

## Relationship between Organizational Climate and Training Transfer in Small and Medium Enterprises in Nigeria

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### Abstract

The quality of training and consequent application of what is learned is a prerequisite for improved organizational performance. Organizational climate have served as key mediator between training and training transfer to the organization. If you trained your employees, it is a good policy to invest in evaluating how much the knowledge and skill received from the training have been transferred to the workplace and whether it resulted in improved individual and by extension organization performance. Thus, factors which may mitigate or facilitate training transfer such as organizational climate is of serious importance to all organization the small and medium enterprises in Nigeria inclusive. This study was conducted to identified factors of organizational climate that contribute the most in affecting the training transfer in the organization and whether organizational climate indices related significantly towards training transfer. The samples of this study consist of 45 top managers of six selected SMEs located in the Minna Technology Based Incubation Centre (MTBIC). Questionnaires were used in data gathering. Data were collected on organization climate variables (vision, support and participative safety) and training transfer variables (perceived training transfer). Result of the study was based on the analysis of the findings using SPSS computer software.

**Keywords:** Organizational climate; Training transfer, Nigeria.

### 1.0 Introduction

The primitive belief about knowledge evaluation is that whatever is learnt in training intervention programmes is automatically transferred to the work place by the recipient. Thus, “evaluation has often been overlooked or not implemented to its full capacity” (Greg, G.W., & Diane, W. , 2006).poor evaluation exercises have been attributed to organizations’ inability to determine the value added by training to the organizational performance hence the organizations report high investments in training with poor returns. For instance, an estimated USD 200 million is expended on training and development annually by industries in North America (Awoniyi, Griego, & Morgan 2002), while another report shows an investment in training in excess of USD 50 billion by United State industries (Industry Report, 2000) and a little less than 10% of such expenditures translate into improved performance in job situations (Kontogheorges, 2001; Cheng &Ho, 2001). These figures have increased at an alarming rate over the past decade as US organizations are in recent time reportedly spending up to USD 125 billion yearly on training and development programmes (Grossman, R., & Salas, E.(2011). In addition, an approximate 40% of what is learnt by participants I training interventions are not immediately transferred to the job context, while only 50% of investments in training and development programmes lead to improvement in job performance(Huint, P. & Saks, A. M. 2003). Thus, in the words of Shank (1998), cited in (Bunch, J.K. 2007) contributing to the wrong valuation of the training profession.

### 1.1 Background of the problem

The wide gap between training expenditures and the expected outcome on organizational performance have prompted a lot of interests in the study of training transfer. Sincethe early works of Thorndike 1900s, through the

literary works of Mosel in the 1950s, Ruth Salinger in mid 70s, Baldwin & Ford in the 80s, series of empirical studies have been conducted in an attempt to unravel the mystery surrounding the wide gap between training and performance in the workplace. The past four decades have witnessed expanded researches in training transfer with increased focus in evaluating the relationship between training transfer and organizational productivity. Although earlier works on training transfer was linked to applied psychology for example, Thorndike emphasized on the transfer of what an individual learned from one situation to another, while a situation whereby an individual is trained but failed to use the knowledge acquired on his job is akin to a successful operation where the patient died (Mosel, 1957). Organizational climate changes provides higher opportunities for understanding organizational relationship patterns. The features of the organizational climate have been empirically justified as having tremendous impact on training transfer (Tracey, Tannenbaum, & Kavanagh, 1995). Several literatures revealed that the transfer climate has huge influence on strategies of training transfer strategies as well as on trainee behaviour. The transfer climate can be categorised as “supportive or unsupportive” this however is largely dependent on how the organization’s environment facilitates or inhibits the application of acquired skills and knowledge (Burke & Baldwin, 1999). Supportive transfer climate can be seen through the organization efforts and direction in improving organization performance by implementing goal oriented method. Organizations should not only place emphasis on employees’ motivation to learn but also motivate them apply what is learned (Alan, C., 2006). An operation in which the patient is lost is indeed not a successful one neither to the patient’s relation nor to the Doctors that conducted it thus, drawing from that analogy, a training exercise in which what is learnt is not transferred to the workplace is a failed training.

### **2.1 Organizational Climate**

Organizational climate literatures looked at critical issues involving the influence of social interactions within the organization. While climate is contextually associated with situations relating to how members feel, think and react towards the organization. This however, can be a subject of manipulation by individuals in positions of power in the organization (Acikgoz&Gunsel, 2011). According to Denison (1996), organizational climate “is the current perceptions of people within a work environment with regard to the observable (social, political, and physical) nature of the personal relationships that affect the accomplishment of work within a particular organization”. While to Shim (2010), organizational climate “is employees' shared opinion and knowledge with others in their workplace”.

In particular, the transfer climate has been identified as critical to achieving transfer of training in organizations. Thus, an organization whose climate is favourable for transfer to take place is considered as “supportive”, while those whose climate inhibits transfer are regarded as “unsupportive” (Burke & Baldwin, 1999). Supportive transfer climate can be seen through the organization efforts and direction in improving organization performance by implementing goal oriented method. The vision of the organization should create a climate that could motivate their employees’ performance at workplace (Acikgoz&Gunsel, 2011). Werner & DeSimone (2008), suggested that the HRD intervention such as training could assist the employees and organization in attaining their goal or vision. They also emphasized that by enhancing the employees’ skill and successful performance, it could eventually lead to the attainment of employee and organizational goal. Therefore, this study focused on determining whether there is any relationship between visions as an organizational climate construct and training transfer.

Goldstein and Ford (2002) as cited by Roberson et al (2009) identified two sides of transfer climate which they labelled “consequences and situational cues”. To them, consequence cues is the reactions exhibited by peers and supervisors as trainees attempt to apply their new knowledge and skills at the workplace, while the situational cues entails ‘social and task stimuli’ within the organization which provide clues and remind trainees of what is learned in training and also create avenue for application of the learned skills. Werner & DeSimone (2006), transfer of training can occurred when there are factors that contribute in encouraging it to be practiced and produce a conducive climate in the workplace such as the support required. Supervisor support is one of the examples mentioned by Werner & De Simone (2006), that contribute towards the transfer of training in workplace when such encouragement given to apply the new skill. Their studied was aligned with the study by Eisenberger, Fasolo, & Davis-Lamastro, (1990) as cited in (Bunch, J.K. 2007) in which they suggested that no matter how perfect a training design is and no matter how high the level of a trainee interest, the required change will only be attained if the organization provided support for training to be transferred. The extent to which the factors in the workplace provide support for training to be transferred is however our concern in this research. To Rouiller and Goldstein (1993), these whole workplace supports are referred to as “the transfer climate”. The past four decades have witnessed expanded researches in training transfer with increased focus in evaluating the relationship between training transfer and organizational productivity. Organizational climate through some of its respective components have been identified as one of the factor that inhibits or help facilitate training transfer. Some of these components include supervisor, peer, and the organization itself (Burke & Hutchins, 2008). Thus, in this study the construct of support refers to support at the organizational level such as the top management, supervisor, peers and subordinates.

Organizational climate according to James, M.K., & Barry, Z.P., (1987) cannot be easily recognised, but rather, it is sensed. Thus, they see it as “a collection of organizational attributes which is shaped by the way the organization relates to its members as well as the environment. While Cooke and Rosseau (1988) cited in (Bunch, J.K., 2007), describe the climate of the organization as “what the individual perceived about the organization’s characteristics and attributes”. To Acikgoz&Gunsel (2011) participative safety is a situation which an individual perceived as interpersonally non-threatening when making decision and the process also can be motivated by the environment. Individual that endeavor participative would unlikely to continue perform the new skills that been learned when they being ridiculed by peers of subordinates (Werner & DeSimone, 2006). This shows that participative safety can be identified as a huge factor which could enhance training transfer in the workplace.

## **2.2 Training Transfer**

Training transfer according to Wexley& Latham, (1991) “is the degree to which learners use the skills, knowledge and attitudes acquired in training to their jobs”. New knowledge and skills gained in training interventions are meant to be practiced on the job to enhance performance, thus, these knowledge and skills must be imported to the job context as observed by Baldwin & Ford (1988), that training transfer “is the learned behaviour that is generalized to the job context and maintained over a period of time on the job”. To this end, in order to achieve a successful transfer, the application of what is learnt to the job situation must enjoy some degree of consistency with trainees required to sustain the usage of gained training over a relatively long period of time. The Canadian Institutes of Health Research defined knowledge transfer as “the exchange, synthesis and ethically-sound application of knowledge within a complex system of relationships among researchers and

users” (Jacobson, N., Dale, B. & Paula, G., 2004. Broad and Newstrom (1992) identified transfer of training as a “transfer partnership” which involves three main institutions comprising the supervisor, trainee, and trainer and that the role played by all these key players is monumental to a successful transfer of training. With the dynamism confronting businesses and the challenging requirements of the job, training transfer has assumed a critical position because it can help the employees do their daily job efficiently and finished their job punctually. Thus, it is important to ensure that transfer of training is a success and build up the organizational climate required to achieve it. Besides that, transfer of training will change the work atmosphere in the organization through the enhancement of the work system. Transfer of training is a concept used to explore how well the individuals transfer the learning to workplace in a lasting manner. According to Al- Musrawi, (2008) cited in (Richard K.L & Helen. F., 2011) many program failed to produce lasting practical changes in faculty because what is learned in training intervention is not transferred to the workplace. Many factors were identified to support the transfer of training implementing in practice to engage with the learners, among which are peer supports, supervisor and organization itself. Other methods believed to increase the transfer of training involve “constructive alignment” in which program learning outcomes are aligned with assessment (Richard K.L & Helen. F., 2011). The impact of an organization’s climate on transfer of training was echoed by several authors like Ford & Weissbein, 1997; Baldwin & Ford, 1988; Salas et al, 1998 (Burke & Hutchins, 2008). Although recent researches have expanded the scope of organizational climate, Holton, Bates, & Ruona (2000), identified transfer climate to as “learning transfer system” which they defined as every factor in the person, training, and organization that influence transfer of learning to job performance (Greg, G. W. & Diane, W. 2006). Although Huberman, 1990 & Lomas, 2000 identified the researchers and users as the major impediments to training transfer, Frenk, 1992, emphasized a structural barrier to training transfer policies and practices which distorts not only between trainers and trainees but the organization where they work (Jacobson et al, 2004). Cultural values could also play important role in ensuring training transfer, thus, values, beliefs, and assumptions that prevent training transfer must be recognised and treated accordingly this according to Bunch, J.K.(2007) could help in mapping out strategies that will foster training transfer in the organization.

### **3.0 Methodology**

#### **3.1 Subjects**

The respondents of this study consist of 45 employees of six SMEs in Minna Technology Based Incubation Centre (MTBIC). Of these respondents, 44.4% were male and 55.6% were female from the six SMEs. The respondents’ age range from 24 to 52 and the educational attainment are as follows: senior secondary certificate examination (20%), Diploma (6.7%), others (6.7%) and university degree/HND (64.4%).

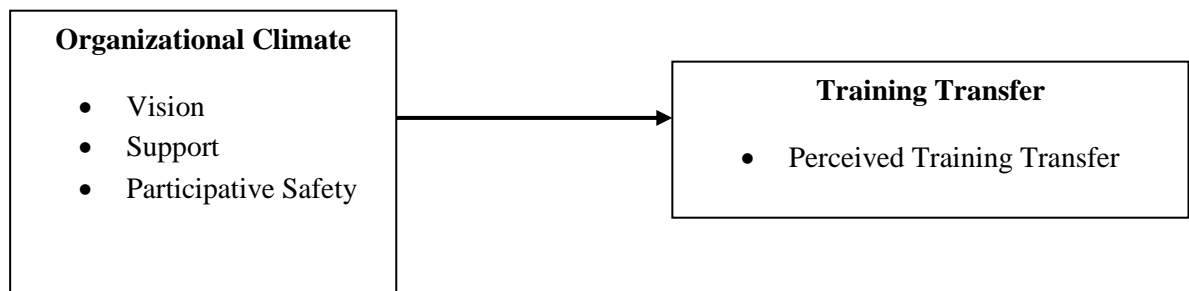
#### **3.2 Procedure**

This study is aimed at determining the relationship between the transfer of training and. Therefore a correlation study was conducted by distributing questionnaires to purposive samples that consist of the employees that already attended any form of training in the previous 5 years of working with the SMEs. All the respondents were assured of utmost confidentiality of their responses. Questionnaires that been completed by the respondent were returned directly to the researchers.

### 3.3 Measures

This study measured a total of 18 item that were built on a five point Likert-Type scale that consist of the higher score of 5 for “Strongly Agree” and the lowest score of 1 for “Strongly Disagree”. This study used pre-tested construct from past empirical studies to ensure their validity and reliability. This study test the reliability based on Cronbach  $\alpha$ . Stephen Isaac and William Micheal’s (1985), proposed that the value of Cronbach  $\alpha$  greater than 0.7 indicate may high reliability, values between 0.3 and 0.7 are moderate reliability and below 0.3 is low reliability. 12 item from Acikgoz and Gonsel (2011) were used in measuring organizational climate variable. There were three main construct for measuring organizational climate consisted of vision ( $\alpha = .662$ ), support ( $\alpha = .628$ ) and participative safety ( $\alpha = .833$ ). Four items scale were developed to measure each of the construct. In relation to perceived training transfer measurement, this study used 6 items from Facticeau et al. (1995) with the reliability of item that is  $\alpha = .796$ . It measured the employees’ belief on the outcomes of their performance after receiving training.

### 3.4 Research Framework



### 3.5 Analyses

In testing the hypothesis relationship between the independent variables (organizational climate) and the dependent variable perceived training, this study utilized spearman’s rho correlation. Through the testing of data normality, it’s indicated that the data is not normally distributed (see Table 1). Field (2009) suggested that if the significance value of K-S tests less than .05, it indicates a deviation from the normality. Hence, in this study spearman’s rho correlation was used to determine the significance relationship between the independent and dependent variables. The analyses also included the direction of the relationship and the strength based on Guilford Rule of Thumb as cited by Ibrahim et al (2011). Based on Guilford Rule of Thumb the result of Spearman Rho analyses below .2 indicate a negligible relationship, between .2 to .4 indicate low relationship, between .4 to .7 is moderate while between .7 to .9 is high relationship and greater than .9 indicate very high relationship. In this study, SPSS version 20 was used in the analyses of the data.

**Table 1**  
**Normality Test for Independent (Organizational Climate) and Dependent Variable (Perceived Transfer Training)**

	Kolmogorov – Smirnov			Shapiro – Wilk		
	Statistic	Df	Sig	Statistic	Df	Sig
Vision	.169	45	.002	.945	45	.033
Support	.216	45	.000	.946	45	.036
Participative safety	.134	45	.042	.955	45	.080
Perceived transfer training	.272	45	.000	.874	45	.000

#### 4.0 Result

This section presents the main research result. From Table 2 is the result of Spearman's Rho analyses to investigate the relationship between the organizational climate and training transfer. The finding shows that the significance value for vision variable is (.047). The significance value for this correlation coefficient is less than .05; therefore it can be concluded that there is significance relationship between vision and perceived transfer training at level of significance .05. The value of  $r_s$  for vision is  $r_s = .252$ ; it a positive but low in strength of the relationship. For support variable indicate that sig (.000) is smaller than sig  $\alpha$  (.01); therefore it can be concluded that there is a significance relationship between support and perceived transfer training. The value of  $r_s$  for support is  $r_s = .550$  that refer to a positive and moderate relationship. The finding also shows that the significance value for participative safety (.003). The significance value for this correlation coefficient is less than .01; therefore it also can be concluded that the participative safety variable also has a significance relationship towards perceived transfer training. However the value of  $r_s$  for participative safety  $r_s = .401$ , it only show a moderate relationship between the two variable in a positive way.

**Table 2**  
**Relationship Between Organizational Climate and Training Transfer**

		Perceived Training Transfer	
Spearman's Rho	Vision	Correlation Coefficient	.252*
		Sig. (1-tailed)	.047
		N	45
	Support	Correlation Coefficient	.550**
		Sig. (1-tailed)	.000
		N	45
	Participative Safety	Correlation Coefficient	.401**
		Sig. (1-tailed)	.003
		N	45

\*\* . Correlation is significance at the 0.01 level (1 – tailed)

\* . Correlation is significance at the 0.05 level (1 – tailed)

## 5.0 Conclusion

Organizational climate is the result of employees' evaluative process (Hayes et al, 2002). Employees encounter many events in the organization and what they perceived might influence how they behave in the organization. Others studies have shown that organizational process is related to climate and indicate relationship to satisfaction and performance (Lawler et al, 1974). However in this study we tried to investigate whether the factors of organizational climate had relationship toward training transfer, whereas training transfer is assumed to improve employees' performance in the workplace. As for the vision of the organization, this study found that there is a low relationship between the organization vision and transfer of training. We therefore suggested that any organization should highlight their vision and make their employees more aware of the main objectives which the organizations seek to achieve. The entire training program conducted was supposed to improve employee's skill, knowledge and ability to enhance their task at workplace as aligned with the vision of their organization. The positive relationship of the variables indicates that if organizations are able to develop and increased the employees' awareness of the vision of the organization; it might also increase the level of transfer of training in the workplace. By highlighting the vision of the organization employees could realized that they were the asset in achieving the organization goal and vision as concluded that the vision could motivate force at work (Acikgoz&Gunsel, 2011).

The study found that support is the most important factor that contributes in motivating the transfer of learning out of the three variables that were tested in this study. These result suggested that to enhance employees' transfer of training the organization should create a climate where all level of employees in the organization from the top management until the subordinate support the attempts to transfer trained skill and give recognition towards successful skill transfer. Feacteau et al (1995) in their finding also suggested that supervisors must support their employees by providing opportunities to applied skill that they acquired through training and give reward if the skill transfer is successful. Through the positive relationship this study suggested that the more encouragement given it will definitely affect the training transfer positively. Support from all level in the organization provide conducive climate for the employees to utilize their training skill at the workplace.

Participative safety is also an important factor of organizational climate that also have a positive relationship with training transfer. To enable employees to apply the new skill that they have learned, they must feel that there is no threat of being ridiculed by others whilst performing it. When the atmosphere of an organization is a non-threatening one, it will be trusted to provide suitable support and encourage an improvement of doing things (Acikgoz&Gunsel, 2011). To increase the level of transfer of training at workplace, the employees require a psychological support to perform a new skill after training. The feeling of been safe is important so that they feel that they are not being label or being ridicule when trying to introduce new approach in completing a certain task at the workplace. The more an organization creates a participative safety work environment, the more it will give a positive relationship among employees and might increase the transfer of training. Thus all the contribution of the organizational climate that relate to training transfer should be given proper attention by the organization so that the investment made to train the employees would not become a waste if all the skills learned are not being transferred to the workplace. A successful training transfer will eventually improve the performance of an organization.

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