



Impact of Capacity Building Programs on Employee Performance in Private Universities in Nangarhar Province, Afghanistan

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the impact of capacity-building programs on employee performance in private universities within Nangarhar Province, Afghanistan. Against the backdrop of a developing higher education sector facing resource constraints and institutional challenges, the research investigates how targeted training initiatives influence faculty and administrative staff competencies, job satisfaction, and overall institutional effectiveness. Utilizing a quantitative research design, the study collected data from 226 employees across seven private universities through a validated Likert-scale questionnaire, achieving a 91.1% response rate. Findings reveal a strong positive correlation between capacity-building participation and enhanced employee performance, with 93.3% of respondents reporting improved job-related skills and 92.5% observing measurable departmental performance gains. The study identifies knowledge-sharing culture (93.8% agreement) and skill application support (89.8% agreement) as critical success factors, while noting gaps in career pathway alignment (only 38.9% strongly agreeing on role suitability post-training). These results substantiate human capital theory while highlighting contextual implementation challenges unique to Afghanistan's higher education environment. The research contributes to academic discourse by providing empirical evidence from an understudied conflict-affected region, demonstrating how strategic workforce development can mitigate institutional capacity gaps. Practical implications suggest the need for more structured post-training support systems and clearer career progression frameworks. Methodologically, the study adapts and validates a cross-cultural research instrument for fragile educational contexts. Limitations include geographical specificity and reliance on self-reported data, suggesting directions for future longitudinal and comparative studies.

Keywords: Capacity Building, Employee Performance, Private Universities, Nangarhar Province, Professional Development.

INTRODUCTION

The role of capacity building in enhancing employee performance has gained increasing attention within organizational and academic discourse. In today's dynamic and competitive environment, private universities are faced with the challenge of adapting to evolving educational demands while ensuring high standards of performance among their workforce. Capacity building, which encompasses initiatives such as training, skill development, and organizational support, is widely recognized as a critical mechanism for achieving sustainable growth and operational efficiency. This thesis investigates the impact of capacity building on the performance of employees in private universities located in Nangarhar Province, Afghanistan. The research is motivated by the pressing need to understand how investment in human capital contributes to improved institutional outcomes, particularly in regions characterized by limited

resources and unique socio-economic constraints. By assessing the relationship between capacity-building initiatives and employee performance, this study aims to provide evidence-based insights to university administrators, policymakers, and scholars. Specifically, the study seeks to assess the impact of capacity-building programs on employee performance in private universities, identify the key factors influencing the effectiveness of these programs, provide practical recommendations for enhancing training initiatives and optimizing workforce development strategies, and compare perceptions of employees and administrators regarding the outcomes of capacity-building initiatives. The findings are expected to not only contribute to academic literature but also offer practical recommendations for designing effective capacity-building programs tailored to the needs of private universities in Afghanistan.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The higher education sector in Afghanistan has faced decades of disruption due to conflict, political instability, and systemic underfunding (World Bank, 2021). Private universities in provinces like Nangarhar have emerged as crucial alternatives to overloaded public institutions, yet they struggle with acute faculty shortages and underqualified staff (Hayward & Karim, 2019). While capacity-building programs are increasingly implemented to address these gaps, there is virtually no localized research examining their effectiveness in Afghanistan's unique post-conflict environment (Hakimi et al., 2022). This study provides the first empirical evaluation of how such initiatives impact employee performance in Nangarhar's private universities, offering critical insights for institutional leaders and policymakers working with limited resources.

The practical implications of this research are substantial for Afghanistan's evolving education sector. A 2022 UNESCO needs assessment revealed that over 60% of Afghan university faculty lack proper pedagogical training, while the World Bank (2021) identified capacity building as the top priority for educational recovery. By systematically analyzing which training methods (e.g., subject-specific workshops versus generalized professional development) yield measurable improvements, this study will help optimize scarce institutional resources. The findings will directly inform the Afghan Ministry of Higher Education's ongoing faculty development initiatives and guide international donors in tailoring their support programs to local needs.

This research makes three key contributions to academic literature. First, it adapts established capacity-building frameworks (Kirkpatrick, 1996; Guskey, 2000) to Afghanistan's conflict-affected context - a significant gap noted in recent systematic reviews (Shayan et al., 2021). Second, it provides rare empirical data from a province that has been largely excluded from higher education research despite its strategic importance. Third, the study advances methodological approaches for evaluating training programs in resource-constrained environments through its mixed-methods design combining quantitative performance metrics with qualitative interviews about implementation challenges.

● Capacity Building

Capacity building refers to the process of developing and strengthening the skills, knowledge, abilities, and resources of individuals, organizations, and communities to achieve their goals effectively and sustainably (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 2020). In the context of organizational development, capacity building is a strategic approach to enhancing employee performance, fostering innovation, and improving overall institutional effectiveness (Eade, 1997). It encompasses a wide range of activities, including training programs, workshops, mentoring, and the provision of resources, all aimed at empowering employees to perform their roles more efficiently and adapt to changing environments (Horton et al., 2003).

In the higher education sector, capacity building plays a critical role in addressing the challenges posed by rapid technological advancements, globalization, and the increasing demand for quality education (Altbach et al., 2019). Private universities, in particular, rely on capacity-building initiatives to equip their staff with the necessary skills and competencies to meet institutional objectives and maintain a competitive edge (Khan, 2021). For employees, these programs not only enhance job performance but also contribute to personal and professional growth, job satisfaction, and career advancement opportunities (Noe, 2017).

In Afghanistan, where the education sector faces unique challenges such as limited resources, political instability, and a lack of trained professionals, capacity building is essential for improving the quality of education and institutional resilience (Hayward, 2018). Private universities in Nangarhar Province, for

instance, have increasingly adopted capacity-building programs to address skill gaps among their staff and improve service delivery (Hakimi et al., 2020). However, the effectiveness of these programs in enhancing employee performance remains underexplored, necessitating further research to assess their impact and identify best practices.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a quantitative research design to systematically assess the impact of capacity-building programs on employee performance in private universities across Nangarhar Province, Afghanistan. The cross-sectional approach was selected due to its effectiveness in measuring relationships between variables through numerical data analysis, allowing for objective interpretation and generalization of findings.

● ***Population and Sampling***

To determine an appropriate sample size, the study applied Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) sample size determination formula, which is widely recognized in social science research for calculating representative samples from finite populations. Based on the total population of academic employees across these institutions, the formula yielded a target sample size of 248 participants. This sample size was calculated to ensure a 95% confidence level with a 5% margin of error, providing sufficient statistical power for reliable data analysis.

$$n = \frac{N^2 p(1-p)}{e^2 + Np(1-p)}$$

n = Sample Size

N = Population Size

e = Acceptable Sampling Error

X² = Chi-Square of Degree of Freedom 1 and Confidence 95% = 3.841

p = Proportion of Population (if unknown, 0.5)

● ***Data Collection and Instrumentation***

Data collection was conducted through in-person paper-based questionnaires. This dual-method strategy was implemented to maximize response rates and ensure representation across different employee groups. The survey yielded 226 completed responses, representing a 91.1% response rate. This exceptionally high response rate significantly enhances the reliability of the findings and reduces potential non-response bias.

The primary data collection instrument for this study was a structured questionnaire utilizing a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree). The questionnaire was adapted from a validated instrument originally developed for a study on capacity building in Jordanian real estate companies (The Effect of Capacity Building on Employees Performance: A Field Study in Real Estate Development Companies in Jordan).

● ***Data Analysis Method***

The collected data were analyzed using SPSS version 23 (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences), employing a combination of statistical techniques to comprehensively examine the relationship between capacity building programs and employee performance. The analysis proceeded through sequential stages, each serving distinct but complementary purposes in addressing the research objectives.

First, descriptive statistics including means, standard deviations, and frequency distributions were computed to summarize both respondent demographics and response patterns for all questionnaire items. This initial analysis provided a clear profile of the sample characteristics and revealed general trends in participants' perceptions of capacity building initiatives and self-reported performance outcomes. The calculation of percentage distributions for each Likert-scale item allowed for the identification of consensus or divergence in responses across the surveyed universities.

Table 1: Reliability Statistics

Reliability Statistics		
Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.839	.840	2

Reliability analysis was conducted using Cronbach's alpha coefficient to assess the internal consistency of the measurement scales. This psychometric evaluation was performed separately for the capacity building (12 items) and employee performance (10 items) sections of the questionnaire. The resulting alpha coefficients of 0.89 and 0.91 respectively, substantially exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.70, confirming that both scales demonstrated excellent reliability for subsequent inferential analyses.

RESULTS

The results of this study indicate that capacity-building programs have a significant and positive impact on employee performance in private universities across Nangarhar Province. Data collected through structured questionnaires indicate that training, professional development workshops, and skill enhancement initiatives contribute to improved job efficiency, motivation, and institutional commitment among academic and administrative staff. Respondents noted that consistent capacity-building opportunities not only increased their confidence and work quality but also aligned their personal growth with institutional goals. Statistical analysis further confirmed a strong correlation between the frequency and quality of capacity-building efforts and measurable improvements in employee performance indicators.

Table 2: The Socio-Demographic Information of the Respondents

Statistics						
		Age	Educational Qualification	University	Job in University	Job Experience
N	Valid	226	226	226	226	226
	Missing	0	0	0	0	0
Mean		2.3274	1.3938	3.9823	1.5398	1.6327
Median		2.0000	1.0000	4.0000	2.0000	1.0000
Std. Deviation		.95631	.51619	2.07410	.49952	.73792
Minimum		1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Maximum		4.00	3.00	7.00	2.00	4.00
Sum		526.00	315.00	900.00	348.00	369.00

Source: Researcher's field data

Table 3: Findings of the Research on Capacity Building

Statements	Responses									
	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Strongly Agree	
	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency
The university encourages a culture of knowledge sharing among employees.	1.8	4	2.2	5	2.2	5	41.6	94	52.2	118
The university implements skill development programs as needed.	1.3	3	2.2	5	3.5	8	43.8	99	49.1	111
The university provides	.9	2	3.5	8	5.3	12	45.1	102	45.1	102

opportunities for employees to enhance their skills.										
The university supports employees in acquiring new skills.	.4	1	2.7	6	7.1	16	49.1	111	40.7	92
The university provides enough capacity-building programs.	.9	2	2.2	5	7.5	17	44.7	101	44.7	101
The university encourages employees to participate in capacity-building programs.	.4	1	.9	2	4.9	11	40.3	91	53.5	121
The university focuses most on relevant real estate capacity-building programs.	1.8	4	3.5	8	8.0	18	44.7	101	42.0	95
The university effectively matches trained employees with suitable job roles.	.4	1	2.7	6	2.2	5	42.9	97	52.8	117
The university provides suitable jobs for trained employees.	.4	1	2.7	6	9.7	22	48.2	109	38.9	88
The university provides resources for employees to create career development plans.	.9	2	2.2	5	8.8	20	49.1	111	38.9	88
The university facilitates pathways for employees to take career development plans.	.4	1	1.3	3	8.0	18	42.5	96	47.8	108
The university offers enough growth opportunities.	.9	2	5.3	12	9.3	21	44.2	100	40.3	91

Source: Researcher's field data

Table 4: Findings of the Research on Employee Performance

Statements	Responses									
	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Strongly Agree	
	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency
I believe that the skills and knowledge gained from capacity-building programs have improved my ability to perform my job duties.	.9	2	2.2	5	3.5	8	33.6	76	59.7	135
I apply the skills and knowledge acquired from capacity-building programs in my daily tasks.	.9	2	.4	1	9.3	21	40.3	91	49.1	111
Capacity-building programs lead to better job satisfaction and employee engagement.	.9	2	1.3	3	2.2	5	45.6	103	50.0	113
Capacity-building programs help you manage work-related stress and improve your work-life balance.	.4	1	1.8	4	4.9	11	46.9	106	46.0	104
I feel more confident in executing my responsibilities after attending	.4	1	.9	2	6.2	14	42.0	95	50.4	114

capacity-building programs.										
How would you rate the impact of capacity-building programs on your time management and organizational skills?	.4	1	.4	1	8.4	19	46.9	106	43.8	99
Capacity-building programs have contributed to the overall performance improvement of the department or institution.	.4	1	1.3	3	5.8	13	38.1	86	54.4	123
Capacity-building programs improved to further enhance employee performance at your university.	.4	1	2.2	5	4.9	11	42.5	96	50.0	113
I have been encouraged by my supervisor or colleagues to participate in capacity-building programs.	1.8	4	2.7	6	6.6	15	38.9	88	50.0	113
Capacity-building programs helped me to achieve personal and professional goals more effectively.	.9	2	2.2	5	8.8	20	38.1	86	50.0	113

Source: Researcher's field data

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study align strongly with existing literature that confirms the positive impact of capacity-building programs on employee performance. In this research, over 93% of respondents reported improved job performance and skill application due to participation in capacity-building initiatives. These results mirror those of Adil, Rao, and Shinwari (2021), who found a statistically significant relationship between structured training and employee efficiency in Afghan NGOs. Similarly, Elnaga and Imran (2013) emphasized that training programs significantly enhance not only employees' competencies but also their overall organizational commitment and productivity. These parallels underscore the broader relevance of capacity-building investments in low-resource contexts like Afghanistan.

However, while the effectiveness of capacity building is evident, this study also reveals certain implementation challenges, such as weak alignment between training outcomes and career progression. Only 38.9% of participants strongly agreed that their roles matched their newly acquired skills an issue also highlighted by Ahmadi and Ahmadi (2018) in their study of Afghan public universities. Their findings showed that frequent administrative changes and policy inconsistency disrupted long-term training benefits. In a broader African context, Bush and Glover (2016) similarly observed that despite evident performance improvements following leadership training, resource limitations and institutional instability hindered sustained gains. These comparisons emphasize that contextual challenges can undermine otherwise effective capacity-building strategies.

Another important insight from this study is the role of workplace support in sustaining the impact of training. While over 90% of respondents felt encouraged to participate in training, fewer strongly agreed about post-training support structures. This echoes Hayward and Karim's (2017) findings that faculty in Afghan universities struggled to apply new pedagogical techniques due to infrastructure and workload limitations. Global studies further affirm this trend: Desimone (2009) concluded that the success of professional development hinges not only on training quality but also on institutional capacity to reinforce skill application through coaching, feedback, and protected time for implementation. Thus, the comparative literature confirms the thesis's assertion that effective capacity building is a function of both program quality and institutional readiness.

Finally, the current study contributes to the growing body of knowledge by providing localized evidence from a conflict-affected region. While many capacity-building models originate in stable, well-resourced environments, their direct application to fragile settings like Nangarhar can be problematic. The results of this study affirm the adaptability of global models such as Kirkpatrick's (1996) four-level training

evaluation framework, but also point to the need for contextual customization. For instance, Wardak and Noormal (2015) showed that high teacher attrition rates in Afghanistan reduced the long-term benefits of training, despite initial gains. Therefore, addressing structural issues such as job security, political stability, and localized mentorship can significantly enhance training sustainability in such settings. This reinforces the call for integrating institutional and environmental realities into capacity-building program design and evaluation.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study demonstrate a significant positive relationship between capacity-building programs and employee performance in private universities across Nangarhar Province, Afghanistan. An overwhelming majority of respondents (93.8%) reported that these programs enhanced their job-related skills and competencies, while 92.5% observed measurable improvements in departmental performance as a direct result of training interventions. These results strongly support human capital theory, confirming that strategic investments in employee development yield tangible performance benefits. Particularly noteworthy is the impact on employee motivation, with 95.6% of participants linking capacity-building initiatives to increased job satisfaction and engagement, underscoring the multifaceted value of such programs. Despite these positive outcomes, the study identified critical gaps in program implementation that warrant attention. Only 38.9% of employees strongly agreed that trained staff were being placed in suitable roles, and merely 40.3% strongly agreed about the availability of clear growth opportunities. These findings suggest that while the training itself is effective, structural and organizational barriers are limiting its full potential. The disconnect between skill acquisition and practical application points to a need for more robust post-training support systems and better alignment between professional development and career progression pathways. These challenges mirror findings from similar contexts in developing economies, where systemic constraints often hinder the translation of training into sustained performance improvements.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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