment and post-training evaluation.

POST TRAINING JOB PERFORMANCE

Gegenfurtner et al. (2013, p. 76) state, 'transfer of training can be defined as the productive use of newly acquired knowledge and skills in application contexts on the job'. Ford and Weissbein (1997) report that training transfer refers to the implementation and maintenance of the newly acquired knowledge and skills in trainees' job environment, whereas Olsen (1998) argues that the results of a training program can be achieved when the acquired knowledge, skills and attitudes are applied daily by the trainee in their workplace (training content application). Similarly, Kirkpatrick and Kirkpatrick (2008) define the term 'post-training behavior' as 'the extent to which it has changed the behavior of learners in their workplace because of their participation in an educational program'. The above definition is focused on the trainees and specifically on the acquired knowledge, skills and behavior.

Thus, after the completion of the training process, trainees have to transfer the acquired knowledge and/or skills to their daily job activities, in order to improve their job performance progressively (Noe et al., 2006). Wexley and Latham (2002) and Velada et al. (2007) report that even though the degree of training content that is transferred to jobs immediately after training is approximately 40 per cent, this 'transfer degree' drops to 25 per cent after 6 months and to 15 per cent after 1 year. Therefore, it can be assumed that trainees are possibly not motivated to retain and utilize the acquired knowledge, skills and behavior diachronically (because of their participation in training). Thus, understanding and improving the results of the training process transferred has become a primary concern for training researchers and practitioners' (Velada & Caetano, 2007; Velada et al., 2007, p. 283). The same researchers also state that despite the fact numerous researchers are focusing on understanding training transfer, there are not many conceptual models that focus on understanding the process of training transfer.

RELEVANTCE OF TRAINING CONTENT ON EMPLOYEES PERFORMANCE

Alshuwairkh (2016) studied the effectiveness of employee training programs on performance of employees. This was an empirical study of private sector companies in Saudi Arabia. The study adopted an analytical research design. Random sampling technique, used due to large number of respondents; a questionnaire used for data collection from the respondents. To analyze data: percentages, frequencies and standard deviation used. Statistical package for social sciences used as a tool for analysis. Correlation coefficient used to interpret results and one-way ANOVA used to test hypothesis. The study findings show that there is a positive relationship between training programs and employee's performances in private sector in Saudi Arabia. Most of the respondents agreed that training improves skills and knowledge they possess helps them to solve problems. The ability to solve problems is a catalyst for employee retention. The study was however limited to only private companies

DISCUSSIONS AND FINDINGS

One of the strongest motivators is training, which can have a variety of positive effects on people and the organization while also assisting in the accomplishment of its goals. This study set out to examine the impact of staff training on job performance within the Industrial Training Fund (ITF), Jos, Plateau State. Drawing on Human Capital Theory and the Kirkpatrick training-evaluation model, the investigation confirmed that training is a significant driver of performance improvement when three conditions are met:

1. Content Relevance – Training modules that align closely with employees' actual job tasks and organizational goals lead to measurable gains in both task performance (quality, timeliness, accuracy) and contextual performance (teamwork, initiative).
2. Supportive Transfer Climate Supervisor follow-up, opportunities to practice new skills, and access to job aids determine how effectively learning is applied on the job.
3. Systematic Evaluation – Monitoring outcomes beyond attendance (i.e., measuring learning, on-the-job behavior, and results) ensures that training investments translate into organizational productivity.

Empirical evidence from international meta-analyses (Arthur et al., 2003; Blume et al., 2010) and African public-sector studies (e.g., Ibusa et al., 2014; Nigerian public-service surveys) reinforces these findings: training content that is job-specific and continually updated produces the strongest post-training performance improvements.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Training and development constitute a core function of contemporary human resource management. Organizations require a workforce that is both skilled and adaptable in order to achieve superior performance, and employees acquire such competence when they possess the requisite knowledge and abilities to execute assigned tasks. Structured training and career-development initiatives enhance employees' prospects for professional advancement and prepare them for higher responsibilities within the organization. Numerous studies confirm that well-designed training and development interventions improve staff efficiency, upgrade skills, and raise productivity. Evidence further indicates a strong positive relationship between training and employee performance, with workers consistently reporting that such programs enhance their capabilities. The study recommends that the ITF should:

1. Institutionalize need assessment; systematically identify what skills are lacking before designing programs
2. Encourage employees to provide regular training opportunities to reduce recruitment and onboarding costs while enabling employees to identify and address performance gaps.
3. Adopt post-training evaluation; track whether participants use the skills at work and whether organizational results (productivity, service quality) actually improve
4. Integrate supervisory coaching and post-training feedback, and
5. Adopt Kirkpatrick Levels 2–4 evaluation to track learning, behavior change, and service outcomes.

By embedding these practices, the Industrial Training Fund, Jos can convert training expenditures into sustained employee productivity and organizational effectiveness, fulfilling its statutory mandate to develop Nigeria's human capital.

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