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ASSESSMENT OF THE IMPACT OF TRAINING PROGRAMS ON WORKER PERFORMANCE: FRONTLINE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICY ACTION

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Abstract

The effectiveness of training programs on the performance of the frontline workers in the public institutions selected in Kaduna State and the Federal Capital Territory, Nigeria was evaluated. The study adopted a descriptive survey design with mixed elements; the population of the study is of about 1,450 workers. A multistage sampling technique was used to obtain a sample of 300 respondents, based on Taro Yamane's formula. Structured questionnaires and semi-structured interviews were used to gather data, which were later analyzed using descriptive statistics (means), Pearson correlation and thematic analysis (Cronbach's alpha = 0.79). The results indicated that there are problems in the training programs in terms of needs assessment, irregular training delivery, and poor funding (Aggregate mean = 2.68). They had moderate positive effects on knowledge, skills, motivation and productivity (aggregate mean = 3.37) when implemented. The overall effectiveness was, however, limited by poor budgetary appropriation (aggregate mean = 3.69) and poor monitoring (aggregate mean = 3.69). The study finds that gaps in realization have a definite negative impact on the contribution of training to worker performance. It is recommended that the government should institutionalize needs-based training, boost funding, improve monitoring systems, update curricula and governments should collaborate to achieve better policy outcomes and a better way of delivering public services in Nigeria.

Keywords: training programs, worker performance, public sector, policy implementation, employee development, Nigeria

Introduction

Workers' training and development have generally been seen as important elements to improve productivity, efficiency, and performance of the organization. It provides employees with the skills, knowledge, and attitudes needed to effectively function in their job, adjust to changing work environments, and contribute to organizational goals (Bajaj et al., 2023; Chukwuma & Owusuaa-Konadu, 2022). Well-planned training programmes are essential to build competent human capital to meet the challenges of modern governance in the public sector, where service delivery makes a direct contribution to the quality of citizens' lives.

In Nigeria, the public sector is still the biggest employer and a major contributor to national development. Continuous professional development is a theme of many government policies, such as the National Policy on Education, Civil Service Reform programmes, and sectoral capacity building programmes organised by institutions like the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) and civil service training institutes. These programs are designed to enhance the skills of workers in the face of fast-changing technologies, policy changes, and growing expectations for effective public service delivery (Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC), 2024). These programs include leadership development courses, seminars, workshops, and leadership on-the-job programs, all designed to enhance performance and fill skills gaps.

Despite all these efforts, however, Nigeria's public sector still faces some enduring problems of low productivity, inadequate delivery of services and less than optimal performance of its workers. The training programs are poorly designed to address their needs, inconsistently implemented, underfunded, out-of-date, and fail to have good monitoring and evaluation systems (Oleribe et al., 2019; Tizikara, 2026). This means that the anticipated benefits of training in terms of knowledge, capacity building, motivation and efficiency are restricted. These gaps are especially impacting frontline workers, who make up the bulk of public service delivery for ministries, departments, agencies, education, and aviation-related institutions.

The problem is aggravated by contextual issues like resource limitations, organisational inefficiency and the gap between training content and job requirements. However, empirical evidence indicates that, though training can greatly improve the performance of employees, the negative effect of the failure to implement the training in the Nigerian public sector is that it has a great chance of wasting resources and not producing the desired effect on productivity (Adekeye, 2026). The long-standing gap between policy intent and impact highlights the need to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of training initiatives and their impact on the performance of workers, especially in the field.

The aim, therefore, of this study is to evaluate the effect of training on workers' performance with particular reference to frontline workers in selected public sector institutions of Kaduna State and FCT. It looks at the impact of current training programs, what is obstructing them being successful and offers immediate policy recommendations to address it. The results will be put into practice to inform evidence-based reforms for strengthening human capital development and enhancing public sector performance in Nigeria.

Literature Review And Theoretical Framework

The outcomes from empirical studies on training programs and worker performance are found to be more complicated and dependent on different aspects of the design and implementation of the training program as well as contextual factors. Zamiri & Esmaeili (2024) identified key factors for successful training: systematic needs assessment, appropriate funding, training content, competent trainers and support mechanisms after the training. Some of the challenges in Nigeria include inconsistent training regime, outdated curriculum, inadequate budgetary provision, and poor monitoring and evaluation

processes (Jacob et al., 2020). In public sector frontline workers, for example, skills acquired in training may not be relevant to specific occupations, so skills do not transfer to workplaces (Razak & Zahidi, 2024)

The results of the study on the effectiveness of government training programmes in Nigeria are mixed. Some interventions have shown positive results in enhanced employee competencies and service delivery in specific ministries (Adekeye, 2026), while others show gaps in implementation. In the education sector, teacher training programs under UBEC have experienced small gains in pedagogical skills; however, irregular attendance and lack of follow-up have limited the impact (John & Aliyu, 2024). Likewise, the emphasis of civil service training institutes has been criticised due to increased attention to the quantity of programs and a decrease in the quality of programs, which has led to limited impact on the actual performance of the job (Adekeye, 2026)

The effects of properly designed training programs on workers' performance are well documented. Job knowledge, technical skills, motivation, efficiency, innovation and overall productivity are improved through training (Barathnivash & Mary, 2026). Employees who receive the relevant training have greater commitment, improved problem-solving skills, and greater service delivery capability, leading to greater organisational effectiveness (Wu et al., 2025). On the other hand, improper training results in lost resources, employee dissatisfaction and continuing low productivity. The adverse effects of these on the public sector in Nigeria include poor service delivery, bureaucratic delays, and citizen dissatisfaction (Adeyori & Fajebi, 2019).

These trends are confirmed by research from overseas. Organisational support and resources are sometimes an intervening factor in the effectiveness of training in developing economies (Edward et al., 2022). The same problems of funding constraints and political interference have been reported in sub-Saharan Africa (Kulkarni, 2018). The results of this study point towards the need for context-specific interventions that consider the realities in the public sector in Nigeria.

In this study, human capital theory and human capital policy implementation theory are used as a basis. The Human Capital Theory, which was proposed by Schultz (1961) and expanded by Becker (1967), argues that an investment in education and training will boost the knowledge, skills, and abilities of an individual, thereby increasing his or her productivity and economic output. In the context of this study, the theory highlights the importance of training as an investment in the capabilities of public sector personnel with the aim of enhancing their performance and contributing to the development of the country. The theory also recognizes that the return on investment is linked to the utilization of the acquired skills.

The Policy Implementation Model, including top-down/bottom-up approaches (Pressman & Wildavsky, 1973; Lipsky, 1980), is complementary. The top-down focus is on clear policy goals, adequate resources and hierarchical control, whereas the bottom-up focus is on the importance of street-level bureaucrats (frontline workers) and local adaptations in determining outcomes. The hybrid approach is especially pertinent to Nigeria, where many of the government's instructions are difficult to implement at the local level because of the limited resources available and the bureaucratic dynamics.

The paper combines Human Capital Theory with the Human Capital Policy Implementation Theory to offer a powerful framework in which to analyze the relationship between training policies and outcomes for workers and to develop concrete, first-line suggestions for policy.

Methodology

This study examined the effects of Training Programmes on the Performance of frontline workers in the selected Institutions within Kaduna State and the Federal Capital Territory, Nigeria. The descriptive survey design and cross-sectional design with mixed-methods elements were used. The

design can be used to describe phenomena, analyze relationships between variables, and to collect quantitative and qualitative data about real-world problems, such as training effectiveness and employee performance (Ahmed et al., 2024). The method helped to gather perceptual data from frontline staff and helped triangulate for more robust findings.

The target population was the frontline workers in education, civil service, and aviation-related agencies in Kaduna State and the Federal Capital Territory. These include teachers, administrative staff and operational staff who are directly involved in service delivery. The population was estimated at 1,450 workers using staff records of selected Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) in 2025.

The sample size was calculated by Taro Yamane's (1967) formula for finite population size:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

where n is 1450 (population size) and e is 0.05 (margin of error at 95% confidence level). This resulted in a sample size of 300 respondents. A multi-stage sampling method was used to achieve representativeness. In the first stage, the institutions were selected using the simple random sampling technique, with six from Kaduna State and three from the FCT. In the second stage stratified sampling was used according to cadre (junior, senior, and supervisory staff). Lastly, purposive sampling was employed to obtain frontline workers with two years of experience and/or attendance at least one training program in the past five years. Such a mix provided for both representation and relevance of respondents.

A structured questionnaire and a semi-structured interview guide were the key tools used in data collection. The questionnaire was divided into four parts, namely: demographic data, factors influencing training programs, effects of training on the performance of the workers and challenges in conducting effective training. The items were rated on a 5-point Likert-type scale from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5). To gain deeper contextual insights, a questionnaire was supplemented with semi-structured interviews with 25 key informants (training coordinators, heads of departments and senior frontline staff). Secondary data were obtained from government training reports and performance appraisal reports and relevant MDA documents.

The research instruments were checked for face and content validation by three experts in public administration and human resource management from Kaduna State University and African Aviation and Aerospace University. The feedback was taken into consideration and necessary changes were made. A pilot study, comprising 30 respondents outside the main sample, was conducted to test the reliability of the instrument. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the questionnaire was 0.79, which represents good internal consistency or reliability of the instrument.

Both quantitative and qualitative methods were used in data analysis. Data were quantitatively analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics, which include frequencies, percentages, and mean scores, and Pearson product-moment correlation, respectively, using SPSS version 26. A mean score ≥ 3.0 was chosen as a criterion for agreement. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the qualitative data derived from the interviews. The quantitative and qualitative results were triangulated and this provided trustworthiness and credibility.

The ethical issues were fully respected during the study. All participants gave informed consent and were told that their participation was voluntary, and their names were not to be mentioned and their identity would be kept confidential. Approval from relevant authorities was obtained and the study followed the guidelines of ethical standards for human research.

Findings And Discussion

This presents the results of the data collected from frontline public sector workers. Out of 300 questionnaires distributed, 278 were duly completed and returned, representing a response rate of 92.7%. This high response rate enhances the reliability of the findings. The demographic profile of respondents shows that 56.5% were male and 43.5% were female. A majority (48.2%) fell within the 31–40 years' age bracket, while 62.6% had 6–15 years of working experience. Most respondents (51.8%) held a first degree or HND qualifications, and 67.3% were from education and administrative cadres. This profile indicates a mature and experienced sample with adequate knowledge of training programs and workplace realities.

Factors Affecting Training Programs

Respondents identified several factors influencing the effectiveness of training programs. The aggregate mean score of 2.68 indicates general disagreement on the overall effectiveness of existing programs.

Table 1: Factors Affecting Training Programs

Statement	Mean	Remark
Adequate needs assessment before training	2.45	Disagreed
Regular and consistent training schedule	2.71	Disagreed
Relevance of training content to job needs	2.89	Disagreed
Availability of competent trainers	2.76	Disagreed
Sufficient funding for training activities	2.52	Disagreed
Aggregate Mean	2.68	Disagreed

Impact of Training on Worker Performance

Training programs were perceived to have moderate positive effects where they were implemented.

Table 2: Impact of Training on Worker Performance

Statement	Mean	Remark
Improved job knowledge and skills	3.62	Agreed
Increased employee motivation and commitment	3.41	Agreed
Enhanced work efficiency and productivity	3.28	Agreed
Better service delivery to the public	3.35	Agreed
Improved problem-solving abilities	3.19	Agreed
Aggregate Mean	3.37	Agreed

Barriers to Effective Training

Several barriers were identified as hindering training effectiveness.

Table 3: Barriers to Effective Training

Statement	Mean	Remark
Inadequate budgetary allocation	3.85	Agreed
Lack of proper monitoring and evaluation	3.76	Agreed
Poor follow-up mechanisms after training	3.68	Agreed
Outdated training curricula	3.54	Agreed
Bureaucratic bottlenecks	3.61	Agreed
Aggregate Mean	3.69	Agreed

Discussion of Findings

The findings reveal that while training programs have the potential to enhance worker performance, their overall impact remains limited due to significant implementation gaps. The low mean scores on factors affecting training programs (aggregate 2.68) confirm earlier observations by Agbonifoh & Osifo (2017) and Chukwuma & Owusuaa-Konadu (2022) that inadequate needs assessment and irregular delivery undermine training outcomes in Nigeria's public sector. Similarly, the high agreement on barriers (aggregate 3.69), particularly funding and monitoring deficiencies, aligns with Febiri & Hub (2021) and Obasan et al. (2015), who noted resource constraints as major obstacles.

However, the moderate positive impact on performance dimensions (aggregate 3.37) supports Human Capital Theory (Schultz, 1961), showing that well-executed training improves knowledge, motivation, and efficiency. This is consistent with Adekeye (2026), who found significant gains in service delivery when training is relevant and followed up. The results also reflect Policy Implementation Theory, highlighting the gap between top-down policy directives and bottom-up realities faced by frontline workers.

Overall, the findings underscore that training programs in the Nigerian public sector suffer from systemic implementation challenges, limiting their contribution to improved worker performance. These outcomes have serious implications for productivity and public service delivery.

Conclusion

Despite various government training initiatives aimed at strengthening public sector capacity, this study found that the impact of training programs on worker performance among frontline employees in Kaduna State and the Federal Capital Territory remains limited. Key findings revealed that factors affecting training programs recorded a low aggregate mean of 2.68, indicating weaknesses in needs assessment, regularity, content relevance, and funding. While training showed moderate positive effects on job knowledge, skills, motivation, and productivity (aggregate mean = 3.37), major barriers such as inadequate budgetary allocation, poor monitoring, and lack of follow-up mechanisms scored a high aggregate mean of 3.69. These results highlight significant implementation gaps that prevent training from translating into sustained performance improvements.

The study concludes that current training policies in Nigeria's public sector suffer from systemic challenges, leading to suboptimal returns on investment and continued inefficiencies in service delivery. This aligns with existing literature emphasising the disconnect between policy intentions and implementation realities (Ajuzieogu, 2025).

Following these findings, it is recommended that: (i) Government should institutionalise regular training needs assessment across MDAs; (ii) Increase and ensure timely budgetary allocation for capacity building; (iii) Establish strong monitoring and evaluation systems with post-training follow-up; (iv) Update training curricula to include modern, job-relevant methods; and (v) Promote active collaboration between training institutes and frontline workers for better ownership and effectiveness. These policy actions, if prioritised, will enhance the effectiveness of training programs and contribute to a more productive public sector workforce in Nigeria.

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