

Strategic Training Practices and Firm Performance among Human Resource Management Consultancy Firms in Nairobi Kenya

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ABSTRACT

Firm performance is essential for competitiveness, but many firms struggle with executing functional strategies, resulting in poor outcomes. In a dynamic market, strategic training is critical to maintaining superior performance, especially with growing global competition. Despite significant investments in employee training, the effect of strategic training on firm performance among HR consultancy firms in Nairobi, Kenya, remains underexplored. This paper aimed to examine the role of strategic training practices in firm performance. The study examined the effects of employee motivation to learn, the impact of perceived supervisor support and the effect of employee training attitudes on firm performance in HR consultancy firms. The study was grounded on learning organization theory. An explanatory research design was adopted, utilizing questionnaires to collect data from 185 human resource management consultancy firms in Nairobi. The data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical methods to draw meaningful insights. The study highlighted the crucial role of strategic training and employee commitment in enhancing firm performance. Additionally, motivation to learn, supervisor support, and positive training attitudes showed strong positive correlations with performance in Nairobi's HR consultancy firms. The regression analysis indicates these variables explain 2.3% of the variance in firm performance ($R^2 = 0.023$). The motivation to learn ($\beta=0.079$, $p=0.009$), supervisor support ($\beta=0.128$, $p=0.022$), and training employee attitude ($\beta=0.196$, $p=0.013$) were found to be statistically significant predictors of firm performance. In conclusion, strategic training practices such as motivation to learn, supervisor support, and employee attitudes significantly enhance firm performance. The study recommends that HR consultancy firms in Nairobi prioritize fostering employee motivation through continuous professional development and training. Strengthening supervisor support via leadership programs and promoting positive attitudes toward training, aligned with employee career goals, will enhance both individual growth and firm performance.

Key Words: Strategic training, Motivation to learn, Supervisor support, Employee's attitude, Firm performance

INTRODUCTION

With increasing competition and the need for specialized skills, HR consultancy firms must adopt strategic training initiatives to enhance employee competencies, drive innovation, and improve service delivery. Strategic decisions must involve all organizational levels, particularly in designing and implementing training practices (Chauhan & Chauhan, 2022). These practices, focusing on motivation to learn, supervisor support, and employee attitudes, have shown significant positive effects on firm performance (Karin & Höglund, 2023).

Organizational learning theory emphasizes creating learning organizations that foster continuous skill development, enabling companies to stay competitive, especially in human capital-driven industries like HR consultancy. Firms that align training programs with organizational goals and assess their effectiveness, considering employee motivation and attitudes, can achieve significant performance improvements (Newkirk-Moore & Bracker, 2018; Anvari et al., 2010).

Supervisor support plays a crucial role in training success. Employees who feel supported by their supervisors are more engaged and committed, viewing training as a personal investment in their growth, which leads to better firm performance (Bacha, 2020). Studies across regions show similar findings. For example, research in the U.S. and Canada revealed that employee motivation, training attitudes, and supervisor support were key

factors in driving firm performance (Stefanie, 2013). Moreover, a study by CompTIA (2020) highlighted the importance of leadership support in encouraging younger employees, such as Gen Z, to engage more with training.

In Africa, studies further support the importance of strategic training. In Lesotho, Motlokoa et al. (2018) found that training improved performance and employee motivation, especially when supervisors offered support. Similarly, in Namibia, Zemburuka and Dangarembizi (2020) showed that military forces benefited from strategic training when leadership provided adequate support. In Ethiopia, Abeba et al. (2015) found that employee motivation and positive training attitudes significantly impacted performance, recommending continuous training programs with employee involvement. In Uganda, Edward et al. (2017) demonstrated the mediating role of job satisfaction between training and employee commitment, reinforcing the need for supportive management.

Research in Kenya also highlights the relationship between training attitudes and firm performance. Ketty (2018) found that strategic training and management support led to significant improvements in performance at the Kenya Copyright Board. Employees who were motivated to learn and supported by supervisors demonstrated stronger commitment to organizational goals. In Indonesia, Teuku et al. (2020) discovered that staff learning and capabilities positively influenced firm performance, especially when employees received sufficient support. Similarly, Adam et al. (2016) showed that strategic training in Tanzania's public water utilities improved employee behavior, attitudes, and performance.

Across regions, the literature emphasizes the critical role of strategic training in firm performance. Motivation to learn, supervisor support, and positive attitudes towards training consistently enhance performance outcomes. As global competition intensifies, firms that invest in strategic training are better positioned to adapt to challenges, improve performance, and secure long-term success (Parthasarthy & Sethi, 2022; Maina, 2018; Wandiga, 2015). Despite investments in training, many firms struggle with employees transferring learned skills to the workplace, especially in HR consultancies in Nairobi, Kenya. Further research is necessary to explore how motivation, attitudes, and supervisor support impact training transfer and performance in these firms.

Objectives

The objectives of this study were:

1. To determine the effect of motivation to learn of employees on firm performance among human resource management consultancy firms in Nairobi Kenya.
2. To establish the effect of perceived supervisor support on firm performance among human resource management consultancy firms in Nairobi Kenya.
3. To understand the effect of employees' training attitudes on firm performance among human resource management consultancy firms in Nairobi, Kenya.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

Strategic training practices and Firm performance

Empirical studies on strategic training practices and firm performance reveal a strong connection between well-structured training programs and organizational success. For example, Anvari et al. (2010) focused on strategic training programs in a medical university in Iran, aiming to assess the relationship between training, loyalty, and employee attrition. They found a significant link between strategic training and high employee dedication, concluding that strategic training fosters commitment and reduces turnover. Similarly, Motlokoa, Sekantsi, and Monyolo (2018) examined training in Lesotho's banking sector, with an objective to determine its impact on motivation and performance. Their findings indicated that strategic training significantly enhanced employee motivation and performance, suggesting that organizations should prioritize training investments. In Uganda, Edward, Kasekende, and Angundaru (2017) studied banks and found that training improved job satisfaction and employee commitment. They concluded that strategic training is essential for fostering loyalty and improving

firm performance. These studies consistently underscore the critical role of strategic training in enhancing firm performance.

Effect of Employee's motivation to learn on firm Performance

Motivation to learn is critical for successful training and performance. Cook and Artino (2016) define it as the process that initiates and sustains goal-oriented actions, influenced by expectancy-value theory, where motivation arises from anticipated success and perceived task value. Self-efficacy, the belief in one's abilities, is another vital motivator, as outlined by social-cognitive theory. Employees driven by intrinsic motivation view training as a challenge and opportunity for growth, leading to better performance (Baldwin *et al.*, 2019; Salas *et al.*, 2022). The Valence-Instrumentality-Expectancy (VIE) theory posits that learning transfer occurs when trainees believe they can succeed (expectancy), effort improves performance (instrumentality), and this leads to favorable outcomes (valence). Facticeau *et al.* (1995) and Grossman and Salas (2021) found this framework enhances learning transfer by instilling confidence in trainees. Research in India by Mohanty, Dash, and Dash (2017) demonstrated that trainee characteristics such as confidence, goal orientation, and responsibility significantly improve learning outcomes. Ngure and Juma (2018) studied effective learning management at the Co-operative Bank of Kenya, finding that employee readiness, learning environment, and management support are crucial for training success. Across various contexts, fostering motivation, self-efficacy, and a supportive learning environment are essential for driving both individual and organizational growth. Hence, hypothesis H₀₁ below:

H₀₁: Employee's motivation to learn has no significant effect on firm performance.

Effect of perceived Supervisor Support on employee in firm performance

Supervisor support is defined by Rhoades and Eisenberger (2022) as the extent to which supervisors value employees' contributions and well-being. It plays a pivotal role in helping employees succeed through guidance, constructive feedback, and career development (Knies, Leisink, & van de Schoot, 2017). Effective support enhances employee commitment and is associated with improved perceived organizational support, reduced turnover, and increased extra-role behavior (Kurtessis *et al.*, 2017). Research by Burns (2016) in a Southern California healthcare company found that perceived supervisor support significantly boosted employee commitment, leading to improved company performance. Similarly, Guan and Frenkel (2019), in a study of Chinese manufacturing companies, revealed that supervisor support positively influenced employee performance and engagement. Using a highly reliable measurement scale, they found supervisor support to be a key factor in effective training transfer. Additionally, Arici's (2018) study in Turkey's hospitality sector demonstrated a direct relationship between supervisor support, employee commitment, and firm performance, emphasizing the role of authentic leadership. Otuko, Chege, and Musiega (2013) found similar outcomes in Kenya, where learning and development, supported by supervisors, positively impacted job performance at Mumias Sugar Company. Thus, the literature highlights supervisor support as a critical factor in employee success and performance, helping employees apply training to their jobs effectively, thereby improving both individual and organizational outcomes. Thus, the hypothesis H₀₂ below:

H₀₂: Perceived supervisor support has no significant effect on firm performance.

Effect of employees' training attitudes on employee in firm performance

Attitude, as described by Kendra Cherry (2021), is a mix of emotions, beliefs, and behaviors shaped by personal experiences that significantly influence behavior. In a training context, attitude refers to an employee's belief in their ability to succeed and acquire new knowledge. Employees confident in their learning capabilities approach training with positivity and persistence (Schwoerer *et al.*, 2015), leading to better skill acquisition and commitment (Blume *et al.*, 2020). Research shows that a positive attitude towards training is crucial for successful learning transfer. Employees with higher self-efficacy tend to persevere through challenges, while those with low self-efficacy are often discouraged by difficulties, leading to reduced effort and learning outcomes. Studies by Blume *et al.* (2010) and Gegenfurtner (2021) confirm that a positive training attitude enhances the likelihood of applying new skills in the workplace. Sahoo and Mishra (2019) found that trainee

attitudes and characteristics positively impacted training transfer in an Indian power company. Similarly, Mohanty, Dash, and Dash (2017) identified self-efficacy and goal orientation as significant factors in learning effectiveness. Research by Ngure and Juma (2018) at the Co-operative Bank of Kenya also highlighted the importance of employee readiness, learning methods, and management support in influencing training success. Across various contexts, positive training attitudes, self-efficacy, and motivation are critical for effective training and professional development. Consequently, the hypothesis H₀₃ below:

H₀₃: Employees' training attitude has no significant effect on firm performance.

Theoretical Review – Learning Organization Theory

Peter Senge's concept of a *learning organization* (1997) emphasizes continuous improvement and innovation, where individuals constantly strive to expand their capabilities to achieve desired outcomes. This aligns with strategic training by fostering an environment in which employees are motivated to learn, supported by supervisors, and maintain positive attitudes toward training (Dawood, 2015). In a learning organization, motivation to learn is crucial, encouraging individuals to embrace challenges and persist in skill development, directly contributing to firm performance (Blume et al., 2010). Supervisory support is another key element in such organizations. Supervisors not only provide direction but also offer encouragement and feedback, enhancing employee commitment and performance (Knies, Leisink, & van de Schoot, 2017). Positive training attitudes are equally important, as they drive employees to invest effort in learning and applying new skills, promoting innovation and improving organizational performance (Burke & Hutchins, 2007). Senge's vision-driven approach ensures that training aligns with broader organizational objectives, encouraging employees to engage in lateral thinking and contribute to knowledge generation. This unified vision integrates training into the organization's strategic goals, fostering engagement and enhancing performance across all levels. Overall, Senge's learning organization theory supports strategic training practices by emphasizing motivation, supervisor support, and positive training attitudes as key factors in creating a culture of continuous learning and innovation, ultimately driving firm success.

METHODOLOGY

Study area

The focus of this research study was on the impact of strategic training practices on the performance of companies within the management consulting industry in Nairobi, Kenya. Nairobi was selected as the area for this study due to its large population and the high concentration of consulting firms in the city, as reported in the Kenya Economic Report for 2020. The research was conducted on a sample of 185 management consulting firms that have been selected from the city of Nairobi, Kenya.

Research design and Population

The explanatory design was selected to uncover data previously unexplored and is particularly suited for social research, as it allows the discovery of phenomena not extensively studied. Although it may not explore every aspect, it provides a deep understanding of the issue. Additionally, this design offers cost and time efficiency during data collection and helps standardize interview questions and hypothesis testing. The target population refers to the entire group of interest in the study (Sekaran, 2010). For this research, the population consisted of 344 human resource management consultancy firms in Nairobi, Kenya. These firms were selected due to their likely familiarity with strategic training processes and the concentration of HR professionals in Nairobi, as reported by the Kenya Economic Report (2020). The population includes HR professionals, enabling the researcher to generalize findings effectively to the broader sector. The choice of Nairobi was strategic, given its role as a hub for consultancy firms in the country.

Sample size and data

Bukhari (2020) describes sampling as a tangible representation of a desired population, taking into account all potential participants in the research study. The primary purpose of sampling is to obtain a group that accurately

represents the entire population, allowing the researcher to gather information about the population as a whole, while taking into account the constraints of time, money, and other factors. In this study, the researcher utilized simple random sampling, which requires minimal prior knowledge of the study population, is free of classification errors, is compatible with inferential statistics, is bias and prejudice-free, is user-friendly, and allows for easy assessment of sampling error. The sample size was also determined using Yamane's (1967) simplified formula for proportions, assuming a confidence level of 95% and $P \geq 0.5$. This approach aligns with the sampling theory's requirement that all potential units in the target population be identified to enable the calculation of the probability for selecting a random combination.

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + Ne^2}$$

Where: n = required responses

N = Sample size

e² = error limit

Placing the formula for the current population gave a sample size of:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Sample size (n)} &= \frac{344}{1 + 344 * 0.05^2} \\ &= \frac{344}{1.86} \\ &= 185 \end{aligned}$$

Thus, this study focused on collecting data from 185 participants.

This study obtained data through use of Questionnaires. Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement/disagreement for each of the items on a five-point Likert scale by indicating numbers ranging from (1) “strongly disagree” to (5) “strongly agree.”. Given the nature of the survey interaction, the researcher physically distributed questionnaires (through drop and pick approach) to the respondents and followed up for the completion to ensure they are all completed and returned back within 2 weeks. To ensure that stakeholders can easily understand the collected data, it must undergo analysis. The researcher employed quantitative data analysis techniques for this purpose. Upon receiving the questionnaires from the respondents, the responses were edited, classified, coded, and tabulated using statistical package for social science and excel sheets. The collected data were then reviewed for completeness and comprehensibility. The information was converted into percentages using a profitability ratios approach, and presented through tables, charts, pictograms, and graphical demonstrations to provide a clear visual representation

FINDINGS

Correlation results

The correlation table 1 below shows the relationship between firm performance and three variables: motivation to learn, supervisor support, and training employee attitude. Supervisor support has the strongest positive correlation with firm performance ($r = 0.582$, $p = 0.023$), indicating a statistically significant and moderately strong relationship. This suggests that as supervisor support increases, firm performance improves. Training

employee attitude also shows a significant positive correlation with firm performance ($r = 0.512, p = 0.008$), implying that a positive attitude toward training positively affects firm performance. Motivation to learn, though weaker, still shows a positive correlation with firm performance ($r = 0.315, p = 0.037$), which is statistically significant, suggesting that employee motivation to learn does contribute to firm performance but to a lesser extent. Overall, the results highlight that while all three variables influence performance, supervisor support and training attitude have a more substantial impact on firm outcomes.

Table 1: Correlation results

Correlations					
		Motivation to learn	Supervisor support	Training employee attitude	Firm performance
Motivation to learn	Pearson Correlation	1			
	Sig. (2-tailed)				
Supervisor support	Pearson Correlation	.625**	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000			
Training employee attitude	Pearson Correlation	.213**	0.143	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.004	0.054		
Firm performance	Pearson Correlation	0.315	0.582**	0.512**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.037	0.023	0.008	
	N	182	182	182	182

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Source: (Field data, 2024)

REGRESSION RESULTS

The regression analysis aimed to assess the direct effects of motivation to learn, supervisor support, and training employee attitude on firm performance. The model summary reveals an R Square value of 0.023, which indicates that only 2.3% of the variance in firm performance can be explained by these predictors. The adjusted R Square value of 0.006 further underscores the limited explanatory power of the model. The overall model is marginally significant with a p-value of 0.052, according to the ANOVA results, suggesting that while there is some relationship between the predictors and firm performance, it is not robust. Among the individual predictors examined in the model, motivation to learn ($\beta=0.079, p=0.009$) and supervisor support ($\beta=0.128, p=0.022$) both exhibits statistically significant relationships with firm performance, as indicated by their respective p-values being below the conventional threshold of 0.05. The positive beta values for these predictors suggest that increases in motivation to learn and supervisor support are associated with improvements in firm performance. Specifically, supervisor support has a stronger positive impact on firm performance compared to motivation to learn, as evidenced by its higher beta value (0.128 vs. 0.079). This implies that, within the context of the firm, initiatives that enhance supervisor support are likely to yield more substantial improvements in performance relative to those that solely focus on increasing employees' motivation to learn.

Additionally, training employee attitude is also statistically significant ($\beta=0.196, p=0.013$), suggesting a positive and meaningful contribution to firm performance. However, the beta value for this predictor is larger than those

for motivation to learn and supervisor support, indicating that, although its impact is statistically significant, it may represent a different aspect of influence on performance, potentially reflecting attitudes developed through training programs rather than direct support or motivation. The constant term of the model, with a significant coefficient of 1.127 ($p < 0.05$), implies that there are baseline factors influencing firm performance that are not accounted for by the predictors in the model. This constant suggests that even in the absence of variation in the measured predictors, firm performance would still be influenced by other unmeasured variables or inherent characteristics of the firm. The low R Square and the marginal overall model significance imply that other variables, not included in this analysis, might play a more critical role in explaining variations in firm performance. This suggests the need for further research to identify additional factors and refine the model for a more comprehensive understanding of the drivers of firm performance as shown in table 2 below.

Table 2 - Direct effect – effect of strategic training practices on firm performance

Variable	Coefficient (B)	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
Constant	1.127	0.217	-	5.187	0.000
Motivation to learn	0.079	0.091	0.083	0.864	0.009
Supervisor support	0.128	0.105	0.116	1.225	0.022
Training employee attitude	0.196	0.123	0.121	1.592	0.013
Model Summary					
Statistic	Value				
R	0.151				
R Square	0.023				
Adjusted R Square	0.006				
Std. Error of Estimate	0.06671				
ANOVA					
Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	0.018	3	0.006	1.377	0.052
Residual	0.792	178	0.004		
Total	0.81	181			
a. Predictors: (Constant), Training employee attitude, Supervisor support, Motivation to learn					
b. Dependent Variable: Firm performance					

Source: (Field data, 2024)

Hypotheses testing

Based on the direct regression results above, the null hypotheses were tested and results given in table 3 below:

Hypothesis 1 (H₀₁): Motivation to learn does not significantly affect employee performance in strategic training on firm performance among human resource management consultancy firms in Nairobi, Kenya.

The regression coefficient for motivation to learn is 0.079, with a standard error of 0.091 and a significance value (p-value) of 0.009. Since the p-value is less than 0.05, we can conclude that the effect of motivation to learn on firm performance is statistically significant. Thus, we reject the null hypothesis. Motivation to learn significantly affects employee performance in strategic training on firm performance.

Hypothesis 2 (H₀₂): Perceived supervisor support does not affect employee performance in strategic training on firm performance among human resource management consultancy firms in Nairobi, Kenya.

The regression coefficient for supervisor support is 0.128, with a standard error of 0.105 and a significance value (p-value) of 0.022. Since the p-value is less than 0.05, we can conclude that the effect of perceived supervisor support on firm performance is statistically significant. Therefore, we reject the null hypothesis. Perceived supervisor support significantly affects employee performance in strategic training on firm performance.

Hypothesis 3 (H₀₃): Training attitudes do not significantly affect employee performance in strategic training on firm performance among human resource management consultancy firms in Nairobi, Kenya.

The regression coefficient for training employee attitude is 0.196, with a standard error of 0.123 and a significance value (p-value) of 0.013. Since the p-value is less than 0.05, we can conclude that the effect of training employee attitude on firm performance is statistically significant. Thus, we reject the null hypothesis. Training attitudes significantly affect employee performance in strategic training on firm performance. Therefore, the direct regression results indicate that motivation to learn, perceived supervisor support, and training employee attitude all have significant effects on firm performance among human resource management consultancy firms in Nairobi, Kenya. The significance values for all three variables are below the 0.05 threshold, leading to the rejection of the null hypotheses in each case.

Table 3 – Hypothesis test

Hypotheses	Beta (β)	P-values	Decision
Hypothesis 1 (H ₀₁): Motivation to learn does not significantly affect employee performance in strategic training on firm performance among human resource management consultancy firms in Nairobi, Kenya	0.079	0.009	Reject
Hypothesis 2 (H ₀₂): Perceived supervisor support does not affect employee performance in strategic training on firm performance among human resource management consultancy firms in Nairobi, Kenya.	0.128	0.022	Reject
Hypothesis 3 (H ₀₃): Training attitudes do not significantly affect employee performance in strategic training on firm performance among human resource management consultancy firms in Nairobi, Kenya.	0.196	0.013	Reject

Source: (Field data, 2024)

CONCLUSIONS

The study concludes that motivation to learn, supervisor support, and employee training attitudes all play significant roles in influencing firm performance among human resource management consultancy firms in Nairobi, Kenya. The results showed that employees who are motivated to learn are more likely to apply newly acquired skills effectively, thereby enhancing performance. Supervisor support also proved to be critical in promoting employee engagement and commitment, leading to improved performance outcomes. Lastly, positive attitudes toward training were found to significantly contribute to better employee performance, as employees who view training positively tend to invest more effort and perseverance. The findings suggest that fostering a

supportive work environment, encouraging continuous learning, and promoting positive training attitudes are essential strategies for enhancing overall firm performance.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, the study recommends that HR consultancy firms in Nairobi should prioritize fostering employee motivation to learn by offering opportunities for continuous professional development through trainings. Supervisor support should be strengthened through training programs that equip employees with the skills to mentor and guide their teams effectively. Firms should also promote positive attitudes towards training by highlighting its benefits and aligning training programs with employee career goals. Additionally, organizations should integrate strategic training as part of their performance improvement plans, ensuring that training initiatives are tailored to meet both organizational objectives and individual employee growth.

Implications of the Study

The findings of this study have significant implications for both Learning Organization Theory and practical organizational strategies. In terms of theory, the study underscores the importance of supervisor support and training attitudes in fostering a learning organization. This aligns with Peter Senge's concept, which emphasizes the need for supportive leadership and collective learning to drive innovation and achieve organizational goals. The study validates these principles by demonstrating that supervisors play a critical role in motivating employees to apply their skills and continue learning.

Practically, organizations aiming to enhance performance should prioritize supervisor development to equip leaders with the skills to foster employee growth. Furthermore, cultivating positive attitudes toward training is essential for encouraging continuous improvement and skill application. Companies should design training programs that not only build skills but also promote a culture of learning, thus leading to higher employee engagement and improved overall performance.

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