

# PUBLIC SERVICE EMPLOYEE ATTITUDE TOWARDS TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES: THE MEDIATING ROLE OF GENDER AND JOB TITLE



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## Abstract

The study examines employees' attitudes towards the training and development programmes offered by the public service based on Gender and Job title. The study followed a quantitative approach, and a self-developed and self-administered research instrument was used for data collection. The sample consisted of 286 employees in skilled, semi-skilled, and managerial positions within the Mpumalanga government complex. The Mann-Whitney U test was used to analyse employees' attitudes based on Gender, and Kruskal Wallis gathered employees' attitudes based on Job titles. The instrument was validated using Cronbach alpha and yielded an alpha coefficient of ( $\alpha$ ).853, which Exploratory and Confirmatory factor analysis further validated. The study results revealed differences in employees' attitudes based on Gender on the ease of training and quality of training programmes dimensions. Furthermore, differences were revealed based on the Job title on the quality of training, facilitation of training, and career and personal development dimensions. The study concludes that the public service needs to address the skills gap and shortage within its service. The study recommends that employers, especially the public sector, consider introducing tailor-made training and developmental programmes for individual employees, and training materials should be designed to address the specific needs of individuals or groups of employees with similar needs.

## 1. Introduction

At the heart of any country across the globe is the vision of providing sufficient education, training, and development to all citizens. This is vital because good training programmes must go beyond achieving economic growth to satisfy individual needs and improve society (Kumar & Raghavendran, 2013). Studies indicate that employee performance, job satisfaction, and organisational commitment positively correlate with well-designed training and development (T&D) programmes (Brown & Sitzmann, 2011; Karim, Choudhury, & Latif, 2019). Understanding employee attitudes towards T&D programmes enables organisations to design and implement programmes that meet employee demands while maximising their impact (Truitt, 2011). South Africa's public sector provides basic services to all citizens (Akinboade, Kinfaek & Mokwena, 2012). A productive and well-trained workforce is critical to attaining this goal. Over time, the South African government has made major

investments in programmes for development and training. The government allocates approximately 20% of public spending on education and skill development (PSETA, 2018). According to the National Skills Fund (NSF) 2023/24 Annual Performance Plan, the NSF has set aside R3,901 billion for the fiscal year 2023/24 to cover ongoing contractual obligations and new skill development programmes in education and training activities. Despite efforts made by the South African government and private sector to address skills gaps (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2023; National Skills Development Strategy III, 2014), major challenges remain due to factors such as mismatched education and labour market needs, inequality, inadequate funding, employer disengagement, and rapid technological change (OECD, 2017; Mkhonza & Letsoalo, 2017; PSETA, 2024). Similarly, the OECD (2017) acknowledges that major challenges remain despite efforts by the South African government and various private sector entities to address skills gaps.

Despite these investments, the country is still grappling with the legacy of Apartheid, which created huge disparities in access to education and training, leaving a significant portion of the population lacking the skills needed to fulfil job needs (Akoojee et al., 2005). In response to this difficulty, the South African government passed two major pieces of legislation: the Skills Development Act (Act No. 8 of 1998) and the Skills Development Levies Act (Act No. 9 of 1999). These acts provided a framework for a national skills development strategy to provide employees with the skills necessary to thrive in a growing economy (DHET, n.d). The SDA supports Section 29(1) of the Bill of Rights as contained in the Constitution, which states that all individuals have the right to further education, which the state shall make increasingly available and accessible through appropriate measures (McConnachie, Skelton, & McConnachie, 2017). Despite these legislative efforts, uncertainties remain about the efficiency of training initiatives in establishing a fair and equitable public service. According to research, employees with varying demographic characteristics may have diverse attitudes towards training programmes. These attitudes can range from positive, where employees view training results in positive outcomes such as wage increment, recognition, and an opportunity for career growth and skill development (Willis & Dubin, 1990; Farr & Middlebrooks, 1990), to negative, where employees consider training as meaningless, poorly designed, or an added burden on their workload. These disparities are critical for creating T&D programmes that appeal to all employees and maximise their impact. This paper conducts a comparative analysis of public service employees' attitudes towards training and development programmes in South Africa. The paper examines how demographic characteristics, namely Gender and job title, impact employee attitudes towards ease, facilitation, quality of training, and career and personal development. By investigating these relationships, the paper aims to contribute to creating focused training programmes that bridge the historical gap and create a skilled and motivated public service workforce.

## 2. Literature Review

Training and development efforts are frequently included in organisational learning initiatives. Although these phrases are commonly used interchangeably, there is a significant distinction. According to Goldstein and Ford (2002) and Alipour, Salehi, and Shahnavaz (2009), training is an organised attempt by an organisation to foster the learning, retention, and transfer of job-related behaviour. In contrast, development is the growth of the individual in capability, knowledge, attitude, and competence. In this study T&D is broken down into specific dimensions, namely, ease, facilitation, and quality of training programmes as well as career and personal development programmes. Ease of training

programmes refers to the accessibility and user-friendliness of training programmes. Facilitation of training programmes encompasses the quality of instruction provided during training.

The quality of training programmes includes factors such as content relevance and alignment with job tasks, whilst career and personal development dimensions highlight the potential of T&D to support employee growth and advancement within the organisation. By focusing on these dimensions of T&D, this study contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of how training can effectively enhance employee knowledge, skills, and capabilities.

The importance of T&D in the public sector cannot be overemphasised. Training and development boost employee productivity and enhance performance (Ahmad & Manzoor, 2017). Employees are better suited to execute their duties more efficiently when they have the chance to learn new skills and knowledge, which results in increased productivity. This is especially crucial in the public sector, where keeping up with the most recent developments and industry standards is critical. Hence, the inclusion of the Skills Development Act (Act No. 8 of 1998), the Skills Development Levies Act (Act No. 9 of 1999), and the The Public Service Sector Education and Training Authority (PSETA) as legislative measures to foster training in the public service. Furthermore, The Act seeks to address historical disparities in access to training programmes and encourage participation from a diverse workforce (Letseka, 2004).

### 2.1 Employee Perceptions and Attitudes towards Training and Development in the Public Service

Employee attitudes towards T&D programmes substantially impact employee engagement and programme effectiveness. These attitudes range from positive, neutral and negative. Employees are more engaged and gain more from T&D programmes when they perceive the training helps develop skills relevant to their work and future career aspirations (Cheng & Ho, 2001).

Employees' buy-in is further increased by well-designed and guided programmes with clear learning objectives and engaging delivery techniques (Burke & Hutchins, 2007). Most importantly, when employees recognise the programme's contribution to their professional and personal development, they foster a sense of self-efficacy and job satisfaction (Noe et al., 2006; Elovainio et al., 2000). While positive employee perceptions are essential for successful T&D programmes, negative perceptions can be just as destructive. Understanding these negative attitudes enables organisations to modify programmes and avoid potential hazards.

Employees may become disengaged and perceive their time wasted if the training is deemed inappropriate to their job duties or career goals (Gutterman, 2023). This can happen when training content is not related to their current responsibilities or future goals. Notably, poorly designed or delivered programmes can lead to frustration. Employees may perceive low content quality without clarity, engaging activities, or trained facilitators (Gutterman, 2023).

Employee attitudes towards T&D programmes in the South African public service are complex. While some studies, such as Rykleif and Tengeh (2022), stress the perceived relevance of T&D for enhancing service delivery, it is important to note that employees could show a mix of positive and neutral perceptions towards T&D programmes. Some reasons could contribute to the disparity between perceived importance and real attitudes. Govender (2010) emphasised the importance of fostering a learning culture in the public sector. Employee motivation may diminish if training programmes are incompatible with their needs or do not result in meaningful skill development and career advancement opportunities (Tannenbaum et al., 1991; Giangreco et al., 2009;). Further research into the specific design of T&D programmes and their alignment with employee perceptions of relevance may give information on how to bridge the gap between the perceived importance and actual attitudes towards training in the South African public service.

## **2.2 Relationship between Demographics and Employee Attitudes towards Training and Development Programmes**

Effective T&D programmes are critical to developing a trained and adaptive workforce. However, a 'one-size-fits-all' approach may not be ideal. According to research, employee demographics can impact employee perceptions and participation in T&D programmes. Demographic characteristics classify people within a population (Jones et al., 2020). They provide a glimpse of the composition of the workforce and can help develop T&D programmes relevant to employee demands. When planning T&D programmes, a variety of demographic variables must be taken into account. For the purpose of this study, emphasis has been placed on gender and job title as factors influencing employee attitudes towards T&D programmes. The selection of these factors as essential determinants of employee attitudes toward T&D programmes is based on a large body of research and a historical context. Gender emerges as a major factor influencing employee attitudes. Numerous studies have repeatedly shown that women and men have different perceptions and experiences with training opportunities (Shields & Wheatly-Price, 1999; Almeida-Santos & Mumford, 2004). These differences can be explained by a range of factors, including

societal prejudices, cultural norms, and historical biases (Shields & Wheatly-Price, 1999; Almeida-Santos & Mumford, 2004). Women, for example, may face problems such as work-life balance, childcare duties, and gender-based discrimination, all of which might influence their participation in T&D programmes.

Furthermore, job titles can have a considerable impact on employee attitudes. According to research, people in different levels of the hierarchy may have varying levels of access to training opportunities, as well as different views of the worth and usefulness of such programmes (Keep, 2005; Purcell, 1999). Employees in higher positions have more access to specialised T&D programmes, whereas those in more junior positions may have fewer options due to budget limits or organisational goals (Westwood, 2004). Furthermore, the history of South Africa, which is marked by systemic discrimination and inequality, has had a significant impact on the experiences and attitudes of employees from various backgrounds (Horwitz et al., 2002). Apartheid's legacy has resulted in discrepancies in education, employment prospects, and resource availability, which could keep influencing employee's perceptions and attitudes towards T&D programmes. Understanding how these demographic factors influence employees' perceptions of the effectiveness of T&D is critical for designing programmes that suit the unique needs of diverse employee groups. Furthermore, the public sector's duty to provide essential services to residents needs a highly skilled and motivated workforce, making it critical to maximise the effectiveness of T&D activities. This will ultimately contribute to an improved understanding of the elements impacting employee engagement and growth in the South African public sector.

## **3. Methodology**

The study used non-probability sampling for data collection. The participants were selected based on convenience and probability. The target population for the study included all employees from semi-skilled & discretionary decision-making to top management from various departments within the Mpumalanga government complex in Mbombela. The sample size was selected based on Israel's (1992) table and calculated using the Raosoft sample calculator. The target sample size for the study ranged between 286 and 333, with a 5% precision level so that the study results could be reliable and generalisable. The questionnaire was self-administered to 302 Mbombela government employees, resulting in a response rate of 94.7%. Notably, 286 questionnaires were returned without error, forming the foundation of this study. The data collected was analysed using mathematical programming software R version 4.3.1 and STATA version 18. The demographic characteristics were analysed using descriptive statistics and visual binning. Mann-Whitney and Kruskal Wallis

were used for inferential statistics to ascertain whether a difference exists in employees' attitudes towards T&D programmes.

Employee attitudes towards T&D programmes were measured using a self-developed twenty-seven-item scale. The questionnaire comprised three sections. Section A collected demographic information. Sections B (fifteen) items were developed to measure employee's attitudes towards training programmes. Section C (twelve) items were developed to measure employee's attitudes towards development programmes. The structured questionnaire, designed around the research objective, utilised 6-point Likert scales ranging from strongly agree (6) to disagree (1) for responses strongly. Physical administration by the researcher facilitated clarification for participants.

### 3.1 Normality check of the Research Instrument

The paper employed the Henze-Zirkler (Henze & Zirkler, 1990) (multivariate normality) and Anderson-Darling (Anderson & Darling, 1954) (univariate normality) tests to assess the normality of the distribution of the questionnaire items. The null hypothesis of multivariate normality was rejected by the significant p-value (0.00) obtained from the Henze-Zirkler test statistic (4.904436). Similarly, the null hypothesis of univariate normality was rejected using the Anderson-Darling test, which yielded extremely significant p-values ( $< 0.001$ ) for all measurement items. The results indicate that neither the multivariate nor individual variable distributions follow a normal distribution. Hence, the inferential statistics adopt a non-parametric approach using Kruskal-Wallis and Mann-Whitney U tests.

### 3.2 Reliability and Validity

Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ ) coefficients were used to evaluate the reliability of each instrument.

**Table 1.** Reliability of the Self-Developed Research Instrument  
Reliability statistics of the questionnaire

Reliability statistics of the questionnaire		
Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardised Items	N of Items
.853	.877	57

Table 1 displays the Cronbach's alpha analysis reliability test findings for the self-developed questionnaire on training and development and human capacity development. The questionnaire's reliability value of .853 indicates an acceptable degree of internal consistency among the items within the instrument. This indicates that the questionnaire items consistently assess the intended construction, suggesting a high level of reliability. This number is higher than the typical permissible range of 0.70 or higher. In agreement, DeVellis (2021) stated that for most research applications, a Cronbach's alpha value above .70 is usually regarded as appropriate.

Furthermore, Exploratory and Confirmatory factor analysis was used to analyse the relationship between the study items, investigate the underlying structure of the self-developed questionnaire, and determine the quality and goodness of the measurement instrument. All fitted models used robust maximum likelihood estimation due to the non-normality of the study items, and model goodness of fit for the hypothesised model was evaluated using several indices. CFA model-fit: ( $\chi^2(1503) = 3068,318$ ,  $p=0$ , CFI= 0.913, TLI=0.908, RMSEA= 0.060, SRMR=0.034.

Based on the CFA model-fit results, the chi-square test statistic ( $\chi^2(1503)= 3068,318$ ,  $p=0$ ) indicates a statistically significant lack of fit for the hypothesised model. This suggests that the model might not perfectly capture the data structure. However, it is important to acknowledge that the chi-square test can be sensitive to sample size, particularly in larger samples (Cheung & Lau, 2008). Therefore, the study relied on additional fit indices (RMSEA, CFI, TLI, SRMR) to provide a more nuanced picture. The RMSEA represents the average approximation error between the model and the population data, values below 0.08 generally indicate a good fit as stated by Hu and Bentler (1999). The RMSEA value for the model which is 0.060 falls within the acceptable range. Additionally, the CFI (comparative fit index) and TLI (Tucker-Lewis index) indices compare the proposed model to a null model (where all variables are uncorrelated), values closer to 1 indicate a better fit (Hu & Bentler, 1999; Cheung et al., 2024). In this case, CFI=0.913 and TLI=0.908 are above the recommended benchmark of 0.90, suggesting a good fit between the model and the data. Furthermore, standardised root mean square residual (SRMR) measures the discrepancy between the observed and model-predicted covariances, values below 0.08 suggest a good fit (Hu & Bentler, 1999; Cheung et al., 2024). The SRMR value for this study (0.034) is well below the recommended threshold, indicating a good fit in terms of

reproduced variances and covariances (Hu & Bentler, 1999; Cheung et al., 2024). Having confirmed the adequacy of the research instrument, the following is a presentation of the demographic profile of the study.

**Table 2.** Demographic characteristics of employees

Demographic data (n=286)			
Characteristics	Category	Frequency	Percentages
Gender	1 (Male)	92	32%
	2 (Female)	194	68%
JobTitle	1 (General employee)	53	18,5
	2 (Junior manager)	103	36,0
	3 (Middle manager)	86	30,1
	4 (Senior manager)	44	15,4

Table 2 reveals a gender skew with a higher proportion of female respondents (68%) than males (32%). Job titles primarily comprised Junior Managers (36.0%) and Middle Managers (30.1%). General Employees (18.5%) and Senior Managers (15.4%) comprised the remaining categories. Educational qualifications indicated a high proportion of respondents with postgraduate degrees (40.2%), followed closely by those with Degrees (39.9%). Diplomas were the least common qualification (19.9%).

### 3.3 Findings of the Study

The differences in employee attitudes towards T&D programmes across job titles were analysed. The analysis employs the median scores and p-values listed in Table 3. Below is the finding based on Job titles.

**Table 3.** Employee attitudes towards T&D programmes based on job titles

Job title				
Dimension	Category	N(286)	Median	p-value
Ease of Training	1 (General employee)	53	-0.0579 [-3.33, 1.93]	<b>0,188</b>
	2 (Junior manager)	103	-0.0284 [-4.26, 2.16]	
	3 (Middle manager)	86	0.187 [-3.72, 1.92]	
	4 (Senior manager)	44	0.337 [-1.92, 1.38]	
Facilitation of Training	1 (General employee)	53	0.163 [-2.62, 1.70]	<b>0,001</b>
	2 (Junior manager)	103	-0.0370 [-2.60, 1.53]	
	3 (Middle manager)	86	0.408 [-4.51, 2.08]	
	4 (Senior manager)	44	0.522 [-3.97, 1.28]	

<b>Quality of Training</b>	1 (General employee)	53	-0.226 [-2.70, 2.33]	<b>0,000</b>
	2 (Junior manager)	103	-0.0664 [-2.53, 1.88]	
	3 (Middle manager)	86	0.311 [-4.63, 1.76]	
	4 (Senior manager)	44	0.651 [-2.44, 1.88]	
<b>Career Development</b>	1 (General employee)	53	0.0196 [-3.45, 1.38]	<b>0,006</b>
	2 (Junior manager)	103	-0.164 [-3.46, 2.04]	
	3 (Middle manager)	86	0.0877 [-2.84, 2.05]	
	4 (Senior manager)	44	0.543 [-1.88, 2.16]	
<b>Personal Development</b>	1 (General employee)	53	-0.436 [-2.37, 1.66]	<b>0,017</b>
	2 (Junior manager)	103	0.115 [-2.89, 2.02]	
	3 (Middle manager)	86	0.288 [-2.38, 2.34]	
	4 (Senior manager)	44	0.284 [-2.38, 1.56]	

Based on the abovementioned results, it is evident that there are statistically significant differences between employee attitudes towards T&D programmes across Job titles on the following dimensions of T&D: Job title and facilitation of training at the  $p<0,001$  level of significance. Table 3 revealed a significant difference only between general employees ( $M= -0.0579$ ) and middle managers ( $M= 0.187$ ). This suggests that general employees perceive the facilitation of training programmes less favourably than middle managers. Additionally, differences exist between Job Title and quality of training at the  $p<0,000$  level of significance. Table 3 revealed a significant difference between general employees ( $M= -0.226$ ) and both middle managers ( $M= 0.311$ ) and senior managers ( $M= 0.651$ ). This suggests that general employees perceive the quality of training programmes less favourably than middle and senior managers. Similarly, differences exist between Job Title and Career Development at the  $p<0,006$  level of significance. Table 3 revealed a significant difference between general employees ( $M= 0.0196$ ) and junior managers ( $M= -0.164$ ). This suggests that general employees perceive training programmes as contributing less to their career development compared to junior managers. Furthermore, differences exist between Job Title and Personal Development at

the  $p<0,017$  level of significance. Table 3 revealed significant differences between general employees ( $M= -0.436$ ) and both junior managers ( $M= 0.115$ ) and middle managers ( $M= 0.288$ ). This suggests that general employees perceive training programmes as contributing less to their personal development than both junior and middle managers.

Furthermore, based on the results shown Table 3, it is evident that there are no statistically significant differences between employee attitudes towards T&D programmes across job titles on the Ease of training dimension at the  $p<0,188$  level of significance. This suggests that senior, middle, and junior managers, as well as general employees, share similar perceptions regarding the ease of use of training materials, the clarity of instructions, and the navigability of the training programmes.

Building onto the results above, further analysis was conducted to determine whether differences exist in employees' attitudes towards T&D programmes based on Gender. Furthermore, the analysis employs the median scores and p-values in Table 4.

**Table 4.** Employee attitudes towards T&D programmes based on Gender

Gender				
Dimension	Category	N (286)	Median	p-value
Ease of Training	1 (Male)	92	0.320 [-3.21, 2.16]	<b>0,029</b>
	2 (Female)	194	0.0887 [-4.26, 2.12]	
Facilitation of Training	1 (Male)	92	0.237 [-2.33, 1.46]	<b>0,441</b>
	2 (Female)	194	0.201 [-4.51, 2.08]	
Quality of Training	1 (Male)	92	0.272 [-2.53, 2.11]	<b>0,011</b>
	2 (Female)	194	0.0658 [-4.63, 2.33]	
Career Development	1 (Male)	92	0.195 [-3.46, 1.65]	<b>0,109</b>
	2 (Female)	194	0.0818 [-3.06, 2.16]	
Personal Development	1 (Male)	92	0.314 [-2.38, 1.62]	<b>0,207</b>
	2 (Female)	194	0.159 [-2.89, 2.34]	

Table 4 revealed a significant difference between males and females on Ease of Training dimension at the  $p < 0,029$  level of significance, as well as on the Quality of Training dimension at the  $p < 0,011$  level of significance. This suggests that males have a positive attitude towards these dimensions, whilst females have a combination of neutral and positive attitudes. This means that male and female employees may have had different experiences with ease and quality of T&D programmes, resulting in incomparable perceptions and attitudes.

Furthermore, the analysis presented in Table 4 reveals a lack of statistically significant differences between male and female employees' attitudes toward T&D programmes across three dimensions: facilitation of training programmes ( $p < 0,441$ ), Career Development ( $p < 0,109$ ), and Personal Development ( $p < 0,207$ ). These findings suggest that, within the context of this study, there is no compelling evidence to support the claim that gender significantly influences employees' perceptions of these aspects of T&D. This suggests that male and female employees may have had similar experiences with facilitation of T&D programmes, as well as career and personal development programmes, resulting in comparable perceptions and attitudes.

#### 4. Conclusion

The results of this paper are consistent with previous studies that recognise the overall value of training programmes for employee development. The observed variance in attitudes based on job title is consistent with the findings of Colquitt et al. (2000), indicating that employees at different levels have unique training preferences. Possible justifications for the observed attitude differences include the perceived relevance and alignment of training programmes with job-specific demands and career goals. McLean et al. (2017) found that employees at higher levels (middle and senior managers) may prioritise programmes focused on leadership development and strategic skills that could aid them in advancing their careers. Employees in general, and junior positions alternatively, may be more interested in learning specific skills that are directly relevant to their current duties (Burke & Hutchins, 2007). Furthermore, the lack of perceived relevance or clarity on the benefits of training programmes may be the cause of the neutral attitude shown among general employees and junior managers. Employees who fail to recognise the link between training and their professional and personal development may have a neutral or even negative attitude, according to studies by Baldwin and Ford (1988) by giving employees more authority over their work and asking them what kinds of training they would appreciate most, might result in an



improvement in junior managers and general employee's attitudes towards T&D.

Furthermore, the findings are supported by previous studies conducted by other researchers. According to Edgar and Geare (2004), gender disparities are acknowledged by a significant body of research comparing the attitudes and behaviours of men and women (Mor Barak et al., 1998; Konrad & Hartmann, 2001). These differences are frequently linked to the unfair treatment that women endure (Mai-Dalton & Sullivan, 1981; Kirton & Greene, 2015) and it is hypothesised that these encounters influence a person's attitudes and behaviours at work (Cianni & Romberger, 1995). While certain research, such as Webster and Martocchio (1995), could not find any significant gender effects, Feinberg and Halperin (1978) demonstrated that women have lower learning levels. Given the absence of theoretical support for these effects, it is not unforeseen that consistent results for gender have not been found.

The findings of this study are contrary to the findings of Truitt (2011), which revealed that women, significantly more often than men, indicated positive attitudes toward training. Additionally, Bausch et al. (2014) mentioned that older women showed more positive development compared with older men. However, Gegenfurtner (2020) found no significant gender differences in employee motivation to participate in training. These findings indicate that factors other than gender may play an influential role in shaping attitudes towards training programmes. Gegenfurtner (2020) also highlight the importance of organisational context in gender disparity. Investigating issues such as supervisor support for training and the existence of work-life balance policies could provide an improved understanding of how gender interacts with these variables. The level of support provided by supervisors can significantly influence employees' participation in and benefits from training programmes.

This study analysed the attitudes of public sector employees in Mbombela, South Africa, regarding T&D programmes, taking into account specific demographic variables. The findings provide significant insights while also highlighting areas for future research. The analysis demonstrated a generally positive attitude towards T&D programmes, implying that employees understand the relevance of such programmes in improving skills and knowledge. However, the large female sample (Table 2) limit the findings' applicability to the larger public service workforce. Overall, the findings reveal that employees have a combination of neutral and positive attitudes towards T&D programmes within the Mbombela public service, to improve understanding of public sector employees' attitudes towards T&D programmes, future studies may explore the following:

- Collect more detailed and precise information on job titles within categories (Table 3). This would allow for job analysis based on actual job functions, further improving the generalizability to specific work groups.
- Consider longitudinal studies to capture how attitudes about T&D change over time and throughout professional stages, allowing for a more nuanced understanding.
- Supplement quantitative findings with qualitative data (e.g., interviews, focus groups) to investigate the causes of employee attitudes and potential areas for improvement in T&D programme design and implementation.

By adopting these recommendations, future research may generate more representative samples and use demographic data to better understand public sector employee attitudes towards T&D programmes. This will help establish more successful training efforts that address the different demands of the public service employees in Mbombela and nationwide. Furthermore, the observed variances in employee attitudes towards T&D programmes based on job title and gender, emphasises the importance of taking individual preferences into account when developing training programmes. These findings have major implications for policymakers and human resource professionals in the public service. Public sector agencies should maximise the benefits of their investments in employee T&D by prioritising excellent programme design, adapting training content to specific needs, and creating a supportive training environment. This results in a more trained, motivated, and effective public service workforce capable of providing high-quality services to citizens.

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