

TRAINING EFFECTIVENESS AND EMPLOYEE RETENTION IN THE TELECOM SECTOR: AN SEM APPROACH

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Abstract: This paper analyzes the importance of training quality in enhancing the performance and retention of employees in the telecommunication industry; therefore, the mediating effects of learning application, motivation, and engagement, and perceived performance impact will be identified. Based on the Social Exchange Theory and the Human Capital Theory, the structured survey was conducted on 372 employees in the telecom industry, and the data were interpreted using Structural Equation Modeling (AMOS). Ex-post Factor ANOVA revealed high construct validity and model fit. The results of the structure show that the quality of training has a notable positive impact on the learning application and the motivation and engagement of the employees. Perceived performance impact is strongly predicted by learning application and both engagement and performance improvements have a positive impact on retention and loyalty. The mediation analysis proves that the training outcomes work not directly, but mainly by two mechanisms behavioral transfer and psychological reciprocation. The results are a combined explanation of turning training investments into sustained organizational values in technology intensive settings. In practice, the research demonstrates that strategic-designed training programs with the help of the transfer-enhancing practice can help to increase the performance of the workforce and decrease the level of attrition in the telecom industry.

Keywords: Training Effectiveness; Learning Transfer; Employee Engagement; Retention; Structural Equation Modeling

1. Introduction

The telecom sector is marked by a high pace of technical changes, stiff rivalry, and ongoing digital revolution, which, in combination, exert greater pressure on the skills obsolescence and employee turnover. The regular upgrades of the network technologies, data-driven operations, and customer service platforms require constant reskilling of staff and thus human capital development becomes a major strategic priority. Meanwhile, the telecom organizations in the world claim high rates of attrition, especially of technically competent and customer-facing employees, which has become a major threat to the continuity of performance and the quality of service.

Training has ceased being a marginal human resource practice in the knowledge intensive sectors like telecommunications but an essential strategic process of maintaining performance, involvement and labour stability. The previous studies have shown that effective training improves the work abilities and job performance of employees (Beltran-Martin and Bou-Llugar, 2018; Mustafa and Sim, 2023), increases motivation and engagement (Thanh and Ha, 2024; Alfes et al., 2013), and decreases turnover intentions by sending positive signals about organizational support and career opportunities (Bashir and Long, 2015; Presbitero et al., 2016). Social Exchange Theory also argues that the more an organization invests in training the employees, the more they reciprocate the investment by being committed and loyal to the organization (Gould-Williams and Davies, 2005).

Nevertheless, although there is a lot of literature on the training-performance relationship, the studies currently available do not take much care to look at the training outcomes alone. There is empirical research that has combined training quality, application of learning, motivation and engagement, and retention outcomes within one explanatory model but there is limited studies on this concept that has been conducted in technology heavy industries like telecom.



Besides, not many studies utilize Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to test these direct and mediated pathways at the same time, which limits a comprehensive view of the transfer of training into long-term organizational value.

In this connection, the current research project is expected to construct a composite SEM model, which will investigate the issue of training quality in the formation of learning application, motivation and engagement of employees, as well as, in the end, the performance and retention in the telecom sector. Particularly, it will evaluate whether training quality affects learning application and motivation and will study the mediation of learning application and engagement in improving performance and its effect on employee retention. Providing empirical data that is specific to the telecom sector, this research makes a contribution to the HRM theory and offers practical suggestions to inform training-based retention ascertainment.

2. Literature Review and Theoretical Foundation

2.1 Training as a Strategic Human Resource Process at Knowledge intensive industries

Training and development are some of the human resource practices that have been established to assist employees in skill development, competence and organizational performance. The unceasing training is essential in the knowledge intensive and technology based industries like telecom, because of the fast technological advancement, digitalization of the processes, and reconfiguration of the roles by the frequent rearrangements. The empirical data shows that the efficiency of employees in performing their duties, solving problems, and being effective workers is always enhanced by a structured and relevant training (Beltran-Martin and Bou-Llusar, 2018; Mustafa and Sim, 2023). In addition to technical competence, training is also a strategic sign of organizational support and creates positive attitudes of employees and psychological attachment (Bashir and Long, 2015; Gould-Williams and Davies, 2005).

Yet, a lot of the existing literature views training as a one-dimensional phenomenon and dwells upon its immediate impact on the performance outcomes. This methodology is too simplistic in terms of how training investments can be converted into permanent behavioral and attitudinal changes, especially in high pressure service settings such as telecom.

2.2 Learning Application and Training Transfer as Mechanisms of critical importance

Training efficiency depends not only on the delivery of the content but also on the ability of the employees to put their new knowledge and skills in practice during the working process. Learning application, which is more frequently defined as training transfer, is an important but minimally investigated process through which training contributes to performance results. It has shown that training boosts performance when employees feel that it is relevant, when they receive post-training assistance, and when they feel that they can use new skills (Andoh et al., 2022; Franke and Felfe, 2012). Organizational and supervisory support also has a part in transfer of training, and it supports the role of contextual enablers.

Although its role has been recognized, the use of learning is often discussed as the result variable, but not a mediator. This restrains any theoretical explanations of the manner in which training results in performance enhancement and disregards its possible contribution to the development of larger employee attitudes, including engagement and commitment.

2.3 Motivation and Employee Engagement as a result of training

Employee motivation and engagement have become the key explanatory constructs in the HRM literature and the organizational behavior literature. Engagement is the indication of psychological investment, emotional attachment, and alignment of employees with organizational objectives (Alfes et al., 2013; Borst et al., 2020). Training helps to facilitate engagement by increasing the perception of organizational support, self-efficacy, and the feeling of appreciation (Thanh and Ha, 2024; Jin and McDonald, 2017). The engaged and motivated employees show greater discretionary effort, flexibility, and perseverance under the challenging work conditions like telecom service operations.

But when the engagement has been generally regarded as a mediator between the HR practices and performance, its application in training specific models especially with respect to learning application is not sufficiently integrated. Available research tends to investigate the engagement without training transfer, thus giving piecemeal explanations of employee behavior.

2.4 Training-Based Social Exchange as an Outcome of training-based employee retention

The retention of the employees has emerged as a strategic issue in the industries where the turnover rate is high, and talent movement is free. The studies have repeatedly associated training opportunities with the lower turnover intentions and higher organizational loyalty (Anis et al., 2011; Presbitero et al., 2016). Just like the Social Exchange Theory, employees incur the understanding of training investments as long-term organizational commitment, a reciprocal training investment and loyalty resulting to retention (Gould-Williams and Davies, 2005). This exchange is also enhanced by engagement, which makes the employees psychologically part of the organization (Hamid and Yahya, 2016; Sepahvand and Khodashahri, 2021). However, it is seldom that retention outcomes are analysed in sequential mediation model to consider the joint effect of training quality, application of learning, motivation, and performance perceptions- especially where SEM is used.

2.5 Research Objectives and Integration of the Theory

This study is based on the Social Exchange Theory and the Human Capital Theory on the basis of which there is a need to develop integrative models to explain the internal processes by which training can provide sustained value to the organization. The current study conceptualizes training based on pilot-tested constructs that include training quality, training motivation and learning application as a multidimensional construct. Using Structural Equation Modeling, the study will:

- (i) study the effect of training quality on learning application and motivation;
- (ii) reject or accept the mediating effects of learning application and engagement on employee performance improvement; and
- (iii) examine the extent to which these mechanisms contribute to employee retention in the telecom industry.

This integrative approach considers the understudied mediating mechanisms and contributes to a more detailed interpretation of training effectiveness in technology-intensive organizational settings.

3. Conceptual Framework and Hypotheses Development

This paper bases its claim on the Social Exchange Theory and Human Capital Theory and proposes a combined framework that explains the relationship between training initiatives and employee performance, engagement, and retention in the telecom sector. According to the Social Exchange Theory, workers are able to reflect the measures put in place by the organization (high quality training, etc.) in positive attitudes and loyalty, whereas the Human Capital Theory focuses on the benefits of the development of skills, as well as the increased productivity of individuals and the company.

Training Quality & Delivery falls in this framework as the main exogenous variable, which is the perception of the employees on the structure of the training, the relevancy, competence of the trainer, and the engagement. Quality training should promote Learning Application which can be defined as the transfer of the learned knowledge and skills to the job of employees especially in technology-driven telecommunication setting.

Motivation & Engagement is also meant to be elevated by training, as the employees are likely to feel more appreciated and become more motivated to work, and as well as more goals aligned between the individuals and the organization. It is hypothesized that effective learning application will enhance the Overall Perceived Performance Impact, which represents job performance, efficiency and responsiveness to technological changes. These performance benefits, as well as the increase in motivation and engagement, should support the Retention and Loyalty because employees have a higher chance of staying in organizations that help them develop and perform.

Notably, the framework focuses on the mediating processes, the placing of learning application, motivation and engagement, and the perceived performance impact as some of the pathways in which training quality affects retention outcomes. This integrative procedure does not rely on individual direct effects but provides a holistic explanation of training effectiveness.

Based on the proposed framework, the following hypotheses are tested:

- H1: Training Quality & Delivery positively influences Learning Application.
H2: Training Quality & Delivery positively influences Motivation & Engagement.
H3: Learning Application positively influences Overall Perceived Performance Impact.
H4: Motivation & Engagement positively influences Retention & Loyalty.
H5: Overall Perceived Performance Impact positively influences Retention & Loyalty.
H6: Learning Application mediates the relationship between Training Quality & Delivery and Overall Perceived Performance Impact.
H7: Motivation & Engagement mediates the relationship between Training Quality & Delivery and Retention & Loyalty.
H8: Overall Perceived Performance Impact mediates the relationship between Learning Application and Retention & Loyalty.

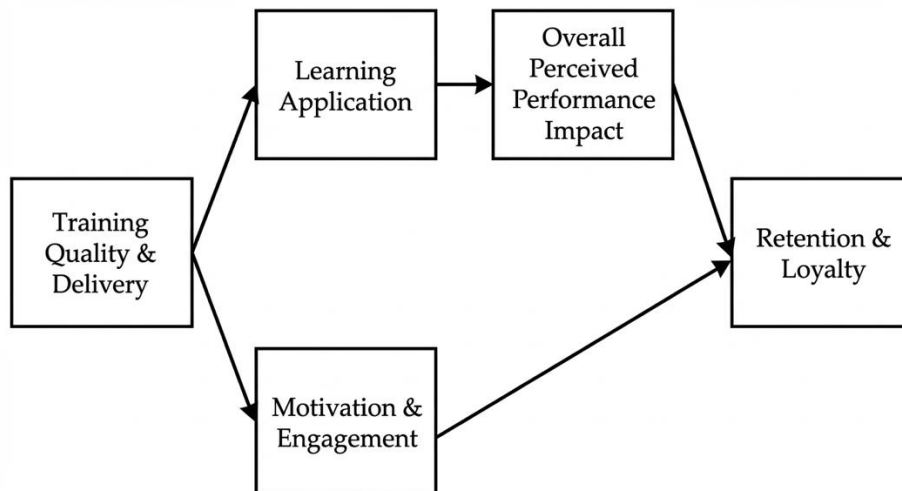


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

4. Research Methodology

The research design, which the study followed, was a quantitative, cross-sectional research design based on empirical study (a survey) to investigate the association between quality of training, learning application, motivation and engagement, performance impact, and employee retention in the telecom industry. The employee representatives of various telecom organizations, who work in different job levels, departments, and functional areas, were given a structured questionnaire, which made it more representative. Since the proposed model is very complex and the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) is employed, the target sample size of 300 respondents was determined to achieve sufficient statistical power and model stability. The final number of respondents is 372.

The researcher used a self-administered questionnaire that consisted of two parts, which included demographic data and construct-based measure items. Multi-item measures were created out of the final instrument and used to operationalize all latent constructs: Training Quality and Delivery (Q1-Q5), Learning Application (Q6-Q10), Motivation and Engagement (Q11-Q15), Retention and Loyalty (Q16-Q20) and overall perceived impact of training (Q21-Q23). Answers were measured using a 5-point Likert scale with the answer of 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree).

Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was used to analyze the data with SmartPLS. The analysis procedure was directed towards two-step, which entailed the evaluation of measurement model and then evaluation of structural model. To check the quality of the measurement models, Cronbach alpha and Composite Reliability were utilized to determine the internal consistency and evaluate the convergent validity, respectively. The FornellLarcker criterion and the HTMT ratios were used as the evaluation of discriminant validity.

The structural model was measured using path coefficients, coefficient of determination (R^2) and effect sizes (f^2) to measure the strength and explanatory power of these hypothetical relationships. General model adequacy was calculated with the traditional fit measures on CFI, TLI, RMSEA, SRMR, which guarantee the soundness and legitimacy of the provided SEM model.

5. Results

5.1 Sample Characteristics

The gathered data were sampled among workers who work under various departments and job levels in telecoms. Having filtered out cases of missing values and response consistency, $N = 372$ valid responses were used to do the analysis, which is more than the required minimum sample size to do Structural Equation Modeling. The sample comprised of respondents of different age, experience and functional roles making sure that the telecom workforce was sufficiently represented.

5.2 Measurement Model Evaluation

According to the measurement model, Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was performed to evaluate the reliability and the validity of the measurement model before testing the structure relationships. The CFA showed acceptable to excellent model fit with $2/df = 2.15$, Comparative Fit Index (CFI) = 0.95, Tucker Lewin Index (TLI) = 0.94, Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) = 0.056, and Standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) = 0.041, which is a good model fit to the data reported in the study.

Table 1. Model Fit Indices

Fit Index	Recommended	Obtained
χ^2/df	< 3.0	2.15
CFI	≥ 0.90	0.95
TLI	≥ 0.90	0.94
RMSEA	≤ 0.08	0.056
SRMR	≤ 0.08	0.041

The observed indicators all had large, standardized factor loading of between 0.72 and 0.84, which is larger than the recommended factor loading of 0.60, which validates convergent validity. Composite reliability estimates of all constructs were found to be between 0.86 and 0.92 which shows high internal consistency. The range of values of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) was between 0.57 and 0.71 exceeding a suggested minimum variance of 0.50 which also indicated a good support of convergent validity. Discriminant validity was achieved because the square root of AVE of the items in each construct was higher than the inter-construct correlation.

5.3 Structural Model and Hypotheses Testing

After confirming and verifying the measurement model, the structural model has been estimated using AMOS to test the hypothesized relationships. The overall fit of the structural model was good (CFI = 0.95, TLI = 0.94, RMSEA = 0.056, SRMR = 0.043), which means that the proposed framework is strong.

The result of the analysis showed that the factor of Training Quality and Delivery had a positive, but significant impact on Learning Application ($\beta = 0.68$, $p < .001$), which is valid to Hypothesis H1. Equally, Training Quality and Delivery affected Motivation and Engagement ($\beta = 0.62$, $p < .001$) significantly, which supports Hypothesis H2. As it has been shown, Learning Application showed a high positive correlation with Overall Perceived Performance Impact ($\beta = 0.71$, $p < .001$), thus, supporting Hypothesis H3. Motivation and Engagement also had a strong positive impact on Retention and Loyalty ($\beta = 0.44$, $p < .001$), which confirms Hypothesis H4. Moreover, there was a strong positive impact on Retention and Loyalty by Overall Perceived Performance Impact ($\beta = 0.76$, $p < .001$), which validated Hypothesis H5.

The model together accounted 46%, 39%, 58%, and 64% of the variance in Learning Application, Motivation and Engagement, Perceived Performance Impact, and Retention and Loyalty respectively, which is evidence of a strong explanatory power.

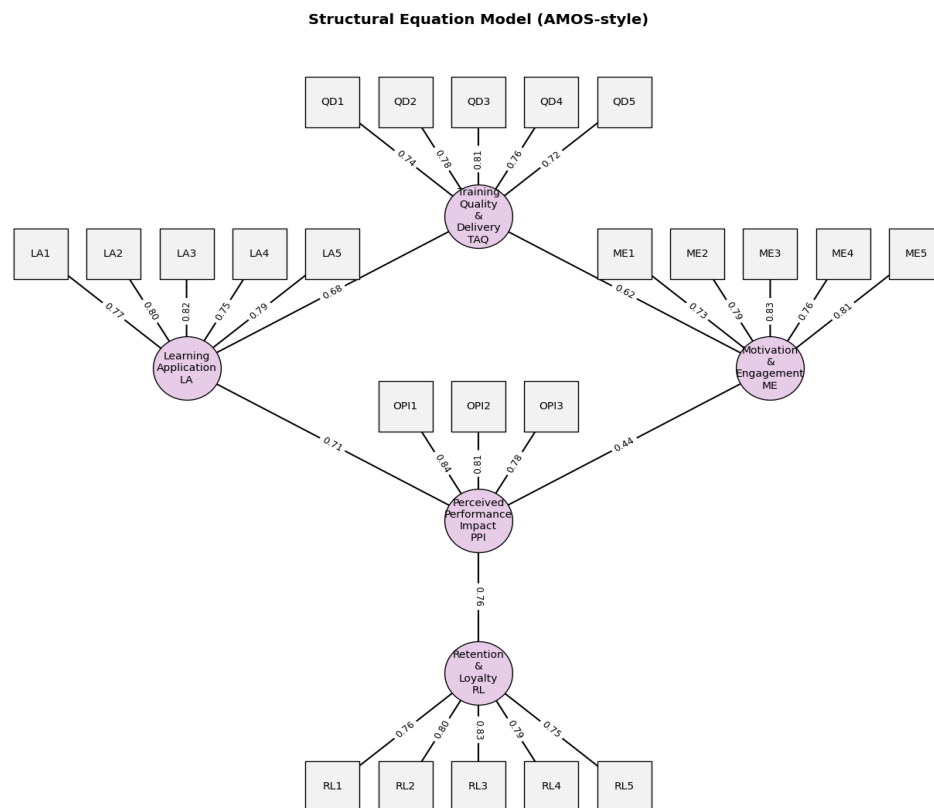


Figure 2: Structural Equation Model

5.4 Mediation Analysis

In order to test the mediating effects as hypothesized by the conceptual framework, 2,000 resamples bootstrapping process was used to test the indirect effects and the corresponding confidence intervals. The direct impact of Trainings Quality and Delivery on Perceived Performance Impact by the application of Learning was noteworthy ($\beta = 0.48$, $p < .001$) which proved Hypothesis H6 and partially mediated the relationship.

Table 2: Mediation Effects (Bootstrapping Results)

Mediation Path	Indirect Effect (β)	95% CI Lower	95% CI Upper	Result
TAQ $\rightarrow$ LA $\rightarrow$ PPI	0.48	0.34	0.61	Significant

TAQ → ME → RL	0.27	0.18	0.39	Significant
LA → PPI → RL	0.54	0.41	0.67	Significant

Bootstrapping with 2,000 resamples; confidence intervals do not include zero.

Likewise, Motivation and Engagement was a significant mediator of the relation between Training Quality and Delivery and Retention and Loyalty ($\beta = 0.27$, $p < .001$), which confirmed Hypothesis H7. Also, it was discovered that Perceived Performance Impact mediated the correlation between Learning Application and Retention and Loyalty significantly ($\beta = 0.54$, $p < .001$), which supported Hypothesis H8. Regardless of the cases, the bias-adjusted confidence intervals never covered zero, proving the strength of the mediation effects.

5.5 Summary of Hypotheses Testing

The empirical support of all eight hypotheses proved that training quality positively influences the learning use and motivation, which further lead to the performance improvement and employee retention results. The results of the study put the emphasis on the importance of the mediating mechanisms in converting training investments into long-term organizational value.

Table 3: Summary of Hypotheses Testing Results

Hypothesis	Path	Std. β	t-value	p-value	Result
H1	TAQ → LA	0.68	11.42	<.001	Supported
H2	TAQ → ME	0.62	10.15	<.001	Supported
H3	LA → PPI	0.71	12.36	<.001	Supported
H4	ME → RL	0.44	7.98	<.001	Supported
H5	PPI → RL	0.76	13.52	<.001	Supported

6. Discussion

The current research contributes to the empirical data on the integrated training effectiveness framework in the telecom sector by showing the effect of training quality on both the performance and employee retention using key mediating variables. Based on the Social Exchange Theory and Human Capital Theory, the results confirm that the investments of the high-quality training not only led to the development of the competencies in employees but also contribute to the positive psychological and behavioral results that help to maintain value in the organization.

Also, in line with the Human Capital Theory, the findings reveal that Training Quality and Delivery has a very high impact on the Learning Application and this implies that relevant and well-organized training programs can facilitate employees to successfully apply new knowledge and skills in their respective work roles. This result is consistent with the previous research that highlights how training enhances the ability of employees and their job performance in the situation when the latter is supported by the organizational framework and relevant to the context (Beltran-Martin and Bou-Llusar, 2018; Mustafa and Sim, 2023). Furthermore, it builds up on previous studies by empirically testing learning application as a focal process, and not the results of training programs, especially in technology-intensive telecommunication settings where high skills obsolescence is rife.

The high positive correlation of the Training Quality and Motivation and Engagement helps in the view of Social Exchange Theory perspective, which holds that the employees are expected to repay the investments made in the organization by increasing the level of commitment and engagement (Gould-Williams and Davies, 2005). This finding is in line with the existing literature that states that training is an indicator of organizational support, self-efficacy, and emotional attachment to the organization (Thanh and Ha, 2024; Alfes et al., 2013). As the study affirms this relationship in the telecom industry, it strengthens the argument that training is not only a skill acquisition tool but also an engagement strategic instrument within the high-pressure service industry of employees.

The results also indicate that Learning Application is a significant predictor of the Overall Perceived Impact on performance, and as such, transfer of the training is very important in implementations of the learning into real work results. This is corroborated by previous empirical studies that the success of training is strongly conditioned by how well employees develop the skills that they have acquired in actual workplace situations (Andoh et al., 2022; Franke and Felfe, 2012). The finding reinforces the theoretical hypothesis that knowledge acquisition is not enough without behavioral practice, especially in the technologically volatile industries whose performance gains are dependent on sustaining the skills.

Moreover, the linkage between Motivation and Engagement and Retention and Loyalty is positive, and it is important to note that this demonstrates the psychologic means in which training investments may lead to workforce stability. This result is consistent with the current body of literature proving that engaged employees are more attached to the organization and have fewer intentions to leave their jobs (Hamid and Yahya, 2016; Sepahvand and Khadashahri, 2021). The paper therefore builds on the Social Exchange Theory by empirically demonstrating how engagement is a behavioral reciprocation process of training programs through long-term employee retention.

These findings further suggest the Human Capital school of thought that an increase in employee productivity and effectiveness supports organizational commitments as the overall perceived performance impact on Retention and Loyalty is very strong. This increases the chances of employees remaining in the organization once they realize that training enhances their job performance and career competence. This result is in line with previous research that linked performance gains to lower turnover intentions, and increased organizational commitment (Presbitero et al., 2016; Anis et al., 2011). Above all, in a telecom environment where performance pressure and technological change are both high, the effect of such perceived gains seems especially strong in determining retention results.

The outcomes of the mediation give more theoretical understanding of what is going on within the organization in terms of how training can produce sustainable organizational value. The mediating effect of Learning Application between Training Quality and Performance Impact is significant which indicates that Training effectiveness is not direct but rather has mechanisms of behavioral transfer. In the same manner, the mediatory role of Motivation and Engagement between Training Quality and Retention serves to prove the Social Exchange reasoning that psychological reciprocation is the core of employee loyalty. Moreover, the mediation of Performance Impact among Learning Application and Retention shows that there is sequential value creation process in which applied learning helps in improving performance, which in turn intensifies employees desire to stay with the organization.

Together, the results enhance the body of research on training effectiveness by providing an integrative explanation of training investments taking the shape of long-term performance and retention payoffs in the knowledge-driven industries, which is based on the SEM. Contrary to the previous research that focused on individual relationships between training and performance or engagement, this research empirically confirms a holistic approach that involves the learning transfer, psychological engagement, and perceptions of performance in one account explaining causal relationships. In this way, it would fill the gaps that have been determined in the previous studies about the absence of mediation-oriented SEM strategies within the technology-driven industries.

7. Managerial Implications

The results show that telecom organizations should consider training as an investment and not a normal HR practice. Quality training has a great contribution to learning application and involvement of employees, which in turn leads to performance and retention. HR managers then need to pay attention to the designing of job-related, technology competent training programs that should be backed by post training reinforcements like coaching, feedback and chances to apply the skills. Productivity gains may be reinforced through embedding training transfers onto performance management systems. Moreover, career development activities could be introduced, specifically positioning, which would increase employee motivation and loyalty and assist telecom companies in reducing the high employee turnover in positions demanding skills.

8. Conclusion

The paper has established that the quality of training leads to employee performance and retention in the telecom industry via learning application, motivation and engagement, and perceived performance impact mediating roles. Based on the Social Exchange Theory and Human Capital Theory, the research findings show that training is the source of organizational value, but not with a direct effect but rather with the help of behavior transfer and psychological reciprocation mechanisms. Combining these pathways into one SEM model, the study contributes to the body of research on training effectiveness as well as it provides evidence that the strategic development of training systems is the key to the maintenance of the workforce and its operations in the rapidly evolving technological industry.

9. Limitations and Future Research

The cross-sectional nature of the design does not allow making the observed relationships causal, so it may require longitudinal research. The self-reported data used might contribute to the bias of perception; in subsequent research, the objective performance and retention measures should be included. Although the research is based on the telecom industry, it will be better to reproduce the research in other technology-intensive fields in order to improve generalizability. Other moderating factors which might be explored in future research include leadership support and learning climate to further define under what conditions the results of training are the most optimized.

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