

Moderating Effect of Employee Commitment on the Relationship Between Strategic Training and Firm Performance in Human Resource Consultancy Firms in Nairobi, Kenya

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ABSTRACT

Firm performance is vital for competitiveness, yet many organizations struggle with executing functional strategies despite robust corporate plans. In a dynamic market, strategic training is essential for sustaining superior performance. As global competition intensifies, consultancy firms must enhance their functional strategies to stay ahead. While past research highlights challenges like uncertain returns, poor corporate image, and resource constraints, the impact of strategic training, employee commitment, and firm performance among HR consultancy firms in Nairobi, Kenya, remains underexplored. This research aimed to examine the Moderating effect of employee commitment on the relationship between strategic training and firm performance in HR consultancy firms in Nairobi, Kenya. The study was based on the Resource-Based View (RBV) theory and employed an explanatory research design. Data was collected through questionnaires from 185 human resource management consultancy firms in Nairobi. A hierarchical regression analysis was conducted to derive meaningful insights. The findings showed that affective, continuous, and normative commitments significantly moderate the relationship between strategic training variables and firm performance. Affective commitment had a moderate effect ($\beta=0.210$, $p=0.030$, $< .05$), while continuous ($\beta=0.595$, $p=0.000 < .05$) and normative commitments ($\beta=0.445$, $p=0.000 < .05$), all had stronger and significant moderating effects. Thus, employee commitment significantly moderates strategic training's impact on firm performance, emphasizing emotional attachment, financial investment, and moral obligation for success. HR consultancy firms should enhance employee commitment through supportive environments, career growth, job security, and ethical leadership to maximize strategic training effectiveness and improve overall firm performance.

Key Words: Strategic training, Affective commitment, continuous commitment, normative commitments, Firm performance.

INTRODUCTION

In today's competitive market, it is essential for organizations to implement strategies that foster and sustain high performance within their workforce. One such strategy is strategic training, which plays a pivotal role in enhancing employees' competencies and driving overall improvements in organizational performance. Strategic training refers to the integration of employee development programs with an organization's overall strategic goals (CompTIA, 2020). It focuses on aligning training efforts with business objectives to ensure that employees acquire the skills, knowledge, and competencies that will directly contribute to organizational success (Gilley & Gilley, 2022). Unlike traditional training, which may address immediate skill gaps or operational needs, strategic training anticipates future workforce requirements and positions employees to meet long-term business challenges (Tannenbaum et al., 2021). The goal is to foster continuous improvement, adaptability, and innovation within the workforce by providing targeted development that supports the company's vision and mission.

Strategic training significantly influences firm performance in various ways. By aligning training with business strategies, organizations ensure that employees have the skills needed to execute company goals effectively.

For instance, training programs designed to enhance leadership capabilities or technological proficiency can improve operational efficiency and contribute to a company's competitive edge (Cascio & Boudreau, 2016). Furthermore, strategic training can lead to improved employee performance and productivity, as employees are equipped with the tools and knowledge to perform at a higher level, thus supporting organizational growth and profitability (Tharenou *et al.*, 2019). Additionally, strategic training plays a crucial role in employee retention and satisfaction. When organizations invest in employee development aligned with career growth opportunities, it fosters greater employee engagement and commitment. Employees who perceive that their professional development is valued by the organization are more likely to stay, reducing turnover and the associated costs of hiring and training replacements (Albrecht *et al.*, 2015). Strategic training also supports organizational agility, enabling firms to quickly adapt to changes in the market, technology, and customer expectations (Vlachos, 2020).

Thus, companies that strategically invest in training initiatives report better performance outcomes, including increased profitability, market share, and overall employee satisfaction (Molina & Rodríguez, 2020). Furthermore, organizations that tailor training programs to meet their specific strategic needs tend to experience improved innovation, customer satisfaction, and employee productivity, ultimately leading to a sustainable competitive advantage (Bersin, 2020). As such, the alignment of training with organizational strategy is essential for driving both individual employee performance and broader organizational success. Similarly, it is crucial for businesses to foster employee commitment, ensuring that individuals are dedicated to achieving organizational goals and working collaboratively as part of a team. While hiring skilled employees is important, cultivating a strong sense of commitment within the workforce is even more vital. Ogunjinmi *et al.* (2013) highlighted that while every employee contributes to achieving business objectives, committed employees are especially integral to an organization's efficiency, effectiveness, and long-term stability.

Employee commitment refers to the psychological attachment and loyalty employees have towards their organization, which significantly influences their motivation and productivity (Albrecht *et al.*, 2015). When organizations invest in strategic training, it signals to employees that their development is valued, fostering higher levels of commitment (Gilley & Gilley, 2022). Employees who feel supported by ongoing learning opportunities are more likely to be engaged and dedicated to achieving organizational goals, leading to improved performance outcomes. Research indicates that strategic training directly enhances employee commitment by equipping them with the skills and knowledge necessary to perform their roles effectively, thereby boosting their confidence and job satisfaction (Tannenbaum *et al.*, 2021). Furthermore, training programs aligned with organizational goals create a sense of purpose, as employees understand how their development contributes to the company's broader vision. This alignment increases organizational commitment, as employees are more likely to identify with the company's strategic objectives (Cascio & Boudreau, 2016).

In turn, heightened employee commitment leads to improved firm performance. Committed employees exhibit higher productivity, lower absenteeism, and greater retention rates, all of which contribute to the overall success of the organization (Molina & Rodríguez, 2020). Moreover, employees who are fully engaged and committed to their roles are more likely to innovate and contribute to problem-solving, which can provide the organization with a competitive edge (Vlachos, 2020). This study looked at the moderating effect of employee commitment factors, i.e affective, continuous, and normative commitments on the relationship between strategic training and firm performance.

Objectives

The objectives of this study were:

1. To determine the moderating effect of affective commitment on the relationship of strategic training practices, employee commitment and firm performance among human resource management consultancy firms in Nairobi Kenya.
2. To establish the moderating effect of continuous commitment on the relationship of strategic training practices, employee commitment and firm performance among human resource management consultancy firms in Nairobi Kenya.

3. To analyze the moderating effect of normative commitment on the relationship of strategic training practices, employee commitment and firm performance among human resource management consultancy firms in Nairobi Kenya.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES

Strategic training practices and Firm performance

Empirical research on strategic training practices and firm performance consistently demonstrates a strong link between well-designed training programs and organizational success. For instance, Anvari *et al.* (2010) studied strategic training initiatives at a medical university in Iran, exploring the relationship between training, employee loyalty, and turnover. Their findings revealed a significant connection between strategic training and increased employee dedication, highlighting its role in fostering commitment and reducing attrition. Similarly, Motlokoa, Sekantsi, and Monyolo (2018) investigated the banking sector in Lesotho, focusing on the impact of training on motivation and performance. Their results showed that strategic training notably improved employee motivation and performance, suggesting that organizations should prioritize investments in training. In Uganda, Edward, Kasekende, and Angundaru (2017) examined the banking sector and found that training enhanced both job satisfaction and employee commitment. They concluded that strategic training is vital for cultivating loyalty and boosting firm performance. These studies collectively emphasize the significant role strategic training plays in enhancing organizational performance.

Moderating effect of employee commitment on relationship between Strategic training practices and Firm performance

Studies suggest that while strategic training can improve employee skills and organizational outcomes, its impact is significantly amplified when employees exhibit strong commitment to their organization. For example, Gilley and Gilley (2022) found that committed employees are more likely to apply newly acquired skills effectively, thus enhancing overall firm performance. They argue that employee commitment fosters a supportive work environment where training initiatives are more readily embraced and integrated into everyday tasks. In line with this, research by Albrecht *et al.* (2015) demonstrated that training programs designed to align with organizational goals lead to higher employee engagement, which in turn improves job performance and organizational success. Similarly, Cascio and Boudreau (2016) highlighted that the positive effects of strategic training on firm performance are often moderated by employee commitment, as highly committed employees tend to be more motivated and exhibit better performance. Additionally, studies in the banking sector by Motlokoa, Sekantsi, and Monyolo (2018) revealed that strategic training programs had a more pronounced effect on employee motivation and performance in organizations with higher levels of employee commitment. These findings underscore the importance of fostering employee commitment to maximize the returns on strategic training, suggesting that organizations must not only invest in training but also in strategies to enhance employee loyalty and engagement (Vlachos, 2020).

Moderating effect of affective commitment on the relationship of strategic training practices in firm performance

Empirical studies suggest that affective commitment significantly moderates the relationship between strategic training practices and firm performance, amplifying the positive effects of training initiatives. Affective commitment refers to the emotional attachment and identification an employee has with their organization, which influences their motivation to engage with training and contribute to organizational success. Research by Albrecht *et al.* (2015) indicated that employees with high affective commitment are more likely to fully participate in strategic training programs, applying the acquired skills to enhance performance. Cascio and Boudreau (2016) further supported this, finding that the alignment of training with organizational goals boosts employee engagement, especially among those with strong emotional ties to the company. Additionally, Vlachos (2020) highlighted that affective commitment not only fosters better training outcomes but also supports long-term performance improvements, as committed employees tend to be more consistent in their job performance. Similarly, Gilley and Gilley (2022) found that strategic training programs have a greater impact on organizational performance when employees feel emotionally connected to the organization, as they

are more motivated to apply the knowledge gained. These studies showed that fostering affective commitment can enhance the effectiveness of strategic training, leading to improved firm performance. Hence, hypothesis H₀₁ below:

H₀₁: Affective commitment does not significantly moderate the relationship between strategic training practices and firm performance.

Moderating effect of continuous commitment on the relationship of strategic training practices in firm performance

Continuous commitment refers to the employees' desire to remain with an organization due to the perceived costs of leaving, such as loss of benefits or social connections. Studies indicate that employees with high continuous commitment are more likely to benefit from strategic training, as they are less likely to leave the organization after receiving training and are more invested in applying the acquired skills. For instance, Gilley and Gilley (2022) found that continuous commitment, combined with strategic training, leads to higher retention and better application of learned skills, enhancing overall firm performance. Similarly, Tannenbaum *et al.* (2021) demonstrated that employees who feel obligated to stay due to continuous commitment are more inclined to invest effort into their development, thereby contributing to organizational success. Furthermore, Vlachos (2020) emphasized that continuous commitment moderates the relationship between training and performance by ensuring that trained employees remain with the organization long enough to contribute to its goals. This suggests that fostering continuous commitment alongside strategic training practices can strengthen the link between training and improved firm performance. Thus, the hypothesis H₀₂ below:

H₀₂: Continuous commitment does not significantly moderate the relationship between strategic training practices and firm performance

Moderating effect of normative commitment on the relationship of strategic training practices in firm performance

Normative commitment refers to the feeling of duty employees have towards their organization, often stemming from organizational culture or values. Research by Albrecht *et al.* (2015) highlights that employees with high normative commitment are more likely to fully engage in strategic training, as they feel an intrinsic obligation to contribute to the organization's success. In a similar vein, Tannenbaum *et al.* (2021) found that normative commitment enhances the transfer of training to job performance, as employees feel morally compelled to apply the skills learned. Furthermore, Gilley and Gilley (2022) emphasized that when employees are committed to their organization out of a sense of duty, they tend to have higher retention rates, which ensures the long-term benefits of training initiatives. Vlachos (2020) also supported this view, noting that employees with strong normative commitment are more likely to persist in their roles, utilizing their training to improve firm performance. These findings indicate that fostering normative commitment can strengthen the link between strategic training practices and improved organizational outcomes. Hypothesis H₀₃, is given below:

H₀₃: Normative commitment does not significantly moderate the relationship between strategic training practices and firm performance.

Resource Based View theory

The Resource-Based View (RBV) theory, introduced by Barney (1991), posits that a firm's resources and capabilities are central to achieving a competitive advantage. The theory suggests that resources must be valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable to contribute to superior performance. In the context of the current study, RBV provides a framework to understand how strategic training, viewed as a valuable resource, can enhance organizational performance when effectively utilized. The theory emphasizes the role of human capital as a unique and inimitable resource that drives firm success (Barney, 1991). By incorporating employee commitment; whether affective, normative, or continuous, the study explores how such resources can

harnessed through strategic training to strengthen the link between employee capabilities and overall firm performance.

METHODOLOGY

Research design and Population

The explanatory design was chosen for this study to explore previously unexamined data, making it ideal for social research, where uncovering lesser-studied phenomena is essential. While it may not cover every possible aspect, it provides an in-depth understanding of the issue at hand. Furthermore, this design is both cost- and time-efficient in data collection, and it facilitates the standardization of interview questions and hypothesis testing. The target population refers to the group of interest for the study (Sekaran, 2010). For this research, the population consisted of 344 human resource management consultancy firms in Nairobi, Kenya. These firms were selected due to their likely familiarity with strategic training processes, as well as Nairobi's concentration of HR professionals, as indicated in the Kenya Economic Report (2020). The inclusion of HR professionals in the population allows for effective generalization of the findings to the wider sector. Nairobi's strategic selection stems from its role as a central hub for consultancy firms in the country.

Sample size and data

Bukhari (2020) defines sampling as a method of selecting a representative subset of a population, considering all possible participants in the study. The main goal of sampling is to select a group that mirrors the entire population, allowing the researcher to make inferences about the population, while also accounting for time, financial, and other constraints. For this study, the researcher employed simple random sampling, which requires little prior knowledge of the population, eliminates classification errors, aligns with inferential statistics, and is free from bias. It also simplifies the process and facilitates the evaluation of sampling errors. The sample size was determined using Yamane's (1967) simplified formula for proportions, assuming a 95% confidence level and $P \geq 0.5$. This method follows the principles of sampling theory, which emphasizes the identification of all potential units in the target population to calculate the probability of selecting a random combination.

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

Where: n = required responses

N = Sample size

e2 = error limit

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

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

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

FINDINGS

Hierarchical regression results

This was conducted to determine the moderating effects of affective commitment, continuous commitment, and normative commitment on the relationship between strategic training variables (motivation to learn, supervisor support, and training employee attitude) and firm performance. The results are provided in table 1 below.

In Model 1, the predictors (motivation to learn, supervisor support, and training employee attitude) were entered into the regression equation. The results showed that these predictors explained only 2.3% of the variance in firm performance ($R^2 = .023$, $p > .05$), indicating a weak relationship. None of the predictors were statistically significant at this stage, highlighting that the direct influence of these strategic training variables on firm performance is minimal.

In Model 2, affective commitment was introduced as a moderating variable. This addition resulted in a slight increase in the explained variance to 4.9% ($R^2 = .049$, $p < .05$). The interaction between affective commitment and the predictors was significant ($\beta = .210$, $p < .05$), suggesting that affective commitment moderates the relationship between the strategic training variables and firm performance. This indicates that employees' emotional attachment to their organization enhances the impact of strategic training on performance.

Model 3 included continuous commitment as a moderator. This model explained 18.1% of the variance in firm performance ($R^2 = .181$, $p < .001$). The interaction term for continuous commitment and the predictors was significant ($\beta = .595$, $p < .001$), indicating a strong moderating effect of continuous commitment on the relationship between strategic training variables and firm performance. Continuous commitment, reflecting employees' perceived cost of leaving the organization, significantly amplifies the effectiveness of strategic training initiatives on firm performance.

Finally, in Model 4, normative commitment was added as a moderator. This model further increased the explained variance to 19.5% ($R^2 = .195$, $p < .001$). The interaction term for normative commitment was significant ($\beta = .445$, $p < .001$), suggesting a substantial moderating effect. Normative commitment, which pertains to employees' sense of obligation to remain with the organization, enhances the positive effects of strategic training on firm performance.

Therefore, the hierarchical regression results indicate that while the direct effects of motivation to learn, supervisor support, and training employee attitude on firm performance are weak, the inclusion of affective, continuous, and normative commitments as moderating variables significantly enhances the explanatory power of the model. Continuous and normative commitments, in particular, exhibit strong moderating effects, thereby underscoring their critical role in leveraging strategic training to improve firm performance. These findings suggest that fostering strong organizational commitment among employees can be a vital strategy in maximizing the benefits of training programs for overall firm performance.

Table 1 – Hierarchical regression results

Variables	Model 1 β (Std. Error)	Model2 β (Std. Error)	Model 3 β (Std. Error)	Model 4 β (Std. Error)
Predictors (Direct effect)				
Constant:	1.127	0.962	0.520	0.542
Motivation to learn	-.079(.091)	.207(.08)	1.102(.503)	.821(.573)
Supervisor support	.128(.105)	.272(.068)	.287(.068)	1.032(.745)
Training employee attitude	.196(.123)	.015(.081)	.0151(.081)	.178(.085)

Interactions: (Moderating effect)				
Affective commitment, Motivation to learn, Supervisor support, Training employee attitude		.210(.096)		
Continuous commitment, Motivation to learn, Supervisor support, Training employee attitude			.595(.102)	
Normative commitment, Motivation to learn, Supervisor support, Training employee attitude				.445(.072)
Model Summary Statistics:				
R	.151	.220	.425	.441
R Square	.023	.049	.181	.195
Adjusted R square	.006	.027	.162	.176
S.SE of the Estimate	.06671	.06601	.06125	.06073
R Square Change	.023	.026	.158	.171
F Change	1.377	4.807	34.107	37.759
Sig. F Change	.252	0.030	.000	.000

Source: (Field data, 2024)

Hypotheses testing

Based on the hierarchical regression results, the null hypotheses were tested and results presented, see table 2:

Null Hypothesis (H_{01}): Affective commitment does not significantly moderate the relationship between strategic training practices and firm performance.

In Model 2, the inclusion of affective commitment as a moderator increased the R^2 to .049, with the interaction term for affective commitment being significant ($\beta = .210$, $p < .05$). The significant interaction term indicates that affective commitment moderates the relationship between strategic training practices and firm performance. Therefore, we reject the null hypothesis. Affective commitment significantly moderates the relationship between strategic training practices and firm performance. These findings align with existing literature, which emphasizes the importance of affective commitment in enhancing employee performance and organizational outcomes (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Employees with high affective commitment are more likely to be motivated and engaged in training programs, thereby improving their performance and contributing positively to the firm's performance (Dysvik & Kuvaas, 2013).

Null Hypothesis (H_{02}): Continuous commitment does not significantly moderate the relationship between strategic training practices and firm performance.

In Model 3, the inclusion of continuance commitment as a moderator increased the R^2 to .181, with the interaction term for continuance commitment being highly significant ($\beta = .595$, $p < .001$). This significant interaction term suggests a strong moderating effect of continuance commitment on the relationship between strategic training practices and firm performance. Consequently, we reject the null hypothesis. Continuance commitment significantly moderates the relationship between strategic training practices and firm performance. This result is consistent with previous studies that have shown the impact of continuance commitment on employee behavior and organizational performance. Employees who perceive high costs

associated with leaving the organization are more likely to participate in training programs and apply what they learn to improve firm performance (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Meyer et al., 2022).

Null Hypothesis (H₀₃): Normative commitment does not significantly moderate the relationship between strategic training practices and firm performance.

In Model 4, the inclusion of normative commitment as a moderator further increased the R² to .195, with the interaction term for normative commitment being significant ($\beta = .445$, $p < .001$). This significant interaction term indicates that normative commitment moderates the relationship between strategic training practices and firm performance. Therefore, we reject the null hypothesis. Normative commitment significantly moderates the relationship between strategic training practices and firm performance. The moderating effect of normative commitment is supported by literature that highlights the role of employees' sense of obligation in enhancing their engagement and performance. Employees with high normative commitment feel a moral obligation to stay and contribute to the organization, making them more likely to benefit from and apply strategic training initiatives (Meyer & Herscovitch, 2021; Wasti, 2013). Therefore, based on the hierarchical regression analysis, all three types of commitment; affective, continuance, and normative significantly moderate the relationship between strategic training practices and firm performance among human resource management consultancy firms in Nairobi, Kenya. These findings underscore the critical role of employee commitment in maximizing the effectiveness of strategic training programs and improving overall firm performance. The results suggest that fostering a strong sense of commitment among employees can enhance the impact of training initiatives, leading to better organizational outcomes.

Table 2 – Hypothesis

Hypotheses	Beta (β)	P-values	Decision
Null Hypothesis (H ₀₁): Affective commitment does not significantly moderate the relationship between strategic training practices and firm performance	0.210	0.030	Reject
Null Hypothesis (H ₀₂): Continuous commitment does not significantly moderate the relationship between strategic training practices and firm performance	0.595	0.000	Reject
Null Hypothesis (H ₀₃): Normative commitment does not significantly moderate the relationship between strategic training practices and firm performance	0.445	0.000	Reject

Source: (Field data, 2024)

CONCLUSION

The study explored how employee commitment moderates the relationship between strategic training practices and firm performance in HR consultancy firms in Nairobi, Kenya. The findings indicated that while strategic training variables; motivation to learn, supervisor support, and training employee attitude had a weak direct impact on firm performance, their effectiveness significantly increased when employee commitment was factored in as a moderating variable. Affective commitment, which reflects employees' emotional attachment to their organization, was found to enhance the impact of training on performance, albeit to a moderate extent. On the other hand, continuance commitment, which relates to employees' perceived cost of leaving the organization, had a much stronger moderating effect, demonstrating that employees who feel tied to their organization due to financial or career-related reasons are more likely to apply training outcomes effectively.

Similarly, normative commitment, which stems from employees' sense of moral obligation to stay with the organization, also showed a strong moderating effect, reinforcing the idea that employees who feel a duty to their employer are more engaged in training programs and contribute to improved performance. These results emphasize that organizations cannot rely solely on training programs to enhance performance; rather, they

must also cultivate a work environment that fosters strong commitment. By prioritizing policies that enhance employees' emotional connection, financial investment, and moral obligation to the organization, firms can maximize the effectiveness of strategic training initiatives. Ultimately, fostering high levels of employee commitment ensures that training investments translate into tangible performance improvements, thereby driving long-term organizational success.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, the study recommends that HR consultancy firms prioritize strategies that enhance employee commitment to maximize the effectiveness of strategic training programs. Organizations should implement policies that foster affective commitment by creating a supportive work environment and recognizing employee contributions. Additionally, firms should provide career growth opportunities and job security to strengthen continuance commitment, ensuring employees see long-term value in staying. Moreover, reinforcing normative commitment through ethical leadership and a strong organizational culture will encourage employees to feel a moral obligation to contribute. By integrating these approaches, firms can enhance training effectiveness and improve overall performance.

IMPLICATION

The findings have both theoretical and practical implications. Theoretically, the study reinforces the Resource-Based View (RBV) theory by demonstrating that employee commitment is a valuable intangible resource that enhances the impact of strategic training on firm performance. This underscores the importance of human capital as a critical competitive advantage. Practically, the results highlight the need for HR consultancy firms to integrate employee commitment strategies into their training programs. Organizations should foster emotional attachment, job security, and moral obligation among employees to maximize training effectiveness. This ensures that training investments translate into improved performance, ultimately strengthening the firm's market competitiveness.

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