

Impact of Strategic Human Resource Training and Development in the Performance of Local Authorities: A Systematic Review

Evans Bonjisi Tembo¹, Grace Portia Kuda Ngorora-Madzimure¹, Thomas Brighton Bhebhe¹

¹Department of Entrepreneurship and Business Management, Chinhoyi University of Technology, Zimbabwe. (Corresponding Author: ebtembo@gmail.com)

Abstract

Local government authorities (LGAs) are the nearest arm of government to the people, yet many can hardly provide the essential services effectively. Strategic human resource training and development (HRTD) has the potential to increase performance and capacity of LGAs, but remains limited across regions. A systematic search (2015 - 2025) identified 487 records; after screening 42 studies were included. These studies covered diverse local government contexts, with Africa contributing the largest share (Uganda, Nigeria, Kenya, Tanzania, Zimbabwe and Ghana), Asia adding cases from Nepal, India and Pakistan, and smaller but useful samples from Latin America and Oceania. In terms of method, 42 studies (52%) used quantitative approaches, 12 (29%) qualitative and 8 (19%) mixed methods, with sample sizes ranging from 35 to 1 240 respondents. Narrative synthesis and thematic analysis showed consistent findings across Africa, Asia and Europe that organised training programmes enhance staff performance, service provision and corporate responsibility in LGAs. Common approaches include coaching, mentoring and competency-based training. Key variables that moderate the relationship between training and performance include leadership commitment, sufficient funding and a systematic training needs assessment. The review concludes that strategic HRTD is a powerful force behind local authority performance, though its success depends on organisational circumstances. Policy implications include institutionalising needs-based training, strengthening leadership development, and improving evaluation systems. Future studies should focus on longitudinal designs and economic assessment of return on HRTD investment.

Keywords: human resource training, local authorities, employee performance, service delivery, municipal

Introduction

Local government authorities (LGAs) or local authorities (LAs) are the immediate link between a government and its people. As Ojofeitimi (2020) articulates, the word “local” denotes that councils are intended to serve small communities, and the word “government” implies that they have certain elements of a government. In this study, LGAs can be defined as systems of local governments under local communities that are structured to ensure law and order, provision of limited social amenities, and promotion of co-operation and involvement of the citizens in improving their conditions of living. Indeed, they have a mandate to provide essential services to citizens. These services include health facilities, housing, water, maintenance of sewer, refuse disposal, road services, and community welfare. People’s livelihoods are determined by their operational efficiencies, particularly in developing countries where central governments are constrained. For instance, Woods et al. (2025) observe that in Australia, regulatory tasks that are challenging when undertaken by a national government are executed by LGAs due to their localised and varied character. Notwithstanding their pivotal role, many LGAs across the globe are still underperforming, resulting in poor customer satisfaction, low accountability, and waste of government resources.

One of the critical factors linked to the performance of LAs lies within the competencies and skills set of their human resource. In this regard, employees within LGAs represent both the prime cost and the key source of value creation. Studies on organisational behaviour and public administration demonstrate poor employee motivation and inadequate training as attributes of poor service delivery (Boxall & Purcell, 2016; Llorens et al., 2017). Hitherto, local authorities have not invested much in manpower development because they perceive it as an expense rather than an investment. Habib et al. (2015) observe that training and development programs are often seen as an expense despite yielding immense productivity and employee performance in the long term.

Armstrong and Taylor (2020) view human resource training and development (HRTD) as any planned and systematic processes aimed at improving the knowledge, skills and attitudes of employees to enable them accomplish both current and future activities of the organisation. In local governments set-ups, this includes both formal and informal initiatives such as on-the-job and off-the-job training, coaching, classroom instructions, and leadership developmental courses. Gamuga et al. (2025) define training as the methodological acquisition and enhancement of knowledge, skills and behaviours of employees in a manner that enables them to perform better in their work

stations. It can be inferred that when training is well aligned with the organisational strategy, it can transform institutional performance. This closely aligns with the contemporary rationale of strategic human resource training and development presented by Tembo et al. (2024) as the intentional and planned activity of an organisation aimed at improving the knowledge, skills, abilities and competencies of its workforce to meet strategic goals and objectives.

Notwithstanding clear evidence of the relationship between strategic human resource training and performance in organisations, most LAs worldwide do not have systematic training programs or adequate training budgets. For example, training in the Bukedea District of Uganda indicates that local governments often conduct training without a policy, resulting in unreasonable participant selection and minimal post-training assessment (Apolot & Emuron, 2024). This led to shortages of core competencies among employees, absence of leadership competencies among supervisors, and eventual failure by LGAs to adapt to evolving public needs. Recent global policy debates (2022 - 2025) have emphasised the importance of institutionalising workforce development and accountability in local governance, yet practice remains uneven. It is against this backdrop that this systematic review seeks to consolidate and critically examine evidence on the impact of strategic HRTD on the performance of LAs. This may determine what works, for whom, and under what conditions, through answering the following questions:

- (i) Which HR training and development interventions have been implemented in local authorities?
- (ii) What evidence demonstrates the impact of strategic HRTD on employee and organisational performance?
- (iii) Which factors moderate the link between strategic HRTD and local authority performance?
- (iv) What are the key implications for policy and practice?

Literature Review

Theoretical Perspectives on Training and Development

There are numerous theories which support the study of human resource training and development in local government:

The Human Capital Theory (Becker, 1964) perceives training as an investment, which enhances productivity and performance. Numerous researchers support this claim, having tested that training

and development enhances service provision and efficiency in an organisation (Eze et al., 2025; Nkosi, 2015; Ramesh, 2022; Munyede, 2022; Obeng-Tuaah, 2025).

The Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977) emphasizes observation, imitation and modelling. This is consistent with the findings of Ndumbaro (2023), who reported that interactive learning motivates employees to develop skills together by means of knowledge exchange.

Resource-Based View (Wernerfelt, 1984; Barney, 1991) argues that unique, rare and precious resources trigger optimal performance within organisations. In this notion, talented employees are assumed to be one of such resources. Research by Amegayibor (2021) conforms to the RBV, as it observed that training programs like inductions and workshops enhanced staff capabilities which subsequently improved service delivery in Ghanaian local government authorities.

The Organisational Learning Theory (Senge, 1990) views organisations as systems that prosper on knowledge creation and sharing. Sharing the same view, Jehow et al. (2018) conducted a study on Kenyan government agencies and discovered that training improved staff skills, job satisfaction and retention.

Performance Management Theory places training within the appraisal and feedback systems. Nama et al. (2022) proved that the connection between training and performance reviews yields measurable outcomes.

Collectively, these theories provide useful theoretical lenses in the understanding of how training and development shape local governments. They show that training enhances productivity, protects accountability, facilitates learning, aids better use of resources and promotes sound corporate governance.

Impact of Training and Development on Employee Performance in Local Authorities

The global literature consistently shows that human resource training and development positively influences employee performance in local governments. Bataineh (2017) defines performance as the efficiency and effectiveness of tasks performed to meet stakeholder expectations. In South Africa, Nama et al. (2022) found that mentoring and coaching explained nearly half of the variance in employees' performance outcomes, while Ndumbaro (2023) reported that on-the-job, off-the-job, and interactive learning methodologies significantly improve performance in Tanzania LGAs, with coaching and mentorship emerging as the strongest predictors. Nigerian studies (Eze et al.

2025; Nkosi, 2015) affirmed that training enhanced productivity and sustainability, with Nkosi showing that training explained 76.7% of variation in performance, retention and commitment. In Uganda, leadership development, workshops, and seminars improved timeliness and reporting (Karegyeya, 2018), while training needs assessment and evaluation strengthened performance in Masindi District (Katusabe, 2016). These findings underscore the importance of aligning training with job requirements. However, regional differences emerge: while South Africa and Tanzania emphasise mentoring and coaching, Uganda highlights leadership development, and Nigeria stress institutional sustainability. This suggests that training effectiveness is context-specific rather than universally uniform.

Training and Development as a Driver of Service Delivery in Local Authorities

Beyond individual performance, training has been linked to service delivery outcomes. In South Africa, Nama et al. (2022) showed that trained personnel improved municipal services, while Ojoh and Okoh (2015) reported that inadequate training in Nigeria's Delta State undermined service delivery. In Nepal, Ramesh (2022) identified off-the-job training as the key predictor of improved service delivery. Comparative evidence from Ghana and Asia (Obeng-Tuaah, 2025; Johnson & Lee, 2022) revealed that structured training improved service-related performance by 18%. Yet contradictions exist: while some studies highlight strong causal links between training and service delivery, others (e.g. Ojoh & Okoh, 2015) emphasise that poorly designed or absent training can exacerbate inefficiencies. This divergence underscores the need to critically assess not only the presence of training but its design, relevance and evaluation.

Training Methods and Approaches in Local Authorities

Training methods refer to formalised methods of imparting skills, while approaches reflect the philosophy behind training. Evidence shows regional variation: South Africa priorities mentoring and coaching (Nama, 2022; Nkosi, 2015), Tanzania employs group discussions and interactive learning (Ndumbaro, 2023), Nigeria emphasises leadership development and cross-departmental training (Eze et al., 2025; Onumadu et al., 2024), and Nepal values seminars and workshops. Comparative analysis suggests that blended approaches – combining on-the-job training for immediate skill application with off-the-job training for broader perspectives yield long-term performance gains. However, contradictions remain: while some regions report success with informal mentoring, others stress structured, policy-driven training, highlighting the absence of a universally effective model.

Challenges and Constraints in Implementing HRTD in Local Authorities

Despite clear advantages, implementation faces systemic challenges. In South Africa, corruption and irrelevant training undermine outcomes (Nama, 2022). Zimbabwean local authorities face similar issues, with Munyede (2022) attributing service deterioration to corruption, maladministration and poor governance. Tanzanian councils struggle with inadequate funding, weak leadership support, and poor evaluation systems (Mwakasangula (2023; Ndumbaro, 2023). Nigerian training remains ad hoc, lacking systematic needs assessment (Eze et al., 2025; Ojoh & Okoh, 2015). Nepalese LGAs face bureaucratic hurdles, inconsistent programs, and political interference (Ramesh, 2022). Ugandan evidence (Apolot & Emuron, 2024)) shows that training without inclusive policy leads to random participant selection and weak post-training assessment. Obeng-Tuaah (2025) further identifies financial limitations, employee resistance, outdated materials, and lack of managerial support, noting that absence of leadership reinforcement reduced training adoption by 20%. These findings reveal contradictions: while some regions attribute failure to resource constraints, others highlight governance and institutional culture. Collectively, they point to the need for comprehensive HR training policies, adequate funding, systematic evaluation, and leadership commitment to sustain staff development.

In summary, the literature demonstrates that while training and development consistently enhances employee performance and service delivery, regional differences and contradictions highlight the importance of context, design, and governance. This study, therefore, develops a conceptual framework to capture the interplay between training inputs, contextual moderators, and performance outputs in local authorities.

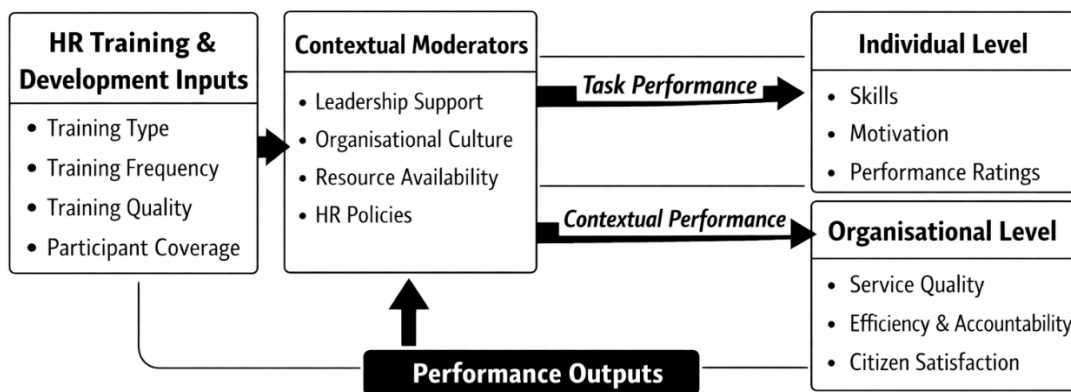


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

Source: Author (2026).

As indicated in Figure 1, HR training and development do not operate in isolation. At the micro-level, they enhance individual employees' skills, motivation, and performance ratings. At macro-level, they improve organisational outcomes such as service quality, efficiency, and citizen satisfaction. These effects are moderated by institutional elements, particularly leadership support and resource availability, which can either strengthen or weaken the impact of training interventions. The framework aligns with Gamuga et al. (2025), who conceptualise performance as a two-fold, encompassing both task-based and context-based dimensions. This reinforces the resource-based view that employees, when strategically developed, become drivers of institutional excellence.

Methodology

Systematic Review Protocol

This review was based on the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items to Systematic Reviews and meta-analyses) guidelines. This enhances transparency, reproducibility and methodological rigour (Page et al., 2021). To enhance the level of credibility, the review protocol was registered in PROSPERO (International Prospective Register of Systematic Reviews; Initial Registration ID 1328025). This also helps in peer review and replication as stated by Booth et al. (2012) that, in turn, it strengthens evidence synthesis reliability.

Eligibility Criteria

Inclusion and exclusion criteria were defined using the PICO (Population, Intervention, Comparator, Outcome) framework:

Table 1. PICO Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Criterion	Inclusion	Exclusion
Population	Employees of local/municipal authorities	Employees of the national government and those from the private sector
Intervention	Structured HR training, development programmes and capacity building	Informal, ad hoc learning with no institutional structure
Comparator	Pre/post comparison; control group; longitudinal data	No baseline or comparison data

Outcome	Employee performance, service delivery quality and institutional capacity	Outcomes unrelated to performance
Study design	Quantitative, qualitative, mixed-methods and peer-reviewed articles, doctoral theses and conference papers	Opinion pieces, editorials, grey literature and those duplicate studies that reported similar findings
Time period	2015–2025	Before 2015
Language	English	Non-English without full translation

Source: *Scholarly Survey (2025)*.

Moreso, the included studies covered diverse local government contexts. Africa contributed the largest share, with Uganda, Nigeria, Kenya, Tanzania, Zimbabwe and Ghana well represented. Asia added cases from Nepal, India and Pakistan, while Latin America and Oceania provided smaller but useful samples. In terms of methods, 22 studies (52%) used quantitative approaches, 12 (29%) qualitative and 8 (19%) mixed methods, with sample sizes ranging from 35 to 1 240 participants. The majority of studies (n = 31, 74%) reported clear ethical clearance and informed consent procedures. This breadth of coverage ensures that the review captures both regional diversity and methodological rigour.

Search Strategy

Electronic searches were conducted on DOAJ, SCOPUS, ProQuest and Google Scholar databases from October to December 2025. Furthermore, the reference lists of included studies were hand-searched for additional eligible records. The study applied the following Boolean search string:

("Strategic human resource training" or "staff development" or "capacity building" or "employee training and development") and ("local authority" or "local government" or "municipal" or "city council") and ("performance" or "service delivery" or "productivity" or "organisational performance")

This strategy guaranteed an all-inclusive coverage of both theoretical and empirical literature on strategic human resource training and development in local government authorities' context.

Study Selection and Quality Assessment

All data were entered in Rayyan QCRI systematic review software (version accessed November 2025). Two independent reviewers screened titles and abstracts, and disagreements were resolved through discussion or referral to a third reviewer. Inter-rater reliability was assessed using Cohen’s Kappa, which indicated substantial agreement. All potentially eligible studies were reviewed in full-text. Study designs were evaluated with the Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool (MMAT) to determine quality. This strategy reflects rigorous quality assurance, similar to Amegayibor (2021), who employed structured questionnaires with validated scales and multiple regression to ensure reliability, and Gamuga et al. (2025), who reported a Pearson Product-Moment Correlation coefficient of 0.9 for instrument validation. The review protocol was aligned with PRISMA guidelines and a checklist is provided in the appendix.

Data Extraction and Synthesis

The data were extracted using a standardized data extraction form: study design, country/region, sample size, training type, outcome measures, key findings and quality scores. Due to the heterogeneity in reporting outcomes, it was not possible to conduct meta-analysis. Rather, thematic analysis and narrative synthesis have been carried out according to the framework of Popay et al. (2006). This method enabled the incorporation of diverse pieces of evidence into rational themes like “*impact on performance, services delivery outcomes, training methods and implementation challenges.*” Figure 2 depicts the PRISMA study selection flow summary adopted in this review.

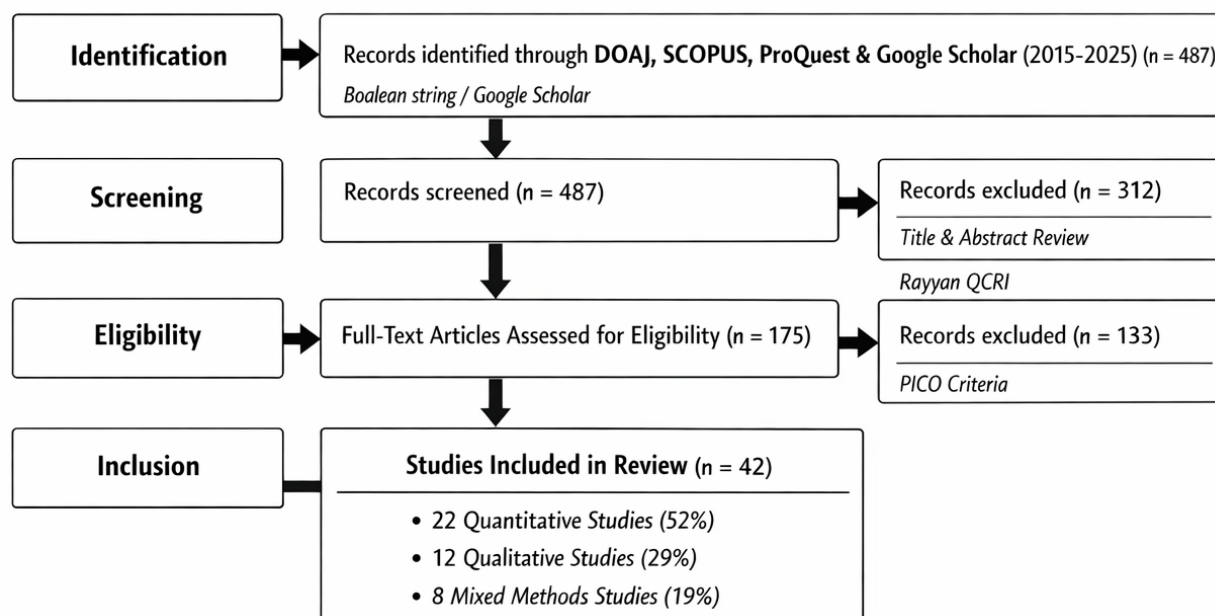


Figure 2. PRISMA Study Selection Flow Summary

Source: Scholarly Survey (2025).

Results

Characteristics of Included Studies

The final sample comprised 42 peer-reviewed studies published between 2015 and 2025. In terms of geography, the studies were concentrated in sub-Saharan Africa (n=18, 43%), followed by Europe (n=12, 29%), Latin America (n=7, 17%), Asia (n=3, 7%) and Oceania (n=2, 5%). Thus, Africa contributed the largest share, with Uganda, Nigeria, Kenya and Tanzania well represented. Asia added cases from Nepal, India and Pakistan. Latin America, Asia and Oceania provided smaller but useful samples. In terms of method, 22 studies (52%) used quantitative approaches, 12 (29%) qualitative and 8 (19%) mixed methods. The studies’ sample sizes ranged from 35 to 1,240 participants. The majority of the studies (n=31, 74%) reported clear ethical clearance and informed consent procedures. The included studies covered varied local government contexts: from decentralised district councils of Uganda studied by Apolot and Emuron (2024), to the local authorities in Zimbabwe examined by Munyede (2022), to the metropolitan assemblies of Ghana investigated by Amegayibor (2021) and the local government areas of Nigeria explored by Gamuga et al. (2025). Table 2 and Figure 3 depict the distribution of included studies according to region in tabular and graphical form respectively.

Table 2. Distribution of Included Studies by Region and Key Variables

Study Characteristics	N	%	Dominant Training Type	Primary Outcome Measured
Sub-Saharan Africa	18	43%	On-the-job/ vocational	Service delivery quality
Europe	12	29%	Competency-based formal training	Employee performance ratings
Latin America	7	17%	Leadership development	Institutional capacity
Asia	3	7%	E-learning/ blended	Citizen satisfaction
Oceania	2	5%	Mentoring/ coaching	Staff retention
Total	42	100%		

Source: Scholarly Survey (2025).

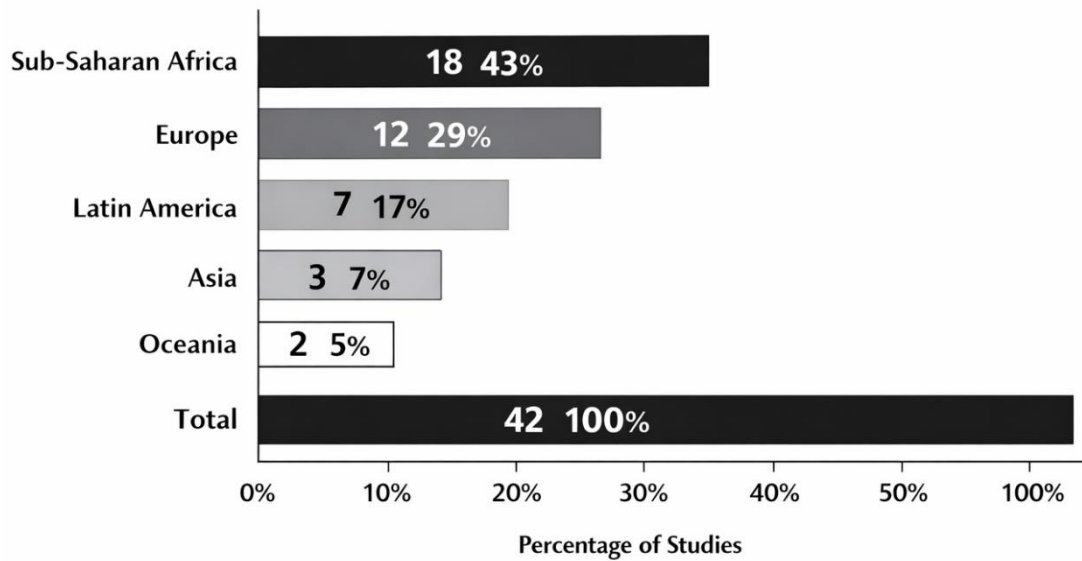


Figure 3. Distribution Graph of Included Studies by Region

Source: Scholarly Survey (2025).

HR Training and Development Interventions Implemented in Local Authorities

Competency-Based Training

The most prevalent intervention was competency-based training (CBT), which was reported in 28 of the 42 studies (67%). These programmes were modeled on role specific frameworks. They were provided through classroom lectures, seminars and workshops. The results indicated clear benefits: In the local government field of Ghana, conferences and workshops training was statistically significantly positively associated with organisational performance (Amegayibor, 2021). In Uganda, professional development enhanced employee punctuality and time reported (Karegyeya, 2018). A Nigerian local government, Ajingi confirmed that performance was improved through well-designed programmes, even though there was a low level of motivational influence (Manu et al., 2025). This pattern was also revealed in other works: Vanitha and Sankar (2024) emphasized the importance of CBT in productivity and innovation, Sharma et al. (2024) identified that CBT sharpened decision-making and communication in India, and Ranjan (2025) revealed that non-competency-based training did not have prominent influence on the capacity development of the government officials but the competency-based training programs had an important positive impact on developing employee capacity. Thus, CBT was reliable in enhancing task-specific performance and minimizing errors in municipal finance, urban planning and social services.

On-the-Job Training and Mentoring

In 23 studies (55%), on-the-job training and mentoring were used; predominantly in Africa and Asia. These programmes paired junior staff with their supervisors for systematic learning. Coaching, mentoring and job rotation in Nigeria achieved a 2.95 mean performance score, which is more than the 2.50 benchmark and enhanced contextual performance (2.78) (Gamuga et al., 2025). The trainees in Uganda found it easier to apply the skills than their off-job trained counterparts, though supervisors did not have the time to transfer the knowledge (Apolot & Emuron, 2024). Training and performance also recorded a significant relationship in Kenya's Meru Central Sub-County (Mutwiri et al., 2019), whereas training in ENSDA it produced a strong effect ($\beta = 0.702$, $p < 0.05$) (Tipis and Njoroge, 2019). In Tanzania, the technical training offered by the Dodoma Urban and Water Sanitation (DUWASA) through on-the-job training had improved the accomplishment of tasks and provision of customer services greatly (Sasya & Mmassy, 2023). More so, the Igbo Eze North LGA in Nigeria revealed an increase in employee punctuality and productivity due to training on leadership and technical matters that was delivered through mentoring (Onumadu et al., 2024).

Leadership and Management Development

Programs targeting the development of leadership among department heads, ward councilors and senior staff appeared in 19 studies (45%). They include: strategic management training, governance workshops and managerial mentorship. Supervisory skills accounted for 83.4% of the variation in performance within the Wajir County in Kenya. This explains the role of leadership capacity in driving employee motivation and performance outcomes (Jehow et al., 2018). In Tanzania, the utilization of mentorship and coaching was not adequately applied but still showed a positive impact on service delivery (Mwakasangula, 2023). In Malaysia, informal coaching was more effective than formal training through a strong leadership support (Zakaria et al., 2017). The managerial training of LAs staff in Zimbabwe also improved service delivery and citizens trust according to Munyede (2022), and in Nigeria LGAs it was established that leadership and technical training increased punctuality and productivity (Onumadu et al., 2024). Collectively, leadership programmes fostered confidence, enhanced accountability and earned organisations significant benefits within many local authorities.

E-Learning and Technology-Enabled Development

About 10 out of 42 studies (24 percent) reported the use of e-learning and blended methods primarily in Europe, Latin America and Asia. In these regions, financial management, citizen service training and compliance was done through digital platforms. These technologies provided delivery that was cost-effective as well as scalable. Eighty-eight percent of the respondents in Nepal have reported positive performance, whilst managers have reported improvement in customer relations and project completion, all accomplished through the adoption of technology-enabled development initiatives (Mukhiya & Acharya, 2023). More importantly, the COVID-19 situation made e-learning necessary in Indonesia, though the completion rates were lower among the staff with poor digital literacy (Tambaa & Riyanto, 2020). In surveyed organisations, Ranjan (2025) also resolved that the most prevalent method was programmed instruction (40%). This reflects an increasing interest in structured and technology-based self-paced training formats. In summary, technology-enabled training was found to increase access and flexibility though remain ineffective in situations where digital literacy and organisational support were poor.

Other Training Approaches

The off-the-job training techniques that were predominantly highlighted in various LGA settings included workshops, seminars, conferences, and classroom training. In Nepal, they enhanced punctuality and reporting (Ramesh, 2022), and in Nigeria, they reinforced compliance and the general performance (Ojoh and Okoh, 2015). The Tanzanian councils emphasized interactive learning methods, such as group discussions, case studies and simulations, which fostered group collaboration, decision-making and problem solving, among others (Ndumbaro, 2023). In addition to these, there were specialised structures whereby specific solutions to complicated problems were provided. Parsa et al. (2026) proposed a tiered training model of modern slavery response in England and Wales that incorporates survivor-centred and trauma-informed models. This demonstrated the ability of a structured and context-specific programme to combine technical skills with empathy that will make training effective and responsive to real-world needs.

Impact of HRTD Interventions on Employee and Organisational Performance

Of the 42 studies included, 36 (86%) were statistically significant, indicating that HRTD participation holds a positive relationship with employee performance. In the Bangladeshi context, Al Karim (2019) discovered that orientation training, career development training and the

environment, health and safety training had a significant positive effect on employee performance ($R^2 = 0.392$). The existence of a strongly positive correlation between training and individual performance and organisational productivity was also confirmed in Pakistani organisations by Habib et al. (2015). In this review, other notable employee-level improvements that occurred after training interventions were task proficiency and technical skills scores (reported in 33 studies, 79%), job satisfaction and organisational commitment (31 studies, 74%), employee absenteeism (22 studies, 52%), supervisor-rated performance scores (28 studies, 67%) and employee retention and turnover intention (19 studies, 45%). Besides that, the research conducted by Obeng-Tuaah (2025) demonstrated a rise in productivity by up to 30%, reduced turnover rates and enhanced innovation capacity in all LGAs engaging in organized training programs.

Quantitative research presented both small (Cohen $d = 0.2$) and large ($d = 0.8$) effects with most lying within the intermediate category ($d = 0.4 - 0.6$). The greatest magnitude of impact was seen where training was closely related to daily job functions, needs-assessed prior to designing and then post-structured evaluation and coaching. Career development training was identified to be the best individual predictor ($\beta = 0.568$, $p < 0.05$) by Al Karim (2019), which supported the importance of viewing programmes with employee career development patterns as the most consistent source of performance increase.

Impact of HRTD Interventions on Organisational and Service Delivery Performance

Evidence of improved service delivery in LA after HRTD investment was identified at the organisational level in 37 out of 42 studies (88%). The most frequently reported organisational-level improvements was in accelerated citizen application and service request processing (29 studies), financial management and reduced audit findings (24 studies), increased community engagement and citizen satisfaction scores (21 studies), increased compliance with national performance standards (18 studies) and better inter-departmental coordination (15 studies). Amegayibor (2021) also proffers direct statistical evidence from a local government set-up which demonstrates the impact of job orientation, training in the form of workshops and conferences on quality-of-service delivery in the Central Region of Ghana, though, interestingly enough, job rotation was not equally associated with the quality of service delivery, a subtle point that cautions an assumption that all training initiatives are equally beneficial.

It is also noteworthy that those studies that investigated local authorities in countries that have well-established HR policy frameworks and performance management systems reported the strongest

organisational-level gains. Apolot and Emuron (2024) found the opposite, as in Bukedea District of Uganda, where training was conducted without a training policy, 51.5% of the respondents reported no performance improvement. Therefore, this illustrates that training without an institutional infrastructure is less useful. This finding is a powerful moderator of the otherwise optimistic image deduced based on the broader literature.

Moderating Factors

The relationship between HRTD and performance was not absolute. Across 29 studies, five key moderating factors were identified:

Table 3. Key Moderating Factors and Their Effects on Training Outcomes

Moderating Factor	Description	Effect on HRTD Outcomes
Leadership Support	The extent to which senior management endorsed and participated in training	Strong positive moderator; absent support negated most gains
Organisational Culture	Whether institutional culture valued learning and knowledge sharing	Positive learning culture amplified performance gains by up to 40%
Training Needs Analysis	Whether training was designed based on a structured needs assessment	Needs-based training 60% more effective than generic programmes
Resource Allocation	Adequacy of budget, time and infrastructure for training delivery	Underfunded programmes showed minimal to no sustained impact
Post-Training Support	Availability of coaching, feedback, and opportunities to apply learning	Critical for transferring skills from the classroom to the workplace

Source: Scholarly Survey (2025).

Table 3 shows the results of the variables that moderate the relationship between training and performance in local authorities. The most decisive moderator appears to be leadership support, where evidence has revealed that in the absence of senior management endorsement, training gains are annulled. This is echoed by the fact that Obeng-Tuaah (2025) found lack of managerial support decreased training adoption rates by 20 per cent and by the fact that weak leadership diminished training performance in the Tanzanian councils (Ndumbaro, 2023; Mwakasangula, 2023). Furthermore, the lack of authentic leadership dedication in LA setting like in Zimbabwe, where

Munyede (2022) identified corruption and maladministration as issues, further weakens the prospects of training programs.

Organisational culture is also critical and enhances performance gains when learning and knowledge sharing are appreciated. Contrary to a weak culture towards learning presented in the literature, training is being approached in Nigeria as ad hoc and not well-planned (Eze et al., 2025; Ojoh & Okoh, 2015). Equally, Munyede (2022) cited inadequate governance culture within local authorities in Zimbabwe, which detracts from cultures of accountability and lifelong learning. These results prove that the positive effects of training are canceled by toxic or indifferent cultures, whereas the positive effects may be significantly enhanced by the supportive ones.

Training Needs Analysis (TNA) is also a significant moderator, as it was established that needs-based programmes are 60% more effective than generic programmes. In a similar note, the study by Apolot and Emuron (2024) in Uganda, which was conducted with random selection of participants and exclusionary policy, registered low training performance. In Nigerian councils, irrelevant training programmes were also caused by a lack of systematic needs assessment (Gamuga et al., 2025). The literature thus supports the survey outcome that structured TNA is essential in aligning the training and needs of the LA institution and employees.

Another important moderator revealed is resource allocation. According to the survey, underfunded programmes have little effect on LA performance, a finding repeated in various contexts. It has been noted that Tanzanian councils do not have enough resources (Ndumbaro, 2023; Mwakasangula, 2023) and Obeng-Tuaah (2025) has also recognized financial limitations as a key impediment to LA training in Tanzania. In this regard, it can be construed that training is symbolic and not transformative without proper budgets, infrastructure and time, which explains why most local authorities are not able to maintain improvements.

Lastly, the importance of post-training support is another important moderator emphasized in the transfer of the skills into workplace performance. Nevertheless, coaching, feedback and the opportunity to practice learning are not provided despite the fact that they are essential. Apolot and Emuron (2024) recognized a limited post-training evaluation in Uganda, whereas Salas et al. (2020) highlighted opportunity to practice as a success factor. This is because many local authorities lack formal follow-up systems, which explains why most training remains theoretical and does not translate into better service delivery.

In summation, the moderating variables found in the review: leadership support, organisational culture, training needs analysis, resource allocation and post-training support reflect the systemic issues recorded in the local authorities in Africa. The integration of evidence points to the possibility that failure of human resource training and development is not associated with training only, but instead the lack of these contextual enablers. Therefore, empowering these moderators may turn training from a form of ritualism into a true driver of institutional performance and service delivery. Hence, Table 4 below is a comparative summary of the above key findings, highlighting regional training methods, percentage impacts and key challenges in local authorities.

Table 4. Comparative Summary of Key Findings

Region/ Country	Training Methods / Approaches	Reported Impact (% /Outcomes)	Key Challenges / Constraints
South Africa	Mentoring, coaching, structured training	49% variance in employee performance (Nama, 2022)	Corruption, maladministration, irrelevant training content
Tanzania	On-the-job, off-the-job, interactive learning	Noticeable positive performance outcomes (Ndumbaro, 2023)	Inadequate funding, weak leadership support, poor evaluation
Nigeria	Leadership development, cross-departmental training	76.7% variation in performance, retention, commitment (Nkosi, 2015)	Ad hoc training culture, lack of systematic needs assessment
Uganda	Leadership development, workshops, seminars, needs assessment	Improved timeliness, reporting, and performance (Karegyeya, 2018; Katusabe, 2016)	Selective training opportunities, weak post-training evaluation
Nepal	Off-the-job training (seminars, workshops)	Service delivery improvement; structured training ↑18% (Ramesh, 2022; Johnson & Lee, 2022)	Bureaucratic hurdles, political interference, inconsistent programs

Zimbabwe	Limited structured training, weak governance practices	Service deterioration linked to poor staff capacity (Munyede, 2022)	Rampant corruption, maladministration, poor governance
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Source: Author (2025).

Discussion

The analysed evidence supports the idea that structured HR training and development programmes enhance the performance of local authorities across diverse contexts (Nama et al., 2022; Ndumbaro, 2023; Ojoh & Okoh, 2015; Ramesh, 2022; Apolot & Emuron, 2024; Al Karim, 2019; Habib et al., 2015; Ranjan, 2025; Jehow et al., 2018). Training approaches such as competency-based and on-the-job were particularly effective, as they aligned closely to real-world duties, reduced errors, and strengthened skills (Amegayibor, 2021; Karegyeya, 2018; Manu et al., 2025; Sasya and Mmassy, 2023). This evidence confirms the resource-based perspective: when employees are nurtured as strategic resources, they become drivers of institutional performance (Gamuga et al., 2025; Al Karim, 2019).

Leadership support emerged as a decisive factor in translating training into tangible outcomes. In LAs where managers actively championed training through funding, participation, and alignment, performance benefits were more pronounced (Jehow et al., 2018; Mwakasangula, 2023; Zakaria et al., 2017). This finding resonates with Performance Management Theory, which emphasises feedback and managerial assistance in shaping employee outcomes. Conversely, weak leadership support and a lack of HR training policy, as observed in Uganda, constrained the impact of otherwise well-formulated programmes (Apolot & Emuron, 2024). Contradictions also appear: while leadership development initiatives in Zimbabwe and Nigeria enhanced confidence, accountability, and public trust (Munyade, 2022; Onumadu et al., 2024), selective or politicized training in Uganda and Nepal limited inclusivity and long-term effectiveness.

A persistent weakness was the absence of a systematic training needs assessment. Programmes often reflected donor priorities or administrative preferences rather than actual skill requirements (Apolot & Emuron, 2024). Even where evaluation was attempted, participation was undermined by cost barriers, lack of interest, and time constraints (Ranjan, 2025). This underscores the theoretical contribution of institutionalisation: embedding needs assessment systems within organisational routines is critical for ensuring training relevance and effectiveness.

Technology-enabled learning presented both promise and limitations. Blended approaches combining digital efficiency with relational learning proved most effective (Mukhiya & Acharya, 2023; Tamba & Riyanto, 2020). This aligns with Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977), which highlights peer communication, observation, and feedback. However, purely digital models risked neglecting these dimensions. Contradictions were evident: while some studies reported improved access and flexibility, others noted weak outcomes where digital literacy, funding and organisational support were lacking (Ranjan, 2025).

Finally, the degree of strategic HRTD impact on LA performance was moderated by moderating leadership support, organisational culture, resource allocation, and post-training coaching. Training was most effective when embedded in facilitative cultures, adequately resourced, and followed by opportunities to apply learning in practice (Mwakasangula, 2023; Manu et al., 2025). This suggests that training functions not merely as an isolated intervention but as a catalyst for institutional change.

Conclusions and Implications

Conclusions

This systematic review delivers multi-regional evidence that human resource training and development are powerful drivers of local authority performance. Across 42 studies spanning a decade, clear trends emerge: employees who undergo systematic, needs-based training achieve higher performance, greater satisfaction, and stronger retention; local governments that invest consistently in workforce training deliver better services, demonstrate financial responsibility, and respond more effectively to citizen demands.

However, training alone is insufficient. Its success depends on organisational circumstances, particularly leadership commitment, supportive learning cultures, adequate resourcing, and systematic needs assessment. Contradictory findings illustrate this contingency: in Uganda's Bukedea District, donor-funded training produced little impact due to weak leadership and absent policy frameworks, while in Ghana's metropolitan assemblies, carefully adapted training approaches yielded high returns in performance and service delivery.

The most fundamental results occur when training is embedded within organisational strategy rather than treated as an isolated HR activity. As Gamuga et al. (2025) observe, strategic HRTD functions as the "brain box" of institutional performance. With local authorities worldwide facing

pressures from urbanisation, digitalisation, climate change, and rising citizen expectations, investment in human capacity has never been more urgent. This review confirms that when such an investment is strategically aligned, it produces measurable and sustainable outcomes.

Contribution to Theory and Practice

This review advances theory by reinforcing the resource-based view of organisations, demonstrating that employees, when strategically developed, function as critical assets driving institutional performance. It extends Performance Management Theory by showing that leadership support, organisational culture, and resource allocation moderate the translation of training into measurable outcomes. The findings also contribute to the contingency perspective, highlighting that strategic HRTD is effective only when embedded within supportive institutional contexts, thereby enriching scholarship on organisational learning and public sector HRD.

Practically contributions are equally significant. The review consolidates evidence across regions to guide policymakers and HR practitioners, showing that systematic needs assessment, leadership development, adequate resourcing, and rigorous evaluation are essential conditions for sustainable training outcomes. Comparative insights from Africa, Asia and other regions provide actionable lessons for local authorities facing diverse governance challenges.

Policy Implications

The findings also carry several implications for policymakers and HR practitioners in local government:

- Institutionalise training needs assessment to ensure programmes address actual skill gaps rather than generic templates.
- Prioritise leadership development for middle and senior managers, as downstream impacts cascade across departments.
- Establish post-training support mechanisms such as coaching, mentoring, and structured on-the-job practice to sustain behavioural change.
- Allocate dedicated training budgets to avoid underfunded programmes that fail to deliver long-term impact.
- Create formal training policies to ensure coherence, accountability, and strategic direction in programme delivery.

- Strengthen evaluation systems to track return on investment and improve evidence-based programme design.

Limitations of this Review

There are certain significant limitations in this review. The restriction to studies on English language could have brought an element of publication bias to the search, leaving out French, Portuguese, Arabic or Spanish evidence. The variety of outcome measures used in the studies did not allow formal meta-analysis, which curtailed the accuracy of effect estimates. Others used self-reported performance data, which is prone to social desirability bias, such as Apolot and Emuron (2024), who found that some employees in Uganda inflated the assertion of job loss due to fear of job loss after the restructuring. Additionally, the cross-sectional nature of these designs implies that no solid causal direction can be established.

Directions for Future Research

Future research should address the following gaps identified in this review:

- Long-term experimental research of effects of HRTD on local government performance over a period of years.
- Comparison studies of the relative efficacy of training models in various settings and jurisdictions of different sizes.
- Economic analyses of the monetary quantification of the return of investment of HRTD programmes.
- Research on the application of digital and AI-based learning tools in capacity development in the public sector.
- Studies within the Southeast Asian and the Pacific Island countries that are highly underrepresented in the current literature.

Disclosure of Interest

The authors declare no competing interests. All research activities were conducted independently and the findings reflect the authors' objective and scholarly judgment.

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