An analysis of the impact of the environment on the transfer of training in the work environment: A systematic review

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to analyze the impact of the environment on the transfer of training in the work environment, as little has been done to explore the nature of the transfer of the learning work environment. This study used secondary sources. The information was outsourced from online journals (published peer-reviewed articles), published and unpublished dissertations, online sources, and textbooks relevant to the topic being studied. An employee's work environment consists of the physical and social conditions in which employees perform their daily duties and have an impact on how well a person puts their training to use. This study concludes that organizational level (characteristics of the work environment) significantly affect the transfer of training in the work environment positively or negatively. Trainees who worked in a more positive environment and who received more encouragement from their peers made the most progress on transferring training. However, peer-supported trainees in a negative environment were just as successful as those in a favourable one. Training transfer was highly correlated with aspects including supervisory assistance, work autonomy, and preferred support. There is a lack of theory on the transfer of training. This study will contribute to the theory by expanding the subject of the work environment about the transfer of training. Findings from this research will advance the science behind the work environment variables and transfer of training. This study will bring new knowledge of the work environment on the transfer of training and will further provide leads for future research. Since this study relied on secondary sources it was limited to the scholarly work that is available at the time the research was conducted.

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Introduction

In the working environment (climate for transfer) of all organizations, training is important because it allows organizations to prosper and gain a competitive edge. In today's competitive environment, the business community is constantly and rapidly changing (Verweire & van den Berghe, 2004:1). There is a lot of potential for organizations to increase efficiency and create new goods, services, and business representations because of the combination of falling costs and rising advancements in technology (Asyres, 2005; Mdhlalose, 2022a:436). Thus, a significant portion of an organization's budget goes into employee education and development each year (Bauer et al., 2014:1; Graham, 2015; Maharemeh, 2021:133; Silverman 2012). Subsequently, even if succession planning is being attempted, training may still play a role (Mdhlalose, 2022b:49). For the foreseeable future, training and staff development will continue to play critical roles in the success of any organization (Martin, 2010:87).

Creating a new training programme is simple, but if the results are not measured, it might be a waste of time and assets (Robbins, Coulter & Decenzo, 2020:297). Training concerns have grown more concerned with the transfer of training, or the successful application of skills and information acquired in a training programme to a work setting (Khan, Mufti & Nazir, 2015:197). Thus, this topic has attracted numerous scholars like Baldwin, Ford, and Blume (2017); Chee, Saudi, and Lee, (2018); Deva and Husein (2017);...
Ford and Weissbein (2017); Mansour, Naji, and Leclerc (2017); and Tafvelin et al. (2021) yet it is still a problem that has not been addressed for organizations (Khan et al., 2015:210).

It is unlikely that training efforts will result in a positive change in job performance unless the newly developed skills are transferred into the work environment (Baldwin & Ford, 1988). The greatest influence in the work environment is to create a work-friendly environment and to ensure the support of supervisors and peers (Blume, Ford, Baldwin, & Huang, 2009). The elements relating to the environment are related to the transfer of training and the context of training (Ford, 1997:13). Independently and collectively, researchers have evaluated characteristics that make up a work environment or transfer climate factor to determine its influence on transfer (Burke & Hutchins, 2007:279). The characteristics of a positive transfer environment include (Rouiller & Goldstein, 1993):

i. Indicators that encourage participants to use new skills.
ii. Implications for the correct use of skills and remediation of lack of use of skills.
iii. Peer and management incentives and feedback to foster a sense of community and encourage productivity.

When trainees believe that the training components were developed and presented in a manner that enhances their capacity to transfer the skills to their everyday work, they are more likely to do so (Holton et al., 2000). Thus, this study aims to study the impact (measurement) of the work environment on the transfer of training in the work environment, consequently, very little research has been conducted to determine what factors influence the success of the transfer of training in the work environment. This study's importance lies in its contribution to the current body of information concerning the impact of the environment on the transfer of training in the work environment. Thus, this leads this study to the contemporary problem of this study that most organizations are currently experiencing.

Problem Statement

Putting newly acquired knowledge, practises, and abilities to use in the work environment is one of organizations’ training's greatest challenges (Deller, 2022). Therefore, both private organizations and public administrations are pouring substantial resources into Human Resources Development (HRD) (Alnowaiser, 2017:15; (Association of Training and Development [ATD], 2015); Al-Mottahar & Pangil, 2021:1). Organizations often spend a significant portion of their annual budget on training programmes, although many organizations that undergo such instruction fail to implement what they have learned in the work environment (Kia & Ismail, 2013:196). Just 10% of training outcomes are transferred to the work environment and have successfully achieved the positive transfer of learning (Baldwin & Ford, 1988; Schneider, Pältz, & Stauche, 2014). In the best-case scenario, only 15% of all learnings from training are transferred to work (Cromwell & Kolb 2004). Consequently, training is sometimes criticised as an investment due to its poor returns and perceived ineffectiveness (Dewayani & Ferdinand, 2019:142).

In disagreement with the above findings Yelon, Ford and Golden, (2013:43) provide a distinct argument by stating that years after initial instruction, the transfer process is still ongoing. If that is the case, the method of transmission would be in line with the aim of training to produce permanent change. However, studies of transfer have often been conducted immediately after training. Spreading out drills over a longer period helps people retain the information. It allows trainees to memorise material in a way that is less prone to forgetting than rote repetition (Thalheimer, 2006:8). The accompanying chart (Figure 1) demonstrates the superiority of several exposures to content over a single presentation, of spaced exposures over non-spaced exposures, and widely spaced exposures over closely spaced exposures.

Figure 1: Experiment 1; Source: Dellarosa and Bourne (1985).

Baldwin and Ford (1988) prove that training transfer is difficult to achieve because of the interplay of several different variables (including, but not limited to, learner motivation and ability, training method, and the context in which training is delivered). Organizations still do not get their money’s worth because of the transfer issue, in which trainees fail to apply what they have learned after they return to the work environment (Bauer et al., 2014:1). This is a complete nonstarter for organizations. With that in mind, the problem of training transfer becomes paramount in HRD (Maharmeh, 2021:133). Compared to other training components, work environment factors may result in more transfer (Schmitz, 2009). Dorji (2005) cite the terms “job/transfer climate” and “performance support” to describe these environmental elements. There are a variety of factors that influence how likely it is that trainees will use what they have learned in the classroom once they return to the job (Grossman & Salas, 2011), these variables are identified by Dorji, (2005); Kia & Ismail, (2013); Merriam & Leahy, (2005); Noe, (2002); Raymond, (2010); Schmitz, (2009); Xiao, (1996). These
factors are accountability, application opportunity, colleagues’ support, congruency of trainee and organisational goals, expectations of performance outcomes, organisational support, negative individual results, motivation, positive individual results, supervisory behaviour, peer support and workgroup support and expectations from transmission outcomes, and technological support. Organizations find it challenging to identify precisely which elements of the work environment are most important for transfer (Grossman & Salas 2011:104). A common flaw in the way training programmes are developed and delivered is a lack of relevance to the work environment (Manju & Suresh, 2022:32). While Baldwin and Ford (1988) highlighted the work environment as a critical input for training to transfer to the work environment. The problem identified in this study is that despite the importance of the work environment setting to the effectiveness of training transfer, most training programmes are developed and delivered in isolation without considering the work environment as the main determinant factor for the transfer of training to be successful.

Conceputal Framework
To investigate the impact of the environment on the transfer of training in the work environment, a conceptual framework for the transfer of training is needed. In this study, the conceptual framework is linked to the past literature, and it is derived from reviewing past research to form the study’s conceptual framework. Compared to training methods and employee backgrounds, work environment factors have received less attention from researchers (Baldwin & Ford, 1988; Holton et al., 1997). Nonetheless, several studies have shown the significance of environmental elements in comprehending the training transfer process (Baldwin & Ford, 1988; Rouiller & Goldstein, 1993). The term "transfer of training" refers to the process of applying and maintaining in one's work context the information, abilities, and attitudes gained during training (Baldwin & Ford, 1988; Blume et al.2010; Broad, 1997; Ford & Weissbein, 1997; Islam & Ahmed, 2018:296; Shahani, Nawaz & Dharejo, 2019). Transfer of training refers to when employees prepare for, participate in, and reflect on training sessions, they are more likely to retain and use the knowledge and abilities they acquired. Figure 2: labels the suggested conceptual framework that will be used to evaluate the results of this investigation. Based on Figure 2 the work environment conditions either have a positive/negative impact on the success of the transfer of training in the work environment and whether the newly learned skill or knowledge will be retained in the long run. This means for the transfer of training to be successful depends on the work environment.

![Figure 2](https://via.placeholder.com/150)

Figure 2: A conceptual framework; Source: Developed by the researcher.

If a manager wants his or her employees to put what they have learned in training to use in the real world, he or she must do more than just provide a welcoming atmosphere; he or she must also take responsibility for making sure that the work environment is consistent with and conducive to the trainees' needs (LeClaire et al., 2007). There are three tiers of connected work environmental variables: (a) primary environmental considerations; (b) circumstances normally associated with training; and (c) circumstances precisely connected to training (Baldwin & Ford, 1988). Organizational effectiveness is largely dependent on the work environment (Noe & Schmitt, 1986) and it is a determinant factor that has a direct effect on how well the transfer of training is implemented in an organization (Noori, Z., et al., 2016:163; Suleman et al., 2020:995). In this study, the three work environment factors are viewed as the same environment factors (transfer climate) that enhance the transfer of training.

Research and Methodology
Data Collection and Analysis
Primary data, collected particularly for a study, and secondary data, collected and compiled by others, are both useful to social scientists. (Fox & Bayat, 2007:36; Howard, 2014:103; Leedy & Ormrod, 2015:297; Mathews & Ross, 2010:51). This study used secondary sources. The information was outsourced from online journals (published peer-reviewed articles), published and unpublished dissertations, online sources, and textbooks relevant to the topic being studied. In a secondary study, previously conducted studies on the same subject are compiled into a coherent whole (Babbie, 2005:288). Users may benefit from collecting data from a wide range of sources and analysing it based on their needs (Prasanna, 2022). Find industry or product category-wide trends by analysing original research data (Relevant Insights, 2020). The ability to conduct longitudinal research is afforded by data gathered across time (Walliman, 2011:177). Secondary sources reinterpret or debate the meaning and context of primary sources to further our knowledge of a subject (Dolowitz et al., 2008:90). When secondary data is utilised objectively, new insights might emerge (Davis, 2007:33).

Materials and Methods
Research reveals that a portion of an organization’s training budget is lost owing to ineffective knowledge transfer and employee relapse (Burke & Baldwin, 1999). Organizations may avoid this loss of resources by considering whether their work environment is conducive to transfer training (de Caires, 2013). An employee’s work environment consists of the physical and social conditions in which employees perform their daily duties (Rahman, 2020:0073). Factors in the working environment are those that may have an impact on how well a person puts their training to use (Dodson, 2004). Elements of the work environment that are like most
pedagogical stances are among the environmental variables impacting the transfer of training (Abdollahi & Daneshmandi, 2017:135). Dorji (2005) states that job-transfer climate or performance support are some names for these external environmental factors. Many different organisational characteristics exist to influence training transfer including a variety of factors such as accountability, application opportunity, climate for transfer, colleagues support, congruency of trainee and organisational goals, expectations of performance outcomes, organisational support, negative individual results, motivation, positive individual results, supervisory behaviour, peer support and workgroup support and expectations from transmission outcomes, and technological support (Dorji, 2005; Kia & Ismail, 2013; Merriam & Leahy, 2005; Noe, 2002; Raymond, 2010; Schmitz, 2009; & Xiao, 1996).

Three aspects of the work environment, namely, management support, opportunities to perform, and organisational learning culture, have a substantial and favourable impact on the efficacy of training. This analysis confirms the impact of work environment characteristics on training outcomes and their implications for enhancing training's efficiency (Alias et al., 2017). Trainees who worked in a more positive environment and who received more encouragement from their peers made the most progress. In addition, having peers with support around helped counteract the atmosphere. Peer-supported trainees in a negative environment were just as successful at transferring what they learned as those in a favourable one. These findings imply that closer variables, such as social reinforcement from peers, might counteract the influence of farther ones, like the environment, on transmission (Martin, 2010).

Pham, Segers and Gijseelaers, (2012) study found that training transfer was highly correlated with aspects including supervisory assistance, work autonomy, and preferred support (help as required by the learner). The trainee's transfer tactics also mediated the connection between the training setting and subsequent job performance. The findings verified the importance of a positive work environment with many opportunities to put training into practice (Bauer et al., 2014). Training retaining is moderately and positively correlated with all work environment support characteristics. Moreover, the results of multiple regressions show that different aspects of the work environment explain different amounts of variation as predictors of employee outcomes, with the model explaining 32% of the transfer and peer support accounting for the majority (Hughes et al., 2019).

Peer support is a key factor in learning retention, whereas assistance from superiors has little to no role. The impact of social support on training transfer is mediated by the drive to enhance performance by way of learning. When employees sense they have the backing of their managers and co-workers, they are more likely to take advantage of opportunities to learn and grow in the work environment (Ithnin et al., 2022). As shown by Abdollahi and Daneshmandi’s (2017) research, the level of management's involvement in the training transfer process is quite substantial. Furthermore, peer support was shown to be useful in facilitating the transition from classroom to work environment learning. This indicates that people will try to apply what they have learned in training to their jobs if they are asked to share course materials and given encouragement to do so.

Dermol and Čater (2013) results show a correlation between supervisor endorsement and training outcomes, as well as between supervisor endorsement and organisational rewards for knowledge sharing. Incentives in the work environment have been shown to significantly impact both the learning and performance outcomes of corporate training programmes and the retention of that knowledge. As a result of the positive mental and physical changes they promote, they are also indirectly linked to the success of the organisation. A lack of a correlation between training intensity and business success was also identified. The results of the hierarchical regression show that none of the environmental factors has a significant relationship with training transfer, while the results of the linear regression show a positive and statistically significant relationship between perceived organisational support and training transfer (de Caires, 2013). Trainees are more likely to apply what they learn in the classroom to real-world situations if they have the chance to do so and if their supervisors are willing to impose consequences for failing to do so before the course even begins (Testers, Gegenfurtnner & Brand-Gruwel, 2016).

According to Gyimah’s (2015) research, the transfer of training inside an organisation was greatly influenced by the atmosphere there. This suggests that the staff’s impression of the environment might either promote or hinder training transfer, resulting in a good or negative environment. While the research found that organisational climate impacted training transfer, it also revealed that different aspects of culture had various degrees of influence. The most statistically significant factor in training transfer was determined to be management endorsement. Thus, participants believed they were better prepared to move when they had the backing of upper management. However, exposure to performance opportunities had no discernible effect on knowledge retention.

The characteristics of the trainee and the work environment have unwavering impacts on the transfer of training. As a result, for the training to be successfully transferred, the atmosphere must be favourable (Mdhlalose, 2022c). The most important impact of the training effectiveness criterion is the transfer of training, which boosts both individual and organisational performance (Bhatti & Kaur, 2010:658). More study on the synergistic effects of pre-and post-training interventions on transfer results is necessary to improve our knowledge of how to maximise transfer (Baldwin, Ford, & Blume, 2017:22). An organization's employees are content in an environment that provides specialized and personal growth and recognition, which ensures organisational efficacy and realization (Naong, 2022:1092).

A study by Islam and Ahmed (2018) found that when employees see that their employer supports them by appreciating their contributions and caring for their well-being, they get the self-assurance necessary to complete tough jobs and experience greater work satisfaction. Increased self-confidence, as measured by self-efficacy, increases the possibility that training program-learned
information will be applied. Wisshak and Barth (2022) study confirmed that delivering training with an emphasis on application and dealing with practical challenges. Additionally, they made training accomplishments apparent to facilitate transfer to the job.

Kerins et al. (2021) showed that trainees reported a dearth of chances to execute processes in the workplace, as well as obstacles related to the transfer climate, such as a lack of proper equipment and reluctance to change in the work environment. Trainees indicated a strong feeling of personal responsibility to transmit, and they felt empowered to alter their practice in response to the obstacles encountered. The research of Jaidev (2018) indicates that there is a positive association between 'transfer climate' and 'transfer of training' and that 'transfer intention' partly mediates the relationship between 'transfer environment' and 'transfer of training. In addition to trainee characteristics and contextual variables, Rahman’s (2021) research revealed that productive networking among trainees before, during, and after training was a crucial component for the effective transfer of training. Mdhlalose (2022c) study confirmed that learner characteristics and work environment have a consistent influence on training transfer.

Conclusion

This paper reviewed an analysis of the impact of the environment on the transfer of training in the work environment: A systematic review. This paper aimed to analyse the impact of the environment on the transfer of training in the work environment by focusing on the variables of the work environment. An employee’s work environment consists of the physical and social conditions in which employees perform their daily duties and have an impact on how well a person puts their training to use. These work environment characteristics accountability, application opportunity, colleagues support, congruency of trainee and organisational goals, expectations of performance outcomes, organisational support, negative individual results, motivation, positive individual results, supervisory behaviour, peer support and work group support and expectations from transmission outcomes, and technological support. Work environment, namely, management support, opportunities to perform, and organisational learning culture, have a substantial and favourable impact on the efficacy of transfer of training. Trainees who worked in a more positive environment and who received more encouragement from their peers made the most progress on transferring training. However, peer-supported trainees in a negative environment were just as successful at transferring what they learned as those in a favourable one. Training transfer was highly correlated with aspects including supervisory assistance, work autonomy, and preferred support. This study concludes that organizational level (characteristics of the work environment) significantly affect the transfer of training in the work environment positively or negatively.

Limitations of the Study

The following limitations had an impact on this study:

i. There is limited scholarly work focusing on the impact of the work environment on the transfer of training.
ii. This study relied on secondary data, and secondary data lacks accuracy, and relevance since some of the scholarly work used is outdated.
iii. This study was limited to the variables with the spectrum of the work environment.

Recommendations

Findings from the literature review serve as the basis for the following suggestions:

i. Organizations should provide and maintain a work environment that is conducive and positive. This will ensure the successful transfer of training.
ii. Organizations should ensure that the work environment allows employees an opportunity to practice or perform what they have been trained for to allow the transfer to take place.
iii. Management in organizations should provide the necessary support to the employees to allow the transfer of training.

Suggestions for Future Research

This study suggests the following future studies:

i. The impact of individual characteristics on the transfer of training.
ii. Available opportunities to transfer training in the work environment.
iii. The impact of characteristics of the training measure on the transfer of training.

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References


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