

THE ROLE OF TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT IN ENHANCING EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT: A SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Employee engagement has emerged as a critical determinant of organizational performance, yet its relationship with training and development remains fragmented across literature. This study conducts a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) guided by the PRISMA framework to synthesize evidence from the past decade (2015–2025). A structured search of the Scopus database yielded 137 documents, which were narrowed to 88 after applying filters and further screened to a final sample of 10 highly relevant peer-reviewed articles. The findings confirm that training and development initiatives directly foster engagement by signaling organizational support and enhancing employee competencies. Engagement often acts as a mediating mechanism linking training to outcomes such as performance, commitment, and retention, while factors such as leadership quality, digital transformation, and cultural context moderate these effects. The synthesis also underscores that the training–engagement nexus is strongest when development initiatives align with national priorities and socio-cultural expectations. This review contributes to the HRD literature by consolidating fragmented evidence and integrating theoretical perspectives, including social exchange theory, the Job Demands-Resources model, and institutional theory. Practical implications suggest that organizations must treat training as a strategic lever, embedding digital tools and contextual sensitivity to cultivate sustainable employee engagement.

Keywords: Cross-Cultural Context; Employee Engagement; Human Resource Development; Training and Development; Organizational Performance

INTRODUCTION

Employee engagement has increasingly become a critical focus in organizational and human resource development (HRD) research due to its strong correlation with performance, productivity, and employee retention. Engagement is broadly defined as the emotional commitment an employee has toward their organization, which translates into higher levels of effort, loyalty, and job satisfaction (Doghan, 2019; Negi, 2018). In this context, organizations that effectively foster engagement are more likely to experience reduced turnover, enhanced employee well-being, and improved overall performance. This has prompted scholars and practitioners alike to explore various strategies to enhance engagement, among which training and development have emerged as pivotal mechanisms (Raharjo, 2023).

Training and development programs play a crucial role in equipping employees with the skills, knowledge, and competencies needed to perform their roles effectively. Empirical studies suggest that participation in well-designed training initiatives not only enhances job-related competencies but also fosters a greater sense of belonging and organizational support, which are key drivers of engagement (Raharjo, 2023; Solihah et al., 2024). Specialized training programs that are tailored to employees' unique needs have been shown to increase engagement levels significantly, as they demonstrate the organization's commitment to personal and professional growth (Doghan, 2019; Solihah et al., 2024). This perception of investment often leads to stronger emotional bonds between the employee and the organization.

The effectiveness of training in promoting engagement is further influenced by the quality of the working environment in which such training occurs. A supportive environment that fosters autonomy, skill development, and psychological safety significantly enhances the impact of training on engagement (Bilal et al., 2023). When employees perceive that their learning opportunities are aligned with their personal career aspirations, they are more likely to become enthusiastic and proactive in their roles, thereby strengthening their emotional connection to the organization (Bresk, 2023). Leadership also plays a vital role in this dynamic, when leaders prioritize training and development as integral components of their HR strategies, employees feel more valued, which further boosts engagement (Santoso, 2024).

Moreover, several mediating factors have been identified in the literature as influencing the relationship between training and employee engagement. Training satisfaction, for example, acts as a significant mediator, indicating that the perceived quality and relevance of training programs directly affect employees' attitudes toward their work and organization (Rahman et al., 2021). Additionally, innovative approaches such as gamification in training have been shown to increase participation, enjoyment, and learning outcomes, all of which contribute to higher engagement levels (Alfaqiri et al., 2022; Iacono et al., 2020). These findings underscore the need for organizations to design training programs that are not only informative but also engaging and aligned with employees' intrinsic motivations.

In light of the growing body of literature, it is evident that training and development serve as powerful tools for enhancing employee engagement. Organizations that strategically invest in learning and development not only improve employee capabilities but also foster a more committed, satisfied, and high-performing workforce (Doghan, 2019; Raharjo, 2023; Solihah et al., 2024). However, despite the abundance of empirical studies on this topic, the evidence remains fragmented across various contexts, industries, and methodological approaches. This gap highlights the need for a systematic synthesis of existing research to provide a clearer understanding of the mechanisms, contextual factors, and outcomes associated with training-induced engagement.

Accordingly, this study conducts a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) to address the following research questions:

1. RQ1: How do training and development practices influence employee engagement across different organizational contexts?
2. RQ2: What mechanisms and factors mediate or moderate the relationship between training, development, and employee engagement?
3. RQ3: What gaps exist in the current literature, and what directions should future research pursue to strengthen understanding of this relationship?

LITERATURE REVIEW

A strong theoretical foundation is essential for understanding the relationship between training and development and employee engagement, as it situates these concepts within the broader framework of Human Resource Development (HRD). HRD provides the overarching perspective through which organizational strategies for enhancing employee capabilities are conceptualized, while training and development serve as the operational mechanisms that translate HRD objectives into practice. Employee engagement, in turn, emerges as a critical outcome of these initiatives, reflecting the extent to which employees commit emotionally and behaviorally to their organizations. By exploring HRD, training and development, and engagement in an integrated manner, this section establishes the conceptual basis for analyzing how development practices contribute to workforce motivation, performance, and retention as highlighted in the selected body of literature.

Human Resource Development

Human Resource Development (HRD) is increasingly recognized as a central driver of organizational effectiveness, as it not only enhances employee competencies but also fosters individual growth and contributes to long-term strategic goals. HRD encompasses structured initiatives such as training, education, and professional development programs designed to improve employees' knowledge, skills, and abilities. This holistic approach has gained significant relevance in the era of globalization and rapid technological advancement, where organizations require a workforce that is both adaptive and innovative to remain competitive.

A growing body of literature emphasizes the broader implications of HRD beyond skill enhancement. Effective HRD initiatives are strongly linked to creativity and innovation, as they nurture a culture of originality and continuous improvement. Research by Kahfi (2022) underscores that HRD fosters environments where open communication and opportunities for development stimulate employees' creative capacities, leading to innovative organizational outcomes (Kahfi, 2022). This aligns with the premise of this study, as the relationship between training and employee engagement is often mediated by creativity, empowerment, and opportunities for growth elements observed in several of the selected articles included in the present SLR.

HRD also plays a decisive role in shaping employee engagement and performance. According to Niraula and Kharel (2023), strategic investments in HRD not only empower employees with job-relevant skills but also foster a sense of belonging and commitment to the organization. This empowerment increases engagement levels, boosts productivity, and supports retention efforts, illustrating the reciprocal relationship between HRD and workforce stability (Niraula & Kharel, 2023). This perspective resonates directly with the purposes of this study, which seek to uncover the mechanisms through which training and development foster engagement across different organizational contexts.

Globalization further amplifies the importance of HRD. Ja'far et al. (2019) argue that non-formal training can address resource constraints while supporting employee self-actualization, ultimately improving organizational resilience (Ja'far et al., 2019). At the same

time, Ovesni (2023) highlights HRD's multidisciplinary nature, drawing insights from economics, psychology, and management (Ovesni, 2023). Such cross-disciplinary integration enables organizations to tailor HRD programs to their specific cultural and operational challenges, a critical insight for contextualizing findings from the diverse set of studies included in this review.

Technological advancement has transformed HRD practices, with virtual HRD emerging as a powerful tool for global organizations. McWhorter (2010) explains that digital and virtual platforms extend training accessibility, enable cost efficiency, and increase engagement through interactive content (McWhorter, 2010). The relevance of this technological shift is reflected in recent studies, many of which emphasize digital learning, gamification, and blended approaches as modern mechanisms linking training to employee engagement.

Sustainability has also become an integral concern for HRD. Pang and Zhang (2023) demonstrate that organizations prioritizing HRD are better positioned to address environmental and societal challenges, aligning human capital strategies with broader goals of sustainable development (Pang & Zhang, 2023). Similarly, HRD strengthens leadership pipelines, preparing future leaders to navigate uncertainty and complexity (Olubitan et al., 2023). Performance management systems further reinforce HRD by providing feedback loops that align individual goals with organizational objectives, which, as Korff et al. (2016) note, strengthens employees' motivation and time perspective toward long-term engagement (Korff et al., 2016).

HRD also has significant socio-economic implications, especially in developing economies. Research shows that targeted HRD initiatives generate substantial benefits by equipping individuals with employable skills and empowering them to participate in economic activities (Khan & Naeem, 2020; Leuhery, 2023; Nguyễn et al., 2024). Such initiatives highlight HRD's relevance not only for organizational outcomes but also for national competitiveness. These insights enrich this study, as they point to contextual and structural factors economic, cultural, and technological that may moderate the relationship between training and engagement in different organizational and national settings.

Training and Development

Training and development constitute a core component of Human Resource Development (HRD), serving as fundamental mechanisms to equip employees with the skills, knowledge, and competencies necessary to meet organizational demands. As organizations grapple with rapid technological change, globalization, and shifting market dynamics, investment in effective training and development has become essential for maintaining competitiveness and fostering employee engagement. A comprehensive approach to training not only enhances individual performance but also strengthens organizational effectiveness and long-term sustainability.

Training and development encompass a wide range of formal and informal activities, including structured training programs, on-the-job training, mentoring, and continuous professional development. Empirical evidence demonstrates that structured training programs significantly improve employee knowledge and job performance, delivering measurable returns on investment (Niraula & Kharel, 2023). Beyond performance outcomes, training cultivates a culture of continuous learning, which encourages employees to proactively pursue professional growth (Kalangit et al., 2022). This culture of learning is central to enhancing engagement, as observed across several of the studies included in the systematic review, where employees reported higher engagement when provided with ongoing development opportunities.

Strategic alignment of training initiatives with organizational goals is critical for maximizing their effectiveness. Training that addresses immediate skill gaps while supporting long-term strategic objectives reinforces employees' understanding of their roles in contributing to organizational success. Ja'far et al. (2019) emphasize that targeted training not only equips employees for current challenges but also fosters commitment to future organizational directions (Ja'far et al., 2019). Similarly, Olabiyi (2023) notes that when employees perceive their training as directly tied to broader organizational success, they develop a sense of ownership, which enhances engagement and productivity (Olabiyi, 2023). This aligns directly the research question, as it illustrates how training and development practices foster engagement by clarifying role expectations and strengthening organizational commitment.

The ongoing digital transformation has revolutionized training and development by shifting from traditional in-person methods toward more flexible and accessible digital solutions. Organizations now deliver learning through e-learning modules, webinars, virtual simulations, and blended training formats. Bennett (2014) highlights that such technological integration increases training accessibility, while Alami et al. (2016) emphasize how interactive platforms provide real-time feedback and dynamic learning experiences (Alami et al., 2016; Bennett, 2014).

Evaluation of training effectiveness is equally vital. Clarke (2004) stresses that assessing outcomes is critical for determining the value of training programs, while Hakuduwal (2019) suggests that continuous feedback mechanisms are essential for maintaining program relevance (Clarke, 2004; Hakuduwal, 2019). Key metrics such as productivity improvements, employee satisfaction, and retention rates serve as evidence of training effectiveness and its contribution to engagement.

Psychological and perceptual factors also influence training effectiveness. Employees' perceptions regarding the value and relevance of training determine their willingness to engage in the process. Ramiz (2024) argues that organizations that communicate the importance of training while involving employees in its design are more successful in fostering engagement (Ramiz, 2024). Similarly, when employees perceive training as an investment in their professional and personal growth, they are more committed to both their roles and the organization. This was echoed in the selected SLR studies, where engagement outcomes were mediated by employees' satisfaction with training quality and relevance.

Furthermore, training programs are increasingly designed to address emerging workforce needs, particularly in developing soft skills and socio-emotional competencies. Hatch and Dyer (2004) highlight the importance of skills such as communication, teamwork, and emotional intelligence in preparing employees for evolving market demands (Hatch & Dyer, 2004). Programs that focus on these competencies not only enhance adaptability but also strengthen employees' sense of belonging and purpose, leading to higher engagement levels.

Finally, integrating training with broader HRD practices is necessary for maximizing its impact. Šukalová et al. (2022) and Leuhery (2023) note that training should not be viewed in isolation but as part of a holistic HR strategy that encompasses talent acquisition, career development, and performance management (Leuhery, 2023; Šukalová et al., 2022). Such integration creates coherence across HR functions, reinforcing engagement and retention by providing employees with clear pathways for growth and advancement.

Employee Engagement

Employee engagement has become a central theme in organizational psychology and human resource management due to its substantial impact on both employee satisfaction and organizational performance. Defined as the emotional commitment employees feel toward their

organization, engagement reflects their willingness to invest discretionary effort in their roles, ultimately driving productivity and organizational success (Azmy, 2019; Laiman et al., 2023). This multidimensional construct is influenced by numerous antecedents, including job satisfaction, perceived organizational support, autonomy, and work-life balance (Alnuaimi, 2022; Amalia, 2023).

Beyond the psychological and organizational antecedents of engagement, the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model has become one of the most widely applied theoretical frameworks to explain why employees engage in their work. According to the JD-R model, employee engagement arises when job resources—such as autonomy, organizational support, and training—are sufficient to buffer job demands and stimulate personal growth (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Within this framework, training and development are conceptualized as critical resources that reduce strain, enhance competencies, and generate motivation. By equipping employees with the skills to meet organizational demands, training alleviates potential stressors while simultaneously increasing enthusiasm and dedication to work. This dual role situates training as both a protective and enabling factor, directly linking HRD initiatives to engagement outcomes. Consequently, the JD-R perspective offers a robust theoretical basis for understanding how investment in employee development translates into higher levels of engagement, and why the absence of such resources may diminish organizational commitment and performance.

Job satisfaction remains one of the most consistent drivers of engagement. Employees who are satisfied with their roles are more likely to demonstrate loyalty, emotional investment, and long-term commitment to their organizations (Azmy, 2019; Ibrahim et al., 2021). This satisfaction cultivates a sense of belonging, which forms the foundation for sustained engagement. Similarly, work-life balance is increasingly recognized as a vital factor, with employees who successfully manage professional and personal responsibilities exhibiting higher engagement levels (Laiman et al., 2023).

Organizational and workplace factors also shape engagement levels. Employees who perceive clarity in their roles and work within supportive environments are more likely to engage deeply with their tasks (Alnuaimi, 2022). Leadership is particularly influential, as supportive leaders foster cultures of openness, collaboration, and trust, which enhance employees' commitment and engagement (Amalia, 2023). The literature within this review supports this dynamic, with studies indicating that training initiatives embedded in supportive leadership structures yield stronger engagement outcomes compared to training delivered in isolation.

Autonomy is another essential determinant of engagement. When employees feel empowered to make decisions and influence their work processes, they become more motivated and creative in contributing to organizational goals (Amalia, 2023; Slåtten & Mehmetoglu, 2011). This autonomy not only enhances intrinsic motivation but also strengthens the link between professional development opportunities, such as training, and engagement. Moreover, a supportive organizational culture is critical for sustaining engagement, ensuring that gains achieved through development initiatives are reinforced by the broader environment (Ibrahim et al., 2021).

Employee well-being, encompassing both financial and emotional dimensions, further contributes to engagement. Research suggests that perceived organizational support and self-efficacy significantly enhance engagement levels, as employees who feel valued and capable are more likely to commit themselves to their roles (Ferawati, 2023). Engagement also mediates important organizational outcomes, linking well-being to reduced turnover intention and improved retention (Desiana et al., 2024). These findings resonate with studies in the

selected corpus, where employees reported that high-quality training reinforced their sense of support and efficacy, thereby deepening engagement.

Engagement is not uniform across demographic groups or organizational contexts. Generational differences, for instance, reveal that younger cohorts, such as Generation Z, place greater emphasis on growth opportunities and workplace flexibility compared to traditional drivers like financial stability (Kusnaya et al., 2022). These preferences highlight the need for adaptive engagement strategies that integrate development initiatives with evolving workforce expectations. In talent management, organizations that strategically connect training, recognition, and career advancement opportunities create stronger engagement and improve retention rates (Amalia, 2023; Ismail et al., 2021).

Finally, employee engagement is strongly associated with organizational outcomes, particularly performance and profitability. Studies demonstrate that higher engagement levels correlate positively with productivity, work quality, and financial results (Darmasetiawan, 2021; Sokrat, 2020). Organizations with engaged employees often report sustained competitive advantages, as engagement directly contributes to innovation, customer satisfaction, and long-term success (Samodra et al., 2024). The literature reviewed here consistently affirms that training and development function as catalysts for engagement, amplifying employees' contributions to organizational performance.

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

This study employed a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach to synthesize empirical and conceptual evidence on the relationship between training and development and employee engagement. The review followed the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) protocol to ensure methodological transparency, replicability, and rigor. By systematically identifying, screening, and evaluating peer-reviewed studies, this SLR provides a consolidated understanding of how training and development contribute to employee engagement across diverse organizational and cultural contexts.

Search Strategy

The literature search was conducted using the Scopus database in January 2025. A predefined search string was applied to capture relevant studies:

“training and development” and *“employee engagement”*

The initial query returned 137 documents. To refine the dataset, the following filters were applied:

1. Publication period: 2015–2025 (last 10 years).
2. Document type: Journal articles only.
3. Language: English.

After applying these criteria, the dataset was reduced to 88 journal articles. The metadata exported in CSV (full record) format included title, abstract, keywords, authors, year, source title, and DOI, allowing for systematic screening.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

To ensure quality and relevance, inclusion and exclusion criteria were established:

Inclusion criteria

1. Peer-reviewed journal articles.
2. Explicitly examining the relationship between training and/or development and employee engagement, or where engagement was considered as a mediating or outcome variable.

3. Empirical or conceptual studies are situated in organizational, management, or HRD contexts.
4. Published between 2015 and 2025.

Exclusion Criteria

1. Studies that mentioned training or engagement are only superficially without establishing conceptual or empirical linkage.
2. Non-peer-reviewed documents (conference proceedings, book chapters, reports).
3. Studies outside HRD or organizational contexts (e.g., purely educational pedagogy, technical training without engagement outcomes).
4. Duplicate records.

Screening and Selection Process

The screening and selection process was conducted in three stages.

1. Title and Abstract Screening: From the initial 88 articles, many were excluded because they focused exclusively on training/development or engagement without analyzing their interrelationship.
2. Full-text Eligibility Assessment: Articles were examined in greater depth to determine whether they provided empirical data or conceptual models connecting training and development with employee engagement.
3. Final Inclusion: Based on relevance, methodological rigor, and contribution to the research questions, a final set of 10 articles was identified for in-depth analysis and synthesis. These articles spanned multiple countries and contexts, including India, Ghana, Indonesia, Saudi Arabia, and cross-cultural studies, and represented both quantitative and qualitative methodologies.

The detailed process of article identification and selection is presented in the PRISMA flow diagram (Figure 1), demonstrating the systematic narrowing from 137 initial documents to the final inclusion of 10 highly relevant studies.

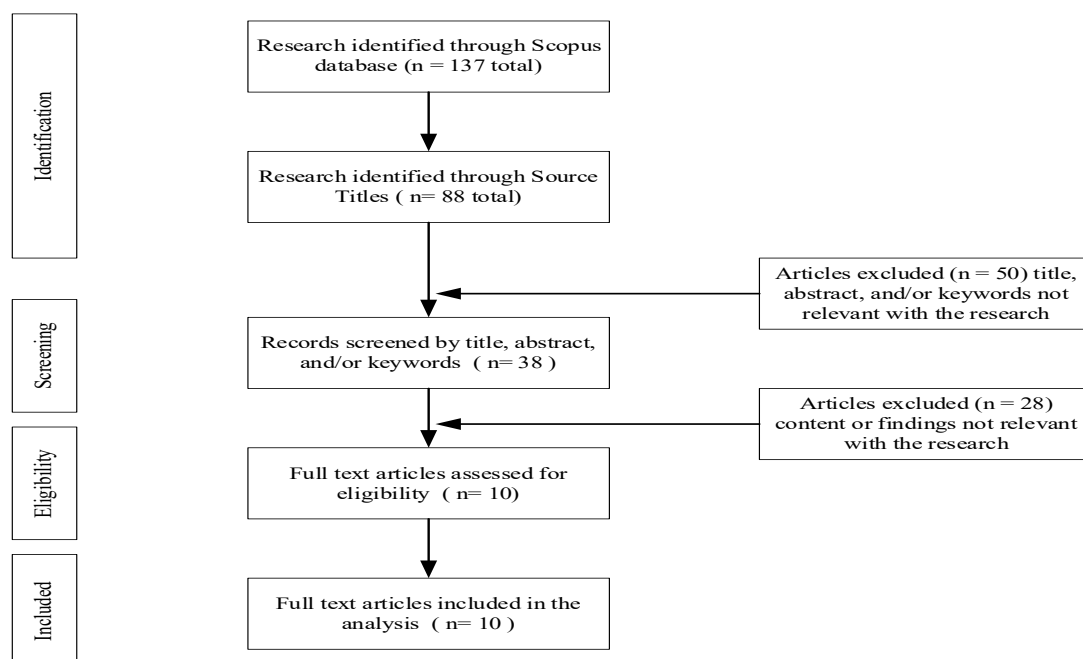


Figure 1. PRISMA Flow Diagram

Data Extraction and Analysis

A data extraction form was developed to capture information such as authors, year of publication, journal, methodology, country/region, type of training/development intervention, and key findings related to employee engagement. A thematic synthesis was then conducted to identify recurring themes, mechanisms, and contextual factors as shown in Table 1:

Table 1. Summary of Selected Studies on Training and Development and Employee Engagement

No	Author(s)	Year	Title	Journal	Method	Country/Context	Main Findings
1	Kavitha	2025	The Impact of Human Resource Practices on Organizational Performance: Mediating Role of Employee Engagement	International Research Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies	Quantitative survey	India	HR practices, including training and development, significantly influence organizational performance through employee engagement as a mediator.
2	Dwumah et al.	2025	Navigating the Green Path: Strategies for Enhancing Employee Engagement through HRD	Business Strategy and the Environment	Mixed-method	Ghana	Green HRD strategies, including sustainable training, enhance engagement and align employees with organizational sustainability goals.
3	Manroop et al.	2025	Human Resource Management in Times of Crisis: The Role of Engagement and Development	Organizational Dynamics	Conceptual/Case study	Not specified	Training and employee development are critical in crises; engagement serves as a stabilizer to maintain performance.
4	John & Tiwari	2025	HR Aspects of Corporate Social Responsibility: Training and Engagement Linkages	Data and Metadata	Qualitative case study	India	CSR-related training improves employee awareness and strengthens engagement with organizational social goals.
5	Yamoah	2025	Employee Commitment in Ghanaian Healthcare:	Business, Management and Economics Engineering	Quantitative survey	Ghana (Healthcare sector)	Training initiatives improve commitment, with employee

			Role of Training and Engagement				engagement acting as a key mediator in performance outcomes.
6	Agrawal et al.	2025	Effectiveness of Sustainability Communication on Employee Engagement	Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management	Quantitative survey	India	Communication and training in sustainability practices enhance employee engagement and organizational identification.
7	Dahal & Sharma	2025	Leading from a Distance: How Emotional Intelligence and Training Influence Engagement	Journal of Logistics, Informatics and Service Science	Quantitative survey	Nepal	Leadership training and emotional intelligence development improve engagement in remote-working contexts.
8	Wulandari et al.	2025	Determinants of Employee Performance Mediated by Engagement : Role of Training	Journal of Ecohumanism	Quantitative survey	Indonesia	Training positively affects employee performance, with engagement acting as a mediating factor.
9	Alenezi et al.	2025	Relationship Between Digital Transformation in Training and Employee Engagement	Journal of Chinese Human Resources Management	Quantitative survey	Saudi Arabia	Digital transformation in training delivery fosters engagement by enhancing learning accessibility and satisfaction.
10	Zatar and Jaouadi	2025	Impact of HRM on Fostering Employee Engagement in Saudi Vision 2030	International Journal of Advanced and Applied Sciences	Quantitative survey	Saudi Arabia	HRM practices, particularly training and development, are central to boosting employee engagement aligned with Vision 2030.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The systematic search and screening process yielded a final set of 10 peer-reviewed journal articles published between 2015 and 2025 that explicitly addressed the relationship between training and development and employee engagement (see Table 1). These studies collectively represent diverse contexts, including India, Ghana, Indonesia, Saudi Arabia, Nepal, and broader cross-cultural examinations. The selected articles were published in reputable international journals such as *Business Strategy and the Environment*, *Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management*, *Organizational Dynamics*, and the *International Journal of Advanced and Applied Sciences*.

Publication Trends and Contexts

The final studies were predominantly published in the 2020–2025 period, reflecting a growing scholarly interest in linking training and development with engagement in the last five years. Several articles focused on emerging economies such as India, Ghana, and Indonesia, highlighting the importance of HRD practices in driving engagement in developing country contexts. Others examined global trends, including the role of digital transformation and sustainability communication, underscoring the breadth of training practices under investigation.

Methodological Characteristics

Among the ten studies, quantitative survey designs dominated, often employing structured questionnaires to test the mediating or moderating role of engagement between training/development and organizational outcomes (e.g., performance, commitment, retention). Two studies adopted qualitative or case study approaches, particularly in the contexts of corporate social responsibility and crisis management, offering deeper insights into organizational practices. One study was primarily conceptual, analyzing the role of HRD and engagement in times of organizational turbulence. This methodological diversity allowed the review to capture both measurable outcomes and nuanced organizational processes.

Thematic Findings

Across the selected literature, several themes emerged:

1. Training as a driver of engagement: Multiple studies confirmed that training and development initiatives directly enhance employee engagement by equipping staff with relevant skills and signaling organizational support (Kavitha, 2025; Wulandari et al., 2025).
2. Engagement as a mediator: Engagement frequently acted as a mediating variable between training and broader outcomes such as performance, commitment, and organizational sustainability (Agrawal et al., 2025; Yamoah, 2025).
3. Role of leadership and emotional intelligence: Leadership development and emotional intelligence training were highlighted as crucial factors that strengthen engagement, particularly in remote or crisis contexts (Dahal & Sharma, 2025; Manroop et al., 2025).
4. Digital transformation in training: Studies noted the growing importance of digital and blended training platforms, which expand accessibility and positively influence engagement (Alenezi et al., 2025).
5. Cultural and contextual dimensions: Engagement outcomes were shaped by socio-cultural settings, with studies from Ghana and Saudi Arabia emphasizing the need for culturally responsive HRD practices aligned with national agendas and healthcare systems (Dwumah et al., 2025; Zatar & Jaouadi, 2025).

6. CSR-related training improves employee awareness and strengthens engagement with organizational social goals (John & Tiwari, 2025).

Synthesis of Findings

Overall, the synthesis reveals that training and development serve not only as mechanisms for skill enhancement but also as strategic levers for fostering employee engagement. Engagement, in turn, mediates the impact of training on organizational outcomes such as performance, retention, and sustainability. The diversity of contexts and methodological approaches reinforces the generalizability of this relationship while also underscoring the importance of adapting training strategies to specific organizational and cultural environments.

These patterns are consistent with the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model, in which training operates as a critical job resource that not only buffers demand but also stimulates motivation and engagement, while leadership, digital platforms, and cultural alignment serve as contextual moderators shaping its effectiveness.

Discussion

The findings of this review provide strong evidence that training and development play a critical role in shaping employee engagement across different organizational and cultural settings. The synthesis of the ten selected studies reveals a consistent pattern: organizations that invest in systematic and well-aligned training initiatives tend to foster deeper emotional commitment among employees. This confirms the assumption that engagement is not merely a by-product of HRD but a central outcome that sustains performance, loyalty, and innovation.

Across the studies, training emerged as more than a technical exercise of skill enhancement; it was consistently perceived as an organizational signal of support and recognition. This resonates with the premise of social exchange theory, whereby employees reciprocate investments in their growth with heightened engagement and discretionary effort. In India, Indonesia, and Ghana, for example, quantitative survey evidence demonstrated that employees who participated in structured development programs reported greater enthusiasm, stronger attachment, and improved performance outcomes. Such results directly respond to the first research question, underscoring the strategic importance of training as a driver of engagement.

At the same time, engagement frequently acted as a bridge between training and broader organizational outcomes. In multiple studies, engagement mediated the effects of training on performance, retention, and sustainability initiatives, highlighting its function as a mechanism rather than a mere outcome. This insight aligns closely with the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model, in which training operates as a key resource buffering employees from work pressures and simultaneously energizing them. Moderating influences also surfaced: leadership development, emotional intelligence, and digital transformation in training delivery have amplified the positive relationship between training and engagement. In this way, the second research question is addressed through both the identification of mediating pathways and contextual moderators that enrich the training–engagement nexus.

Cultural and institutional contexts added further nuance. Studies in Saudi Arabia linked training-driven engagement to the ambitions of Vision 2030, while Ghanaian research emphasized the role of HRD in strengthening healthcare sector commitment. These examples illustrate that while the fundamental relationship between training and engagement appears universal, its potency depends heavily on alignment with national priorities and socio-cultural expectations. This observation draws attention to institutional theory, which reminds us of that HRD practices cannot be divorced from the broader societal frameworks in which

organizations operate. Such contextual findings speak directly to the third research question and suggest that global HRD strategies must always remain locally adaptable.

When placed against the theoretical background developed earlier, the evidence demonstrates a convergence between theory and practice. The creative potential of HRD (Kahfi, 2022), the psychological bases of engagement such as satisfaction and autonomy (Azmy, 2019; Laiman et al., 2023), and the rising prominence of digital HRD strategies (McWhorter, 2010) all found empirical support in the reviewed studies. Particularly notable is the way digital transformation in training platforms expands accessibility and improves perceived organizational support, thereby enhancing engagement in contexts ranging from remote work to cross-border organizations.

Taken together, the discussion suggests that training and development are not isolated HR functions, but rather strategic levers embedded within broader systems of human resource development. They shape engagement directly, channel its mediating effects toward performance and retention, and are moderated by leadership, digital infrastructures, and cultural environments. In this synthesis, training becomes the foundation upon which sustainable employee engagement is built, offering organizations a pathway to resilience, competitiveness, and long-term success.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this review provide clear and compelling answers to the three research questions that guided the study. With regard to the first question, the evidence consistently demonstrates that training and development initiatives directly enhance employee engagement. Across contexts as diverse as India, Indonesia, and Ghana, employees who participate in structured and meaningful training perceive these initiatives as organizational investments in their growth. This perception strengthens their sense of belonging and motivates them to commit more deeply to their roles, thus confirming that training is not only a technical intervention but also a psychological resource that fosters engagement.

The second question concerned the mechanisms through which training influences engagement. The review reveals that engagement frequently acts as a mediator, translating training efforts into outcomes such as performance, commitment, and retention. This mediating role is amplified by moderating factors—leadership practices, emotional intelligence, and the digitalization of training platforms—that either strengthen or weaken the connection between training and engagement. These findings echo the assumptions of the Job Demands-Resources model and social exchange theory, both of which help explain why employees reciprocate developmental opportunities with heightened engagement and discretionary effort.

The third question addressed the role of cultural and organizational contexts. Here, the studies show that while the link between training and engagement is broadly robust, its intensity is shaped by socio-cultural and institutional conditions. For example, training in the healthcare sector of Ghana or within the framework of Saudi Vision 2030 gained significance because it aligned closely with national priorities and organizational missions. This underlines the insight of institutional theory that HRD practices must remain sensitive to cultural expectations and societal systems to achieve maximum impact.

Taken together, the answers to the three research questions converge on a central conclusion: training and development are powerful levers for cultivating employee engagement. They strengthen skills, communicate organizational support, and, when designed with contextual sensitivity, become engines of commitment and performance that sustain organizational success.

IMPLICATIONS

The implications of these findings are twofold. Theoretically, they affirm the explanatory power of social exchange theory, the JD-R model, and institutional theory in understanding how training and development foster engagement. Practically, they emphasize the importance of designing training programs that integrate technical skill development with psychological and cultural sensitivity. HR practitioners should view training as part of a holistic HRD strategy, using digital platforms to increase accessibility, embedding sustainability communication, and aligning initiatives with organizational and national goals. Leaders who champion training and development can significantly enhance employee engagement, thereby reinforcing organizational resilience and competitiveness.

FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Several gaps remain that warrant further investigation. First, most existing studies employ cross-sectional designs; future research should adopt longitudinal approaches to capture the sustained impact of training on engagement. Second, generational differences require more attention, particularly as younger cohorts such as Generation Z may value flexibility and growth opportunities differently than older employees. Third, emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence, gamification, and immersive virtual learning environments present new avenues for examining how digital HRD shapes engagement. Finally, greater emphasis should be placed on comparative cross-cultural studies to explore how institutional and cultural factors moderate the training–engagement relationship across regions.

LIMITATIONS

This review is not without limitations. By restricting the search to a single database (Scopus), relevant studies indexed elsewhere may have been excluded. The focus on English-language publications may also have overlooked significant research in non-English contexts, particularly given the cultural sensitivity of HRD and engagement. Additionally, the heterogeneity of study designs and measures of engagement limited direct comparability across findings. Despite these constraints, the review provides a robust synthesis of recent scholarship and offers a reliable foundation for advancing both theory and practice in HRD and employee engagement.

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