

Impact of Staff Training on Enhancing Innovative Work Behavior among Non-Teaching Staff in Public Universities in Western Kenya

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ABSTRACT

In today's dynamic academic environment, the ability of institutions to remain adaptive and competitive increasingly depends on fostering innovative work behavior (IWB) among employees, including non-teaching staff. Staff training has emerged as a pivotal human resource practice for enhancing employee innovation, yet its role in shaping IWB among non-teaching personnel in Kenyan public universities remains underexplored. The problem is compounded by limited structured training opportunities and underdeveloped HR strategies targeting this vital employee segment, which restricts their innovative potential and contribution to institutional development. The purpose of this study was to examine the effect of staff training on innovative work behavior among non-teaching staff in public universities in Western Kenya. Specifically, the study sought to assess the relationship between staff training and the ability of employees to generate, promote, and implement novel ideas in their work contexts. A descriptive survey research design was adopted, and data were collected using structured questionnaires from a sample of 196 non-teaching staff at managerial and supervisory levels across six public universities. The data were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. A t-test conducted on the regression coefficient for staff training revealed a statistically significant positive effect on innovative work behavior ($\beta = 0.788$, $t = 14.142$, $p < 0.001$). These findings underscore the strategic role of targeted and well-structured training programs in enhancing creative thinking, proactive problem-solving, and adaptability among non-teaching staff. The study contributes to policy by advocating for the integration of continuous professional development into HR frameworks within public universities. For practice, it highlights the need to institutionalize employee training as a lever for organizational innovation. Academically, it adds to the growing discourse on human resource development by empirically linking staff training to innovative outcomes in the public education sector.

Keywords: Innovative Work Behaviour, Kenya, Non-Teaching Staff, Public Universities, Staff Training

I. INTRODUCTION

In the face of rapid technological and procedural advancements, public universities must continually adapt to stay relevant and competitive within the educational sector. Non-teaching staff play a critical, though often under-recognized, role in ensuring these institutions operate efficiently by managing administrative, financial, and logistical tasks that support the core academic mission (Odor, 2018). For these institutions to remain adaptable and resilient, fostering innovative work behavior (IWB) among non-teaching staff has become essential. IWB, characterized by the generation, promotion, and implementation of novel ideas, enables these employees to find creative solutions to complex problems, improve service delivery, and enhance overall institutional effectiveness (Bos-Nehles et al., 2017).

Staff training has been identified as one of the fundamental drivers of IWB, especially within human resource management (HRM) practices. As a critical HRM strategy, training equips employees with the skills, knowledge, and motivation needed to respond proactively to the evolving demands of their roles (Bos-Nehles et al., 2017). This is particularly relevant in higher education, where there is a need for operational flexibility and innovative approaches to adapt to rapid educational and administrative changes. Training not only boosts the technical abilities of non-teaching staff but also fosters a mindset of continuous improvement, which can drive innovation within these roles (Jalil et al., 2021).

Despite the recognized importance of IWB in the workplace, there is limited research on how training specifically impacts the IWB of non-teaching staff within public universities in Kenya. Previous studies have largely

focused on private-sector organizations or academic staff, overlooking the significant role that non-teaching personnel play in fostering an innovative culture within public institutions (Canet-Giner et al., 2020; Waheed et al., 2018). Moreover, many public universities in Kenya face resource constraints and a lack of formalized HR practices, including structured training programs that target non-teaching staff (Chris et al., 2020). This lack of focus on training potentially limits the capacity of these employees to contribute innovatively to institutional goals.

To address this gap, this study examines the relationship between staff training and IWB among non-teaching staff in public universities in Kenya. Specifically, it aims to answer the question: To what extent does staff training enhance innovative work behavior among non-teaching staff in public universities? This research question is critical, as understanding how training influences innovation could inform HRM practices that effectively harness the potential of non-teaching staff, thereby contributing to institutional resilience and long-term success.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Non-teaching staff in public universities play a crucial role in supporting the administrative, financial, and logistical needs that allow academic staff to fulfill the core educational mission of the institution. However, the potential for these staff to contribute to innovative work behavior (IWB) is often limited due to a lack of structured training and HR practices tailored to their roles. In Kenya, public universities face challenges such as resource constraints and underdeveloped HR systems, which result in limited opportunities for non-teaching staff to engage in activities that foster IWB. Although staff training is recognized as a key enabler of innovation, there is insufficient research on its specific impact on the IWB of non-teaching staff in Kenyan universities. This lack of focus potentially restricts the capacity of these employees to contribute effectively to the institutions' adaptability and competitiveness. Consequently, understanding how targeted training influences the innovative capabilities of non-teaching staff is critical for developing HR strategies that enhance institutional resilience and long-term success in public universities.

1.2 Research Objectives

This research paper was guided by the following objectives:

- i. To assess the relationship between staff training and idea generation as a component of innovative work behavior among non-teaching staff
- ii. To evaluate the impact of training on the promotion of innovative ideas among non-teaching personnel in public universities
- iii. To analyze the influence of structured training programs on the implementation of innovative ideas by non-teaching staff
- iv. To examine the collective effect of succession planning practices, including supervisory support, performance reviews, and mentorship, on innovative work behavior among non-teaching staff

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Review

2.1.1 Resource-Based View (RBV) Theory

The Resource-Based View (RBV) theory emphasizes that organizations can gain a sustainable competitive advantage by leveraging unique resources that are valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable (VRIN) (Nason & Wiklund, 2018). In this study, RBV underpins the idea that non-teaching staff, as valuable organizational assets, can enhance institutional performance through innovative work behavior (IWB) when supported by structured training programs. By investing in training, universities strengthen their human resources, enhancing employees' skills and capabilities—key components of their competitive advantage (Barney, 1991). The RBV framework thus suggests that training equips non-teaching staff to become essential contributors to innovation within public universities, driving institutional adaptability and effectiveness.

2.1.2 Ability-Motivation-Opportunity (AMO) Framework

The AMO framework posits that employee performance is shaped by their abilities, motivation, and opportunities to perform their roles effectively. Training increases employees' ability by improving their skill sets, while providing motivational support and opportunities allows them to apply these skills innovatively in their work (Bos-Nehles et al., 2017). This framework is relevant for understanding how staff training encourages IWB among non-teaching staff in public universities. When universities offer training that enhances skills, supports staff motivation, and provides opportunities for creativity, it fosters an environment where non-teaching staff are empowered to engage in innovative activities that contribute to the institution's success.

2.1.3 Social Exchange Theory

Social Exchange Theory, based on the principle of reciprocity, holds that employees are more likely to engage in positive behaviors when they feel supported and valued by their organization. Applied to the context of public universities, this theory suggests that when non-teaching staff receive structured training and support, they are motivated to reciprocate through increased engagement in IWB. The theory highlights the role of a supportive work environment in encouraging employees to contribute innovatively to their organization (Homans, 1958). In this study, Social Exchange Theory informs the understanding that HR practices such as mentoring and performance feedback, alongside training, play an instrumental role in fostering IWB.

2.2 Empirical Review: Staff Training and Innovative Work Behavior

A growing body of empirical literature underscores the importance of staff training as a strategic human resource practice that significantly enhances employees' innovative work behavior (IWB). Training equips employees with relevant knowledge, skills, and competencies, which in turn foster their capacity to generate, promote, and implement novel ideas within the workplace.

Bos-Nehles et al. (2017) found that a cluster of HRM practices, particularly training and development, plays a crucial role in stimulating IWB. Their study emphasized that training enhances employees' ability and motivation, key enablers of innovation, and concluded that organizations should integrate structured training programs to unlock employees' innovative potential.

Jalil et al. (2021) investigated the relationship between training and IWB among employees in Malaysia's SME sector and found a significant positive relationship. Their study revealed that both affective and calculative commitment partially mediate this relationship, suggesting that training not only builds competence but also fosters psychological attachment to the organization, an essential driver of innovation.

Jehanzeb (2021) further supported this by highlighting the association between managerial training support and IWB. The study revealed that employees who participate in training programs are more likely to engage in innovative behavior, attributing this to the increased confidence and competence gained through continuous learning opportunities.

Tran et al. (2020), applying the AMO (Ability-Motivation-Opportunity) framework in a Vietnamese university, found that training and development significantly influenced IWB among university lecturers. Although the study focused on academic staff, the findings are relevant to non-teaching staff as they affirm the link between learning environments and innovation in educational institutions.

Coetzer et al. (2020) also reported a positive correlation between participation in training and IWB in small professional businesses. They concluded that employees exposed to training environments are better positioned to think creatively and contribute to continuous improvement initiatives within their organizations.

In the Kenyan context, Okumu et al. (2018) examined employee training in the judiciary and found that transfer of knowledge and training resources significantly affected performance outcomes. While the study did not directly focus on IWB, its implications point to the role of training in enhancing behaviors linked to innovation, such as problem-solving and initiative-taking.

Collectively, these studies affirm that staff training is a key enabler of IWB across various organizational settings. They also highlight the need for structured, ongoing training programs tailored to the specific roles of employees, such as non-teaching staff in public universities, to fully harness their innovative potential.

III. METHODOLOGY

A quantitative approach was used, employing a survey research design to investigate the relationship between staff training and IWB. The target population consisted of non-teaching staff in managerial and supervisory roles across six public universities in Western Kenya, with a sample size of 196 determined by the formula put forth by Krejcie and Morgan (1970). Structured questionnaires assessed training frequency, skill improvement, and various aspects of IWB. After testing for reliability and validity, the data were analyzed using SPSS version 25, applying descriptive statistics and regression analysis to understand the training-IWB relationship. Ethical considerations were adhered to throughout the research process to ensure the integrity of the study and the protection of participants' rights. Before data collection, approval of the proposal for data collection was obtained from the Directorate of Post-Graduate Studies and NACOSTI to ensure compliance with research ethics guidelines. Participants were provided with informed consent forms explaining the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of their participation, and their right to withdraw at any time without penalty. Confidentiality was maintained by anonymizing responses and securely storing data to prevent unauthorized access. Additionally, data collected were used exclusively for research purposes, and findings were reported in an aggregated manner to protect individual identities.

IV. FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

4.1 Descriptive Statistics for the Variables

4.1.1 Descriptive Statistics for Staff Training

This section presents findings on staff perceptions regarding training practices within public universities in Western Kenya. The results reflect overall agreement that training is both available and impactful, especially in fostering innovation. Respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement with key statements relating to the presence, frequency, relevance, and effectiveness of training programs in their institutions. Table 1 summarizes the responses using means, standard deviations, and percentage distributions based on a five-point Likert scale ranging from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree."

Table 1
Staff Training Descriptive Statistics

Responses	SD %	D%	FA%	A%	SA%	Mean	SD
The organization provides training programs to employees	0 (0)	.8 (1)	11.3 (14)	34.7 (43)	53.2 (66)	4.40	.720
I regularly attend additional professional training courses in the organizations	0 (0)	1.6 (2)	24.2 (30)	30.6 (38)	43.5 (54)	4.16	.850
The organization always facilitates for training to improve my knowledge and skills	0 (0)	6.5 (8)	25.8 (32)	37.9 (47)	29.8 (37)	3.91	.902
Through training opportunities, I obtain innovative information and skills to deal with contemporary job issues	0 (0)	.8 (1)	31.5 (39)	29.8 (37)	37.9 (47)	4.05	.854
Training offered to me fit my job requirements	0 (0)	3.2 (4)	29.8 (37)	50.0 (62)	16.9 (21)	3.81	.751

Table 1 summarizes responses to five key statements about staff training. The highest level of agreement was recorded on the item *"The organization provides training programs to employees,"* where a combined 87.9% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed ($M = 4.40$, $SD = 0.720$), indicating that training initiatives are well-established in most institutions.

Respondents also expressed high levels of participation in professional development, with 74.1% agreeing or strongly agreeing that they *"regularly attend additional professional training courses"* ($M = 4.16$, $SD = 0.850$). This suggests that training is not only provided but actively attended by staff.

Additionally, 67.7% of respondents confirmed that their institutions *"facilitate training to improve knowledge and skills,"* with a mean score of 3.91 ($SD = 0.902$), while 67.7% also agreed that they *"obtain innovative information and skills to deal with contemporary job issues"* through training ($M = 4.05$, $SD = 0.854$). These findings support the argument that training enhances employees' innovative capabilities and adaptability in modern work contexts.

Finally, 66.9% of respondents agreed that the *"training offered fits their job requirements,"* with a mean of 3.81 ($SD = 0.751$), indicating that training programs are generally aligned with actual job roles.

Overall, the consistently high mean scores (ranging from 3.81 to 4.40) and relatively low standard deviations suggest strong consensus on the presence and relevance of staff training programs. These results affirm previous research (e.g., Bos-Nehles et al., 2017; Tran et al., 2020) showing that targeted training interventions foster the knowledge and motivation required for innovative work behavior. They also highlight the strategic importance of institutionalizing continuous learning opportunities to maintain an innovative and competent workforce.

4.1.2 Descriptive Statistics for Employee Innovative Work Behaviour

This section presents descriptive statistics on the extent to which non-teaching staff in public universities in Western Kenya exhibit innovative work behaviour (IWB). IWB is assessed through various indicators reflecting the generation, promotion, and implementation of novel ideas in the workplace. Respondents were asked to rate their agreement with statements related to their innovative tendencies, including creativity, problem-solving, and the willingness to suggest improvements. Responses were captured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree." The summarized results in Table 4.2 provide insights into the overall innovation orientation of staff members and their perceived capacity to contribute to institutional improvement through innovative practices.

Table 2*Employee Innovative Work Behaviour Descriptive Statistics*

Responses	SD %	D%	FA%	A%	SA%	Mean	SD
I try to create new ideas for difficult issues.	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	10.5 (13)	47.6 (59)	41.9 (52)	4.31	.655
I have confidence in searching out new working methods, techniques, or instruments	0.0 (0)	0.8 (1)	6.5 (8)	43.5 (54)	49.2 (61)	4.41	.650
I have confidence in my ability to introduce innovative ideas into the work environment in a systematic way solve problems	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	16.1 (20)	30.6 (38)	53.2 (66)	4.37	.749
I have confidence in deciding on innovative ideas to be utilized by the university.	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	23.4 (29)	33.1 (41)	43.5 (54)	4.20	.796
I suggest improvements to the ideas expressed by my colleagues	0 (0)	4.8 (6)	16.9 (21)	38.7 (48)	39.5 (49)	4.27	.818

The results indicate a strong presence of innovative work behaviour among non-teaching staff in public universities in Western Kenya. Overall, respondents expressed high confidence in their ability to think creatively, solve problems, and contribute new ideas in their workplaces.

The highest mean score ($M = 4.41$, $SD = 0.650$) was observed for the statement “I have confidence in searching out new working methods, techniques, or instruments,” with 92.7% of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing. This suggests that most staff members are proactive in exploring new and more effective ways of performing their tasks.

Closely following this was the statement “I have confidence in my ability to introduce innovative ideas into the work environment in a systematic way to solve problems” ($M = 4.37$, $SD = 0.749$), where 83.8% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed. This indicates a high level of self-efficacy related to applying innovation practically in their roles.

A similarly strong response was recorded for “I try to create new ideas for difficult issues” ($M = 4.31$, $SD = 0.655$), with 89.5% agreement, highlighting the creative potential and problem-solving orientation of the workforce.

Additionally, 76.6% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they “have confidence in deciding on innovative ideas to be utilized by the university” ($M = 4.20$, $SD = 0.796$), suggesting a good level of involvement in decision-making processes concerning innovation.

Finally, 78.2% indicated that they “suggest improvements to ideas expressed by colleagues” ($M = 4.27$, $SD = 0.818$), pointing to a collaborative and idea-sharing culture among staff.

The high mean scores across all items (ranging from 4.20 to 4.41) and the relatively low standard deviations suggest consistency and shared perceptions among respondents. These findings reinforce the argument that non-teaching staff in these institutions are not only capable but also willing to engage in innovative behaviours when given the right conditions—such as training, encouragement, and opportunities for participation.

This aligns with prior research (e.g., Janssen, 2000; Bos-Nehles et al., 2017) which identifies employee confidence, collaboration, and organizational support as critical drivers of innovative work behaviour in knowledge-intensive environments such as universities.

4.1.6 Regression Analysis of Study Variables

In order to better understand the relationship between variables, regression analysis was conducted. The study found a significant positive relationship between staff training and IWB among non-teaching staff in Kenyan public universities.

Table 3*Regression Analysis of Staff Training and IWB*

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error
Staff Training (Model 1)	0.788	0.621	0.618	0.325

The regression analysis in Table 3 reveals a strong, positive relationship between staff training and IWB. The model has an R-squared value of 0.621, indicating that 62.1% of the variance in IWB is accounted for by staff training ($p < .001$). This result suggests that employees who participated in regular and structured training programs were more likely to exhibit behaviors associated with innovation, including idea generation, idea promotion, and idea implementation. Training programs that focused on both technical skill development and problem-solving were particularly effective in encouraging innovative behavior.

The study found that structured training significantly enhances idea generation among non-teaching staff. The regression analysis showed a high correlation, indicating that training accounts for 62.1% of variance in IWB.

This supports prior research by Bos-Nehles et al. (2017), who demonstrated the importance of training for fostering innovative skills. The AMO (Ability, Motivation, and Opportunity) framework supports this, as training enhances the skill base necessary for creativity and innovation.

Also, Staff who received regular training displayed an increase in idea promotion, with each training increment linked to higher IWB scores. This aligns with findings by Sulaiman et al. (2019), suggesting that supportive practices like training motivate employees to share and promote new ideas, reinforcing the Social Exchange Theory's principle of reciprocity, where staff feel inclined to contribute positively when they perceive organizational support.

In addition, Staff who received regular training displayed an increase in idea promotion, with each training increment linked to higher IWB scores. This aligns with findings by Sulaiman et al. (2019), suggesting that supportive practices like training motivate employees to share and promote new ideas, reinforcing the Social Exchange Theory's principle of reciprocity, where staff feel inclined to contribute positively when they perceive organizational support.

Table 4

ANOVA - Effect of Staff Training on IWB

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	21.180	1	21.180	200.001	.000
Residual	12.920	122	0.106		
Total	34.099	123			

ANOVA results in Table 4 support the significant impact of staff training on IWB ($F = 200.001$, $p < .001$). The high mean square regression value underscores the strength of the training-IWB relationship.

From this table, Supervisory support, mentorship, and performance reviews combined with training yielded a stronger positive effect on IWB, as seen in ANOVA results ($F = 200.001$, $p < .001$). This reflects the Resource-Based View (RBV) theory, which suggests that institutional investment in HR practices like mentorship can increase innovation by enhancing the intrinsic value of staff. As Chris et al. (2020) observed, in resource-limited environments, structured HR practices can compensate for other constraints, emphasizing the strategic importance of succession planning in fostering innovation.

Table 5

Coefficients of Staff Training and IWB

Predictor	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
Constant	1.430	0.206		6.945	.000
Staff Training	0.709	0.050	0.788	14.142	.000

Table 5 shows that the unstandardized coefficient (B) for staff training is 0.709, indicating that each unit increase in training predicts a 0.709 increase in IWB. The beta value (0.788) and the highly significant t-value confirm the strength of this relationship.

The results showed that training also improved idea implementation, with a beta value of 0.788, indicating a strong impact on applying new concepts effectively. These findings are consistent with Jalil et al. (2021), who emphasized that training focusing on problem-solving boosts the implementation phase of innovation. Through structured support, universities can enhance institutional adaptability, ensuring non-teaching staff feel empowered to turn ideas into actionable practices.

V. CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusion

This study concludes that staff training significantly impacts innovative work behavior among non-teaching staff in public universities in Western Kenya. The findings indicate that structured training programs that emphasize skill development, problem-solving, and regularity enhance non-teaching staff's ability to generate, promote, and implement new ideas. The high R-squared value (0.621) and significant beta coefficient ($\beta = 0.788$) underscore that training is a substantial predictor of IWB, suggesting that universities can benefit from investing in continuous training initiatives.

The results also emphasize the importance of support structures, such as mentoring and feedback, in amplifying the positive effects of training on innovation. By providing an environment where employees feel valued and encouraged to apply new skills creatively, universities can foster a culture of innovation that extends beyond

academic staff to include administrative personnel. Ultimately, this study highlights the strategic importance of HRM practices, particularly training, in fostering resilience, adaptability, and long-term success in academic institutions.

5.2 Recommendations

Based on the findings, this study offers the following recommendations for public universities seeking to enhance innovative work behavior among their non-teaching staff:

Public universities should prioritize regular, targeted training programs that develop both technical and problem-solving skills among non-teaching staff. By tailoring these programs to specific needs, universities can better equip staff to adapt to changes and contribute meaningfully to institutional innovation.

Moreover, to maximize the effectiveness of training, universities should establish supportive structures such as mentorship and feedback systems. These elements foster an environment where staff feel valued and confident in sharing ideas, motivating them to apply their skills in creative ways that align with institutional goals.

Furthermore, allocating resources for continuous professional development and setting mechanisms to evaluate training outcomes can help universities refine their approaches over time. By embedding innovation goals into the curriculum and tracking results, institutions can foster a culture of adaptability and sustained improvement among their non-teaching staff.

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