



International University of Leadership

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THE CHALLENGES OF MODERN RETAIL EMPLOYEES TRAINING LEARNINGS' IMPLEMENTATION, A MOROCCAN PERSPECTIVE

By

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DISSERTATION

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This dissertation has been examined and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctorate of Business Administration

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DECLARATION

I declare that the work in this thesis was carried out in accordance with the regulations of the International University of Leadership and is original except where indicated by specific reference in the text. No part of the thesis has been submitted as part of any other academic award. The thesis has not been presented to any other education institution in Morocco or overseas.

Any views expressed in the thesis are those of the author and in no way represent those of the University.

Ahmed SALEMI

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His love and life mission remain the development of employees at the retail level.

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my Dad, my very first teacher from the school of life. He taught me to remain humble and always seek knowledge and understanding. He also taught me that nothing beats love.

This work is also dedicated to my wife Hanane and my two kids Imane and Abdellah. They have always supported me when I had to work long hours and deprived them from weekends and well deserved vacations.

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Abstract

THE CHALLENGES OF MODERN RETAIL EMPLOYEES TRAINING PROGRAMS' IMPLEMENTATION, A MOROCCAN PERSPECTIVE

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Training and development is an important aspect of human resources; particularly in retail industry. Business owners and managers are constantly after the best return on training investment. Often, even if the training is adequate and the trainer is an excellent facilitator, employees voluntarily don't implement what they learnt during training.

The researcher wants to explore elements that may be behind this phenomenon. To delimitate the subject and based on his 20 years' experience as a professional retail trainer, three environmental variables are studied to see whether or not they impact the willingness of employees to implement learning and put skills into practice: Leadership, corporate culture, and follow-up and control.

The researcher reviewed the literature on retail industry, Management of retail human resources, motivation and control of this very particular human capital, corporate culture and leadership. The researcher explored best practices related to these topics and how they impact the attitude of employees. Then the researcher did a field study where senior managers were interviewed and several focus groups with retail employees were conducted. The researcher wanted to get managers and employees opinion on the previous topics and their impact on the willingness of employees to implement what they learn during trainings. The objective is the compare and contrast with the literature and come to an understanding that will help managers and business owners create optimum environment to get the best out every training and development program.

Several authors conclusion on managing human resources concluded that indeed for employees to be engaged and deliver up to expectation, organizations must create appropriate supportive and performance oriented cultures. Literature review also support the importance of appropriate human resources management; particularly when motivation, follow up and control are concerned. If follow up and control are not perceived correctly, employees will not perform up to expectations. Last but not least, Leadership is the back bone of all communication with employees particularly in the retail industry. Great leaders get people to go beyond the call of duty. When good culture, good leadership, appropriate control mechanisms are in place, employees will implement what they learn in trainings.

The analysis of data collected from the empirical study shows positive correlation with the literature review conclusions. The researcher discussed further these elements and implications on management.

In conclusion, the significance and limitations of the research are discussed, recommendations were made and further study proposed.

Keywords: Corporate culture, Leadership, follow-up and control, implementation of training, retail

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents a general overview of the thesis. Mainly, the foundation of the study, the motivation behind the choice of the topic, definition of the problem, the research objectives, the hypotheses, the overall value of this work, Research Methodology, limitations, and the structure of the thesis.

1.1 Foundation of the study

This thesis explores the challenges of implementing the learnings from training programs in the retail industry. Many managers have reported that their sales training programs fail to make a lasting visible impact on overall sales figures (AchieveGlobal, 2011). Spending money, therefore, on training is not a sound managerial decision. Yet, the review of literature and the author's 20 years' experience disagree with the previous statement. How can training be a waste of money when employees' development is at the heart of all sound human resources management strategies. According to Ristow (2009), the business unit with highly skilled and trained employees have more success rates. Training and development programs provide the organization an edge over competitors (Denisi, Budwar and Varma, 2008). In fact, the best differentiating element over competition that is unique and hard to copy remains the human element. Obviously, we cannot get rid of this vital activity. Training is among the **HR management** responsibilities of every line manager (Dessler,2020). Angle (2008) states that every individual works in a given organization as per their capabilities and capacities.

When managers report that the trainings didn't add value to the bottom line, it is then important to research the reasons behind that. There are certainly many variables that will impact positively or negatively the return on training investment. To evaluate training

effectiveness, most studies suggest Kirkpatrick's Four-Level Training Evaluation Model (Donald Kirkpatrick, 1994):

Level 1 - Reactions: How participants have reacted to training.

Level 2 - Learning: What participants have learned from training.

Level 3 - Behavior: Whether what was learned is being applied.

Level 4 - Results: Whether the application of training is achieving results.

This thesis will focus on level 3 of Kirkpatrick's Four-Level Training Evaluation Model (Behavior: Whether what was learned is being applied). **We assume, the training is well received (Level 1) and new skills gained (Level 2), and implementing these new skills will achieve quantifiable financial results (Level 4).** Applying the skills learnt on the job depends on:

1. The management's leadership competencies,
2. The presence of an engaging company culture,
3. The follow up mechanisms and tools put in place to support and coach employees.

Managers and supervisors must build rapport with employees (true Leadership). In acknowledging that it is the duty of supervisors to ensure that employee job performance is at maximum potential, it would be advantageous for managers in all trades and industry sectors worldwide to understand what types of employee-supervisor interactions are associated with employee job performance (Justin Conway,2022). If an employee feels that his/her supervisor may give incorrect information or a task that will not benefit the company, the employee may take extra precautions and/or be reluctant to perform when working

(Elmuti, 1997). The perceived corporate culture is also a critical variable that impacts the degree of which employees will apply knowledge and skills on the job. When employees feel that they are appreciated and receive rewards for service to their company, their motivation to continue receiving rewards increases, and levels of job performance increase (Rhodes & Eisenberger, 2002). Aside from **Leadership** and **corporate culture**, the right follow-up tools must be in place to help employees stay on course and continuously apply skills and learning. Action control is one of the main Management **control systems** and it is direct and focuses on the encouragement of appropriate actions and behavior and prevention of inappropriate actions and behavior of the employees (Merchant & Van der Stede, 2012, p 81).

1.2 Motivation of The Study

In Surah An-Nahl, Allah states a general rule, which is to “ask the knowledgeable if you do not know”. Prophet Muhammad (SA) said way before Albert Einstein that Intellectual growth should commence at birth and cease only at death. Needless to state that many scholars claim the power of the skills capital and how important it is for organizations. Schultz (2001) states that ‘leaders must give employees skills training and education’.

For two decades, one of the objections I get every time I approach a potential client as a Training expert is the following; What if I train the employees and I don’t see a positive ROI (Return On Investment)? My answer has always been that it is better to train them than not. It stands to reason that “illiteracy does not promote productivity”, (Cronje *et al.*,1997). But, I have always been concerned about my clients’ ROI on training and development. I needed to explore further the factors that may improve and motivate employees to implement the training they receive and willingly put the new skills into practice. This thesis is all about that.

1.3 Definition of The Problem

Morocco is investing \$91 Million in 2022 on vocational training (Jihan Rahhou,2021). Local and international private organizations invest even more budget on training and development. Certainly, this is a great investment on people; particularly low lever employees. These are individuals who are making very low wages and who have little opportunity to significantly increase their pay in either current jobs or through promotions" (Robbins, 1998:225).

I have been involved in retail training for almost two decades and the implementation of the learning in the stores has always been a challenge. Business owners, Talent managers and human resources managers all have the same worry and that is how can they be sure the training will yield desired results and achieve set objectives?

I delivered classroom trainings, On the Job trainings, and I supported the trainings with follow up coaching sessions. Throughout the years, I have been alert and constantly observed training environments in order to be able to guaranty the potential success of my trainings. Still, on many occasion, the desired outcomes never reached my level of expectations and that of my clients'. **In some environments some employees don't put into practice what they learn.**

Obviously, many variables may need to be considered in dealing with this challenge: Culture, employee perceptions, working environment, supervision and managerial skills, and others I may encounter while doing this research.

1.4 Research Aim and Objectives

Considering the research problem, the Main aim of the research is to explore the impact of leadership, corporate culture, and follow up & control mechanisms on the willingness of employees to implement what they learn from training and developments programs. This will be explored from two points of view: Employees and Managers.

The research will also propose a framework within which business owners and managers will create an environment that will ensure the implementation of learning and generation of positive Return on training investment (ROTI).

Objectives of this study:

- 1) Determine the Relationship between “employees’ attitude towards implementing learning and putting skills into practice” and “Good Leadership”
- 2) Determine the Relationship between “employees’ attitude towards implementing learning and putting skills into practice” and “Corporate culture”
- 3) Determine the Relationship between “employees’ attitude towards implementing learning and putting skills into practice” and “Follow-up and control mechanisms”

1.5 Hypotheses

The fundamental hypothesis is that employees who don’t have good leaders and work in a positive and empowering culture **will not** be engaged enough to put their skills into practice and perform not only up to expectations but beyond.

Hypothesis 1: Good leadership will turn employees into a very engaged ones and will get them to put all the skills they learnt into practice

Hypothesis 2: Employees who work in a positive and empowering working environment will be very engaged ones and will put all the skills they learnt into practice.

Hypothesis 3: leaders who put in place mechanism of follow up and control help employees implement what they learnt and put skills into practice.

Hypothesis 4: Employees will be engaged and implement what they learnt during training sessions if they have good leaders and good corporate culture and mechanism of control all together.

1.6 Value of the study

This study will help managers put in place a system that will guaranty a positive Return on training investment (taking onto consideration the Assumptions stated in section 1.1 of this Introduction). Employees will put into practice all what they learn not only during corporate trainings but also personal individual professional development efforts.

- Contribute to the body of knowledge by providing a model that can indicate a correlation between “leadership, corporate culture, and follow up and control” and “employees’ engagement”
- Assist organizations, particularly retail, to get the best out of the training investments.
- Encourage business owners and managers to make learning and development a priority in their organizations.
- Help the overall Moroccan economy as we encourage skills development and the building of a very competitive workforce in the region.

1.7 Research methodology

1.7.1 Research Design

Research methodology and design is the general plan of how we will go about answering the research question (Mark Sanders, Philip Lewis, and Adrian Thornhill, 2009).

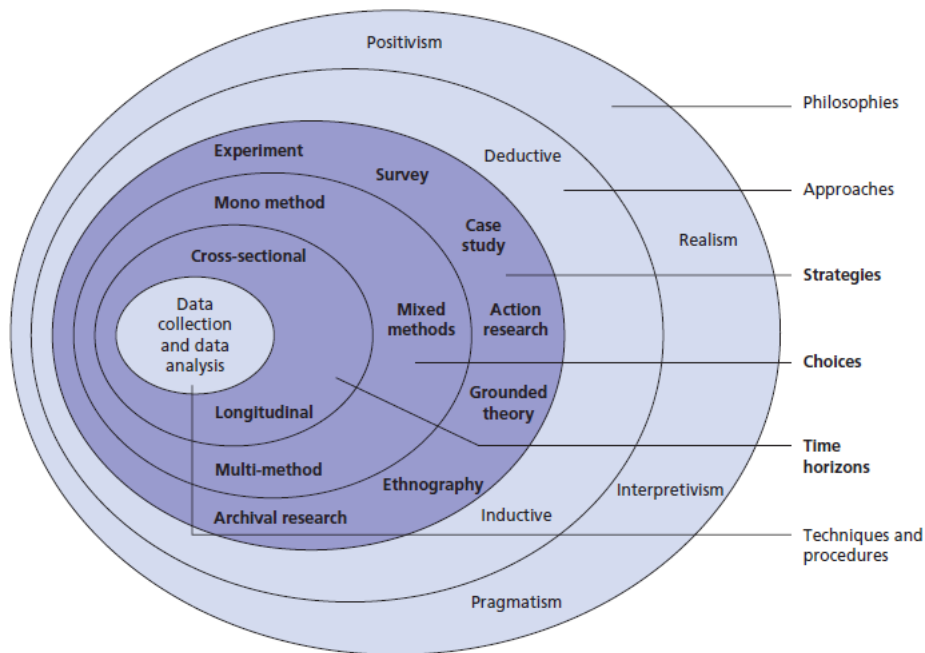


Figure1: The research 'Onion'

Source: Mark Sanders, Philip Lewis, and Adrian Thornhill, 2009

As Johnson and Clark (2006) note, as business and management researchers we need to be aware of the philosophical commitments we make through our choice of research strategy since this has significant impact not only on what we do but we understand what it is we are investigating.

Because my research is more concerned with the feelings and attitudes of the employees as they are subject to environmental factors and how is that effecting behavior and

performance, my research philosophy is that of Interpretivism. My focus will be on the details of situations and the reality behind these details.

The Approach that will be used is a combination of deductive and inductive; Deductive as we verify theories & hypotheses and inductive as the purpose is to understand better a phenomenon and hopefully build a theory out of it. This is a qualitative research and questions used during data collection are open ended questions both in the questionnaire and during the focus groups.

This stated, the research strategy used is both experimental and Grounded theory. Glasser and Strauss (1967) argue that grounded theory is not an excuse to ignore the literature. Conclusions must contain theoretical insights. This justifies the review of literature prior to empirical study.

1.7.2 Research Sample and size

Non-probability purposive sample is used to collect data. As a consultant and trainer for several retail organizations, I have access to a significant number of employees and managers. More than 200 employees and managers were involved in this research study.

1.7.3 Data Collection

Unstructured interviews and focus groups were used to collect data. Unstructured interviews were done with senior management. The rest of the sample size were involved in different focus groups in groups of 20 throughout a period of 2 years. Focus group members were interviewed using a combination of preset open ended qualitative interview questions and follow up questions raised during open discussions.

1.8 Limitations of the Study

The research is limited to the retail organizations, the environment in which it is conducted and the perceptions participants hold about their organizations and managers. Therefore, the findings and conclusions of this study could be only relevant and applicable to employees within the organization researched and similar in the retail industry.

1.9 Structure of the Dissertation

The thesis content that follows is structured as such:

Chapter 2: Review of Literature and will focus on a comprehensive review of related literature.

Chapter 3: Methodology and will cover a detailed description of the methodology used, data collection and analysis, detailed description of the population and sampling technique.

Chapter 4: Findings and Discussion will present a discuss of the data we got from the empirical study. Recommendation are made for managers to help them get the best of their trainings investments and have more engaged employees

Chapter 5: Conclusion and will summarize the main ideas of this work, the overall learning outcomes, limitations of this work and further research is suggested.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

.2.1 Retail industry and the human element

.2.1.1 Retail industry overview

Kotler and Armstrong define retailing as all the activities for selling goods or services directly to ultimate buyers for their personal, non-business use (2012). Retailing is on the vital industries for any society. This is why it has been mostly defined as a socio-economic system. Interestingly enough the word 'retail' comes from the French word 'retailer'; meaning 'to cut piece off' or 'break bulk' (Kujtim Hameli, 2018).

Retailing is very old but only few decades ago it emerged as a very organized system. Convenience has always been key to retail, consumers bought at their closest convenient store, yet there is a shift to target retailing, where consumers are inclined to go farther to get the best choice at better prices (Fernie et al., 2012: 10). There are different types of retailing. Stores can be categorized based on ownership, products offered, and service level.

Customers today are more likely experienced buyers with a keen eye for price, service, and convenience. Delivering a unique in-store experience is a key goal for retailers today (Tang & Lim, 2008)

In Morocco, Retail has grown significantly in the last two decades, turning traditional retail into modern one. Rawaj vision and many other government incentives has been a great help to boost this industry. The government is also helping creating the right environment for both retailers and their customers. In 2018, the law 31-08 was reinforced to protect further

consumers and build trust. Convenience stores represent 58% of the sector’s turnover, 36% of Jobs and 80% of Sales outlets (oxford business group, 2019).

Malls in Morocco are growing fast, helping modern retail develop further. Millions of people visit these malls. These customers are being attracted by many elements including modern design, comfort, and nice shopping experience (Zakaria Laroussi, 2022). These positive experiences can’t take place unless the human element is well trained and is delivering up to expectations.

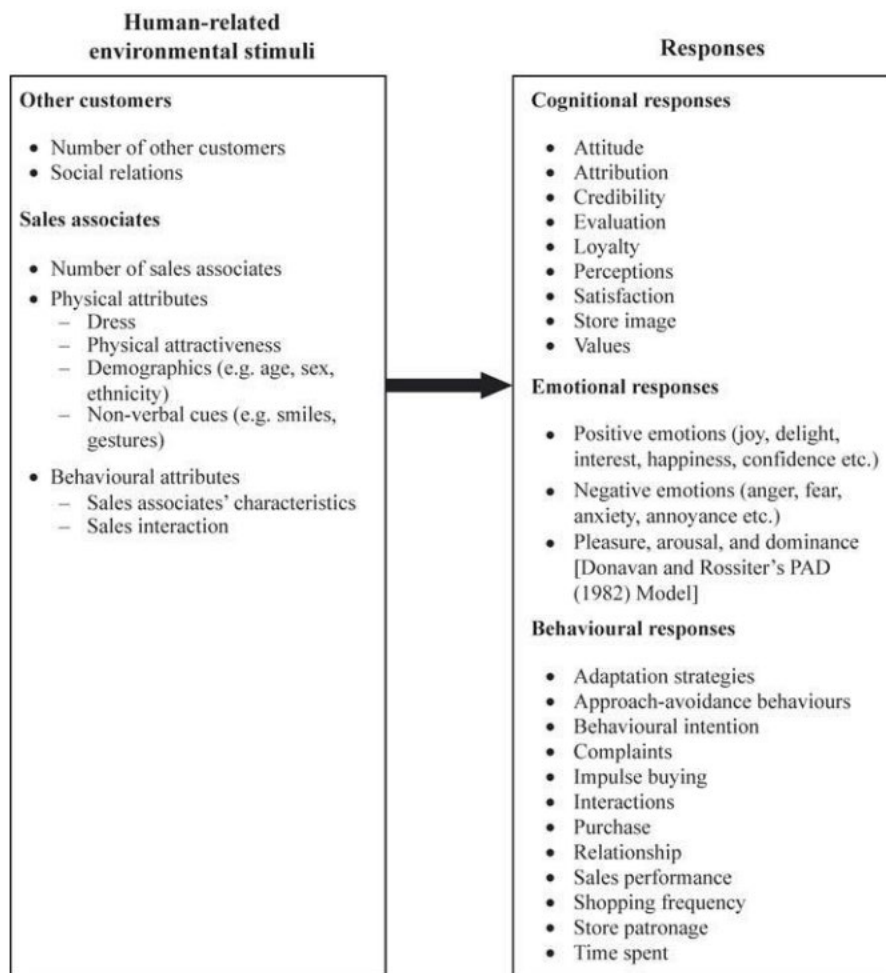


Figure 2: Conceptual framework of human-related environment stimuli and responses. Jae-Eun Kim & Jieun Kim, 2012.

retailers need to effectively manage, control and manipulate human-related environmental factors in order to generate a positive influence on consumers' perceptions towards stores and their behaviors (Jae-Eun Kim & Jieun Kim, 2012). Jae-Eun Kim & Jieun Kim did an excellent work illustrating the influence of the human factors in retail environment (Figure 2).

.2.1.2 The challenge of developing a competitive human element

Planning for small businesses is a must in a very competitive environment where success is achieved through creating competitive advantages. These competitive advantages must be unique and hard to copy. Differentiation strategy is one of the best business strategies; particularly in the retail industry.

When exploring business strategies, Michael Porter strategies come to mind first.

Particularly, Cost leadership and Differentiation. Cost leadership emphasizes producing standardized products at a low per-unit cost for consumers who are price sensitive (David, F. & David, F., 2017). Differentiation is a strategy aimed at producing products and services considered unique to the industry and directed at consumers who are relatively price insensitive (David, F. & David, F., 2017).

Although Cost leadership is one of the strategies that are widely used in the retail industry particularly within the EDLP (Every Day Low Prices) retailers, it is most associated with some type of differentiation strategy. Wegman's, for example, provides consistent lower prices...In addition to store service features, such as cooking classes, freshly prepared foods, and gourmet food cafés (Dinesh et al, 2008).

Retail businesses spend more of their investments on creating an amazing customer experience. It is this customer experience that presents unlimited creative opportunities for managers to take differentiation to a whole different level. Design, social setting, and ambience influence shopping behavior (Baker et al, 2002). Store characteristics that highlight service facets- offering a bank inside the store...provide value to customers and distinguish the store from competitors (Kumar and Karande, 200).

Retail environments are sensory, creating emotional and cognitive reactions in shoppers through sight, smell, sound, and touch (Kayina &Goel,2015). Environmental elements such as lighting, music, window dressing and layouts, architectural design, freshness and fragrance, appropriate temperature, soothing and trendy color, attractive logo, and gentle crowding are ideal conditions that can affect the current and future behavior of consumers in a retail setting (Smith and Burns, 1996). These environmental elements create a more engaging, satisfying, emotional, memorable, enjoyable and convenient retail experience for customers, resulting in being differentiated over competitors (Burke, 2005; Kumar et al., 2010; Dahlhoff, 2013).

Retail stores must differentiate themselves from completion. Price strategies alone are not enough. A particular attention should be given to the uniqueness of the differentiating elements. They must be hard to copy. Although store design and layout along with all other creative ideas to create an emotional bounding with customers are important, the human element stays the best creator of this bounding.

Retail is a people business. Retail employees need more than selling skills. It is all about the love of serving others. Unless retail owners invest in human development and aligning employees personal purpose with that of the retail store, this will remain a big challenge. Otherwise, store employees will be a very unique and almost impossible to copy competitive advantage. This will then be the best differentiation element that will make a whole lot of difference.

.2.2 Corporate culture and its impact on performance

.2.2.1 Organizational culture and its effects

Organizational culture is a combination of values and behaviors. Culture impacts a person's actions, thoughts, successes and failures. It represents beliefs, behaviors and attitudes that one consciously lives by [Gordon 2008, p.141]. Organizational culture has a major impact on performance. William's diagram (Table 1) is a summary of the main themes in the previous argument. This argument states goes further and states that 'Strong' organizational culture, aligns goals and generates high motivation.

Table 1

Relationship between organizational culture and organizational performance

The argument of the corporate-culture school is:

- That organizations have cultures.
- That they become more effective when they develop the right 'strong' cultures (which need careful definition).
- That these cultures create consensus and unity and motivate staff.
- That cultures have an effect on corporate performance.
- That when necessary, cultures can – and should - be changed.
- That it is the responsibility of senior managers to change them.

The corporate-culture approach presumes that organizational cultures can be assessed, managed, constructed and manipulated in the pursuit of enhanced organizational

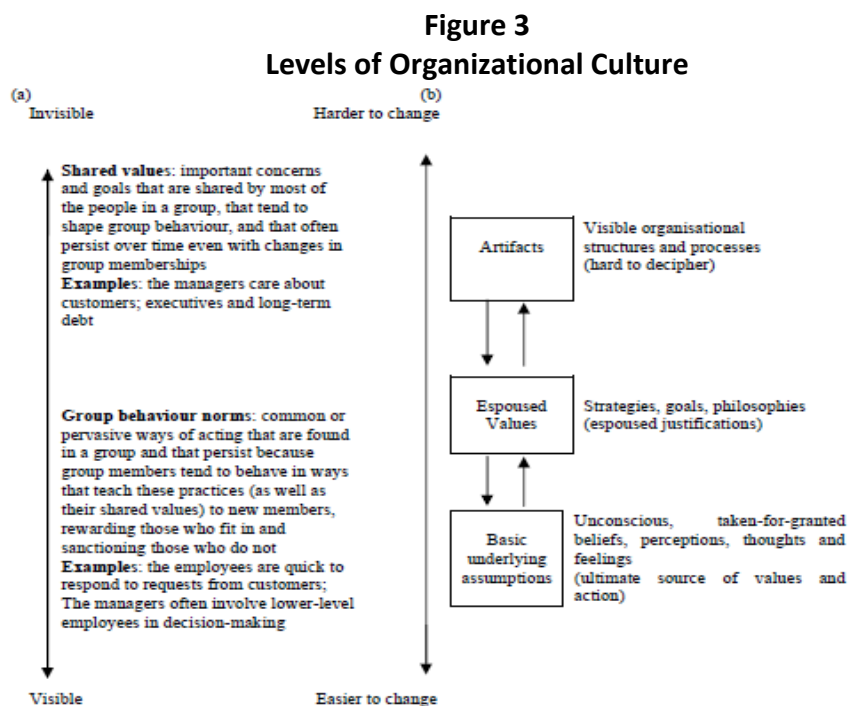
Source: Mabey and Salaman (1995:283). In Williams (1998:43)

effectiveness. Employees' norms, beliefs and values can, and when necessary, should be changed so that they can contribute the appropriate behavior, commit themselves to the organization, support management and strategy. This prevalent view holds that the norms and values shared by members of the organization create consensus, induce unity and, when appropriate, generate appropriate behavior. Cultures integrate the organization (Meek,1988).

Organizational culture and its impact on performance and engagement has been the focus of many researches. There is a consensus on this impact. Kopelman et al (1990) argue that organizational cultures produce unique sets of influences that affect human resources management.

Organizational culture has different levels and not all level can be visible to an outsider.

Figure 3 shows three levels of organizational culture and their visibility t an outsider (Pratt & Rafaeli, 1997).



Adapted from (a) Kottler and Heskett, (1992); (b) Schein (1992), in Willams (1998:41)

Artifacts are visible elements of the culture like language, dress code, behaviors, etc. Most of these elements are present during orientation days in order for new comers to know what is expected from them attitude and behavior wise. Values on the other hand are hard to see and they guide the behavior of organization members (Argyris & Schon, 1978). The most invisible to a new comer is the third level: Basic underlying assumptions. They develop overtime and from the way they handle different situations and events. The unconscious nature of these assumptions makes it very difficult to describe. People learn about them from trial-and –error behavior and by watching how veteran employees behave in different situations (Champoux, 2000).

.2.2.2 Types of cultures

Organizational culture can be divided into four dimensions or ideologies, power, role, performance, and supportive cultures (Harrison and Carroll (1991). Each of these types exhibit different types of behaviors based on different values which impact the way decisions are made and employees are motivated.

In **power cultures**, access to resources is unequal. The power is hierarchical and authoritarian. Leadership in these cultures is stricter but fair with those who are loyal. They see themselves as protectors and know what is best for the organization. Power is exercised therefore based on the leaders' view of what will be best for both the organization and employees. The success of this culture depends on its products and services.

In **Role cultures**, the structure and procedures are what matters the most. The duties and rewards are the result of contract between an organization and its employees. This culture makes an organization bureaucratic and predictable. In today's rapid and constant change, these organizations fail dramatically because they can't quickly adapt to new environments.

In **performance cultures**, employees are expected to put in their energy in order to get the rewards. Performance-oriented culture is viewed positively and employees in these culture believe that they work for something higher than themselves. They manager themselves and have a sense of urgency. There is a common vision and purpose that drives performance (Harrison, 1991).

In **Supportive cultures**, Trust is the central element of the relationship between the organization and its employees. Employees believe they are regarded as human beings and they go to work because they like it and they appreciate and care about one another. This culture is characterized by very good communication both formal and informal, support by the organization and harmony in the workplace. Hiring is very much influenced by individual-organization 'FIT'.

Figure 4: Characteristics of the four corporate cultures

Corporate Culture	Family (FAM)	Eiffel Tower (EIF)	Guided missile (GUT)	Incubator (IN)
Relationship between employees	Diffuse relationships to organic whole to which one is bonded	Specific role in mechanical system of required interactions	Specific tasks in cybernetic system targeted upon shared objectives	Diffuse, spontaneous relationships growing out of shared creative process
Attitude to authority	Status is ascribed to parent figures who are close and powerful	Status is ascribed to superior roles who are distant yet powerful	Status is achieved by project group members who contribute to targeted goal	Status is achieved by individuals exemplifying creativity and growth
Ways of thinking and learning	Intuitive and holistic, lateral and error correcting	Logical, analytical, vertical and rationally efficient	Problem centered, professional, practical and cross-disciplinary	Process oriented, creative ad hoc, inspirational
Attitudes to people	Family members	Human resources	Specialists and experts	Co-creators
Ways of changing	"Father" changes course	Change rules and procedures	Shift aim as target moves	Improvise and attune
Ways of motivating and rewarding	Intrinsic satisfaction in being loved and respected. Management by subjective	Promotion to greater position, larger role. Management by job description	Pay or credit for performance and problems solved. Management by objectives	Participating in the process of creating new realities. Management by enthusiasm
Criticism and conflict resolution	Turn other cheek, save others' faces, do not lose power game	Criticism is accusation of irrationality unless there are procedures to arbitrate conflicts	Constructive task-related only, then admit error and correct fast	Must improve creative idea not negate it

Source: (Trompenaars & Turner, 2012)

Other authors agree with this categorization of organizational culture, although using different terminology. Trompenaars and Turner (2012), build their model around: **Family, Eiffel Tower, Guided missile, Incubator**. Figure 4 present these different cultures outlining how the following elements are approached in each:

1. Relationships between employees
2. Attitude to authority
3. Ways of thinking and learning
4. Attitudes to people
5. How change is operated
6. Conflict resolution.
7. Motivation and rewards

.2.2.3 ‘Care, Model, coach’ Microsoft culture and its impact on performance intentions

Microsoft culture is indeed one of the best corporate culture in modern business era. The center of this culture is ‘Growth mindset’. Carol Dweck (2006) suggests that a growth mindset evolves from an attitude of hard work, learning, training, and perseverance. Growth mindset is learning, growing, and hard work despite setbacks. Microsoft applied this growth mindset in the organization as they created a new management framework: Model Coach Care.

To Whittinghil, corporate vice president of talent, learning, and insights at Microsoft, the purpose is to deliver success through empowerment and accountability by modeling, coaching, and caring (Sherin Shibu and Shana Lebowitz, business insider 2019).

Table 2: Model Coach Care.

Model	Modelling means to live the Microsoft culture and be a demonstrable example for employees. Managers should show that they practice growth mindset so that their employees have a framework for how to approach problems and recover from setbacks.
Coach	Coaching is about defining team objectives and helping the team adapt and learn. Managers should create a space where employees can learn from their mistakes, and emphasize their potential to grow and learn
Care	Attracting and retaining great people, knowing each person’s capabilities and aspirations and investing in the growth of others.

Source: Business Insider 2019: Microsoft is rolling out a new management framework to its leaders. It centers around a psychological insight called growth mindset.

In an interview given to Dale Carnegie, Kathleen Hogan (Chief People Officer and EVP of Human Resources for Microsoft) states that caring is the most important element when building teams. Managers are managers because they care about how others realize their full potential and are invested in the success of each individual in the team. People don't care what you know until they know you care. This model is one core leadership concept most organizations use to help supervisors and managers to build talent.

.2.3 Human resources management practices in the context of retail

.2.3.1 Human Resources management

Entering the new economic era of knowledge, human resources management is the foundation of organizational management, since the unique characteristics of human resources and knowledge capital have become the main competence of an organization (Hoobler and Johnson, 2004).

Gary Dessler (2020) states that to understand what human resource management is, we must start with understanding what managers do. A manager is responsible for accomplishing the organization's goals, and does so by managing the efforts of the people. Human resources management (HRM), then, is the process of *Acquiring, training, appraising, and compensating employees, and of attending to their labor relations, health and safety, and fairness concerns* (Gary Dessler 2020).

Gronroos (1990) and Gummesson (1990) stated that if a management wanted its employees to deliver an outstanding level of service to customers, it must be

prepared to do a great job with its employees. As we move to an extremely service oriented societies, Managing the human resource is vital.

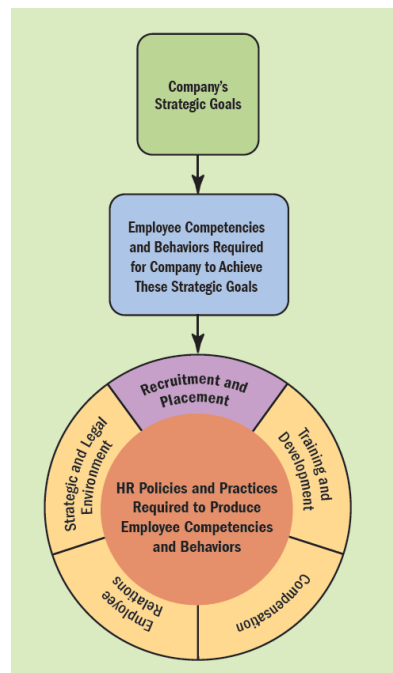


Figure 5: HRM Big picture

Source: Gary Dessler, Human Resources Management. 16th Edition.

.2.3.2 Managing the human element in Retail

Retail is one of the industries that are service oriented by far. Service quality is very important for any retail organization that wants to succeed. Lewis and Booms (1983) propose that service quality resides in the ability of the service firm to satisfy its customer needs i.e. customer satisfaction. Gronroos (1990) Customers evaluate banks' performance mainly on the basis of their personal contact and interaction. While & Paul (1998) supportive working environment and organizational aspiration to service and excellence will motivate employees to give customers the best service. Customer who meets a satisfied and enthusiastic employee will perceive the provided service positively.

Managing the human element in retail is subject in general to human resources strategies and tactics (stated in section 2.3.1), but also some elements specific to retail: Perceived Organizational support, trust in the supervisor, leader- member exchange.

First, Perceived Organizational Support (POS) is the extent to which employees believe that the company cares about them and appreciates their contributions to (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, & Sowa, 1986). Because organizations are not tangible in nature and rather are perceived through the interactions with people that are the essence of these organizations. Store Managers and supervisors represent the organization for retail employees. Rhodes and Eisenberger (2002) stated that favorable treatment from a supervisor is synonymous with support from the organization. This support, add Rhodes and Eisenberger, is a predictor of happier, more productive employees.

Second, Trust in the supervisor is synonymous to trust in another human being. Trust is a psychological state comprising the intention to accept vulnerability based upon positive expectations of the intentions or behavior of another (Rousseau, Sitkin, Burt, and Camerer, 1998). Trust is very important in the acceptance of duties from the supervisor. To establish trust supervisors and managers must show competence. The perception of supervisors has an impact on many employee outcomes (Elangovan and Xie, 1999). When supervisors delegate more to

employees, it is perceived as trust in their performance and will generate more self-esteem and motivation to perform (Gomez & Rosen, 2001).

Third, leader-member exchange is all about the extent of which an employee feels he/she belongs to the manager's in-group and has a very good relationship with him/her (Gomez & Rozen, 2021). Henderson et al (2008), state that when an employee is accepted into a manager's in-group, this can be perceived as a reward because it is typically the result of good job-performance and fulfillment of the psychological contract on behalf of the employee (Henderson et al., 2008).

.2.3.3 Importance of training and development

Part of managing human resources is caring about personal and professional development. In a market that is very volatile, employees must be up to date on skills and competencies necessary to create a competitive advantage. skills, behaviors and attitudes is the responsibility of two complementary systems namely, training and development (Kiat, 1994; Grobler et al., 2002).

Training is the process of teaching new employees the basic skills they need to perform their jobs (Gary Dessler 2020). According to Denisi, Budwar and Varma (2008), training and development programs provide the organization an edge over competitors. The training and development program helps in shaping employees' behavior and efforts to achieve long-term business objectives (Brown, 2003).

In retail, like all other industries, training not only improves skills and competencies but it also motivates employees. Employees' training significantly affects the morale or motivation

level of staff members in the context of retail sector (Dimba, 2010). Not only that but, as Harris and Brewster found in their research, improvement in skills and efficiency of employees provide new opportunities for career growth within and outside the organization (Harris and Brewster, 2003).

Garry Dessler (2020) states that although training is important, its efficiency lies in the need identification, the training elaboration and programming, and delivery.

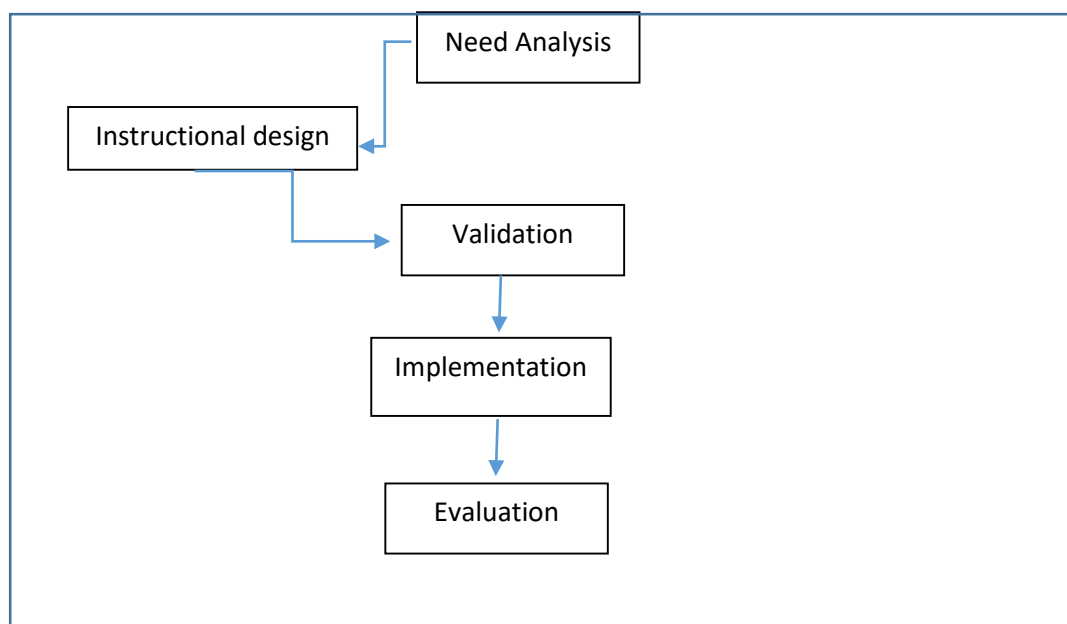


Figure 6: Training process

Adapted from Garry Dessler (2020)

If the process is respected, training becomes a true learning experience. Nel (2001) describes training as a learning experience aimed at bringing about a relatively permanent change in an individual that will heighten the individual's ability to do the job. Training affect also the attitude of employees. Training comprises a systematic process in which employees obtain knowledge, skills, **attitudes** and information needed to achieve the objectives of the organisation (Marx, 1993).

.2.3.4 Motivating retail sales employees

Retail employees are human and will be influenced by traditional motivational theories: The Need-Hierarchy, the two-factor, Adam’s Equity, Expectation theory, etc. The table below summarizes these theories:

Table 3

Theories of motivation

Theory	Sources of motivation	Main theorists
Need theories	People have different needs and desires, which cause individuals to pursue certain courses of action in an effort to regain internal equilibrium	Maslow (1954), Herzberg, Mausner and Snyder (1959), McClelland (1961), Alderfer (1972)
Equity theory	Drive to reduce feelings of tension caused by perceived inequity. How hard a person is willing to work is a function of a perceptual comparison of efforts and rewards with the efforts and rewards of others.	Adams (1963)
Expectancy theory	Relationship among desired outcomes, performance-reward and effort-variables. People are seen to choose deliberately how hard to work, based on the gains they expect to receive from their efforts.	Vroom (1964)
Reinforcement theory	Schedule of reinforcement used to reward people for their performance. Behavior is a function of its consequences.	Mainly based on the contributions of B.F. Skinner.
Goal-setting theory	Behavior is directed by setting specific target objectives and pursuing of these goals.	Locke (1968), Locke and Latham (1990)
Intrinsic motivation theory	Feelings of competence and self-control are subjective rewards that come from performing tasks well and from enjoyment.	Lawler (1969), Deci (1975), Deci and Ryan (1985)
Self-concept theory	People are motivated to enhance their self-esteem, self-worth and self-consistency.	Carlisle and Manning (1994)

Adapted from De Klerk (2001)

Retailing is one of the industries where motivating people is very challenging. “How do you motivate individuals who are earning very low wages and who have little opportunity to increase their pay significantly in either their current jobs or through promotions?”

(Robbins, 1998). Indeed, unless wages are up and factors such as leadership and organizational culture are positively modified, turn over in this industry will remain high.

Managers and immediate supervisors will play a huge role in motivating retail sales employees. We can argue that the manager is responsible for enabling employees as much as possible to realize what motivates them or at least, get rid of sources of demotivation (Holbeche, 1997). Employees do not perceive things and situations the same way. Catt & Miller (1991) state that employees are motivated in different ways and tend to have differing degrees of tolerance for frustration.

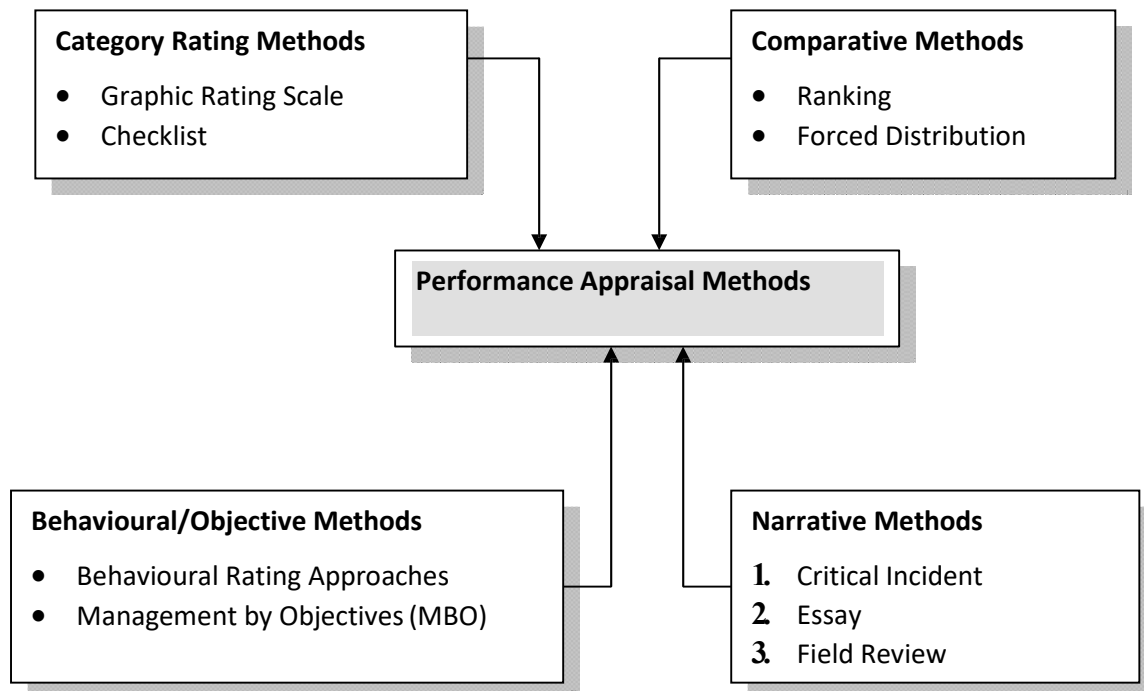
.2.3.5 Control, evaluation, and follow up and its impact on performance intentions

Performance intentions is one of the best predictors of employee job performance (Arnolds & Beshoff, 1998). Carkhuff (1986) defines it as a strong indication of motivation to produce.

Although employees need appropriate training and motivation, managers' follow-up, control and evaluation improves performance. Supervisors are to judge the performance and objectively evaluate it and provide feedback that strengthens performance intentions. Mathis and Jackson (2000) maintain that the immediate supervisor is able to judge the employee's job performance realistically, objectively and fairly.

There are different methods to evaluate employees. Below is a very good summary of the methods from the work of Mathis and Jackson (2000).

Figure 7: Methods of performance evaluation



Source: Mathis & Jackson, 2000:393

Employees need to know what is expected from them and whether or not they are on the right track. In this research the focus is on the motivational aspect of control and evaluation. Evaluation enables the organization to determine the success of employment, placing and motivation (Dessler 2020).

Evaluation is about employees obtaining certain information about themselves and get to know themselves in order that they themselves benefit from

it (Newton & Findlay, 1998). Therefore, evaluation aims at ensuring greater organizational effectiveness by means of individual performance (Griesel, 2004). Performance leads to satisfaction and satisfaction leads to repeat positive behavior (B.F. Skinner expectancy theory). Moreover, it is important that evaluation is concerned with development in such a way that all staff who are appraised can do a more advanced job than simply what is appraised (Stewart, 1987).

.2.4 Leadership and employees' engagement

.2.4.1 Leadership theories

Leadership is a concept that has been studied over and over again and is still an intriguing concept to researchers. The approach to studying leadership differs from one researcher to another. Some early researchers looked at it from the 'Person' perspective (trait theories) while others more recent looked at it from 'behavioral' perspective and many others studied the situations that influence both the person and the behavior. Later researchers state that situational leadership makes a lot more sense and proved to be more accurate when searching for the best leadership approach. The concept of leadership will remain the subject of continuous research.

What's leadership? Leadership is "the behavior of an individual...directing the activities of a group towards a shared goal" (Hemphill&coons, 1957, P. 7). Although there are many definitions to leadership, they all evolve around understanding how individual characteristics, behaviors and situations shape the impact on followers and influence them to perform as desired.

.2.4.1.1 Trait theories

According to Susanne Burns and Kerry Wilson (2010) the focus of trait theories of leadership is on the individual's characteristics. Burns and Wilson presented a rich literature review of the work of many authors who have researched trait theories and their conclusions. Trait theories focus is on studying successful leaders and emulates them (Shrberg et al., 1997). Because trait theories directly link individual characteristics to successful leadership so much to state that leaders are born and not made, Levine (2008) concluded that these theories are no longer uncritically accepted. The statement of Levine is supported by researches like Yukl Gary and Hughes Tom. "No trait would guarantee leadership success" (Yukl, 2002, P. 12).

.2.4.1.2 Behavioral theories

According to Bryman (1986), the failure of trait theories of leadership paved the way to behavioral theories. Many authors and different studies have embraced these theories. The most famous studies are those of IOWA State University, OHIO State University, and university of Michigan.

IOWA study highlights three styles: Autocratic, Democratic and Laissez-faire. Reported by Alan Bryman (1986) and Daft Richard (1999), Democratic style is the best and most effective one as it is centered on delegation and empowerments of followers. This behavior is believed to yield more success while leading others.

OHIO study, reported by Laurie Mullins (2008) focuses more on two styles: consideration and initiating structure. Trust and mutual respect on one hand and defining group

interactions on the other hand made this study interesting and for many researchers is considered to yield more success for leaders.

University of Michigan study, reported by Brymen (1986) and Leftwich (2001), resulted in the development of two styles of leadership: employee-centered and Job-Centered. The employee centered leadership is more focused on the follower's needs while the job centered leadership is more focused on the achievement of goals by performing the required tasks. Bartol & Martin (1998) concluded that it is possible for a leader to focus both on task completion and followers' satisfaction.

Out of the Michigan study Robert Blake & Jane Mouton developed the Managerial Grid with its five components (Blake & Mouton, 1985): Impoverished Management, Country Club, and Middle of the road, Team management, and Task management. Team management stands out as leaders give both importance to people and productivity while encouraging participation.

.2.4.1.3 Situational leadership

Although behavioral theories of leadership have been considered better than trait theories, they didn't give ample satisfaction to researchers who still found fallacies in them. There were situations where behavioral approach to leadership didn't yield good results. Several researchers have then introduced the impact of situations on the effectiveness and success of a leader.

Robbins Stephen (1997) the complexity of leadership success can't be easily understood by merely isolating preferable behavior (Robbins, 1997, P.419). There was a call then to isolate

critical situational factors that affects the efficiency of leadership and its success. Degree of structure, quality of leader-member relations, position power of the leader, role clarity, group norms, information availability, acceptance of leaders' decisions, and subordinates' maturity are all examples of critical situational factors (Howell et al., 1986, pp.88-102).

According to Ken Blanchard, there are four basic leadership styles in situational leadership: directing, coaching, supporting, and delegating (Blanchard, 2007). Blanchard explains that these styles correspond with four development levels: enthusiastic beginner, disillusioned learner, capable but cautious performer and self-reliant achiever. Each style corresponds to each level accordingly. All of this is then match with the actual state of the task and goal. To succeed in implementing situational leadership one has got to develop Diagnosis, flexibility, and partnering skills.

All in all, Leadership effectiveness and success is not only a matter of how good the leader is, nor about his or her behavior towards followers. These theories have been criticized over and over again. When researchers added situational variables, they open a whole new path in search for excellence in leadership.

.2.4.2 Steve Radcliffe's Leadership plain and simple

Steve Radcliffe (2010) states that no matter where one is in an organization he or she can be an inspiring leader. Although leadership has been studied for many years and different approached have been put forward, Steve Radcliffe work is remarkable as it made understanding leadership very simple. There are only three aspects of leading one has to grasp: Future, Engage, Deliver (Steve Radcliffe 2010).

.2.4.2.1 Future

Leading always starts in the future claims Radcliffe. Leadership is not about competencies, skills and personality; it's first and foremost about being in touch with what the leader cares about and then going for it. The focus is on what matters. Knowing where the leader is going helps him/her master the context and better see the big picture. If a manager or a supervisor is lost, how can he lead?

Radcliffe makes a lot of sense here. A leader should know where he/she is headed and have not only a clear vision but also the reason why it matters.

.2.4.2.2 Engage

The second aspect of leadership Steve Radcliffe assert is engage. Once a leader is clear on what he/she wants to lead for, he/she must not just tell and transmit to others but connect and engage them. The main elements of engagement, Radcliffe states, are: Building relationships, creating possibilities that are meaningful to followers, helping in seizing opportunities, move to actions. Building relationships is the backbone of engagement. In big relationships, people are not engaged just in the work you do together, they are engaged in the leader himself (Steve Radcliffe,2010).

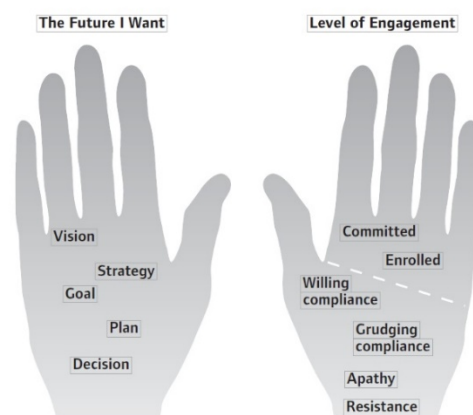


Figure 8: Level of Engagement
Leadership plain and simple, Steve Radcliffe 2010

Figure 8 explains the relationship between levels of engagement and the future the leader is leading to. Resistance happens when followers don't want what the leader wants. Apathy is when followers just don't care. Grudging compliance is when followers follow because they have to. Willing compliance is when followers follow but without enthusiasm (at this level, business as usual runs well). Enrolled is when followers choose to join the leader and bring their creativity, enthusiasm, and ideas. Committed is when followers are not distracted and don't switch to other priorities; they bring their own energy because what they want is aligned with what the leader wants.

.2.4.2.3 Deliver

Prerequisite to Deliver is Future and Engage. Then, a Leader must recognize that there are forces in the environment that will go against the engaged follower. At this stage, leaders must create focus and discipline. They should bring urgency and conviction to the requests and are likely to follow up on what they are asking for. Leaders must not shy away from handling underperformance.

CHAPTER Three: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

Section two of this thesis presented and explained the dependent variables: Management's leadership competencies, An engaging company culture, control and evaluation. In this section, the focus will be on the design and methodology followed in researching the impact of corporate culture, leadership and control on implementing skills and competencies learnt during trainings.

This chapter is divided into four sections. First, we will remind the research objectives. Second, we will present the research design and data collection. Third, we will present the sample and sampling procedure. Fourth, we will present the Data analysis method and techniques used in this research.

3.2 Research objective and questions

The main aim of the research is to explore the impact of leadership, corporate culture, and follow up & control mechanisms on the willingness of employees to implement what they learn from training and developments programs.

Objectives of this study:

- 1) Determine the change in "employees' attitude towards implementing learning and putting skills into practice" and "Good Leadership"
- 2) Determine the change in "employees' attitude towards implementing learning and putting skills into practice" and "Corporate culture"
- 3) Determine the change in "employees' attitude towards implementing learning and putting skills into practice" and "Follow-up and control mechanisms"

3.3 Research design and Data Collection methods

3.3.1 Research Design

Research design is the plan we use to obtain participants and collect data from them, in order to reach conclusions about the research problem (Page & Meyer 2000). The design chosen must be adequate to enable the researcher to answer his/her research. There are four different types of research design namely; experimental research, quasi-experimental research, non-experimental research and qualitative research.

For the purpose of this study the researcher has selected the Qualitative research. The process of research involves empirical work being carried out with the collection of data which can concur, refute or contest theories which in turn allows for understanding and clarification for different observations (May, 1997).

This method is more relevant as the research wants to gain more depth and meaning based on individuals' experiences around training and its failure and the development of alternative solution to turn failure into success having in mind concepts and best practices from the literature review.

3.3.2 Data Collection methods

3.3.2.1 Unstructured Interviews

The research chose unstructured interviews. Participants were able to elaborate and provide a significant amount of information along with the possibility of getting more data. The interviewee is given the opportunity to talk freely about events, behavior and beliefs in relation to the topic area, so that this type of interaction is sometimes called 'non-directive'.

It has been labelled as an informant interview since it is the interviewee's perceptions that guide the conduct of the interview (Mark Saunders, Philip Lewis, Adrian Thornhill, 2009).

Interviews are the most suitable approach for studying complex and sensitive information as the interviewer has the opportunity to prepare a participant before asking sensitive questions and to explain complex ones to them in person (Kumar 2005).

Kumar (2005) views interviews as effective but also time consuming and expensive. Also, the experience of the interviewer, competencies, and commitment affect the quality of data (Kumar, 2005). The research is aware of the potential bias and remained as objective as possible. All conclusions were re-examined using field observation.

3.3.2.2 Focus groups

The focus group is used to refer to those group interviews where the topic is defined clearly and precisely and there is a focus on enabling and recording interactive discussion between participants (Carson et al. 2001).

Typically, group interviews (and focus groups) involve between four and eight participants, or perhaps even 12, the precise number depending upon the nature of the participants, the topic matter and the skill of the interviewer (Mark Saunders, Philip Lewis, Adrian Thornhill, 2009).

Using the guidance of Mark Saunders, Philip Lewis, and Adrian Thornhill, the researcher took the following precautions:

- To avoid non-attendance and or unreliable data, participants had no idea they are taking part of a research. Research was conducted while doing training.

- Lack of trust, perceptions about status differences, dominance of certain individuals. Forming Groups respected the following: Employees alone, same level of managers alone, no mix of managers and employees, no recordings.
- To avoid people dominating the discussion, the researcher facilitated the interaction and made sure that even the quiet ones expressed themselves.

Participants are selected because they have certain characteristics in common that relate to the topic being discussed and they are encouraged to discuss and share their points of view without any pressure to reach a consensus (Krueger and Casey 2000). In our research all participants are retail employees and managers with different experiences in different retail organizations.

3.4 Sampling and selection

The sampling method used is a non-probability sample because it is the most appropriate to answer the research questions. the purposive sampling method is therefore the chosen one.

This method is essentially strategic and necessitates an attempt to establish a good correspondence between research questions and sampling (Bryman, 2004). The inclusion criterion was based on participants who have been employed in retail for at least 5 years.

The age of participants was between 25 and 60. The age restriction is justified by the experience of training and variable hindering or fostering performance.

Table 4: Sample

	Senior Managers	Employees
Unstructured Interviews	10	
Focus Groups		5 groups of 20 to 30 participants

Participants were chosen randomly among the overall population of my corporate trainings.

3.5 Data Collection and analysis

3.5.1 Data Collection

Data collection took place between 2020 and 2022. Corporate retail trainings were an opportunity for the researcher to do unstructured interviews with senior managers and focus groups with employees. A question that sets the context was asked and participants were invited to express what they think and feel. Follow up questions were then given from a set of already established questions (see appendix one and two) and/or generated from participants' answers.

Researcher took notes of all answers (for the participants, the reason is to provide feedback to top management so that they better the participants working environment). The research developed rapport and empathy with participant to further create an open and trusted environment.

The questions are open ended questions. Open ended questions allow the participant to express thoughts and feelings can offer more detail on the research subject (Sarantakos, 1988). The researcher sought to use language that was comprehensible and relevant to each of the participants being interviewed (Bryman, 2001).

The main topics covered are as follows:

1. Years of experience in the retail industry
2. Perception about training and its impact on performance (positive or negative)
3. Perception about the company's culture

4. Perception about leadership and supervision
5. Perception and control and evaluation
6. Perception about the desired working environment

3.5.2 Data analysis

The researcher coded the data (see appendix Three) when all data was collected. The codes used are keywords that are considered to organize and categorize data. The data then was analyzed, put into categories and reflected the intended research questions and mirroring the literature review.

The researcher interpreted data as he identified reoccurring themes while emphasizing similarities and differences. Once this part completed the researcher proceeded to validation as he rechecked the transcripts and codes again.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

Anderson and Arsenault (2000) state that acceptable standards and specific consideration for ethical research are as follows:

- Those risks to participants are minimized by research procedures that do not unnecessarily expose them to risks;
- Those risks to participants are outweighed by the anticipated benefits of the research;
- That the rights and welfare of participants are adequately protected;

HR managers were informed and researcher got the consent and ethical approval prior to the research. At the end of every interview and focus group, the researched asked permission to use data collected for research and academic purposes and has been given consent and approval.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Presentation of research results

4.1.1 Managers' perspective

4.1.1.1 Leadership and employees' attitude towards implementing learning and putting skills into practice

60% of managers interviewed believe that good leadership is enough to get employees to implement what they learn during trainings and put it into practice. 40% stated that good leadership is not enough. There are other variables that will hinder the implementation of training.

The 60% argued the following to be a supportive rationale for their answers:

Good leadership is enough to get employees:

Understand who they are, what they are here for and what's in it for them	83%
Understand and are willing to be on a solution side rather than the problem side	50%
Accept accountability and face environmental challenges	66%
Manage their emotions and think on their feet	50%
Understand that this is the business and everywhere they go they will find the same thing	83%

Understand that things should not be easy and if it is to be it is up to them to overcome challenges. After all that is what they are paid for	33%
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These participants believe that if a leader changes employees mind set, that is enough to change attitude and behavior.

Most employees let themselves be influence by a negative environment. They lack self-esteem and have insecurities issues. They tend to take everything personal. This is a professional environment. It is not supposed to be easy and fit what employees wants. Employees must learn how to be mentally strong and understand that if they are not part of the solution they will certainly be part of the problem.

(Manager number 5)

The 40% argued the following to be supportive rational for their answers:

Other variables will discourage employees from implementing what they learnt from training and will deliberately not be engaged:

Employees are paid less than the average market rate	25%
Employees not paid on time	50%

Employees get treated like machines and manager don't have empathy	75%
Employees being influenced by older employees who have a history with management and create a toxic attitude and environment.	25%
Objectives and KPIs absent or irrelevant	40%
Disrespectful communication	50%

These participants believe that environmental constraints are negatively impacting employees to the extent that leadership alone can't handle.

People exaggerate the impact of coaching and personal development. Today, everybody is a coach and everybody has the magic formula. In reality, when life happens it is not straight forward. Employees are humans and there are limits to what they can support coming from the environment. When an employee who has a family to support doesn't get paid on time, sometimes two months in arrow, I don't think there is a message that will get him to focus; let alone to be engaged.

(Manager number 1)

4.1.1.2 Corporate culture and employees' attitude towards implementing learning and putting skills into practice

All managers agree that positive corporate culture will always lead to a better attitude towards implementing learning and being engaged.

The interviewed managers shared the same reflections on the following:

- Corporate culture is another aspect of management that people talk about but they are not very honest about. Corporate culture shouldn't not be beautiful statements in a mission or on a website. It should be reflected in everyday behaviors.
- When organizations encourage honest communication and the focus is on working together as a team, magic happens.
- In a corporate culture where growth is encouraged and learning takes place in all interactions, people will feel that they develop and that they improve. This will encourage them to give more and be engaged.
- A good culture is where everyone is respected. If there is respect people will deliver.

In our company one of the element of our corporate culture is to make sure employees feel good in the group while, respect each other and share performances. This is great. It will certainly encourage employees to give more and put their skills into practice. Yet, some the managers will be the first to not to implement. We can't ask from our employees to behave in a way and we do the opposite.

(Manager number3)

4.1.1.3 Follow-up and control and employees' attitude towards implementing learning and putting skills into practice

7 out of 10 interviewed managers believe control and follow-up is a must to make sure employees deliver up to expectations. The other 3 think that employees should not need someone to be behind them all the time. They should be autonomous and be the controllers of their own work. One manager mentions delegation as example. Another manager stated that it is not practical to follow employees in retail and make sure they do their job. There is just so much to do as a manager, there is no time for follow-up.

When a follow up question was asked about the how do they see control and follow up put in place, the following elements were presented:

- Key Performance indicators are important to be presented and discussed with employees prior to starting the job
- Evaluation and control is done at the end of the year, but there is no use of the 360 evaluation for retail employees. It is up to their supervisors.
- Often a surprise visit to the field to observe how employee implement what they learnt during evaluation meeting and trainings.
- Customers are asked sometimes to get feedback straight from the target

I have been in this field for many years, retail managers have so much pressure on them to achieve goals. We just don't have time to consider each employee and whether or not they implement trainings. We do what we have to do and we expect them to respect their jobs and the organization that employed them. Plus, this is an industry where turnover is very high; how could we be tough on people when we just hope they don't leave.

(Manager number 9)

4.1.1.4 “leadership, corporate culture, and follow up & control” and “employees’ engagement”

All the 10 interviewed managers agree that there is positive correlation between Leadership, Corporate culture, follow-up & control and employee engagement.

One of the Interviewed managers stated that it is very rare locally to find organizations that think about employee engagement. Managers just hope that employees meet expectations as outlined in their job descriptions.

Two of the interviewed managers shared the following understanding of the relationship between ‘Leadership, Corporate Culture, and follow up & control’ and ‘employee engagement’:

- Good Leadership in a good corporate culture where follow-up is fair and just creates trust. Trust on the other hand leads to employees going beyond the call of duty

When turning this statement into a follow up question to another manager he stated that this relationship is not straight forward. It assumes all employees have good intentions. Sometimes, some employees are just bad people. No matter how good is your leadership or your corporate culture and follow up & control, they will disappoint you.

We had been putting forwards leadership programs and good management practices for years and yet we had an organized thievery in our company. Several employees were sued and were sentenced to jail.

(Manager number 8)

4.1.1.5 Employees perception of the work environment and degrees of tolerance for frustration

8/10 of interviewed mangers when answering this question agree that employees do not like their jobs and that they just found themselves in retail.

Using different examples, managers stated that retail employees view work environment as very bad and dishonest. They perceive the environment as a jungle and one has got to be a predator if One wants to survive.

I once asked of my employees how they behaved in a certain way and they said: I prefer his mother to cry than mine.

(Manager number7)

Some of the ideas mentioned in answering the question and follow up reactions:

- Employees are frustrated all the time
- We get a lot of complaints from customer on employees not being to control their emotions
- It is very common to have employees who would openly state: I am just working her, I am just an employee
- They are jealous of the owners of the business or senior management as they think of them as not honest and that they don't deserve the money they have.

Only two of the managers stated that it really depends on employees and their past experiences. When employees had at least one good experience with an ex manager or supervisor, they tend to think that it is not all bad and they generally are more resilient and develop high tolerance to frustration.

4.1.1.6 Employees affected by Perceived Organizational support, Trust in the supervisor, Leader- member exchange.

Here are same as the previous question the big majority state that employees don't think that the organization supports them. They believe that organizations abuse and just overwork them for the benefit of the owners. The impact, managers agree on, is very average performance.

When employees don't feel they are supported, they work just enough not to be fired. (Manager number 5)

As for trust on the supervisor, majority of the interviewed managers stated that employees usually will perceive the supervisor as a spy for management and his job being to force orders on them. Two managers stated that when there is no trust, employees do not share feedback. These two managers shared the same idea on the importance of employee feedback in retail because they are the once constantly in touch with customers.

All the 10 interviewed managers shared the idea that leader- employee exchange is not something they think about. One manager stated the following: If I open up to my employees, I will never be able to manage them. Another manager when answering to this question stated retail employees are used to be managed with a directive style; so, when a manager tried to establish relationship he is automatically perceived as weak.

In answering the last question on ideas they want to share with the researcher on all what have been discussed, Managers expressed the need for more studies on retail employees and managers as well.

6 out of 10 elaborated giving different examples on their own environment that is not very supportive. Their different statements fall within the same issue: When top management sole indicator of performance is numbers, management efforts are not given credits. Therefore, most managers will not behave in the way employees or good business practices expect them to behave.

4.1.2 Employees' perspective

At the beginning employees were shy and very passive. The trainings start and as the researcher expected, the discussed go quickly towards criticizing the company and the management. Trainings stop and the focus groups' studies start. Every question asked was an opportunity to collect data. The researcher asked permission to write down what is discussed to eventually report to top management.

4.1.2.1 Leadership and employees' attitude towards

implementing learning and putting skills into practice

During the focus group and related to this question, employees stated the following idea:

- Training is very important for employees and for companies. We don't know if we are going to stay here or not. So, the learning will help us personally whether we stay or not.
- Obviously This is not the first training we will attend. It is all the same story. We get trained and then we go back to the field to face the same challenges.
- How can I implement what I learn during training when my own supervisor goes against it?
- Leadership is just a concept people talk about during meetings. We don't see it exhibited in the field.
- Of course when we have a good leader, we put in all our efforts to achieve objectives.

- Leadership is about being a true human and just care

*When I was in a different company, I experience true leadership. Mr AZIZ (May God bless him) was one of the best managers I have ever worked with. He was like a firefighter. Always available, Fights for us against management. One day, I had a problem and on the phone he was talking to his managers who asked him to fire me. He said If he leaves I leave. I had tears in my eyes. Since that day, I stopped working for the company and started working for AZIZ. Of course, the B*** got to him and he left the company. Few months later, I left too.*

(An employee)

4.1.2.2 Corporate culture and employees' attitude towards implementing learning and putting skills into practice

Most of the participants didn't understand what is meant by corporate culture. The researcher had to explain element of corporate culture before discussing its impact on implementing learning and putting skills into practice. Examples were given on use of power, clarity of role, performance evaluation, and management support and also the nature of the relationship among employees and between employees and management.

Discussion on corporate culture and its impact on Implementing learning in the field presented several ideas:

- Power in our environment is all about who do you know. Expertise and competence will not protect you when things go south.
- Good culture in the company will result in more performance.
- When the relationship among employees is not based on trust and employees are concerned about what is being said behind their back, they will be more concerned about gossip and protecting their rears than actually caring about doing the right job the right way.
- When what matter is the feeling of top management over customers and partners, we will not implement what we know is the right thing to do unless we know how it will be perceived by management
- It is good to have a unified uniform with the company logo. It creates sense of belonging. But this can also be a source of frustration when the company doesn't invest in it.

You mention the dress code as part of the culture. I have been given a uniform when I first joined the company. Since then, I had to buy them when they are all damaged. There is never a budget for replacement. This is a reason for frustration and anger. We are stuck between losing our own money and management retaliation.

(An Employee)

4.1.2.3 Follow-up and control and employees' attitude towards implementing learning and putting skills into practice

When Follow up and control is mentioned, participants unanimously have a negative perception about it. Main ideas discussed around follow up & Control and its impact on implementing learning and putting skills into practice are as follow:

- Managers are good at that. All they now are the objective.
- Whatever we do they are never satisfied.
- They (meaning managers) don't do follow up until they have to report results to their managers. Then they just blame us when objectives are not met.
- The only method of evaluation is sales numbers. We may work like crazy, effort will never be taken into consideration.
- What follow up are we talking about when you see your managers once a year. Sometimes we didn't even recognize them when they visit the floor.
- If there is follow-up throughout and managers are in touch, we will know when we make mistakes and we can correct eventually.

- Managers don't understand control as evaluation to progress and grow. Rather, Control for many managers is an opportunity to show off and exercise power.

4.1.2.4 “leadership, corporate culture, and follow up & control” and “employees’ engagement”

Participants were asked how they see the relationship between all the elements (leadership, culture, follow up and control) stated and their engagement. The following is a summary of the ideas shared:

- We are more engaged when we feel that the company care about us.
- A culture where everyone is important and respected. A corporate culture where a leader act as role model. When managers know how to give feedback without hurting feeling. This is a company where employees will go beyond the call of duty.
- As long as there is no leadership and positive empowering environment, there will not be engagement. People will work just enough not to be fired.
- If an employee is evaluated with the intention to grow not to be punished, of course he will be engaged.

I spend more time in the company than with my own kids. I didn't see them grow. The company could have managed to give me more time off. Last two years I didn't get any vacation. You want me to be engaged?!

(An Employee)

4.1.2.5 Employees perception of the work environment and degrees of tolerance for frustration

Participants shared the idea that retail work environment is very challenging. On one hand, they have to deal with very demanding customers and on the other hand they have to deal with rude and arrogant leaders. Some of the participants shared previous experiences where they had better work environment including supportive managers. They stated that that helped them not only to face the everyday work related challenges, but also their own personal matters.

Some other ideas related this question are as follow:

- Retail environment is very difficult. Salaries are very low.
- We work long hours. When one is tired, it is very easy to get frustrated and react negatively to both customers and managers.
- Customers and society in general looks at retail employees as second rank citizens. We are losers. We couldn't do better.
- Both customers and managers patronize us. Most of retail employee lack self-confidence and feel inferior.

- When frustrated most of retail employees just quit. God is the true provider.
- Difficult and sometimes toxic environment where you can't even complain. We are frustrated all the time and sometime we just can't take it anymore.

I was in a training all day and my managers called me at the end of the training day to ask me to go to the store and work all night doing inventory.

This is our environment.

(An employee)

4.1.2.6 Employees affected by Perceived Organizational support, Trust in the supervisor, Leader- member exchange.

Most of the participants argued that there is no organizational support and when there is it is just because the organization has a hidden agenda.

Sometime, stated some participants, they will come up with strategies and communicate about them. But, in the field nothing happened.

Some participants stated that there are some supervisors who are trustworthy. They are reliable and respectful. Particularly those who have been in our shoes before. They know what we go through and they understand. But the majority of participants stated that these type of supervisors are rare.

When asked about Leader-member exchange, participants said the big majority of supervisors and managers will keep their distance. It is very hard to be a friend with managers. They think that will get employee to abuse. Sometimes these exchanges are deliberately aggressive. A participant said that being aggressive toward employees is a sign of tough manager who will be respected and employees will do what he says.

In my previous job, I was once on the shop floor and my manager saw me using my phone. We had a senior managers visit. She came to me and in front of the senior managers and customers started yelling at me. I didn't know what got into me. I took my badge and hit her with it in her face and I quit.

(An employee)

4.2 Discussion and conclusions

The problem of the research is how can owners and managers be sure the training will yield desired results and achieve set objectives?

To be able to bring objective solutions to the research problem, this thesis focus was on level 3 of Kirkpatrick's Four-Level Training Evaluation Model (Behavior: Whether what was learned is being applied).

The assumptions were as follow:

1. The training is well received (Level 1)
2. New skills gained (Level 2),

3. Implementing these new skills will achieve quantifiable financial results (Level 4).

Level 3: Applying the skills learnt on the job depends on:

1. The management's leadership competencies,
2. The presence of an engaging company culture,
3. The follow up mechanisms and tools put in place to support and coach employees.

The researcher did a field research to determine the perception of both managers and employees on Leadership, corporate culture, follow up. The research wants to know the relationships between these elements and employees' willingness to implement learning in the field.

4.2.1 Leadership Competencies

Leadership is very popular as a concept and we all talk about it. Yet, when we observe our business environment, it is very rare to find true leaders. When contrasting literature review with empirical study both from managers' perspective and employees' perspective, there is a huge gap between what needs to be done and what is being done.

Both managers and employees agree that good leadership will definitely lead to employees implementing learning and put in practice skills that they developed throughout the years. The opposite is also true.

Both managers and employees agree on what it takes to be a good leader. Yet they both blame the environment and each other as the reason why there is no good

leadership. On one hand managers blame top managers will and employees preset attitude towards work.

Contrasting with literature review, employees' managers and supervisors will not be true leaders unless the following is established:

- Leaders start with themselves. One can't lead if they are lost. The ability for a leader to motivate and get employees to follow lies in his or her ability to stay composed and manage upward the same time they manage downward.
- Leaders got to be able to manage emotions and develop emotional intelligence. If they can't control emotions they will, as stated by participants, they will come out as aggressive and selfish.
- Leaders got to be able to build trust. That will not be the case unless there is: Credibility, Reliability, and Intimacy. Credibility is important because employees don't like it when managers are not credible. One employee participating in the study said: they are here just to spy for top management. Reliability is important because employees need to know that you will be there for them and that they can rely on you during tough times. Intimacy is important because employees will not trust a manager who doesn't open up and build true relationships with them.
- Credibility, Reliability, and Intimacy must be over self-orientation. This means that the reason why a leader is credible, reliable, and Intimate is for the sake of the group not for his own personal agenda.
- Using the model of Steve Radcliffe will be valuable. Future, Engage, Deliver. Most participants call for such leadership where the leader inspires and

shares a vision then takes time to explain to get employee understand what is expected from them (interviewed managers stated that sometimes even basic KPIs are absent) and then be there with them through support and coaching.

All is all, to be able to see a positive return on training investment, companies must first make sure they have true leaders in their teams. True leaders are appreciated and employees will always deliver up to the expectations of leaders. In the absent of leaders, Trained employees will not do what's best even if they know and they are well trained.

4.2.2 Company culture

Most of the participants describe their corporate cultures as a combination of power culture and role culture. Obviously, they are not happy in such cultures. This matches the literature review as power cultures gives more power to management who use position power mostly to get the job done. The success of this culture depends on its products and services not on the human element. Role culture makes organizations bureaucratic and predictable.

In these cultures, employees will certainly do what they are supposed to do (Job Description/ Contract) and they will do it just enough not to get fired. Both Interviewed managers and employees have mentioned this behavior several times. Employee engagement will not take place in such cultures.

Interviewed managers believe a good culture that will encourage employees to implement learning is the one where communication and respect is present. When

discussing this matter during focus groups, employees also mention the importance of honest and open communication.

Therefore, in contrasting the empirical data with literature review, I believe that for employees to be engaged and implement what they learn during trainings, a culture that is both oriented performance and supportive is a must. Performance- oriented culture is viewed positively and employees in these culture believe that they work for something higher than themselves. This is what has been expressed when discussing with employees. Trust has also been mentioned several times. From the literature review, In Supportive cultures, Trust is the central element of the relationship between the organization and its employees.

All in all, to get the best return on training investment as employees voluntarily implement learning and put learnt skills into practice, organizations must create culture that are supportive and oriented towards merit and performance. If not, training will be just another HR actions that benefits employees but not the organization.

4.2.3 Follow up and Control

From interviewed managers, follow up and control in retail industry in not very well structured and not implemented in field appropriately. Employees perceived follow up and control negatively. They stated that Controlling is most of the time an opportunity for some managers to showcase their power and an opportunity for revenge.

Obviously, Control should be understood and implemented as an opportunity to evaluate and if necessary correct and adjust behaviors and attitudes. Employees should be calling for it and expect it often. Evaluation enables the organization to determine the success of employment, placing and motivation (Dessler 2020).

In retail, the traditional end of the year evaluation is not the most appropriate evaluation method. Rather, what is recommended is an ongoing process of follow up and control. Employees must know the key performance indicators for their jobs prior to starting a job; several interviewed managers stated that.

The following ideas will help set an excellent follow up system that will encourage employees to implement what they learn during trainings and therefore organizations will get the best out of their training investments:

- No follow up and control system will be performant unless there is a good leadership and a good culture, as previously stated.
- Key Indicators should be elaborated in collaboration with immediate supervisors.
- Every key indicator should be on the evaluation sheet and hopefully these indicators include numerical indicators as well as behavioral indicators.
- Evaluation of these indicators should be done on a monthly basis
- Evaluation should yield outstanding talent and negative watch.

Outstanding talent should be recognized and Negative watch should be coached further through personal Improvement Programs (PIPs).

- Every follow up and control system should be linked to a reward system that is not necessarily monetary in nature; Recognition goes a long way.

A good follow up and control system helps employees follow the gap between what is delivered and is expected. When this is done on a monthly basis and managers use it with a growth mindset, employees will definitely implement what they learn during training. The company's growth is aligned with employees' growth.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

5.1 Summary and hypotheses verification

Retail organizations spend a significant amount of money on training and development every year hoping to have a positive return on this investment. Yet, many business owners, senior managers, consultant (like myself) wonder why retail employees do not implement what they learn in the field. We put into perspective three element: Leadership, corporate culture, and follow up & control.

This research is an attempt to verify the impact of the three element (Leadership, corporate culture, follow up and control) on whether or not employees will put skills into practice. We assumed training was relevant and trainers delivered effectively and concern ourselves with just the behavior of employees.

The results of the study support the argument that without appropriate culture, excellent leadership, and well implemented follow up system, employees will not be engaged and will barely meet expectations. The opposite will yield a positive return on training investment as employees will implement learning and put skills into practice.

Several hypotheses were elaborated:

Hypothesis 1: Good leadership will turn employees into a very engaged ones and will get them to put all the skills they learnt into practice

Hypothesis 2: Employees who work in a positive and empowering working environment will be very engaged ones and will put all the skills they learnt into practice.

Hypothesis 3: leaders who put in place mechanism of follow up and control help employees implement what they learnt and put skills into practice.

Hypothesis 4: Employees will be engaged and implement what they learnt during training sessions if they have good leaders and good corporate culture and mechanism of control all together.

All hypotheses are verified to be true. Literature review supported the hypothesis and both interviewed managers and employees confirm the hypothesis to be true.

In conclusion, for training to be beneficial and yield a good return on investment, organizations must first create the right supportive and performance oriented culture, then make sure that there is great leadership at all levels particularly at the supervisors' level, and last but not least make sure follow up system are in line with smart objective and are perceived as evaluation in order to grow along with the organization.

5.2 Limitation of the research study

The following limitations need to be taken into cognizance in this study:

- The size of the sample could be more significant and will yield more data and maybe additional elements around the impact of leadership, culture, and follow up & control on implementation of learning.
- Time constrain made it difficult to go into more details when presenting and discussing results of the study
- As a retail consultant and trainer, the research may be biased when collecting data.
The research did his best to stay objective

- The nature of the industry and the negative culture of the companies where data was collected made it very hard to get all the honest answers from participants.

5.3 Recommendation for further research

From this study, the following is suggested for further research:

- A focus group with a much larger sample size including supervisors and front limen managers
- A research that will include variables other than leadership, culture and follow up will give additional value in understanding the phenomenon subject of this study
- Further research that will break the industry into sub sectors to gain a holistic picture on the concept of employee implementation of learning.

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APPENDIX (CES)

Appendix One

Senior Managers Interview Questions

1. How many years of experience do you have as a manager?
2. Have you always been in Retail Industry?
3. Taking into consideration your experience, what do you think is the relationship between 'Good leadership' and 'employees' attitude towards implementing learning and putting skills into practice'?
4. Taking into consideration your experience, what do you think is the relationship between "employees' attitude towards implementing learning and putting skills into practice" and "Corporate culture"?
5. Taking into consideration your experience, what do you think is the relationship between "employees' attitude towards implementing learning and putting skills into practice" and "Follow-up and control mechanisms"?
6. Taking into consideration your experience, what do you think is the relationship between "leadership, corporate culture, and follow up & control" and "employees' engagement"?
7. Taking into consideration your experience, how do employees perceive the work environment? And what is their degrees of tolerance for frustration?
8. Taking into consideration your experience, how do you think employees are affected by the following:
 - a. Perceived Organizational support?
 - b. Trust in the supervisor?
 - c. Leader- member exchange?
9. In light of our discussion, is there anything else you would like to add?

Appendix Two

Employees Focus Group Questions

1. Have you always been in Retail Industry?
2. Taking into consideration your experience, what do you think is the relationship between 'Good leadership' and 'employees' attitude towards implementing learning and putting skills into practice'?
3. Taking into consideration your experience, what do you think is the relationship between "employees' attitude towards implementing learning and putting skills into practice" and "Corporate culture"
4. Taking into consideration your experience, what do you think is the relationship between "employees' attitude towards implementing learning and putting skills into practice" and "Follow-up and control mechanisms"
5. Taking into consideration your experience, what do you think is the relationship between "leadership, corporate culture, and follow up & control" and "employees' engagement"
6. Taking into consideration your experience, how do employees perceive the work environment? And what is their degrees of tolerance for frustration?
7. Taking into consideration your experience, how do you think employees are affected by the following:
 - a. Perceived Organizational support?
 - b. Trust in the supervisor?
 - c. Leader- member exchange?

In light of our discussion, is there anything else you would like to add?

Appendix Three

(Example of coded analysis of the interviews and focus groups: translated from Arabic and French into English)

Coding-- relationship between 'Good leadership' and 'employees' attitude towards implementing learning and putting skills into practice'?
I have been with working with this company as a supervisor and I had a very talented employee but he doesn't deliver as expected. He knew what to do and is very much capable of over performing, yet he doesn't. the reason was simply the store manager. He was arrogant, rude and very aggressive when giving feedback. With such leadership employees will never implement and put in practice what they learn during trainings.
Coding-- relationship between "employees' attitude towards implementing learning and putting skills into practice" and "Corporate culture"
I have been a manager for many years and have worked for several retail companies. Companies may invest as much as they want on trainings but if the corporate culture is not there, they will not see the ROI on these trainings. I remember this company I worked for, I would park in the parking lot in the morning and my body will freeze. In my department, we had a very toxic environment. Feedback is not welcome, the ends justify the means, recognition and rewards were based on how people get involved in the politics and top management gave more importance to grapevine and hear/say.
Coding-- relationship between "employees' attitude towards implementing learning and putting skills into practice" and "Follow-up and control mechanisms"
My manager is a good leader, but sometimes he is too nice. We know what to do and we get carried on with the stress of everyday work we forget our responsibilities. When he gets mad and he does follow up, performance follows because we know what we need to do when, how, and particularly that he will ask about it.
Coding-- 6. Employees perception of the work environment and degrees of tolerance for frustration.
I think there is no one strategy that fit all when it comes to managing people. Employees are very different from one another. Some work under pressure and other are totally the opposite. I had an employee who performs way better when things go south. Her perception of this kind of hectic and fast paste environment is very positive and motivating.

Appendix Four

Focus Groups in action



Appendix Five

HR Consent Letter

The purpose of this research study is to explore the challenges of implementing the learnings from training programs in the retail industry. I understand that the research is being carried out in part fulfillment of the requirements leading to the award of a DBA.

I _____ give the researcher, on behalf of the company I represent, the permission to conduct interviews and focus groups. I understand that we are free to withdraw from the study at any time. I also understand that all the information provided by our employees will be verified by our services before any publishing and all information of confidential nature will remain as such, including the identity of the participants.

Signed: _____

Date: _____