

The Impact of Leadership Development and Training Programs on Employee Morale and Operational Effectiveness

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Abstract

This research paper examines the connection between leadership development and training programs and their impact on employee morale. Additionally, it investigates the relationship and effects these programs and employee morale have on an organization's operational effectiveness. Current research has shown that these programs can positively affect employees and employers when executed effectively. They increase job satisfaction, employee retention rates, and productivity. However, most of these studies have been narrow in focus and are usually limited to a single company. This research project used a phenomenology qualitative meta-analysis methodology to analyze the effect of leadership and training programs on employees and employers. This provides a more comprehensive study of the topic than is possible within a single study. This research project demonstrates that leadership development and training programs positively affect employee morale and, in turn, positively impact an organization's effectiveness. These results include increased job satisfaction, employee retention rates, productivity, and performance. This supports the hypothesis that a well-developed and implemented leadership and employee training program will increase employee morale and positively impact the company, including employee retention and increased operational effectiveness. These results were seen in various industries and organizations of different sizes globally. These findings should encourage organizations of any size and demographic to consider implementing leadership development and training programs to better their employees, the company culture, and their operational efficiency and effectiveness.

Introduction

Leadership development is a critical aspect of governance. The Apostle Paul instructs Timothy to entrust what he has learned to others who can teach others (*English Standard Version*, 2016, 2 Timothy 2:2). He also reminds pastors and church leaders that their primary job is “to equip the saints for the work of ministry” (*English Standard Version*, 2016, Ephesians 4:12). This truth applies to business too. A significant aspect of any company is leadership development and ongoing training of employees (Singh, 2023). However, what effect and benefits might they bring? This business research project focuses on the impact of leadership development and training programs on employees and, in turn, the company. The research question for the paper is, “What are the effects of leadership development and employee training programs on employee morale and the downstream impact on the company, including employee retention and operational effectiveness?” The hypothesis is that a well-developed and implemented leadership and employee training program will increase employee morale and positively impact the company, including employee retention and increased operational effectiveness.

This study investigated the possible connection between leadership and training programs and employee morale. Additionally, it looked for any relation (in the data provided) regarding the effect these programs and employee morale might have on an organization's operational effectiveness. If these effects are discovered, this project could help organizations understand that employees are the “most valuable asset” they have and see the benefits of investing in their development (Ozkeser, 2019, p. 804). Furthermore, this

study could serve as justification for other institutions to develop and implement training and leadership development programs that benefit both the participants and the organization.

Literature Review

“For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction” (*English Standard Version*, 2016, Romans 15:4a). “Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction” (*English Standard Version*, 2016, 1 Corinthians 10:11a). Scripture is clear, what has been written in the past is for our benefit and should be read, studied, and applied today. This same truth applies to business research. What has been studied and written down concerning a topic should be read, understood, and inform the trajectory of future exploration. As a result, a literature review was conducted focusing on the “effects of leadership and employee training programs on employee morale, and the downstream impact on the company, including employee retention and operational effectiveness.” Scholarly research regarding leadership development and training programs was reviewed. It will be summarized in three sections.

The first section examines the effect of such programs on employees, including the impact of such programs on the attitudes of workers and their reported satisfaction in their jobs. Both factors impact employee morale. The second section covers how the leadership and training programs impact the employers or businesses implementing them. This includes the downstream effects felt by increasing employee morale, including longer retention and increasing productivity and performance of workers. Both factors improve an organization's short-term and long-term operational efficiency (Hasyim &

Bakri, 2023). The final section of the literary review discusses their effectiveness. What makes leadership and training programs most successful and provides the highest return on investment for the companies that offer them and the employees who enroll in them? It also includes a discussion on what attributes were common among programs that were not successful.

The Effect on Employees

Employee training and leadership development programs are found in organizations across the globe in many different sectors. If administered well, they can have a positive effect on employees. These include areas directly related to the research question regarding increasing employee morale, job satisfaction, and productivity (Gutterman, 2023). Singh (2023) supported this and found increased job satisfaction and motivation among young workers who participated in training and development programs where necessary job skills and knowledge were taught. This is supported by Ozkeser (2019), whose studies showed a similar link between motivation and training programs but found that over 70% of the participants were under 35 years old. However, it is not only younger workers; these programs can benefit employees of all ages and work best when full company participation is encouraged (Pandey, 2024). Those considered middle-aged, 31-50, comprised 63% of one study that showed a positive impact of leadership and training programs (Ariani et al., 2024). In another study, the majority (34%) of participants who were between the ages of 40 and 49, 49% had advanced degrees, and 75% had more than 10 years of experience on the job (Mampuru et al., 2024). Abba & Yaqoob (2009) recorded that 78% of participants held a Masters degree, and 81% were considered middle managers in their

organization. Moreover, all people are precious resources and should be continually cared for and developed (Ozkeser, 2019).

In an analysis of 300 people working in various educational institutions, Ichdan (2024) found that training programs and work environments had a significant positive effect on productivity. His study also revealed that motivation and job satisfaction have vital roles in boosting productivity, both of which were enhanced by effective training programs. This was also reported by Zamroni and Rahmawati (2024), who surveyed non-managerial employees of a food nutrient and technology company. They noted that training programs have a positive effect on productivity, a “significant positive impact on job satisfaction,” and that “job satisfaction significantly mediates the effect of training on productivity” (Zamroni & Rahmawati, 2024, para. 1). Increased employee morale, job satisfaction, and productivity are often immediate results of training and development programs. Moreover, employees participating in these activities are more engaged in their work, contribute to a positive environment, and are more efficient (Hasyim & Bakri, 2023). A survey of 346 workers in the mining industry found that training increases job satisfaction and productivity (Ariani et al., 2024). However, it revealed that job satisfaction does not mediate training’s effect on productivity. Instead, training increases productivity regardless of one’s job satisfaction.

Employees who participated in leadership development and training programs also experienced social benefits. After a year-long training program, one study saw a positive change between managers and their subordinates (Brown & May, 2012). This is supported by Bella (2023), who noted that workplace relationships play a critical role in job satisfaction. Head nurses who received

training in authentic leadership recorded an improvement in the motivation and creativity of the nursing staff, signaling a strengthening of trust and relationships (Saleh et al., 2021). Feeling connected and having a sense of belonging is a key driver to morale and can be increased by leadership development and training programs (Vogel & Erickson, 2021).

The Effect on Employers

The literature reviewed represents several small studies covering different industries; it is outside the scope of this study to track the variations across these, though it would be an interesting area for further research. The literature showed a link between the effect of training and leadership development programs on employees and how they benefit the employer. This addresses the second half of the research question. With increased employee morale, job satisfaction, and productivity, companies can experience financial gain, less turnover, and an improved company image (Guterman, 2023). This is supported by Ozkeser (2019), who notes that the motivation of employees and well-trained staff are vital to the success of an organization. Pandey (2024) remarks that as people receive training and gain knowledge, they often make better use of machines, reducing wear and tear, recognizing threats and dangers, minimizing workplace accidents, and requiring less management and oversight, resulting in financial gains for the business. One study remarked that organizations that invest in leadership development programs at an average cost of \$1,575 per person saw 24% growth in gross profit and a staggering increase of 218% in revenue per employee (Rodriguez & Walters, 2017).

How employees perform directly impacts a company's bottom line (Rodriguez

& Walters, 2017). When they feel supported and valued by their employer, they will be more likely to be engaged and motivated. As they are better equipped with skills and knowledge, productivity will rise and result in cost savings for the company (Singh, 2023). Employee performance is positively effected by leadership development and training programs, and together, these increase job satisfaction and organizational success (Okechukwu, 2017). In the long term, training and development programs lead to increased resilience in the organization, better marketing positioning, and can impact financial performance (Hasyim & Bakri, 2023). Investing in employees is an investment in the company's future. Engaging and keeping the best employees around, reduces turnover and hiring costs (Pandey, 2024).

As discussed, feelings of belonging are crucial in increasing employee morale, which can be improved through training and development programs (Vogel & Erickson, 2021). Strong relationships in the workplace have a meaningful impact on job satisfaction. Workplaces that cultivated teamwork, a supportive environment, and positive interpersonal relationships between employees saw an increase in job satisfaction. This is experienced when employees have friendly and supportive co-workers and positive relationships with their supervisors, which include open communication and trust (Bella, 2023). Training and development programs can foster a positive work environment, teamwork, and collaboration (Hasyim & Bakri, 2023). This can enhance an organization's culture and raise overall efficiency (Elagaili et al., 2024). Through leadership development and training programs, organizations can foster a supportive culture that encourages employee engagement and satisfaction (Kanungo, 2024). One study showed that nearly 70% of

respondents agreed that these programs have a positive impact on the development of the organization (Pandey, 2024).

Investing in training and leadership development programs does incur some costs to the business, in both time and resources. However, these investments are recovered as employees become more effective in their work, increasing production and output. As morale increases, employee retention increases, reducing the cost of hiring and onboarding new employees (Pandey, 2024). As discussed above, many organizations have reported savings and returns that outpace the cost of these programs. The presented literature did not discuss the cost of such training programs or the timetable for the return on investment realized by companies. Although out of the scope of this study, this would be an interesting topic for future research, which could be useful for companies considering implementing such programs.

The Effectiveness of Programs

The literature review highlighted how companies can get the most out of leadership and training programs, bringing the largest value and greatest impact to all parties involved. The effectiveness of leadership and training programs is maximized when employees and employers have equal buy-in (Guterman, 2023). Although younger employees greatly benefit from these programs, they are most successful when structured and promoted to everyone in the organization. Moreover, when developing these programs, the needs of the workers and the organization should be considered in order to increase their success and amplify their impact (Pandey, 2024). Good human resource management addresses the needs of top management and lower employees (Ozkeser, 2019). The best development programs seek to grow the

leadership abilities of each person while aligning with the organization's mission, goals, and philosophies (Vogel & Erickson, 2021). The type of programs can take varying forms, including classroom training, on-the-job training, seminars, workshops, coaching, and mentoring (Singh, 2023).

Consistently, the literature demonstrated that leadership development and training programs were not the only variables that impacted employee morale and operational effectiveness (Abba & Yaqoob, 2009). Leadership style and organizational culture significantly influence job satisfaction and employee productivity (Zamroni & Rahmawati, 2024). A person's commitment to the organization can have a meaningful impact on performance, effort, and loyalty (Siswanto, 2024). Additionally, bonuses, compensation, and rewards have been shown to raise and lower employee morale and job satisfaction (Abba & Yaqoob, 2009). Trust in the organization, operating conditions, the type of work being performed, and the confidence one has in their ability to do their job are variables that matter to morale and job satisfaction and impact the organization's performance (Gornto, 2023). Finally, persons who are a good fit for the organization, that is, share its values, norms, and mission, are more likely to benefit from development programs and have increased job satisfaction (Jehanzeb & Mohanty, 2018). Although out of the scope of this study, it would be interesting to track how these different variables interact and effect leadership development and training programs' impact on employee morale and operational effectiveness.

However, not all leadership development programs are counted as successful by senior-level managers. One study showed that almost seventy-five percent of senior managers were dissatisfied with their company's learning and development offerings, even though

spending nationwide on such programs tops 160 billion dollars (Beer et al., 2016). Another study revealed that thirty percent of companies in the United States believed they had failed to maximize international opportunities due to a lack of qualified leaders. In this study, two-thirds of the respondents ranked leadership development as their highest concern (Gurdjian et al., 2014). Why do some programs fail and others succeed? The literature reviewed did not have a single answer. However, five common themes were found in leadership development training programs that senior management did not deem successful.

First, the organizational environment was not ready to support and nurture the changes taught in the leadership programs. Most of the programs saw changes in the short term but had difficulty in making the changes last. Those who attended these programs had less influence to change the system than the surrounding system had in shaping them (Beer et al., 2016). If a leadership development program will see lasting success, the organizational environment needs to support these changes (Kivland & King, 2015). If the environment is not ready or the system does not change, it will be difficult, if not impossible, for individual behavior to change long-term (Beer et al., 2016).

Second, leadership development programs not supported by executive management did not last. Management at all levels of the organization needs to support these programs, but buy-in from the top is essential. Senior managers should complete the training to validate the offerings (Kivland & King, 2015). Third, leadership training programs that do not have a clear strategy and align with the business vision and mission did not produce long-term results (Beer et al., 2016). Often, management overlooked their context for a one-size-fits-all approach to leadership

development. This led to a divorcing of the training from the actual work performed in the organization (Gurdjian et al., 2014). These programs were not aligned with the mission and strategic goals of the organizations, were not supported by the core of the business, and were not considered a priority (Leroy et al., 2023). If the unique makeup, strategic goals, and how the training will apply to the organization's operations are not considered, lasting change and impact on the company is unlikely (Gleeson, 2019). Fourth, in unsuccessful programs, the training did not always match the people. In some cases, the people chosen were not ready for the training, or the training was not right for those selected (Beer et al., 2016). In some cases, there was insufficient pre-screening process to choose program participants (Kivland & King, 2015).

Finally, companies that did not measure results experienced dissatisfaction with their leadership training programs. Choi & Dickson (2009) reported that only 8% of companies in the United States collected data and estimated their return on investment. Without measurable results, these programs are often some of the first to be cut during times of recession and downturn. Companies that collect participant feedback as their only metric have difficulty assessing their programs' impact and return on investment. This type of feedback is collected at the end of a session. It leads to programs tailored to get high marks from the participants with little consideration of producing long-term results (Gurdjian et al., 2014). Without defined program goals and a system to measure success, companies cannot measure a program's impact or spend money on programs that get results and have the desired impact they seek (Ready & Conger, 2023). In these cases, leadership development programs were not audited and had no built-in method for correction

(Kivland & King, 2015). The literature did not include research or discussion regarding standardized key performance indicators for leadership and training programs. Although outside the scope of this study, this would be an interesting topic for further research and could provide valuable information for companies who have or are considering programs like these.

This literature review has shown that leadership and employee training programs positively effect employee morale, job satisfaction, and productivity. This has been demonstrated in a variety of studies that span different sectors. They also impact the organizational culture, work environment, and foster relationships in the company. This positively impacts the company by raising employee retention, increasing financial gains, and improving efficiency. It also demonstrated that not all programs work. The organization must be ready to support participants, executive leadership should champion them, programs must align with the company's mission and goals, participants matter, and measurable metrics must be established. While both hard (skills needed to do one's job) and soft (leadership and character traits) skills were implied through the articles, specifics were not provided about the content or length of the training and development programs. The qualitative meta-analysis conducted for this study looked for trends, patterns, and principles that can be extracted, which may be missed in a single smaller study.

Methodology

This study used a qualitative meta-analysis (QMA) methodology. A phenomenology qualitative design analyzed what employees and employers experience and the effect when leadership development and training programs are present (Neubauer et al., 2019). This methodology was chosen

for this research project for two reasons. First, much work has been conducted on this topic. However, the literature review demonstrated that many were done with a small sample size in a single business environment. This QMA provides a broader study of the field than is possible with a single study and includes data from varied industries and organizations of various sizes. It synthesized the research already conducted and analyzed the results to provide a more comprehensive study of the topic. Second, due to the time constraints of the class, conducting a new survey was difficult, and it was not possible to collect and process the data within the time frame provided. Using the QMA approach gave access to more data and allowed for a broader study than would have otherwise been possible. This approach yielded results that are usable to organizations in varying sectors and different-sized companies.

Procedures

The following procedures were followed to provide a robust and reliable study. First, a broad search of the current studies using keywords and phrases was done. These were run through the Google search engine to discover basic information on the topic and find useful published work (Greener & Martelli, 2020). After some basic knowledge about the subject was gained and a narrow research question developed, key terms such as "Leadership Development," "Employee Morale," "Training," and various combinations were run through Google Scholar (Stuckler, 2021). Besides Google Scholar, additional databases were used to find additional scholarly resources. These included Colorado Christian University's online library, Emerald, ProQuest, and Jstor (Greener & Martelli, 2020). Next, a scan of the references section of the articles found

was conducted and revealed similar studies and primary source documentation (Stuckler, 2021).

Once collected, the articles and studies were examined for overarching themes and terms. It was discovered that the term “employee morale” was not used frequently in previous research. Instead, terms like “job satisfaction” and “employee satisfaction” were used. These themes and terms, and similar ones, were run through scholarly databases again (similar to the process outlined above), and additional information, articles, and studies were found and used (Noah, 2017). To preserve the integrity of the research, peer-reviewed studies comprise most of the data (Levitt, 2018). However, to gain a fuller understanding of the topic, other data (dissertations, government documents, and periodicals) was consulted (Noah, 2017).

Only articles and studies that were available for free, in full text, and focused on leadership and training programs’ effect on an organization were considered. After reviewing dozens of articles, studies, and dissertations, 35 were considered for this project. However, only 24 were used. Eleven were eliminated from consideration as two were not research studies but scholarly work on the topic. Three were studies, but two only studied employee morale, not leadership and training programs. The other examined workplace relationships and job satisfaction. The remaining six were not original independent research studies but literary reviews using secondary data to complete their findings. Only one research paper that did not conduct original independent research was used. Shelton (2001) used studies conducted by the Gallup Organization, the American Society for Training and Development, and the Society for Human Resource Management for the data set. Since these are reputable organizations, the data was examined and

analyzed in an original way, and this was not a literary review; it is included in the data presented.

The total number of studies used was 24. The data was collected and recorded in a chart that tracked the effect of the independent variable of employee leadership and training programs on the dependent variables of employee morale, job satisfaction, employee retention, operational effectiveness, productivity, motivation, and performance. As the data was being analyzed, it was noted that different terms were used to express similar ideas. In response, additional columns were added to the chart to track. These results were analyzed and are discussed below.

Ethical Considerations

This project used phenomenal qualitative meta-analysis, where a study of data that has already been conducted was used and a more comprehensive analysis of the results presented (Timulak, 2009). This study did not gather any new data but only analyzed secondary data or information that had been previously collected. Since no new research was conducted or new material collected from participants, there was no need for informed consent. Only general information which was published in the articles was available. No names, personal information, or other sensitive data of individual participants is included in the research. As a result, this research poses a less than minimal risk to participants, as defined in Code of Federal Regulations §46.102(j), and submission to an Institutional Review Board was not required or performed (Office for Human Research Protections, 2024). Since this research project did not interact with human participants, no other ethical concerns were raised.

Definitions

Words can carry different meanings depending on their usage, context, and place they are used. To provide clarification and aid in understanding, the meanings of the following terms are given: leadership development and training programs, employee morale, job satisfaction, employee retention, operational effectiveness, productivity, motivation, and performance. These terms were discovered during the literature review, used when conducting meta-data research, and are used throughout this paper. The following definitions are derived from the existing peer-reviewed literature.

Leadership development and training programs are designed to help employees teach skills and impart knowledge that will help them excel in their jobs and grow into effective leaders (Singh, 2023). This addresses all aspects of personal development, social, physical, mental, and technical skills, to help them become more efficient and productive and improve their performance (Ozkeser, 2019). Leadership development and training programs are similar in their desire to grow and support those who partake in them, but they differ in aim, function, and content. Leadership development seeks to grow individuals in qualities and personal skills that will help them in their current and future occupations. Training programs aim to grow and improve an individual's knowledge and skills to help them do their current job more efficiently and effectively (Mampuru et al., 2024). For this paper, these terms are used as a single unit.

Employee morale can be defined as the depiction of one's emotions, satisfaction, and attitude toward one's job, coworkers, and employer (Mallik et al., 2019; Nabinayagan & Gowsalya, 2017). It is a complex and intangible concept that

describes how a group of individuals feel about the organization and others in the group. This can include trust, purpose, pride, self-worth, and faith in the leadership and organizational direction (Ariani et al., 2024). It is also closely related to job satisfaction, reflecting how fulfilled people feel about their jobs and work experiences (Ariani et al., 2024; Bella, 2023). Job Satisfaction can be further defined as the level of contentment, attitudes, and emotions one has about one's job (Gornto, 2023; Jehanzeb & Mohanty, 2018).

Employee retention is defined as an organization's ability to retain the employees they desire to keep over time (Kanungo, 2024). People are often considered an asset to the organization and to the business's ongoing success (Shelton, 2001). From an employee perspective, this happens when individuals are satisfied, dedicated, and motivated to remain at their current jobs. Employee retention reduces recruiting and hiring costs for employers (Pandey, 2024).

Operational effectiveness refers to the ability of an organization to carry out its mission in a cost-effective manner. This is seen in the increased efficiency, productivity, and performance of employees (Bella, 2023; Singh, 2023). Over the long term, operational effectiveness is seen in the resilience of the organization, its strong market position, and improved financial performance (Hasyim & Bakri, 2023). Productivity is commonly measured by comparing the inputs and outputs of a system, business, or individual (Ariani et al., 2024; Pandey, 2024). One is considered productive when goods or services are produced at an expected rate in an expected timeframe (Putra et al., 2022). Productivity increases when more goods or services are produced at a lower cost or shorter time.

Motivation can be thought of as what drives people. This includes external stimuli

such as salary, rewards, or bonuses, and internal stimuli such as a sense of achievement or personal satisfaction in one's work (Ichdan, 2024). It is described as one's desire and willingness to make and sustain an effort to accomplish a task or achieve a goal (Kaya & Ceylan, 2014). Performance is the quality and quantity of one's work as assigned by management (Nguyen & Duong, 2020). It measures the outcomes gained and accomplishments achieved by the employees (Okechukwu, 2017). It is also measured by the improvement or decline of production over time (Rodriguez & Walters, 2017).

Results

A total of 35 academic articles were collected and reviewed for this study. Eleven were eliminated for various reasons. Some because they were not research studies, or they did not meet the research criteria, or they were literary reviews and did not conduct original research. This left 24 studies that ranged in size, industry, location of the study, and demographics of the participants, such as age, gender, education, management experience, and work experience. Articles were numbered in the order they were read and entered into a

spreadsheet that tracked the independent variable of employee leadership and training programs on the dependent variables of employee morale, job satisfaction, employee retention, operational effectiveness, productivity, motivation, and performance. See Table 1: Meta-Data Analysis.

Each dependent variable was recorded and added up. See Table 2: Leadership Development and Training Effect. A positive effect of leadership development and training programs on employee morale was mentioned in 1 or 4.17% of the studies. Fourteen, or 58.33%, recorded a positive effect on job satisfaction. A positive impact on employee retention was recorded in eight studies, or 33.33%. The term "operational effectiveness" wasn't used explicitly, but two studies, or 8.33%, used similar ones. Nine, or 37.5%, of the studies, recorded a positive effect on employee productivity. A positive impact on the motivation of employees was shown in four, or 16.67%, of the studies. Similarly, a positive effect on the performance of employees was recorded in four, or 16.67%, of the studies. Two, or 8.33%, of the studies, did not show a significant statistical impact of leadership development and training programs on any of the dependent variables.

Table 1: Meta-Data Analysis

Article	Employee Morale	Job Satisfaction	Employee Retention	Operational Effectiveness	Productivity	Motivation	Performance
#2	✓	☐	☐	✓	✓	☐	☐
#3	☐	☐	✓	☐	✓	✓	☐
#4	☐	✓	☐	☐	✓	✓	☐
#5	☐	✓	☐	☐	✓	☐	☐
#7	☐	☐	✓	✓	✓	☐	☐
#8	☐	✓	☐	☐	✓	☐	☐
#13	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
#14	☐	✓	✓	☐	☐	☐	✓
#15	☐	✓	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
#16	☐	✓	☐	☐	✓	☐	☐
#17	☐	✓	☐	☐	☐	✓	✓
#19	☐	✓	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
#20	☐	✓	✓	☐	☐	☐	☐
#23	☐	✓	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
#24	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	✓	✓
#25	☐	☐	✓	☐	✓	☐	☐
#26	☐	✓	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
#27	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	✓
#28	☐	✓	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
#29	☐	✓	✓	☐	☐	☐	☐
#30	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
#31	☐	✓	✓	☐	☐	☐	☐
#33	☐	☐	✓	☐	☐	☐	☐
#35	☐	☐	☐	☐	✓	☐	☐
	1	14	8	2	9	4	4

The data only recorded one study where leadership development and training programs positively impacted employee morale and operational effectiveness. In that study, labeled as #2 in Table 1, it did not show a positive impact on employee retention. Thus, the answer to the research question would be that leadership development and training programs have

little to no effect on employee morale or impact on the operations of the organization. The hypothesis that a well-developed and implemented leadership and employee training program will increase employee morale and positively impact the company, including employee retention and increased operational effectiveness, was not supported.

Table 2: Leadership Development and Training Effect

Category	Number of Studies	Percentage
Employee Morale	1	4.17%
Job Satisfaction	14	58.33%
Employee Retention	8	33.33%
Operational Effectiveness	2	8.33%
Productivity	9	37.50%
Motivation	4	16.67%
Performance	4	16.67%
Total Studies	24	100%

However, as noted in the definitions section, employee morale and job satisfaction are closely related to and impact and encourage one another (Ariani et al., 2024; Bella, 2023; Singh, 2023). Thus, the totals for employee morale and job satisfaction were combined and will be further referred to as morale, resulting in 15 studies, or 62.50%, showing leadership development and training programs have a positive effect on them. See Table 3: Morale. While the term operational effectiveness was not used in the literature or studies reviewed, terms such as employee retention, employee productivity, employee motivation, and employee performance were used. When these show a positive outcome, they have a positive effect on the operational

effectiveness of the organization. Thus, the totals for employee retention, operational effectiveness, productivity, motivation, and performance are combined and will be referred to as operational effectiveness. This resulted in 17 studies, or 70.83%, recording leadership development and training programs having a positive effect on at least one of these variables. See Table 4: Operational Effectiveness. This supports the research hypothesis that a positive relationship exists between leadership development and training programs, employee morale, and operational effectiveness. Further analysis was conducted to explore and fully answer the research question and hypothesis.

Table 3: Morale

Category	Number of Studies	Percentage
Employee Morale	1	4.17%
Job Satisfaction	14	58.33%
Mention one of the Above	15	62.50%
Total Studies	24	100%

Table 4: Operational Effectiveness

Category	Number of Studies	Percentage
Employee Retention	8	33.33%
Operational Effectiveness	2	8.33%
Productivity	9	37.50%
Motivation	4	16.67%
Performance	4	16.67%
Mention one of the Above	17	70.83%
Total Studies	24	100%

All 24 studies were placed and color-coded into four categories. See Table 5: Meta-Data Analysis Color-coded and Table 6: Dependent Variable Relationships. Category one: studies showing a positive effect of leadership development and training on operational effectiveness but not morale. Seven studies, or 29.17%, were placed in this category. Category two: studies showing a positive impact on morale but not operational effectiveness. A total of

five studies, or 20.83%, were placed in this category. Category three: studies showing no significant statistical impact of leadership development and training programs on any of the dependent variables. A total of two studies, or 8.33%, were placed in this category. Category four: studies showing a positive impact on morale and operational effectiveness. A total of ten studies, or 41.67%, were placed in this category.

Table 5: Meta-Data Analysis Color-coded

Article	Employee Morale	Job Satisfaction	Employee Retention	Operational Effectiveness	Productivity	Motivation	Performance
#2	✓			✓	✓		
#3			✓		✓	✓	
#4		✓			✓	✓	
#5		✓			✓		
#7			✓	✓	✓		
#8		✓			✓		
#13							
#14		✓	✓				✓
#15		✓					
#16		✓			✓		
#17		✓				✓	✓
#19		✓					
#20		✓	✓				
#23		✓					
#24						✓	✓
#25			✓		✓		
#26		✓					
#27							✓
#28		✓					
#29		✓	✓				
#30							
#31		✓	✓				
#33			✓				
#35					✓		
	1	14	8	2	9	4	4
	15		17				

Table 6: Dependent Variable Relationships

Category	Number of Studies	Percentage	Studies
No Morale but Operational Effectiveness	7	29.17%	3, 7, 24, 25, 27, 33, 35
No Operational Effectiveness but Morale	5	20.83%	15, 19, 23, 26, 28
Show Neither	2	8.33%	13, 30
Show Morale and Operational Effectiveness	10	41.67%	2, 4, 5, 8, 14, 16, 17, 20, 29, 31
Total Studies	24	100%	

The data in Table 6 records 10 studies, or 41.67%, where leadership development and training programs positively impacted employee morale and operational effectiveness. This result shows a moderate effect of leadership development and training programs on the dependent variables. However, Table 5 displays that only three of these studies recorded a positive impact on employee retention, bringing that down to 12.5%, which is part of the original research question and hypothesis. At this point, the effect of leadership development and training programs is minimal, and the hypothesis that a well-developed and implemented leadership and employee training program will increase employee morale and positively impact the company, including employee retention and increased operational effectiveness, is not supported. However, one more step in the data analysis was done.

Each category shown in Table 6 was examined to better understand the results and reasons for the studies in the grouping. Category one contained studies that showed a positive effect of leadership development and training on operational effectiveness but not morale. Further investigation revealed that none of the seven studies aimed to test employee morale or job satisfaction; rather, they were studying the independent variable

on one of the five dependent variables grouped into operational effectiveness. Although none of these tested for increased morale or job satisfaction, four of the seven studies alluded to or suggested in the discussion or conclusion that this should have a positive impact on workplace culture and job satisfaction (Kanungo, 2024; Pandey, 2024; Putra et al., 2022; Saleh et al., 2021)—both markers of increased employee morale.

Category two contained studies that showed a positive impact on morale but not on operational effectiveness. None of the five studies that were classified here aimed to test any of the dependent variables grouped together under the operational effectiveness label. Although not tested, two of the studies alluded to or suggested in the discussion or conclusion that this should also have a positive impact on employee performance and/or retention (Bercu, 2017; Jehanzeb & Mohanty, 2018)—both markers of increased operational effectiveness.

Category three consisted of studies that showed no significant statistical impact of leadership development and training programs on any of the dependent variables. One study was conducted in medical facilities and began just before the COVID-19 pandemic. Consequently, the study had to be adjusted, and additional stress was placed on medical workers. The pandemic, and the

increased workload that accompanied it, were mentioned as the main barriers to the implementation of what was learned (Degen et al., 2022). This explains at least part of why it was an outlier, showing no effect on the dependent variables. The second study was conducted in the education sector and showed no statistical significance in the effect of leadership development programs on job satisfaction. However, it did reveal a correlation between self-efficiency, the belief one has the ability to perform the job, and job satisfaction. It was suggested that mentoring or coaching programs could impact self-efficiency and lead to improved job satisfaction (Gornto, 2023).

When the above analysis is considered, and the four studies from

categories one and two are moved to category four, the results are displayed in Table 7: Dependent Variable Relationships Revised. Category one contains a total of three studies or 12.50%. Category two has a total of three studies, or 12.50%. Category three has two studies, or 8.33%. Category four studies contain a total of sixteen studies, or 66.67%. If the studies that did not test for one of the dependent variables found in either morale or operational effectiveness are taken out, then 83.33% or 10 out of 12 studies show leadership development and training programs having a positive impact on employee morale and operational effectiveness. See Table 8: Tested All Dependent Variables.

Table 7: Dependent Variable Relationships Revised

Category	Number of Studies	Percentage	Studies
No Morale but Operational Effectiveness	3	12.50%	3, 25, 27
No Operational Effectiveness but Morale	3	12.50%	15, 19, 28
Show Neither	2	8.33%	13, 30
Show Morale and Operational Effectiveness	16	66.67%	2, 4, 5, 7, 8, 14, 16, 17, 20, 23, 26, 34, 29, 31, 33, 35
Total Studies	24	100%	

Table 8: Tested All Dependent Variables

Category	Number of Studies	Percentage	Studies
Show Neither	2	16.67%	13, 30
Show Morale and Operational Effectiveness	10	83.33%	2, 4, 5, 8, 14, 16, 17, 20, 29, 31
Total Studies	12	100%	

The findings of this qualitative meta-analysis show that leadership development

and training programs have a positive effect on employee morale, and that does lead to

positive downstream effects on operational effectiveness. This includes but is not limited to employee retention, employee productivity, and employee performance. The data presented in this study supported the hypothesis that a well-developed and implemented leadership and employee training program will increase employee morale and positively impact the company,

including employee retention and increased operational effectiveness. Moreover, this is supported by additional research studies and literature reviews, which were excluded from the data above but show similar results. See Table 9: Additional Literature Review and Meta-data Studies and Table 10: Literature Review Dependent Variable Relationships.

Table 9: Additional Literature Review and Meta-data Studies

Article	Employee Morale	Job Satisfaction	Employee Retention	Operational Effectiveness	Productivity	Motivation	Performance
#6	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	☐	☐
#18	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	✓
#21	☐	☐	✓	✓	✓	☐	☐
#22	☐	✓	☐	✓	☐	☐	✓
#32	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
#34	☐	✓	✓	✓	✓	☐	✓
	2	4	4	5	4	1	4
	4		6				

Using the same categories and arrangement of the dependent variables, four out of six studies, or 66.67%, showed that leadership development and training programs have a positive impact on morale. Six out of six studies, or 100%, recorded an effect on at least one dependent variable; most recorded multiple. Only one study recorded no positive effect on morale but a

positive effect on operational effectiveness, while zero studies showed the reverse. Five studies, or 83.33%, demonstrated that leadership development and training programs have a positive effect on morale and aspects of operational effectiveness. This supports the findings and hypothesis in this study.

Category	Number of Studies	Percentage
Employee Morale	2	33.33%
Job Satisfaction	4	66.67%
Mention one of the Above	4	66.67%
Employee Retention	4	66.67%
Operational Effectiveness	5	83.33%
Productivity	4	66.67%
Motivation	1	16.67%
Performance	4	66.67%
Mention one of the Above	6	100.00%
No Morale but Operational Effectiveness	1	16.67%
No Operational Effectiveness but Morale	0	0.00%
Show Morale and Operational Effectiveness	5	83.33%
Show Neither	0	0.00%
Total Studies	6	100.00%

Table 10: Literature Review Dependent Variable Relationships

Discussion

This research paper provides evidence that supports the assertion that leadership development and training programs have a positive effect on employee morale and operational effectiveness. Although not all dependent variables were present in every study, upon closer examination, the majority of the time when the variables were included in the aim of the study, they were found. The psychiatrist Frederick Herzberg, best known for his

motivator-hygiene theory, points to certain factors that give people an increased sense of purpose and fulfillment at work (Freedman, 2025). He suggested employers should make jobs more interesting for their employees to increase job satisfaction and productivity (Rau, 2023). The goal is not to force motivation but to create an environment where motivation and satisfaction can blossom (Herzberg, 2002). One tool organizations can use is the implementation of leadership development and training programs, which increase

knowledge and skills, provide opportunities for advancement, and enhance the company culture (Elagaili et al., 2024). These programs have also been shown to strengthen relationships at work, foster a supportive work environment, and cultivate shared values (Brown & May, 2012; Kanungo, 2024; Saleh et al., 2021).

The hypothesis that a well-developed and implemented leadership and employee training program will increase employee morale and positively impact the company, including employee retention and increased operational effectiveness, is supported true by this study. Leadership development and training programs are not the only variables that impact employee morale and operational effectiveness. Abba & Yaqoob (2009) suggest that these programs effect up to 50% of employees' performance, and the other half is based on other variables. As discussed in the literary review, these variables can include: leadership style, organizational commitment, compensation, rewards, and one's fit in the organization. When variables such as job satisfaction, training, and organizational commitment are combined, their impact on employee performance is greater than the sum of each individual effort (Siswanto, 2024). Without a company culture that supports these programs, the desired results will not be realized (Shelton, 2001).

There is a cost to implementing leadership development and training programs, and it must be fully counted before starting (*English Standard Version*, 2016, Luke 14:28-30). Nevertheless, the investment is worth it for organizations. Staff performance and productivity directly affect a company's bottom line, and leadership development and training programs can positively impact these. Moreover, some companies even reported a relationship between their spending on development and training programs and

higher revenues from the stock market (Rodriguez & Walters, 2017).

While return on investment may be hard to calculate for such programs, this study has provided evidence that they can have a positive impact on employee morale and operation effectiveness. Organizations experience tangible and intangible returns. Whereas tangible and measurable returns may be hard to always quantify, this study provided evidence that leadership development and training programs improve job satisfaction, an intangible result, and that it has an effect on productivity and retention rates, tangible results, saving a company money over time. Organizations that do not offer leadership development and training programs may see financial gain in the short term but will lose the race for intellectual capital and market share in the long term (Shelton, 2001). When considering the costs or calculating the return on investment, the organization must look across the company's financial reports and take a multi-year approach to fully assess the impact and savings they bring. Since employees are the most valuable asset to an organization, everyone would benefit from caring for and investing in them (Ozkeser, 2019).

As shown in the literary review, leadership development and training programs can be effective for a varying demographic. It is effective in increasing job satisfaction, motivation, and retention in young employees (Nguyen & Duong, 2020; Singh, 2023). However, it was also proven effective in employees up to 50 years old (Ariani et al., 2024). While it may be expected to improve morale and the productivity of inexperienced employees, the opposite also was shown to be true, demonstrating a significant impact on people with advanced degrees and over a decade of experience (Abba & Yaqoob, 2009). This qualitative meta-analysis contained research conducted across various industries that

were different-sized and located across the globe. One study showed that these programs are not only effective in large organizations but can produce the same results in small businesses, too (Kanungo, 2024). Consequently, regardless of an organization's type, size, or workforce demographics, leadership development and training programs should be considered as a tool to boost employee morale and increase operational effectiveness.

Not all leadership development and training programs are created equal. In order for them to bring the biggest benefit to the employee and employer, they must be effectively implemented. Building one's house on a solid foundation is essential for success (*English Standard Version*, 2016, Matthew 7:24-27). There are six suggested elements that, if included, will increase the effectiveness of leadership development and training programs in an organization. First, these programs must have buy-in from everyone in an organization (Gutterman, 2023). While line or middle managers must be supportive, unless executives are also committed, the endeavor will not reach its full potential (Kivland & King, 2015). Second, such programs must align with the organization's mission, vision, values, and strategic business goals (Beer et al., 2016). Programs not customized to specific places and purposes will not be valued, prioritized, or supported. Third, they must meet the employee's needs. People need to receive relevant and valuable training for the full effect to be had (Shelton, 2001).

Fourth, the organization must be ready to support and nurture the content of the programs. If a company's culture or structure is not prepared for the changes introduced by these programs, they will not be effective and will be deemed as failures (Kivland & King, 2015). Fifth, an organization must have a way to measure the results and effectiveness of these programs.

Many of these initiatives are not measured and lack hard data to show results (Choi & Dickson, 2009). From the beginning, companies must define the program goals, implement systems to measure success, and publish key performance indicators. Sixth, leadership development and training programs are most effective when they have a mixture of knowledge, career development, and goal setting (Kumar et al., 2018). This should include skills needed to do one's job, leadership lessons, and encouraging positive character traits.

Future Research

"Let the wise hear and increase in learning, and the one who understands obtain guidance" (*English Standard Version*, 2016, Proverbs 1:5). This study has prompted a few areas for future research. Whereas this study only examined the effect leadership development and training programs had on employee morale and operational effectiveness, many other variables contributed to them. Further study is recommended on the types of variables and how they enhance or play off of each other to get the greatest result possible. Additional research is needed to determine which type of program, leadership development or training, and the content of each program has the largest impact on different demographics. This would give organizations an idea of where to start and what to emphasize. Finally, a closer look should be done at which metrics and key performance indexers are used to evaluate these programs, along with the average cost and timetable of expected return on investment. This would provide an industry standard and help organizations fairly evaluate the effectiveness of their programs.

Limitations

This study has some limitations. First, since it is a meta-data analysis using

research that has already been conducted, the full extent and content of the questions asked are not known. Moreover, the same questions were not asked across all participants and studies. Second, the studies used employed different methods of gathering and processing the data. Third, little to nothing is known about the content or focus of the leadership development and training programs that were studied. Fourth, the participants' demographics vary widely in education, race, industry, and location. At times, some of these variables are not fully known. Fifth, only articles and studies that could be accessed free of charge were considered for this project. However, some of these limitations add to the uniqueness of this study, add value to the existing research, and serve as strengths.

Conclusion

People are an organization's most valuable asset, and proper care of them should be a chief priority (Rodriguez & Walters, 2017). This includes investing in employees through leadership development and training programs. These programs must increase how effective and efficient the organization's operations are and cultivate a supportive climate amongst its employees (Elagaili et al., 2024). This research project has demonstrated evidence that well-developed and implemented leadership and employee training programs can increase employee morale and positively impact operational effectiveness. However, for these programs to be effective, they must be tailored to fit the company's mission, vision, values, and goals (Beer et al., 2016). Also, they must meet the unique needs of their staff (Shelton, 2001). These programs also strengthen relationships among coworkers, create a positive culture and work environment, and promote teamwork and collaboration (Hasyim & Bakri, 2023). This

study provided evidence that these variables have a positive impact on employee retention, productivity, and overall operational efficiency. Moreover, leadership development and training programs have been shown to be effective in large enterprises and small businesses (Kanungo, 2024). They had an impact on younger and inexperienced employees as well as on older and highly educated ones (Abba & Yaqoob, 2009; Ozkeser, 2019). Organizations of any size and demographic can and should consider leadership development and training programs to invest in their employees' health, knowledge, and development to increase the company's overall business operations.

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