

# International Journal of Research in Human Resource Management



E-ISSN: 2663-3361  
P-ISSN: 2663-3213  
IJRHRM 2024; 6(1): 145-148  
[www.humanresourcejournal.com](http://www.humanresourcejournal.com)  
Received: 15-04-2024  
Accepted: 16-05-2024

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## Exploring the importance of employee training and development in achieving sustainable development goals

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**DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.33545/26633213.2024.v6.i1b.184>

### Abstract

Employee training and development are vital for organizations across industries, whether aimed at enhancing daily operations or preparing them for future leadership roles. Such initiatives advance professional and personal growth, promote good health, foster gender equality, encourage skill development, and drive workplace innovation. This research article examines the pivotal role of employee training in advancing multiple Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), encompassing good health, quality education, gender equality, decent work, innovation, and reduced inequality. Through strategic investment in training programs, organizations can cultivate workplace well-being, continuous learning, gender empowerment, skill enhancement, innovation, and diversity inclusion, thus significantly contributing to sustainable development objectives. This conceptual paper explores and provides insights into the importance of employee training and development in achieving various SDGs, highlighting its significance in fostering holistic organizational growth and societal progress.

**Keywords:** Employee, training and development, sustainable development goals, SDGs, well-being, gender equality

### Introduction

**Sustainable development goals (SDGs):** The United Nation defines sustainable development goals as "The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are the world's best plan to build a better world for people and our planet by 2030. Adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015, the SDGs are a call for action by all countries – poor, rich, and middle-income – to promote prosperity while protecting the environment. They recognize that ending poverty must go hand-in-hand with strategies that build economic growth and address a range of social needs including education, health, equality, and job opportunities while tackling climate change and working to preserve our ocean and forests". The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) comprise seventeen global goals that are interconnected and aimed at transforming our world. Incorporated into the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, they served as a "blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all." 193 nations agreed to them in September 2015. The enhancement of education, health, and economic growth, as well as the universal decrease of poverty and climate change, are the aims of each of the 17 goals. "Protect the planet, and improve the lives and prospects of everyone, everywhere" is how the United Nations defines the SDGs.

Among these 17 goals each has a specific target to be achieved over the 15-year period, covering a wide range of sustainable development goals including eradicating poverty and hunger, encouraging good health and well-being, ensuring quality education, attaining gender equality, clean water and sanitation, affordable and clean energy, decent work and economic growth, industry innovation and infrastructure, reducing inequalities, sustainable cities and communities, responsible consumption and production, climate action, life below water, life on land, peace, justice, and strong institutions, and partnerships for the goals. These goals offer a framework for governments, businesses, and civil society to work together towards a more sustainable future, addressing the interconnected challenges facing our world today.



Source: <https://en.unesco.org/sustainabledevelopmentgoals>.

They serve as a roadmap for global development efforts, guiding policies, investments, and actions to build a more inclusive, equitable, and sustainable world for present and future generations.

Sustainable development goals can be achieved not by a single organization or a country but it is indeed a joint effort by one and all, the more capable one can contribute more so that nobody is left behind. Today we see that due to technology and globalization, the world has transformed beyond one's expectations, and without doubt, it has transformed the lives of millions across the globe by creating business opportunities, job opportunities, and increased competition which lead every organization to strive for the best to stay ahead and to stay competitive they need to invest in the most important resource that is human resource.

Employee training and development is crucial for every organization or industry be it training and developing employees for performing day-to-day activities or preparing them for future challenging or leadership roles. It helps employees grow professionally and personally by training and motivating them to maintain good health, and create an atmosphere of open-mindedness towards gender equality hence reducing the chances of gender discrimination. It also encourages employees to continuously enhance their skills for development or for bringing innovation to the workplace.

Training is an integral part of human development. This research article explores the importance of employee training and development in achieving multiple Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including those focused on good health, quality education, gender equality, decent work, innovation, and reduced inequality. It demonstrates how strategic investment in training programs promotes workplace well-being, continuous learning, gender empowerment, skill development, innovation, and diversity inclusion, thereby contributing significantly to sustainable development.

#### Objective of the study

- To understand employee training, employee development and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
- To explore the importance of employee training and development in achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

**Employee training and development:** Training is all about teaching new employees those skills that are useful in their day-to-day work, it is also given whenever there is a need to update skills among experienced employees. "Training is the process of teaching new employees the basic skills they need to perform their jobs" (Dessler, 2008) <sup>[13]</sup>. "Training is the process of transmitting and receiving information related to problem-solving" (Halloran, 1986) <sup>[15]</sup>. "Training is an organized activity for increasing the knowledge and skills of people for a definite purpose" (Reddy, B. R. 2005) <sup>[17]</sup>.

Training is a short-term process whereas development is a long-term process that focuses on the career and overall development of employees and prepares them for future jobs. "Development refers to training as well as formal education, job experiences, relationships, and assessments of personality, skills, and abilities that help employees prepare for future jobs or positions". "Training and Development programs provide useful means of assuring that the employees are capable of performing their jobs at acceptable level and also more than that" (Mahapatro, B. 2021) <sup>[2]</sup>.

Employees are undeniably the most valuable assets of any organization, they are considered as driving force behind any organization's success because they have the power to build or ruin an organization's reputation, which has a direct effect on the business's profitability. Insufficient training can leave both new and existing employees ill-equipped to handle their daily responsibilities to their fullest potential. Effective training plays a pivotal role in enhancing employee capabilities, performance, and competency. The significance of training extends beyond job performance to encompass factors such as motivation and job satisfaction. Investing in employee training and development has consistently been linked to increased productivity and satisfaction in the workplace.

Training and development programs serve to cultivate employees' personal and professional skills, knowledge, and abilities. In the fiercely competitive landscape of today's global market, organizations are continuously striving for success, emphasizing the need to leverage human resources efficiently. Managers must prioritize all aspects of human resource management to ensure that employees remain equipped to meet organizational goals and sustain success in the market. By acknowledging the critical role of human resources and fostering a culture of continuous learning and development, Companies may set themselves up for long-

term success. Businesses have realized that learning is a lifelong activity and the benefits they can expect by investing in employees.

**Importance of Employee training and development in the achievement of SDGs:** “Employer training and other developmental initiatives have a significant beneficial influence on job satisfaction, productivity, and, eventually, overall profitability” (Hughey, A. W., & Mussnug, K. J. 1997) [6]. “Numerous nations have implemented national policies to support the creation and implementation of training programs at the national level as a result of the realization of the advantages that training activities provide for society. The objective of these programs is to enhance a country's human capital, which is linked to increased economic development” (Aguinis, H., & Kraiger, K. 2009) [1].

“The necessity for all sectors in every country to acquire new skillsets and toolkits for sustainability, including training and education in systems approaches to solutions, transdisciplinary initiatives, and co-design (Aligned with target 4.7 of the SDGs)” (Stafford-Smith, M., *et al.*, 2017) [8]. This highlights the critical role of continuous learning and development in addressing global challenges and advancing sustainable development. “There are definite advantages to training in the workplace for people, groups, companies, and society as a whole. The field of applied psychology study that we think has the most potential to significantly improve human performance and well-being in organizational and work settings as well as in society at large is training in work organizations” (Aguinis, H., & Kraiger, K. 2009) [1].

The importance of employee training and development in achieving SDGs can be observed as having a direct and indirect impact, there are certain SDGs where one can realize the importance by observing that training and development can have a direct contribution, and on the other hand it can also have some indirect contribution in achieving other SDGs. selected SDGs are discussed below.

**Employee training and development can have a direct contribution towards the attainment of these Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).**

**Good Health and Well-being (SDG 3):** Employee training and development directly promote health and well-being in the workplace by addressing aspects such as mental health awareness, stress management, and ergonomic practices. Training programs can include modules on health and safety, promoting a healthy work environment, and reducing workplace injuries and illnesses.

**Quality Education (SDG 4):** Employee training and development directly contribute to promoting quality education by enhancing skills, knowledge, and learning opportunities in the workforce. Training initiatives foster lifelong learning and skill development, aligning to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education for all.

**Gender equality (SDG 5):** Employee training and development initiatives can directly contribute to promoting gender equality in the workforce by providing equal access to learning and development opportunities for all employees, regardless of gender. Training programs can include modules on diversity and inclusion, gender

sensitivity, and unconscious bias training, fostering a culture of respect and equality within organizations.

**Decent Work and Economic Growth (SDG 8):** Training and development initiatives directly contribute to encouraging decent work and economic growth by improving job skills, productivity, and overall employability. Skilled and well-trained employees are more likely to secure meaningful employment, contributing to economic development and poverty reduction.

**Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure (SDG 9):** Employee training and development directly foster innovation and skill development, which are essential for building resilient infrastructure and promoting sustainable industrialization. Training programs can focus on technological advancements, fostering a culture of innovation within organizations and industries.

**Reduced Inequality (SDG 10):** Access to training and development opportunities directly contributes to reducing inequality by providing marginalized groups with the skills and knowledge necessary for employment and economic advancement. Training initiatives promote equal access to opportunities and help bridge the skills gap between different segments of society.

**Employee training and development can have an indirect contribution towards the attainment of these Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**

**No Poverty (SDG 1):** Employee training and development indirectly contribute to reducing poverty by enhancing employability skills which open doors for jobs thus income level increases, thus creating sustainable livelihoods for individuals and families.

**Zero Hunger (SDG 2):** While indirectly related, improved job prospects resulting from training initiatives can contribute to food security by increasing household incomes and purchasing power.

**Sustainable Cities and Communities (SDG 11):** Enhanced human capital resulting from training programs indirectly contributes to building sustainable communities by fostering innovation, productivity, and the adoption of sustainable practices in urban settings.

**Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions (SDG 16):** By fostering inclusive workplaces and promoting access to education and opportunities, employee training and development indirectly contribute to peace, justice, and strong institutions by reducing social disparities and promoting social cohesion.

## Conclusion

Employee training and development can be seen as a powerful tool in the pursuit of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), offering both direct and indirect contributions to societal progress beyond any organization, industry, or nation. Direct and possible benefits of employee training and development in achieving SDGs such as Good Health and Well-being (SDG 3) can be achieved by educating and training employees to maintain their health and work for their well-being, Quality Education (SDG 4)

plays a vital role in human development, Gender equality (SDG 5) is a key towards achieving a better society education and work are two important areas where gender equality needs to strengthen these two areas have a great impact on the society development thus employee training can facilitate this. Decent Work and Economic Growth (SDG 8), Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure (SDG 9), and Reduced Inequality (SDG 10), all contribute towards a prosperous workplace.

Indirect and possible benefits of employee training and development in achieving SDGs such as No Poverty (SDG 1), Zero Hunger (SDG 2), Sustainable Cities and Communities (SDG 11), and Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions (SDG 16), by providing employee training certain skills can be gained like employability skills, hard and soft skills, technical skills, leadership skills, etc these skills not only helps an individual find a job but also helps them to grow further thus it aids in achieving no poverty and zero hunger, it does not stop here but it also assists in achieving sustainable cities and communities, and Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions which supports social well-being.

The rest of the SDGs like Clean Water and Sanitation (SDG 6), Affordable and Clean Energy (SDG 7), Responsible Consumption and Production (SDG 12), Climate Action (SDG 13), Life Below Water (SDG 14), Life on Land (SDG 15), and Partnerships for the Goals (SDG 17), a behavioral change through employee training can bring a positive effect in achieving the rest of the SDGs also, these may seem unrelated, but behavioral changes among employees like improved education quality, equal job opportunities beyond discrimination, good health and well-being gender equality, etc. can develop an individual's mindset that not only makes a workplace better but also they can carry these traits to their homes making a better society. As nations strive for a sustainable future, investing in continuous learning and development within the workforce proves indispensable, aligning organizational growth with global sustainability objectives. Through strategic investment in training initiatives, societies can bridge gaps, foster innovation, and cultivate resilient communities, paving the way to a more equitable and prosperous world for all.

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